Gender 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, rule of law, sexual mores, and political rights. Thus gender functions as a system of allocating responsibility and power. Gender is not only central to our sense of self as men or women; it also reflects our changing relationship to the larger society. Because gender differs across cultures, expresses power relations, and changes over time, 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 and men. Industrialization, the rise of domestic sentimentalism, invasion and colonization of the West, the institution of slavery, the civil war and reconstruction, and urbanization transformed gender systems during this period. Letters, diaries, and oral histories, as well as scholarly works will provide a window on men’s and women’s lived experience. Popular literature, 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: Required documents and journal articles, available online in Rhodes “Academic Departments,” History, Garceau, Public Folder, History 250 folder.

Course Requirements:

1) Regular participation in discussion: Come to class prepared; that is, having done the reading listed on your syllabus for that day. Good discussion depends upon your preparation. (25%)

2) A debate on Oct 25, for which you prepare to argue one side of the question, with supporting evidence from the assigned readings. This will be factored into your discussion grade.

3) A 7-8 page research paper based on archival sources, due Nov 1. Papers must be edited and proofread, doublespaced, Times 12 font, Chicago-style footnotes, and numbered pages. (25%)

4) A Works-in-Progress report on your research using primary sources, Oct 4 & 6; and a ten minute formal class presentation based on your final research paper, Nov 29, Dec 1 & 6. (25%)

5) A final essay exam based on major themes from course readings, lectures, and films. (25%)
COURSE OUTLINE

Aug 24  Introduction to the Course

Week 1:  Gender in Native North America: The Seneca

Aug 29  Conceptualizing Gender


Jane Sherron DeHart & Linda Kerber, “Gender and the New Women’s History,” *Women’s America*, 1-23.

Aug 31  Gender Systems in Transition: A Seneca Case Study


Week 2:  Gendered Exchanges and Colonization: Indians, Africans, and EuroAmericans


Week 3:  Masculinities and Class in the Early Republic


**Week 4:** Race and Gender in the Early Republic


**Week 5:** Religious Doctrines and Female Subordination: Gentiles and Mormons


Sept 28  Ann Eliza Young, *Wife No. 19, or The Story of a Life in Bondage* (1875) 
[read the whole book].

**Week 6:** Discussion of Research Challenges

Oct 3  Works-in-Progress reports

Oct 5  Works-in-Progress reports

**Week 7:** Cherokee Men and Women at Mid-Century


Week 8  Reform Fervor: From Abolitionism to Seneca Falls

Oct 17  Fall Break

Oct 19  Film: “Not For Ourselves Alone: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony,” Part I. Class meets in Barret 34.


Week 9:  Gendered Rights and Responsibilities in a Democratic Republic


“Declaration of Sentiments”(1848) *Women’s America*, 214-16.

Political Cartoons on Woman Suffrage, *Coursepack*.


Week 10:  Civil War and Reconstruction

Oct 31  Images of Men and Women in Nineteenth-Century Painting [slide lecture].


Week 11: Masculinities in Late Nineteenth-Century Urban America


Week 12: Race and Gender in the Late Nineteenth-Century West


Nov 16 Mary Murphy, “Making Men in the West: The Coming of Age of Miles Cavanaugh and Martin Frank Dunham,” Coursepack, 133-47.

Weeks 13-14: Research Presentations

Nov 21 Student Presentations of Research

Nov 23-27: Thanksgiving Break

Nov 28 Student Presentations of Research
Nov 30 Student Presentations of Research
Dec 5 Student Presentations of Research
Dec 7 Synthesis and Reflection
Date TBA Final Exam