Women around the globe have faced and continue to face beliefs and living conditions that challenge, undermine, or compromise both their independence and their humanity. In our course’s journey of over 150 years of women’s writing, we will encounter works by major women writers from around the globe who engage with these challenges that women encounter regularly. We will consider our texts’ connections, stark differences, and innovations in the literal, aesthetic, political, and cultural treatments of women’s independence and mobility on the one hand and incarceration and stasis on the other. We will think about how these texts and their female characters resist boundaries of class, classification, and other modes of ordering that would be the net to ensnare them. With authors hailing from England, Jamaica, Algeria, India, South Africa, and America and with ancestry from Africa and China, their texts are as cosmopolitan in their reach as are their writers’ origins. From the wind-swept moors of northern England, to the islands of the Caribbean, and across the continents of North America, Africa, and Asia, these texts keenly keep the world in close view. By reflecting on issues of class/caste, race, gender, religion, exile, and justice, we will explore how these authors conceive of and portray women’s experiences in the larger world. Students will write three formal papers, give two oral presentations, sit for a mid-term exam, and complete various informal in-class writing assignments.

Possible Texts:
Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre (1847)
Jean Rhys, Wide Sargasso Sea (1966)
Octavia Butler, Kindred (1979)
Jhumpa Lahiri, Interpreter of Maladies (1999)
Ingrid de Kok, Seasonal Fires: New and Selected Poems (2006)

Possible Films:
Wide Sargasso Sea (Dir. Brendan Maher, 2006)
The Joy Luck Club (Dir. Wayne Wang, 1993)
Inch 'Allah Dimanche (God Willing on Sunday; Dir. Yamina Benguigui, 2001)