Instructor: Sally Robinson
Course: 374
Title: Women Writers

Description: WOMEN, WRITING, AND CONSUMER CULTURE

In this course, we will explore the complex symbolic relationship between women and consumerism. Within patriarchal cultures, women’s hunger for food, for men, for material goods is very often considered problematic; we hear about women who love too much, who shop too much, who eat too much. Even as women are often represented as out of control consumers, they also find themselves represented as the objects of consumption; women and the female body are used to sell products, women’s individual identities are often consumed by others’ needs and desires, women are frequently represented as objects to be owned, purchased, used. How have women writers approached these issues? Do novels by women critically revise, or uncritically accept, what we might call a male-oriented or masculinist take on questions of female appetite and desire? How do race and class impact how women relate to consumer culture, and how consumer culture positions women?

Proposed Readings: Jane Austen, Emma 1814
Edith Wharton, The House of Mirth 1905
Anita Loos, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes 1925
Nella Larsen, Passing 1929
Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye 1970
Margaret Atwood, The Edible Woman 1969
Laura Esquivel, Like Water for Chocolate 1989
Connie Willis, Bellwether 1996
Ruth Ozeki, My Year of Meats 1998