

Women in Nineteenth-Century America

Historian Susan Armitage writes, “Whether one is male or female is, for the most part, a biological fact. But the *roles, values, and behaviors* people assign to that fact are enormously varied across time.” Gender refers to concepts of manhood and womanhood that shape divisions of labor, family structure, social identity, civil law, sexual mores, and political rights. Thus, systems of power and opportunity are encoded in gender. Because gender differs across cultures and across time, and because it informs the structures of society as well as its values, the study of gender is vital to the field of history.

The United States in the nineteenth century saw dramatic change that reverberated through the lives of women. Industrialization, the rise of domestic sentimentalism, westward migration and invasion, slavery, civil war, reconstruction, and urbanization transformed women’s roles during this period. Letters, diaries, and oral histories, as well as scholarly works will provide a window on women’s lived experience. Popular magazines, political cartoons, and American painting will reveal a discourse on gender that called forth American concerns about liberty and order, hierarchy and equality, individualism and community.

Required Texts:

Coursepack: A xeroxed collection of articles and documents handed out the first day of class.

Students pay a lab fee for this packet.

Dee Garceau-Hagen, Ed., *Portraits of Women in the American West* (Routledge, 2005).

Course Requirements:

- 1) Regular discussion: Come to class prepared; that is, having done the reading listed on your syllabus for that day. When you read, jot down notes to capture the author’s main points. For firsthand narratives, underline passages that you find interesting, puzzling, or significant. *Good discussion depends upon your preparation.* (20%)
- 2) A reaction paper, 4-5 pages, on preindustrial women’s work, due September 13. (20%)
- 3) A debate in which you come to class prepared to argue one side of the question, with supporting evidence from both firsthand and scholarly sources. Scheduled for September 29.
- 4) A short research project, 5-6 pages, using archival sources. Due October 25. (20%)
- 5) A critical review essay, 7-8 pages, on one of the books listed under “Further Research.” These book reviews will have a rolling deadline, from September 8 – December 7. Ideally, you review the book of your choice close to the time we discuss that topic in class. (20%)
- 6) A 10-minute formal class presentation based on material from your book review. (20%)

Aug 25 Introduction to the Course

Week 1: Native American Women in Early America

Aug 30 Sylvia van Kirk, "The Role of Native Women in the Creation of Fur Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1830," pp.53-62.

George Ruxton, "The Trapper's View of Women," pp.168-69.

Osburne Russell, "Journal of a Trapper, 1834-43," pp.397-98.

Sept 1 Lecture: Gender Systems in Transition: A Seneca Case Study

Further Research: Susan Sleeper Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounters in the Western Great Lakes* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

Week 2: Anglo Women in Preindustrial America

Sept 6 Laurel Ulrich, "Sept. 1788: Warpt a Piece," pp.72-101.

Laurel Ulrich, "November 1792: Matrimonial Writes," pp.134-61.

Sept 8 Preindustrial Home Production Workshop: Class meets in Orgill Room.

Week 3: Early Industrialization

Sept. 13 John Kasson, "Civilizing the Machine," pp.198-218.

Harriet Robinson, "The Lowell Textile Workers," pp.214-21.

"The Abuse of Female Workers of Lowell, 1836," pp.71-2.

Sept 15 Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," pp.146-60.

Christine Stansell, "Women, Children, and the Uses of the Streets: Class and Gender Conflict in New York City, 1850-1860," pp.189-203.

Marli Weiner, "Mistresses, Morality, and the Dilemmas of Slaveholding: Ideology and Behavior of Elite Antebellum Women," pp.278-98.

Further Research: Thomas Dublin, *Transforming Women's Work: New England Lives in the Industrial Revolution* (1994).

Week 4: Slavery and Abolitionism

- Sept 20 Deborah Gray White, "Female Slaves: Sex Roles and Status in the Antebellum Plantation South," pp.56-75.
- Harriet Jacobs, "Life of a Female Slave," pp.218-25.
- Timothy Lockley, "Spheres of Influence: Working White and Black Women in Antebellum Savannah," pp.102-20.
- Sept.22 "The Reform Impulse," pp.333-36.
- Andover Female Anti-Slavery Society, "A Letter to the Liberator," pp.340-41.
- Ann Boylan, "Benevolence and Anti-Slavery Activity Among African-American Women in New York and Boston, 1820-1840," pp.156-65.
- Gerda Lerner, "The Political Activities of Anti-Slavery Women," pp.172-84.
- Further Research: Katherine Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (Yale University Press, 1973).
- Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Edited by Jean Fagan Yellin (Harvard University Press, 2000).
- Jean Fagan Yellin & John C. Van Horne, Eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Cornell University Press, 1994).
- Victoria Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

Week 5: Seneca Falls, 1848: The Woman's Rights Movement

- Sept 27 Slide Lecture: "Women in Nineteenth-Century American Art."
- Sept 29 Debate: Separate Spheres or Feminism?: Film, "Not For Ourselves Alone" Part I.
- Carroll S. Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual," pp.168-83.
- Caroline Gilman, "The Deferential Wife" (1838) pp.205-07.
- "Declaration of Sentiments" (1848) pp.349-53, and political cartoons.
- Debra Gold Hansen, "The Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society and the Limits of Gender Politics," pp.45-65.
- Keith Melder, "Abby Kelley and the Process of Liberation," pp.231-48.

Week 6: The American West: Gender in Migration and Invasion

- Oct 4 Johnny Faragher and Christine Stansell, "Women and Their Families on the Overland trail to California and Oregon, 1842-1867," pp.246-67.
- Lillian Schlissel, "Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey: Families in Transit, 1841-1850," pp.58-71.
- Oct 6 Rosemarie Stremlau, "Rape Narratives on the Northern Paiute Frontier: Sarah Winnemucca, Sexual Sovereignty, and Economic Autonomy, *Portraits of Women in the American West*, pp.37-60.
- Yolanda Chavez Leyva, "A Poor Widow Burdened with Children: Widows and Land in Colonial New Mexico," pp.85-96.
- Further Research: John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (Yale University press, 1979).
- Glenda Riley, *Building and Breaking Families in the American West* (1996).
- Lillian Schlissel, Byrd Gibbens & Elizabeth Hampsten, Eds., *Far From Home: Families of the Westward Journey* (Schocken Books, 1989).
- Janet LeCompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn: The Upper Arkansas, 1832-1856* (1978).

Week 7: Civil War and Reconstruction

- Oct 11 Wilma King, "The Mistress and Her Maids: White and Black Women in a Louisiana Household, 1858-1868," pp.82-106.
- Victoria Bynum, "The Lives of Slave, Free Black, and Poor White Women During the Civil War," pp.111-29.
- Oct 13 Catherine Clinton, "Bloody Terrain: Freedwomen, Sexuality, and Violence During Reconstruction," pp.136-63.
- Lynn Hudson, "Mining a Mythic Past: The History of Mary Ellen Pleasant," *Portraits of Women in the American West*, pp.20-35.
- Sue Armitage, "Black Women and Their Communities in Colorado," pp.36-40.

Further Research for Civil War and Reconstruction:

Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

Jane E. Schultz, *Women at the Front: Hospital Workers in Civil War America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Jeanne Attie, *Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the American Civil War* (1998)

Leslie Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (University of Illinois Press, 1997).

Fall Break: October 15-18

Week 8: Female Reform in the Gilded Age

Oct 20 "The Woman's Era," pp.297-300.

Estelle Freedman, "The Benefits of Separate Female Organizations," pp.266-71.

Ruth Bordin, "The Temperance Crusade as a Feminist Movement," pp.215-23.

Ida B. Wells, "Race Woman" and "Crusade for Justice," pp.306-10.

Further Research: Ruth Bordin, *Women and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty* (1981).

Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* (St. Martin's Press, 1997).

Week 9: New Womanhood

Oct 25 Film: "Around the World in 72 Days: The Adventures of Nellie Bly."

Oct 27 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "The Solitude of Self," one-page.

Dee Garceau, "Mourning Dove: Gender and Cultural Mediation," pp.108-26.

June Johnson Bube, "Frances Fuller Victor's Promotion of Strong, Independent Womanhood: Women and Marriage Reconstructed in 'The New Penelope,'" *Portraits of Women in the American West*, pp.63-89

Anne Butler, "'We Had No Assistance from Anyone: Happier To Do It Alone': Montana, the Missions, and Mother Amadeus," *Portraits of Women in the American West*, pp.90-119.

Week 9: New Womanhood (continued)

- Oct 27 Dee Garceau-Hagen, "Finding Mary Fields: Race, Gender, and the Construction of Memory," *Portraits of Women in the American West*, pp.121-54.
- Linda Peavy & Ursula Smith, "Unlikely Champion: Emma Rose Sansaver, 1884-1925," *Portraits of Women in the American West*, pp.209-30.
- Natalie Dykstra, "The Curative Space of the American West in the Life and Letters of Elinore Pruitt Stewart," *Portraits of Women in the American West*, pp.209-30.
- Laura Woodworth-Ney, "Elizabeth Layton DeMary and the Rupert Culture Club: New Womanhood in a Reclamation Settlement Community," *Portraits of Women in the American West*, pp.233-59.
- Further Research: Katherine M. Osburne, *Southern Ute Women: Autonomy and Assimilation on the Reservation, 1887-1934*.
- Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Temple University Press, 1985).
- June Sochen, *The New Woman: Feminism in Greenwich Village* (Quadrangle Books, 1972).
- Dorothy Richardson, *The Long Day: The Story of a New York Working Girl As Told by Herself* (1905), reprinted in William O'Neill, Ed. *Women at Work* (Quadrangle Books, 1972):3-303.

Week 10: Feminism and Suffrage

- Nov 1 Film: "Not For Ourselves Alone," Part II.
- Nov. 3 Go over protocols for class presentations.

Week 11: Student Presentations, Nov 8 and Nov 10

Week 12: Student Presentations, Nov 15 and Nov 17

Week 13: Student Presentations, Nov 22

Thanksgiving Break: Nov 23-27

Week 14: Student Presentations, Nov 27 and Dec 1

- Dec 6 Last Day of Class: Synthesis and Reflection