

Women in America: From Seneca Falls to “Sex and the City”

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Course Description:

This course will explore women’s experiences in America from the 1848 Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention to the present from an interdisciplinary perspective. We will pay particular attention to the development of feminist movements and to the ways in which main themes in American history, such as capitalism, military conflict, progress, democracy, and religion, change when we look at America from the perspectives of women. We will also study the ways in which ideas about gender – what it means to be male or female – change over time. How are changes in gender roles reflected in and produced by science, politics, art, education, labor, and popular culture? To more fully understand the history and experiences of women in America, discussions of race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, and sexual orientation will be central to this course.

Beyond learning about the history of women in America, students will hone their critical thinking, research, and writing skills. This class fulfills a Substantial Writing Component (SWC), and a majority of the assignments will be written. Students will write short response papers to each of the books, rough and final drafts of a research paper, and a final take-home essay exam. Portions of several classes will be devoted to students’ presentations of their work and to discussion of college-level academic research, argument development, paper organization, and revision. Students will also become comfortable finding and analyzing primary sources using on-line collections, such as the Library of Congress’s American Memory Project, as well as Miami’s own collections.

In terms of class format, a significant part of every class will be spent discussing the readings. In addition, each student will be responsible for at least one presentation on the woman, event, or organization of her/his choice. To enrich our discussions, I will often bring in music, TV or movie clips, cartoons, or photos that pertain to our reading.

Course Goals/Objectives:

- * learn about women’s contributions to and experiences in America
- * explore the ways in which gender is constructed and how this, too, helps us better understand history
- * hone critical thinking, reading, and writing skills
- * evaluate and use primary and secondary sources, including visual materials
- * conduct college-level academic research, using both primary and secondary sources
- * construct strong thesis statements and arguments
- * write well organized papers
- * become comfortable evaluating and revising your own writing

Grading:

2-page response paper (10%)
6-page research paper (25%)
Midterm (20%)
Final exam (25%)
Class participation (10%)
Homework (including quizzes and in-class writing) (10%)

Required Texts:

Course packet; Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*; Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*; Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*; and Susan Ware, *Modern American Women: A Documentary History*, Second Edition (2002).

Optional Text:

Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 4th edition (2006).

*****Required and optional texts are also on reserve at the King Library.**

- W 8/30 Course Introduction
What is American Studies?
Readings: "Gender and the New Women's History," Jane Sherron De Hart and Linda K. Kerber, and "On the Equality of the Sexes," Judith Sargent Murray.
- F 9/1 Women's history and gender history
Women before 1848
Sign up for student presentations
Readings: Report of the 1848 Women's Rights Convention and Declaration of Sentiments; Sojourner Truth speeches; and Editor's Table from *Harper's Magazine*.
- M 9/4 Labor Day—No Class
- W 9/6 Abolition, reform, and the birth of the women's rights movement
Student Presentation #1: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth
In-class writing: evaluate the Harper's piece or explain the various accounts of the Sojourner Truth speech
Readings: Susie King Taylor "Yes, we shall be free," Lucy Skipworth's letters, and "My Mother Was Much of a Woman': Slavery" by Jacqueline Jones.
Homework: Listen to interviews of former female slaves on American Memory website, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/> LOC or <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>. Write a one page response to what you hear.
- F 9/8 Women in Slavery
Student Presentation #2: Harriet Tubman, Harriet Jacobs
Film: "Unchained Memories"
Readings: excerpt from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and "Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History" by Jane Tompkins.
- M 9/11 Women and the novel
Student Presentation #3: Harriet Beecher Stowe, Caroline Kirkland, Alice Cary, Harriet Wilson, Susan Warner, Sarah J. Hale
Readings: "Mary Bowman," by Elsie Singmaster; and "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," Drew Gilpin Faust; OR "Reshaping the Bonds of Womanhood: Divorce in Reconstruction North Carolina," Victoria Bynum.
- W 9/13 Civil War and Women
The 14th and 15th amendments
Student Presentation #4: Clara Burton, Dorothea Dix, U.S. Sanitary Commission
Homework: Write a 1-2 page essay analyzing the relationship between abolition and the women's rights movement – how did they grow together? What were the conflicts? In particular, explain the significance of the debates over the 14th and 15th amendment from the perspective of the women's rights movement.
Extra Credit: Watch "Not For Ourselves Alone," volume 1 and write one-page response paper.
- F 9/15 Film: "Not For Ourselves Alone" documentary

- Readings: Research Paper Assigned
Ware 23-27; and "Cherokee Women and the Trail of Tears," Theda Perdue; OR
"Hispanic Village Women on the Southwest Frontier," Sarah Deutsch, OR
"Women and their Families on the Overland Trail to California and Oregon, 1842-1867," Johnny Faragher and Christine Stansell.
- M 9/18 Women and Westward Expansion
Discuss topic proposals
Readings: Ware 11-20, and "Unlikely Sisterhood," by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham.
Homework: Complete Topic Proposals!
- W 9/20 **Topic Proposals Due**
African American Women after Emancipation
Women's Club Movement
Student Presentation #5: Mary Church Terrell, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells
Barnett, Frances Willard
Film: "Ida B. Wells- Passion for Justice"
Readings: Ware 34-46; "Hull House in the 1890's: A Community of Women Reformers,"
Katherine Kish Sklar.
- F 9/22 Discuss Annotated Bibliography and Sources
The Rise of the New Woman/ Progressive Reform
Student Presentation #6: Jane Addams, M. Carey Thomas, Sophonisba
Breckinridge, Florence Kelley
Film: "Idea Makers – Hull House" (18 minutes)
Readings: "The Quirls of a Woman's Brain," Mary Roth Walsh; begin *The Yellow Wallpaper*,
Charlotte Perkins Gilman.
- M 9/25 The Science of Gender- Neurasthenia and Women's Brains
In-class writing: respond to *Fat and Blood* or *Sex in Education*
Introduction to "The Yellow Wallpaper"
Student Presentation #7: Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi
Student Presentation #8: Charlotte Perkins Gilman
Readings: Complete "The Yellow Wallpaper" and response paper (2 pages).
- W 9/27 ****"The Yellow Wallpaper" Response Papers Due***
Discuss "The Yellow Wallpaper"
Readings: "The Problem of Male Degeneracy and the Allure of the Philippines," Kristin
Hoganson, and Theodore Roosevelt "The Strenuous Life."
- F 9/29 Gender and the American Empire
In-class writing: What does Teddy Roosevelt have to do with women's history?
Readings: Ware 52-73, 84-89; A Shopgirl's letter "He Allows Himself to 'Have Fun' with the
Working Girls;" Chicago Vice Commission "The Ghastly Life of Fallen Women."
- M 10/2 Women in the Labor Force
Purity, prostitution, and the origins of the birth control movement
Student Presentation #9: Margaret Sanger, Mary Ware Dennett
Readings: Ware 105-114; Mrs. Malcolm Forbes, "The Peace Movement is a Battle;" Alice
Dunbar Nelson "The Negro Woman and the Ballot;" text of 19th Amendment; pro
and con suffrage flyers; and Emma Goldman "Woman Suffrage."
- W 10/4 The passage of the 19th Amendment
World War I
Film: "Iron Jawed Angels"

- Student Presentation #10: Alice Paul, Anna Howard Shaw, Lenora O'Reilly, Carrie Chapman Catt
 Readings: Ware, 139-142; Amy Lowell "The Sisters" and Gertrude Stein selected writings.
 Extra credit: Watch "Iron-Jawed Angels" (entire) and write a 1-2 page response paper
- F 10/6 ***Annotated Bibliography Due***
 The Harlem Renaissance
 Modernism and feminism
 Student Presentation #11: Gertrude Stein, Amy Lowell, Mabel Dodge, Georgia O'Keefe, Nella Larsen, Zora Neale Hurston
 Readings: Ware 123-126; "Making Faces: The Cosmetic Industry and the Cultural Construction of Gender, 1890-1930," Kathy Peiss OR "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home," Ruth Schwartz Cowan.
- M 10/9 The 1920's: Flappers, the beauty industry, and post-suffrage backlash
 Film: "It"
 Student Presentation #12: Clara Bow, Madame C.J. Walker, Gloria Swanson, Mary Pickford
 Readings: Ware 149-153, 165-170; "These Married women are chisellers" letters; "A Promise Fulfilled: Mexican Cannery Workers in Southern California," Vicki Ruiz; OR "Black Braintruster: Mary McLeod Bethune and the Roosevelt Administration," Paula Giddings.
- W 10/11 Discuss outlines
 Gendering of labor and welfare in the 1930's
 Student Presentation #13: Eleanor Roosevelt, Frances Perkins, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Mary McLeod Bethune
 Homework: Begin outline
- F 10/13 No class – Go to the library and work on your papers
 Homework: Complete outlines
- M 10/16 ***Outlines due***
 Film: "With Babies and Banners" or "The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter"
 Readings: Ware 183-201.
- W 10/18 World War II – part 1, women's participation
 Background on *The Bluest Eye*
 Student Presentation #14 Toni Morrison
 Student Presentation #15: Mitsuye Endo, All American Girls Professional Baseball League, Oveta Culp Hobby
 Readings: "Japanese American Women During World War II," Valerie Matsumoto; OR TBA; begin reading *The Bluest Eye*
- F 10/20 World War II – part 2, unintended consequences
 Film: "Coming out Under Fire," or "International Sweethearts of Rhythm"
 Readings: complete *The Bluest Eye*; write response paper (2 pages)
- M 10/23 *** *The Bluest Eye* Response papers due***
 Discuss *The Bluest Eye*
 Readings: Ware 220-226; "The Role of Black Women in the Civil Rights Movement," Anne Standley.
- W 10/25 Women in the Civil Rights Movement
 Student Presentation #16: Fanny McCloud Bethune, Rosa Parks
 Watch "Women of the Civil Rights Movement" (or "Still Revolutionaries" – 16 min)

- In-class writing: TBA
- Readings: "Parties are the Answer: The Ascent of the Tupperware Party," Alison Clarke;
"The Crisis in Women's Identity" from *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan.
- F 10/27 The Feminine Mystique, Tupperware, and the Cold War
Student Presentation #17: Brownie Wise, Betty Friedan
- Homework: Complete rough drafts
- M 10/30 ***ROUGH DRAFT DUE IN CLASS***
PEER REVIEW
- Readings: "The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: The Economic Basis of Witchcraft," Carol F. Karlsen, OR "Seneca Possessed: Colonialism, Witchcraft, and Gender in the Time of Handsome Lake," Matthew Dennis, OR "Hoodo? God Do": African American Women and Contested Spirituality in the Spiritual Churches of New Orleans," David C. Estes.
- W 11/1 Happy Halloween
Witches in America – a cultural history
Student Presentation #18: Tituba, Starhawk
Student Presentation #19: Sylvia Plath
Background on *The Bell Jar*
- Homework: Read *The Bell Jar* and write 2-page response papers
- F 11/3 No Class –
- M 11/6 ****The Bell Jar* Response Papers due***
Discuss *The Bell Jar*
- Homework: Prepare presentations and revise research papers (all week)
- W 11/8 Revision workshop
Research Paper Presentations – group #1
- F 11/10 Research Paper Presentations – group #2
- M 11/13 Finish Research Paper Presentations
- Readings: Ware 235-257; and Mitsuye Yamada "Asian Pacific American Women and Feminism," OR "The Women's Movement and Black Discontent," Paula Giddings; OR Alma Garcia "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse 1970-1980"
- Homework: keep revising
- W 11/15 Second Wave Feminism
In-class writing: write a one paragraph analysis of a primary source on The Archive of Women's Liberation History, www.cwluherstory.org (or from *Sisterhood is Powerful*)
- Readings: Ware 298-303; "Jane," and Boston Women's Health Book Collective "It's My Body."
- Extra credit: Malcolm Gladwell "John Rock's Error" (in coursepacket), write one paragraph response paper
- Homework: complete research paper revisions
- F 11/17 ****Final Draft of Research Papers Due****
The birth control pill and the fight for reproductive rights
Women's bodies and women's choices
Student Presentation #20: "Jane Roe"/Norma McCorvey, Sarah Weddington

M 11/20 Oral History workshop
Homework: Complete oral history project
Readings: "Missing in Action: Women Warriors in Vietnam," Carol Lynn Mithers.
Extra Credit: Watch the movie "Thelma and Louise" and write a 1-2 page response paper.
What issues does the movie bring up? Are we still dealing with these issues today? Why does it end the way it does?

W 11/22 No class

Happy Thanksgiving

M 11/27 ***Oral history assignment due***
Women and the Vietnam War
Student Presentation #21: Jane Fonda, Maya Lin, Shirley Chisholm
Film: "Chisholm '72"
Readings: Ware, 264-267, 327-338; begin *The House on Mango Street*

W 11/29 Women and the New Right
Student Presentation #22: Phyllis Schlafly, Anita Hill
Watch footage of Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill hearings
Student Presentation #23: Sandra Cisneros
Readings: Complete *The House on Mango Street*; write 2 page response paper

F 12/1 ****The House on Mango Street* Response Papers due***
House on Mango Street Discussion
Readings: Ware 320-324, 348-358; Naomi Wolf "The Beauty Myth;" OR "Fasting Girls: The Emerging Ideal of Slenderness in American Culture," Joan Jacobs Brumberg.

M 12/4 Third Wave Feminism
Women's Bodies
Student Presentation #24: Gloria Anzaldua, *Bust* magazine
Readings: "What Carrie could learn from Mary," Catherine Orenstein; and excerpts from *Female Chauvinist Pigs*

W 12/6 Women in popular culture
"Sex and the City"
Student Presentation #25: Carrie Bradshaw, Katie Couric, Oprah

F 12/8 Course review
Take home final exams passed out