

History 2126 / GSWS 2251
Spring 2021
MW 9:00-10:20 am EST; Zoom

McMahon
S11 Hubbard Hall
smcmahon@bowdoin.edu; ext. 3241

WOMEN IN AMERICAN HISTORY, 1600-1900

The roles and experiences of women in American history have been shaped by social, economic, cultural, and political circumstances, values and institutions. For the most part, these foundations were conceived of and controlled by men. Nonetheless, while some women contributed to or accepted those norms, other women resisted and challenged them, both individually and in groups. At the same time, women's roles and experiences differed profoundly across time, place, and class, racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. The historical analysis of gender roles and relations provides a way of understanding similarities and differences as well as continuities and changes in the experiences of women in American society. It also reframes the old questions and proposes new questions for historians to ask about that society in general.

The course examines the social, economic, cultural, and political history of women in colonial and national America between 1600 and 1900. We will examine women's changing roles in both private and public spheres, and the circumstances of women's lives as these were shaped by class, ethnic, and racial differences. Throughout the course, we will explore the recurring conflict between the ideals of womanhood and the realities of women's experience, and we will focus on women's family responsibilities, paid and unpaid work, religion, education, reform, women's rights, and feminism.

Course expectations: The course consists of two synchronous class meetings each week. The reading assignments for each class should be completed by that class meeting. (The further readings listed in the *Reading Guide* are *not* required.) You are expected to attend class and to come to all class meetings and discussion sections prepared to discuss and analyze the readings [20% of final grade]. The *History 2126 / GSWS 2251 Reading Guide* on Blackboard provides questions to help focus your reading for the class discussions as well as electronic links to the assigned articles, either through e-reserve or an online Library database. If you miss a discussion section meeting, you are expected to write an informal (ungraded) but thoughtful evaluation (2-3 pages) of the assigned book. You are encouraged to purchase the assigned books.

All three essay assignments are integral parts of the course. Two careful readings/critical analyses of primary documents (5 pages each) will be due during the semester [together, 40% of final grade]. A final comprehensive take-home essay (9-12 pages) is due by the scheduled final-exam date for the course [in most cases, 40% of final grade]. For guidelines and exceptions, see the *Extension, Deadline, and Grading Policy* on the Blackboard course home page.

All students are expected to read, understand, and abide by the Bowdoin College Academic Honor Code and by the rules of citation described on the Bowdoin College Academic Honesty and Plagiarism site at <https://www.bowdoin.edu/dean-of-students/judicial-board/academic-honesty-and-plagiarism/index.html>.

Texts: Laurel Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (1982; reprinted 1991)
Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth century New York* (1998)
Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (2nd revised edition 2010, orig. pub. 1986)
Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers* (1925; new edition 1999)

The *History 2126/GWS 2251 Reading Guide*, Electronic Reserve Reading Links, and other online Resources can be found on Blackboard at <https://blackboard.bowdoin.edu/>, or at <https://www.bowdoin.edu/~smcmahon/courses/hist246/index.html>

WEEK 1

2/8 “WOMEN’S HISTORY” – “WOMEN HISTORY”: Introduction

2/10 ENGLISH AND EUROPEAN HERITAGE: Gender and Patriarchy

reading: Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91.5 (1986), 1053-71. (JSTOR)

Colonial, Revolutionary, and Early National American Society

WEEK 2

2/15 THE CHESAPEAKE BAY: White and black women in a predominantly male society

readings: Mary Beth Norton, “Gender and Defamation in Seventeenth-Century Maryland,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 44 (1987), 3-39. (JSTOR)

Joan Rezner Gundersen, “The Double Bonds of Race and Sex: Black and White Women in a Colonial Virginia Parish,” *Journal of Southern History* 52 (1986), 351-372. (JSTOR)

2/17 ENGLISH WOMEN IN NEW ENGLAND: Traditional ideas and new circumstances

reading: Jane Kamensky, “The Misgovernment of Woman’s Tongue,” in Kamensky, *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* (1997), Ch. 3, 71-98; notes, 227-238. (e-reserve)

document: Anne Bradstreet, “Prologue,” from *The Tenth Muse Lately sprung up in America* (1650), reprinted by *Poetry Foundation*. (LINK)

Guidelines for Writing a Critical Analysis of a Primary Document (LINK)

History 246: Collections of Primary Documents (LINK)

Extension, Deadline, and Grading Policy; A Brief Guide to Footnote Citations in History; A brief guide to correction marks (LINKS)

WEEK 3

2/22 RELIGIOUS CONFRONTATION (continued) AND SOCIAL CONFLICT: The Salem Witchcraft Episode

readings: Carol F. Karlsen, “The Economic Basis of Witchcraft,” in Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (1987; revised 1998), Ch. 3, 77-84, 101-116. (e-reserve)

Mary Beth Norton, “George Burroughs and the Girls from Casco: The Maine Roots of Salem Witchcraft,” *Maine History* 40.4 (Winter 2001-2002), 259-277. (e-reserve)

2/24 DISCUSSION: COLONIAL WOMEN’S WORK AND ROLES IN NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND

Laurel Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (1982; reprinted 1991)

WEEK 4

3/1 ANGLO-AMERICAN WOMEN DURING THE REVOLUTION AND THE EARLY REPUBLIC: “Republican Mothers” and “Republican Wives”

reading: Ruth Bloch, “The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America,” *Signs* 13 (1987), 37-58. (JSTOR)

document: Judith Sargent Murray, “On the Equality of the Sexes,” *The Massachusetts Magazine, or, Monthly Museum*, Vol. II (March and April, 1790), 132-135, 223-226. (LINK)

3/3 MIDWIFERY ON THE MAINE FRONTIER IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC: The Midwife and the Historian

Film: *A Midwife’s Tale* (88 minutes), by Laurie Kahn-Leavitt (1998), based on Laurel Ulrich, *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (1990)

First essay due: Friday, March 5 (careful reading/critical analysis of a primary document written between 1600 and 1800)

WEEK 5

3/8 "WOMAN'S SEPARATE SPHERE": Myths, realities, and historiography

readings: Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (1988), 9-39. (JSTOR)

Leila J. Rupp, "Women's History in the New Millennium: A Retrospective Analysis of Barbara Welter's 'The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860,'" *Journal of Women's History* 14.1 (Spring 2002), 149, and Nancy A. Hewett, "Taking the True Woman Hostage," *JWH*, 14.1 (Spring 2002), 156-62 (PROJECT MUSE)

further reading: Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966), 151-174 (JSTOR)

3/10 THE WORLD OF URBAN, WHITE, MIDDLE-CLASS WOMEN: Domestic "roles" and fashionable expectations

documents: Catharine Beecher, "The Peculiar Responsibilities of American Women" (1841), T.S. Arthur, "Sweethearts and Wives" (1841), in Nancy F. Cott, et al., eds., *Root of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women* 2nd ed. (1996), 132-147. (e-reserve)

Charlotte Perkins [Stetson] Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," *New England Magazine* 11, issue 5 (January, 1892), 647-656. (LINK)

The Nineteenth Century

WEEK 6

3/15 WOMEN'S "PUBLIC" ACTIVITIES: Education, religion and reform

readings: Kathryn Kish Sklar, "The Schooling of Girls and Changing Community Values in Massachusetts Towns, 1750-1820," *History of Education Quarterly* 33.4 (Winter 1993), 511-542. (JSTOR)

Nancy Beadie, "Emma Willard's Idea Put to the Test: The Consequences of State Support of Female Education in New York, 1819-67," *History of Education Quarterly* 33.4 (Winter 1993), 543-562. (JSTOR)

3/17 THE NEW ENGLAND MILL "GIRLS" BECOME A WORKING CLASS OF WOMEN

readings: Thomas Dublin, "Women, Work, and Protest in the Early Lowell Mills: The Oppressing Hand of Avarice would Enslave US," *Labor History* 16.1 (1975), 99-116. (e-reserve)

Lise Vogel, "With Hearts to Feel and Tongues to Speak," in M. Cantor and B. Laurie, *Class, Sex and the Woman Worker* (1974), 64-82. (e-reserve)

WEEK 7

3/22 SPRING BREAK

3/24 TBD

WEEK 8

3/29 NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN

readings: Nancy Shoemaker, "The Rise or Fall of Iroquois Women," *Journal of Women's History* 2.3 (1991), 39-57. (PROJECT MUSE)

Theda Perdue, "Cherokee Women and the Trail of Tears," *Journal of Women's History* 1.1 (1989), 14-30. (PROJECT MUSE)

3/31 DISCUSSION: PROSTITUTES, BUSINESS CLERKS, AND NEWSPAPERS: The changing social, economic, and cultural order in Jacksonian New York City

reading: Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth century New York* (1998), chapters 1-9, 3-204

WEEK 9

- 4/5 *DISCUSSION: PUBLIC MORALITY, MURDER, AND PUBLIC OPINION: The double standards of opportunity, reputation, and judicial privilege*
reading: Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth century New York* (1998), chapters 10-17, Epilogue, 205-409
- 4/7 *BLACK WOMEN IN WHITE AMERICA: Slavery and Freedom in the 19th century*
reading: Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17.2 (1992), 251-74. (JSTOR)

WEEK 10

- 4/12 *DISCUSSION: BLACK WOMEN, WORK, AND THE FAMILY*
Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (1986; 2nd edition 2010). Read the Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1-5 [2nd edition, 2009]: pp. xiii-162; *optional*: Ch. 9, 267-298
- 4/14 TBD
Second essay due: Friday, April 16 (critical analysis of a primary document written between 1800 and 1900)

WEEK 11

- 4/19 *THE "SCRIBBLING WOMEN": Women writers on "womanhood"*
readings: Joan D. Hedrick, "Parlor Literature: Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Question of 'Great Women Artists'," *Signs* 17.2 (1992), 275-303. (JSTOR)
Beth Maclay Doriani, "Black Womanhood in 19th Century America: Subversion and Self-Construction in Two Women's Autobiographies," *American Quarterly* 43.2 (1991), 199-222. (JSTOR)
- 4/21 *THE "WOMAN MOVEMENT": The beginnings of white middle-class feminism and "woman's rights" in the 19th century*
documents: Sarah Grimke, "Letter in Response to the Pastoral Letter" (July 1837), at *Zulick Home Page*, Wake Forest University. (LINK)
Sarah Grimke, "On the Condition of Women in the United States," Letter VIII, from *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women* (1837). (LINK)
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments," Seneca Falls Convention, Seneca Falls, NY (1848), at *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Susan B Anthony Papers Project*, Rutgers University. (LINK)
Sojourner Truth, "A'n't I a Woman?" Women's Rights Convention, Akron, Ohio (1851), at *Zulick Home Page*, Wake Forest University. (LINK)

WEEK 12

- 4/26 *THE WOMAN SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT: Moderates versus Radical Feminists*
reading: Ellen Carol DuBois, "Outgrowing the Compact of the Fathers: Equal Rights, Woman Suffrage, and the United States Constitution, 1820-1878," *Journal of American History* 74.3 (1987), 836-862. (JSTOR)

The Late Nineteenth Century

4/28 WORKING-CLASS WOMEN IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY: Sexual Harassment, the 1909 Shirtwaist Makers Strike, and the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

Daniel E. Bender, “‘Too much of Distasteful Masculinity’: Historicizing Sexual Harassment in the Garment Sweatshop and Factory,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15.4 (2004), 91-116 (PROJECT MUSE)

Selection of articles from the New York Times Archive through ProQuest: NY Shirtwaist Makers Strike, Nov.23, 1909-Mar. 8, 1910; Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, Mar. 26, 1912-Apr. 27, 1912

WEEK 13

5/3 DISCUSSION: IMMIGRANT WOMEN: Balancing old-world and new-world expectations of womanhood
Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers* (1925; reprinted 1975, 1999)

5/5 THE “NEW WOMAN” AND THE PUBLIC OPTIONS FOR SINGLE WOMEN

reading: Kathryn Kish Sklar, “Hull House in the 1890s: A Community of Women Reformers,” *Signs* 10 (1985), 657-77. (JSTOR)

optional document: Jane Addams, Ch. IV, “The Snare of Preparation,” Ch. VI, “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements,” *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1910), from the Build-A-Book Initiative at the Celebration of Women Writers, FullBooks.com. (LINK)

WEEK 14

5/10 THE “NEW WOMAN” (continued): Continuity and change in perceptions and experiences of girlhood, womanhood, marriage, and sexuality

reading: Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual,” *Signs* 1 (1975), 1-29. (JSTOR)

optional reading: Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “Hearing Women’s Words: A Feminist Reconstruction of History,” in Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (1985), 11-52.

5/12 STRIVING FOR “AUTONOMY” IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

WEEK 15

5/17 TBD

Final Take-Home Essay Due: Monday, May 24, 5:00 p.m.