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.
- Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.
- 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

   Additional Webct Readings

Wed., Feb. 3  Women in Colonial America
   *Women’s America:
   - Carol F. Karlsen, “The Devil in the Shape of a Woman,” 83-96

   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:
   - 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
      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:

Week Six:
Mon., Mar. 1  Women and the Civil War
   Women’s America:

   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. Schecter, “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:*

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:
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:
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  Women at the Millennium

Final Paper Due

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

Additional Webct Readings

Finals Week: Final Exam