

# History 333: Women in American History, Spring 2010

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**Course Description:** Starting in the colonial period and continuing on through the present day, this course will introduce students to the study of U.S. women's history. We will investigate how beliefs about women's proper roles and capabilities changed over time, and we will pay close attention to real women's lives, which were often at odds with prevailing ideologies. In addition, we will question how women's experiences—particularly in the realms of work, family, community, and political activism—varied according to race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and region. Beyond gaining a broad understanding of women's history, students will develop their abilities to think and write critically, question sources, and analyze texts.

**Required Texts:** These books are available at the RIC bookstore and at the Library Reserve Desk

- Linda Kerber and Jane DeHart, eds. *Women's America*, Sixth Edition.
- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, 1785-1812*.
- Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.
- Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (**note:** this book is not available at the campus bookstore. The cheapest way to buy this book is to buy a used copy on amazon.com).
- There is a packet of additional readings (articles and primary documents) posted on webct.

## **Grading Breakdown:**

13% Discussion (includes class attendance and participation)

25% Midterm, **March 29**

12% 2 three-page papers on the additional books: **February 8, February 17, and March 10**

25% Review Essay, **May 5**

25% Final Exam, **Finals Week**

**Note: Students must complete all elements of the course in order to pass the course.**

## **Assignments:**

- **Discussion (Attendance and participation):** Class participation forms a key part of each student's grade. Students should come to class having read and ready to discuss the assigned reading. Class participation will be evaluated based on the student's contributions to the weekly class discussions. Students are expected to attend lectures regularly, make every effort to be on time, and remain for the entire period. The lectures will not necessarily duplicate material in the textbook. More than 2 unexcused absences will cause your discussion grade will suffer. Disruptive behavior shall not be tolerated.
- **Exams:** there will be a midterm on **March 29** and a final exam during exam week. They will cover material from lectures, assigned readings, and class discussions.
- **Book Analyses:** During the semester you will write two three-page papers on the additional reading. You will choose two of the following reading assignments on which to write your papers:

*A Midwife's Tale, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, and Cheap Amusements*. You will receive reading questions to guide your papers. These assignments will be due in class on the day we discuss those readings: **February 8, February 17, and March 10** respectively.

- **Review Essay:** For this assignment, you will choose a specific topic in American women's history to examine in greater detail. In your 10-12 page paper, you will analyze what various historians have written on this topic. I will provide you with a list of topics and suggested reading to draw from in your review essay. Due **May 5** in class.

### **For all assignments:**

You are expected to follow the guidelines for academic honesty set out in the student handbook (see <http://www2.ric.edu/studentlife/pdf/RICStudentHandbook.pdf>) Any cheating and plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment as well as the possibility of failing the course and further disciplinary action from the university. Late assignments will be penalized.

### **How to Read Primary Sources:**

We will be exploring and discussing primary documents from *Women's America* and the additional readings packet. A primary source is a document that was created at the time of the event by people who were observers of or participants in that event or period. Here are some general tips and questions to help you think critically about historical documents.

1. Who wrote this document? Under what circumstances? For what purpose? What were they trying to accomplish? Who was the intended audience?
2. Whose point of view is expressed in the document? What assumptions or biases lie behind that point of view? Are the ideas expressed typical or unusual in this era?
3. How believable is the document?
4. What ideas about women and gender does the author of the document hold? Is she or he describing prescriptions for women, that is, what women "should" do, or the reality of women's experiences?
5. How do these ideas or experiences of womanhood compare to earlier ones we discussed? What similarities or differences do you see? What explains the change?
6. Is the author making universal claims about all women or are the claims directed a specific subset of women?
7. What can this document tell us about the ideals and realities for women in this period of American history?

### **How to Read the Secondary Articles and Books:**

1. What is the historian's thesis or argument about this time period? What are the author's main conclusions?
2. What types of evidence does the author use in support of his or her claims?
3. What trends, ideas, or issues were important for women in this period of American history? In what ways were ideas and experiences of womanhood changing in this period? What factors in American society in the period led to these changes for women?
4. Is this author discussing the conditions of women in general or does he or she focus on differences among women in this period, as a result of factors such as class, race, sexuality, region, etc.?
5. How does this article or book relate to other reading, either primary or secondary, from today's assignment or earlier ones? Does it seem to support or challenge the claims and conclusions of the other authors? If there is disagreement, what reasons might explain their different perspectives on this period?
6. How does this work contribute to or influence your understanding about women in American history?

## **Course Schedule: Topics and Readings:**

### **Week One:**

**Mon., Jan. 25**                      **Introduction**

*Women's America:*  
Introduction, 1-23

**Wed., Jan. 27**                      **Native Women in the New World**

*Women's America:*  
Introduction: Traditional America, 1600-1820, 25-28  
James F. Brooks, "This Evil Extends Especially...to the Feminine Sex," 39-45

Additional Webct Readings

### **Week Two:**

**Mon., Feb. 1**                      **African and European Women in the New World**

*Women's America:*  
Carol Berkin, "African American Women in Colonial Society," 59-66  
Documents: "The Law of Slavery," 67-68

Additional Webct Readings

**Wed., Feb. 3**                      **Women in Colonial America**

*Women's America:*  
Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "The Ways of Her Household," 45-54  
Carol F. Karlson, "The Devil in the Shape of a Woman," 83-96  
Documents: "The Law of Domestic Relations," 55-58; "The Trial of Anne Hutchinson," 79-82

Additional Webct Readings

### **Week Three:**

**Mon., Feb. 8**                      ***A Midwife's Tale***

Discussion of *A Midwife's Tale*  
**Paper Due**, if *A Midwife's Tale* is one of your 2 reading papers

**Wed., Feb. 10**                      **Women of the Revolution and Republic**

*Women's America:*  
Linda K. Kerber, "The Republican Mother and the Woman Citizen," 119-127  
Documents: Supporting the Revolution, 114-118

Additional Webct Readings

**Week Four:**

**Mon., Feb. 15**

**Industrialization and Womanhood in the North**

*Women's America:*

Introduction: The Many Frontiers of Industrializing America, 1820-1900, 129-131

Jeanne Boydston, "The Pastoralization of Housework," 153-164

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual," 168-183

Additional Webct Readings

**Wed., Feb. 17**

**Womanhood and the Old South**

Discussion of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

**Paper Due**, if *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is one of your 2 reading papers

*Women's America:*

Stephanie McCurry, "Women's Work," 145-152

Additional Webct Readings

**Week Five:**

**Mon., Feb. 22**

**Women in Antebellum Reform**

*Women's America:*

Documents: Claiming Rights I, 193-200

Additional Webct Readings

**Wed., Feb. 24**

**Women's Rights**

*Women's America:*

Judith Wellman, "The Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention," 200-213

Documents: Claiming Rights II, 214-217; Sojourner Truth's Defense of the Rights," 218-219

**Week Six:**

**Mon., Mar. 1**

**Women and the Civil War**

*Women's America:*

Drew Gilpin Faust, "Enemies in Our Households," 220-232

Additional Webct Readings

**Wed., Mar. 3**

**Women and Reconstruction and the New South**

*Women's America:*

Tera W. Hunter, "Reconstruction and the Meanings of Freedom," 235-246

Patricia A. Schechter, "Ida B. Wells and *Southern Horrors*," 268-270

Documents: "Counterfeit Freedom," 233-235; After the Civil War," 247

**Week Seven:**

**Mon., Mar. 8**

**New Women**

Additional Webct Readings

**Wed., Mar. 10**                      **New Women continued**

Discussion of *Cheap Amusements*

**Paper Due**, if *Cheap Amusements* is one of your 2 reading papers

*Women's America*

Judy Yung, "Unbound Feet," 302-310

Annelise Orleck, "From the Russian Pale to Labor Organizing in New York City," 310-326

**Week Eight:**

**Week of March 15:**                      **No Class, Spring Break**

**Week Nine:**

**Mon., Mar. 22**                      **Women and Progressive Reform**

*Women's America:*

Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Florence Kelley and Women's Activism in the Progressive Era," 327-339

Documents: "Protecting Women Wage-Workers," 340-344

Additional Webct Readings

**Wed., Mar. 24**                      **Women and Progressive Reform continued**

**Week Ten:**

**Mon., Mar. 29**                      **Midterm Exam**

**Wed., Mar. 31**                      **Woman Suffrage**

*Women's America:*

Ellen Carol DuBois, "The Next Generation of Suffragists," 358-364

Additional Webct Readings

**Week Eleven:**

**Mon., Apr. 5**                      **Suffrage continued**

*Women's America:*

Nancy F. Cott, "Equal Rights Amendment in the 1920s," 379-389

Additional Webct Readings

**Wed., Apr. 7**                      **Sexuality and Marriage in Modern America**

*Women's America:*

Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home," 399-410

Additional Webct Readings

**Week Twelve:**

**Mon., Apr. 12                      Great Depression**

*Women's America:*

Leslie J. Reagan, "When Abortion Was a Crime," 423-428

Jacqueline Jones, "Harder Times," 429-432

Alice Kessler-Harris, "Designing Women and Old Fools," 435-447

Additional Webct Readings

**Wed., Apr. 14                      World War II**

*Women's America:*

Valerie Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women during World War II," 459-465

Ruth Milkman, "Gender at Work," 466-477

Additional Webct Readings

**Week Thirteen:**

**Mon., Apr. 19                      Postwar Ideals of Womanhood**

Additional Webct Readings

**Wed., Apr. 21                      Postwar Contradictions**

*Women's America:*

Daniel Horowitz, "Betty Friedan and the Origins of Feminism in Cold War America," 481-495

Estelle Freedman, "Miriam Van Waters and the Burning of Letters," 500-507

Amy Swerdlow, "Ladies' Day at the Capitol," 517-532

Charles Payne, "A Woman's War," 532-536

Documents: "Dimensions of Citizenship II," 537-546

**Week Fourteen:**

**Mon., Apr. 26                      Second-Wave Feminism**

*Women's America:*

Beth L. Bailey, "Prescribing the Pill," 560-568

Jane Sherron De Hart, "Second-Wave-Feminists," 598-623

Documents: Making the Personal Political, 573-593; Dimensions of Citizenship III, 624-632

Additional Webct Readings

**Wed., Apr. 28                      Second-Wave Feminism continued**

**Week Fifteen:**

**Mon., May 3                      Backlash**

*Women's America:*

Documents: Phyllis Schlafly "The Thoughts of one who loves life as a woman," 593-597

Additional Webct Readings

**Wed., May 5**  
**Final Paper Due**

**Women at the Millennium**

*Women's America:*

Linda Bird Francke, "Women in the Gulf War," 647-656

Susan Bordo, "'Material Girl': Madonna as Postmodern Heroine," 660-663

Carmen Teresa Whalen, "Sweatshops Here and There," 682-691

Jane Sherron De Hart and Carolyn Herbst Lewis, "Thirty Years after Roe," 691-696

Documents: *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, 1992, 632-636; *Dimensions of Citizenship IV*, 641-647, *The Changing Workplace*, 657-660

Additional Webct Readings

**Finals Week:**

**Final Exam**