

History 245  
T Th, 2:40-4:10pm  
Palmer 211

Dee Garceau  
Clough 201, X-3290  
Ofc Hrs: M, F, 2-4pm

## **INTERPRETIVE ISSUES IN AMERICAN WOMEN'S HISTORY**

### Women in American History

Beginning with early contact between Native Americans and Europeans, we explore the effects of colonization on Native American gender systems, the nature of Anglo women's status in coastal colonies, and the meanings of witchcraft in seventeenth-century New England.

Next we investigate the impact of the American Revolution on women, the rise of domestic sentimentalism in nineteenth-century America, and the nature of gender and race relations in the slaveholding South.

Moving into the post-Civil War era, we examine the blurring of 'separate spheres' within the contexts of westward migration, industrial expansion, and urban growth. This brings us to that kaleidoscopic figure whom historians call the 'New Woman.' A mixture of Victorian legacies and modern behaviors, she leads us into the twentieth century.

There we explore the paradoxes of New Womanhood, both Anglo and African-American. Finally, we weigh three pivotal changes in recent American women's history: the impact of World War II, the postwar resurgence of domesticity, and the second wave of American feminism.

### The Concept of Gender

Gender is a category of analysis fundamental to historical inquiry. More than a biological distinction, gender is a cultural construct that shapes divisions of labor, civil codes, social identity, family organization, sexual mores, and political rights. Thus gender is not only central to our sense of self as women or men; it also reflects our changing relationship to the larger society.

Historically, the powers to control production and distribution of goods, to participate in political life, and to exercise moral, intellectual, or spiritual leadership have been disputed between races, between classes, and sometimes between women and men. So, too, the freedoms to choose a partner, raise one's children, or determine one's reproductive life have been contested terrain. Encoded within gender systems, then, are power relations.

But American women's history is far more complex than a tale of "victim and oppressor.~' Indeed, gender systems are more than the sum of law, custom, ideology, or divisions of labor. At times, gender provided a rich array of symbols through which Americans addressed changes in the social fabric. At times, cataclysmic events such as revolution and war spurred changes in women's roles. And at times, women themselves initiated the changes that bounded their lives.

### Required Texts:

Mary Beth Norton, Major Problems in American Women's History, 2nd Edition (1996).

Louisa May Alcott, Little Women (1868).

Elaine Schowalter, These Modern Women (1926).

Coursepack: This xeroxed collection of articles and documents will be handed out in class. Students pay a lab fee for this packet.

### Course Requirements

- 1) Consistent attendance and participation. Over three absences will lower your average by a full letter grade.
- 2) Completion of assigned work, on time. Late papers will be averaged a grade lower than their content.
- 3) All work, unless otherwise indicated, is assumed to be pledged under the Honor Code.

### Class Discussion:

On days marked “Discussion,” consider it a standing assignment that you come prepared; that is, having done the reading listed for that day.

When reading, viewing films, or listening to lectures, *take notes*. You will create a valuable record of ideas, evidence, and questions that you can draw from during discussion. *Good discussion depends upon your preparation.*

Class participation will count as fully 20% of your final grade. The four written assignments listed below, each worth 20%, will comprise the rest of your grade.

### Written assignments:

- 1) A 6-7 page take-home exam on gender in the colonial and Revolutionary period. This will be an essay using course materials as evidence. Outside research will not be necessary.
- 2) A 6-7 page take-home exam on the era of domestic sentimentalism. This essay will use the same format as the first take-home exam, drawing from primary documents and scholarly articles we have covered thus far.
- 3) An **8-10-page research paper on the ‘New Woman.’** This will involve analysis and contextualization of primary documents, such as census manuscripts, letters, diaries, government records, oral histories, advertisements, or popular literature.
- 4) An **in-class Final Exam.** This will consist of two essays. The first will address gender systems during and immediately after World War II. The second will explore the reemergence of American feminism after 1963, and reactions to it.

## COURSE OUTLINE

Th Jan 11      Introduction to the Course

T Jan 16      Lecture / Discussion  
Conceptual Approaches to Women’s History

Reading: Lemer, “Placing Women in History,” Major Problems in American Women’s History (hereafter MPAWH), pp.1-7.

Bock, "Challenging Dichotomies in Women's History," MPAWH, pp.8-13.

Higginbotham, "Afro-American Women in History," MPAWH, pp.14-19.

## **UNIT I: GENDER IN EARLY AMERICA (1590-1750)**

- Th Jan 18      Lecture  
Gender Systems in Early America: A Seneca Case Study
- Reading: Wallace, "The Seneca Nation of Indians," *Coursepack*, pp.37-50.
- T Jan 23      Discussion  
Gender in Cross-Cultural Transition: Native American Women and European Colonization
- Reading: Documents, MPAWH, pp.21-24.
- Devens, "Resistance to Christianity by the Native Women of New France," MPAWH, pp.25-33.
- Ronda, "The Attractions of Christianity for Native Women of Martha's Vineyard," MPAWH, pp.34-39.
- Plane, "The Adultery Trial of Sarah Ahaton," MPAWH, pp.40-45.
- Th Jan 25      Lecture  
Gender Systems in Early America: A Puritan Community
- Reading: Mintz & Kellogg, "The Godly Family of Colonial Massachusetts," *Coursepack*, pp.43-54.
- On Reserve: Koehler, "The Case of the American Jezebels: Anne Hutchinson and the AntiNomian Controversy.
- T Jan 30      Lecture  
Gender, Social Tensions, and Symbolic Worlds: Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Salem
- Th Feb 1      Discussion  
The Conundrum of Witchcraft
- Reading: Demos, "The Poor and the Powerless Witch," MPAWH, pp.54-66.
- Karlsen, "The Potentially Powerful Witch," MPAWH, pp.66-75.

Erikson, "The Witches of Salem Village," *Coursepack*, pp.24-36.

## **UNIT II: GENDER IN THE ERA OF REVOLUTION (1740-1812)**

T Feb 6            Women and the American Revolution

Reading: Hoff Wilson, "The Negative Impact of the American Revolution," MPAWH, pp.83-94.

Norton, "The Positive Impact of the American Revolution," MPAWH, pp.94-103.

Jones, "The Mixed Legacy of the American Revolution for Black Women," MPAWH, 103-07.

"Documents," MPAWI-I, pp.77-82.

Th Feb 8            Discussion  
The Limits of Liberty

Film: "Mary Silliman's War." (Meet in Burrow Viewing Room)

\*FIRST ESSAY EXAM HANDED OUT\*

T Feb 13            Discussion  
The Politics of Reproduction Before and After the Revolution

Reading: Dayton, "Taking the Trade: Abortion and Gender Relations," *Coursepack*, pp.68-84.

Ulrich, "Matrimonial Writes, 1792," *Coursepack*, pp.134-61.

## **UNIT III: THE PARADOXES OF TRUE WOMANHOOD (1820-1860)**

Th Feb 15            Lecture  
Industrialization and Victorian Domesticity

\* FIRST ESSAY EXAM DUE\*

T Feb 20            Discussion  
The Cult of True Womanhood

Reading: Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," MPAWH, pp.115-22.

Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual," MPAWH, pp. 122-32.

Perdue, "Southern Indians and the Cult of True Womanhood," MPAWH, pp.132-37.

Documents, MPAWH, pp.109-14.

Th Feb 22

Discussion

Gender and Race in the Slaveholding South

Reading: Jacobs, "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl," *Coursepack*, pp.44-66, 82-9.

Documents, MPAWH, pp.139-45; 229-30.

Farnham, "The Position of Women in the Slave Family," MPAWH, pp.145-55.

Jennings, "The Sexual Exploitation of African-American Slave Women," MPAWH, pp.155-60.

Scott, "The Myth of the Southern Lady," *Coursepack*, pp.344-51.

\* READ LITTLE WOMEN OVER THE WEEKEND

T Feb 27

Discussion

Rewriting Gender

Reading: Louisa May Alcott, Little Women (1868). Be prepared to discuss the entire novel.

Th March 1

Discussion

The Politics of True Womanhood

Reading: Documents, MPAWH, pp.162-69.

"Keziah Kendall to Simon Greenleaf" (1839) *Coursepack*, pp.201-03.

Dublin, "Women Workers in the Lowell Mills," MPAWH, pp.169-77.

Alexander, "The Martha Washingtonians," MPAWH pp.177-83.

\*\*2ND ESSAY EXAM HANDED OUT\*\*

March 3-11

**Spring Break**

T March 13

Discussion

Victorian Sexuality

Reading: Documents, MPAWH, pp.217-29.

Groneman, "Nymphomania: Physicians and Female Sexuality in Victorian America," MPAWH, pp.230-39.

Stansell, "Working Women and Prostitution in 19<sup>th</sup> Century New York," MPAWH, pp.239-46.

Hode, "A Brief Dialogue on Illicit Sex Between White Women and Black Men in the Slave South," MEMMIL pp.246-52.

Th March 15

Lecture

Social Housekeeping After the Civil War (1865-1920)

Reading: Documents, MPAWH, pp.257-60.

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

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

\*SECOND ESSAY EXAM DUE\*

#### UNIT IV: NEW WOMANHOOD (1880s-1920s)

T March 20

Discussion

Voting and Citizenship Rights

Film: "Not for Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony."

**\* Class meets in Burrow Viewing Room. We will discuss the film and today's readings.**

Reading: Documents, MPAWH, pp.254-57, 291-93, & 322-25.

Terborg-Penn, "Discontented Black Feminists," MPAWH, pp.348-56.

Th March 22

Lecture/Discussion

Emergence of the 'New Woman' (1880s- 1920s)

Reading: Documents, MPAWH, pp.285-97

Tentler, "Work Culture in Factories", *Coursepack*, pp.292-99. Benson, "The Work Culture of Salesclerks," MPAWH, 303- 11.

Clark-Lewis, "Community Life and Work Culture Among African-American Domestic Workers in Washington D.C.," MPAWH, pp.297-303.

### **SHORT RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT:**

Pick a small set of documents, such as a packet of letters, a diary or journal, an autobiography, a play script, ten census manuscript pages, an advertising campaign which appeared in popular magazines, or a female journalist's published articles from the 1910's and '20s. Your job will be to interpret this body of evidence, and to place it in historical context. Please clear your topic with me before proceeding. Due April 17.

T March 27     Discussion  
The New Businesswoman

Film: "Two Dollars and a Dream."  
**Class meets In Burrow Viewing Room.**

Th March 29     Discussion  
New Womanhood: The Politics of Work, Sexuality, and Marriage

Reading: Schowalter, These Modern Women (1927).

T April 3        Discussion  
Work, Families, and the Great Depression

Film: "With Babies and Banners."  
**Class meets In Burrow Viewing Room.**

Reading: Kessler-Harris, "Gender Ideology and Family Survival During the Depression," MPAWH, pp.370-77.

### **UNIT V: WORLD WAR II AND AFTER**

Th April 5        Lecture  
Gender and Wartime: Women as Reserve Labor (1941-1945)

Reading: "Documents," MPAWH, pp.360-70.

Anderson, "Persistent Discrimination Against Black Women," MPAWH, pp.377-85.

T April 10        Discussion  
Change and Continuity in Women's Roles During WWII

Film: "Rosie the Riveter." **Class meets in Burrow Viewing Room.**

- April 12-15      EASTER BREAK
- T April 17      Lecture  
 The Resurgence of Domesticity (1945-1963)
- Readings: Cowan, "The Industrial Revolution in the Home," *Coursepack*, pp.383-93.
- Tyler-May, "The Reproductive Consensus in the Postwar Era," MPAWH, pp.4 15-20.
- Penn, "The Meanings of Lesbianism in Postwar America," MPAWH, pp.430-37.
- \*SHORT RESEARCH PAPER DUE\*
- Th April 19      Discussion  
 Modern Woman:"The Lost Sex"
- Reading: Colton, "Why I Quit Working," Good Housekeeping 119511, *Coursepack*, pp.299-302.
- "I Denied My Sex," True Romance [1954], *Coursepack*, pp.302-08.
- Meyerowitz, "Competing Images of Women in Postwar Mass Culture," MPAWH, pp.420-29.
- T April 24      Lecture  
 The Second Wave of American Feminism (1963-1982)
- Reading: "Documents," MPAWH, pp.439-55. Morgan, "Barbarous Rituals," *Coursepack*, pp.108-12.
- Standley, "The Role of Black Women in the Civil Rights Movement," MPAWH, pp.456-63.
- Rose, "Gender Awareness Among Chicanas of the United Farm Workers," MPAWH, pp.472-81.
- Th April 26      Discussion  
 Multicultural Feminism and Reaction (1976-Present)
- Reading: **For these, we will divide into small groups. Each group will choose three of the following to present in class:**
- "Remembering Vietnam," *Coursepack*, pp.519-23.
- Schlafly, "The Thoughts of One Who Loves Life As a Woman," *Coursepack*, pp.533-7.



Cahn, "Mannishness, Lesbianism, and Homophobia in U.S. Women's Sports," *Coursepack*. pp.468-77.

Faludi, "Blame it on Feminism," *Coursepack*, ix-xxiii.

Faludi, "Man Shortages and Barren Wombs: The Myths of Backlash," *Coursepack*. pp.3-45.

Hochschild, "The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home," *Coursepack*. pp.263-68.

Cunningham, "Barbie Doll Culture and the American Waistland," *Coursepack*, pp.122-25.

Mosle, "How the Maids Fought Back," *Coursepack*, pp.148-56.

Petchesky, "Antiabortion and Antifeminism," MPAWH, pp.502-14.

Brill, "Feminists and the Debate on Pornography," MPAWH, pp.515-21.

Synthesis and Reflection: Discussion of Unifying Themes.

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR THE FINAL EXAM WILL BE HANDED OUT.

M April 30

**Final Exam, 5:30-8pm.**