

History 2609 (249) / GSWS 2601
Spring 2017
MW 1:00-2:25, Sills 209

McMahon
S11 Hubbard Hall
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A History of Women's Voices in America

This intermediate-level seminar will take a long view of women's voices in North America, from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, as these voices emerged in private letters and journals, autobiographies, poetry, short stories and novels, essays, addresses, and prescriptive literature. We will explore the content and form of the writing from a historical perspective, determining women's expectations, reactions and responses to the opportunities and "boundaries" of their lives (roles, status, domain) as these were defined by the particular era—and society—in which they lived. The syllabus follows a basic chronological organization; within that framework, the readings are organized by topic. We will examine a selection of readings each week, comparing the issues women addressed, the questions they asked, the assumptions they made, and their particular perspectives. In most weeks, an essay from the secondary literature on the subject will accompany the primary readings, providing a—but not the only—historical framework for considering the women's voices.

Course requirements: The course consists of two 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 all meetings of the seminar and to arrive prepared to participate in a discussion and analysis of the assigned readings [35% of final grade]. The *History 2609 (249) / GWS 2601 Reading Guide on Blackboard* provides questions to help you focus your reading for the class discussions and make the most efficient use of your time. All reading assignments are available either through e-reserve (use the Library Reserves link on *Blackboard* or the e-reserves link on the *Reading Guide*) or by a link to a database or an online source from the *Reading Guide*. If you miss a class, you are expected to write an informal (ungraded) but thoughtful discussion (2-3 pages) of the assigned readings for that class. You are strongly encouraged to print the assigned articles and to purchase the assigned books from the bookstore; one copy of each book is on reserve in the library.

During the first half of the course, students will write three short (3-4 pages) essays on three of the assigned "primary" texts [10% each]. During the second half of the course, students will design and pursue research projects that focus on some aspect of women's experience in North America, using women's voices—the primary texts written by women—as the primary sources for the project, in conjunction with secondary sources which will help you locate your study in the broader historiographical literature. A research paper (12-15 pages) will be due on or before the scheduled final exam date for the course [35% of final grade]. The *Extension, Deadline, and Grading Policy* for the course can be found on the 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 (When to Cite and How to Cite) described on the Bowdoin College Academic Honesty and Plagiarism website at <http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/academic-honesty/index.shtml>.

Texts: Hannah Foster, *The Coquette* (1797), ed. Cathy Davidson (1987)
Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), ed. by Jean Yellin (2009 enlarged edition)
Alice Walker, *Meridian* (2003 reissue edition)
Maxine Hong Kingston, *Woman Warrior* (1989 edition)
Kim Chernin, *In My Mother's House: A Memoir* (Anniversary edition 2003)
Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (2008 reprint edition)

The *History 2609 (249) / GWS 2601 Reading Guide* and other sources can be found on Blackboard or at: <http://www.bowdoin.edu/faculty/s/smcmahon/courses/hist249/index.shtml>

1. 1/23 INTRODUCTION

1/25 READING WOMEN'S VOICES: "Reading as a Woman"

texts: Charles and Mary Lamb, Preface, *Tales from Shakespeare* (New York, 1806).
Ursula Le Guin, "She Unnames Them," *The New Yorker* (January 21, 1985), 27.
Women's Voices: Instructions for Writing the Short Essays

2. 1/30 EARLY VOICES

essay: Mary Beth Norton, "Evolution of White Women's Experience in Early America,"
American Historical Review 89.3 (June 1984): 593-619. (JSTOR)

texts: Anne Bradstreet (c.1612-1672), Selected poems. *Representative Poetry On-line*,
Department of English, University of Toronto (2003): 1,4,7,8,9,10,11. *Note:*
There is a short biography of Anne Bradstreet ("Notes on Life and Works")
following the Index to Poems.

2/1 EARLY VOICES: Travel Narratives

texts: Mary Rowlandson (c.1635-1711), *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Together with
the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed, Being a Narrative of the Captivity
and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, (Boston, 1682). *Note:* scroll
through "The Small Print" until you get to the narrative.
"Preface to the Reader," Per Amicum ["By a Friend"—most likely Reverend Increase
Mather] from the 1682 edition.

3. 2/6 WOMEN'S READING AND WRITING DURING THE REVOLUTION AND THE EARLY REPUBLIC

essays: Linda Kerber, chapter 8, "Women's Reading in the Early Republic," *Women of the
Republic* (1980), 233-264. (e-reserve)

texts: Abigail Adams (1744-1818), Correspondence between Abigail Adams and John Adams,
March—May 1776. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. (Boston,
Mass.: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2002).

Abigail to John, 31 March—5 April 1776; John to Abigail, 14 April 1776; Abigail to
John, 14 April 1776; Abigail to John, 7-9 May 1776; John to Abigail, 22 May
1776; John to Abigail, 27 May 1776.

The Declaration of Independence (1776).

2/8 WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER IN HISTORY

readings: *Guidelines for writing a Research Paper Prospectus: History/GWS 249*
Bowdoin College, *Academic Honesty and Plagiarism*
Bowdoin Library, *Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide*.

4. 2/13 MASQUERADE: An Eighteenth-century "Best Selling" Novel as History

texts: Hannah Foster (1758-1840), *The Coquette, or The History of Eliza Wharton; A Novel;
Founded on Fact* (1797; ed. Cathy Davidson, 1987).

2/15 THE "ROMANCE" OF ELIZABETH WHITMAN

essay: Bryan Waterman, "Elizabeth Whitman's Disappearance and 'Disappointment'," *William
and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Ser. LXVI.2 (Apr. 2009), 325-364. (JSTOR)

texts: Jane E. Locke, "Historical Preface, including A Memoir of the Author," *The Coquette; or,
The History of Eliza Wharton. A Novel: Founded on Fact* (Boston, 1855), 3-30.
(e-reserve)

Mary E. Crawford, "A Pre-Revolutionary Belle," *The Romance of Old New England
Churches* (Boston, 1903), 11-43. (e-reserve)

5. 2/20 SLAVE WOMEN: A Radically Different Degree of Unfreedom
 essays: Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* (Winter 1992), 251-274. (JSTOR; also Periodicals Archive Online)
 Jean Fagan Yellin, "Preface," "Introduction," "Chronology," and "Correspondence," in Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* (1861; edited and with an introduction by Jean Fagan Yellin, 2000; enlarged edition 2009): vii-xli, 245-273 (2000 edition) or xix-lxi, 311-342 (2009 edition). (e-reserve)
 text: Sojourner Truth, "Arn't I a Woman?" (1851). reprinted in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (NALW), 252-3.
- 2/22 LIBRARY TOUR: Meet Barbara Levergood at Bookhenge, Hawthorne-Longfellow Library
6. 2/27 AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN: From Slavery to Freedom
 text: Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself* (1861; reprinted with an introduction by Jean Fagan Yellin, 2000; enlarged edition 2009).
- 3/1 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PAPER CONFERENCES
7. 3/6 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PAPER CONFERENCES
- 3/8 FILM: "A Midwife's Tale"
 Guide for viewing the film (Reading Guide)
- 3/10 *Research paper prospectus due*
8. 3/27 THE "REALITY" OF WOMEN'S LIVES
 essay: 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,'" and Nancy A. Hewitt, "Taking the True Woman Hostage," *Journal of Women's History*, 14.1 (Spring 2002), 149, 156-162. (Project Muse or Academic Search Complete)
- 3/29 NINETEENTH-CENTURY LOCAL COLOR AND REALIST FICTION
 texts: Mary Wilkins Freeman (1852-1930), "The Revolt of Mother," *Harper's Monthly* (September 1890), reprinted in *A New England Nun and other Stories* (1891).
 Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935), "The Yellow Wallpaper," *The New England Magazine* (January 1892).
 Kate Chopin (1851-1904), "The Story of an Hour" (1894).
9. 4/3 AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN MID-TWENTIETH-CENTURY WHITE AMERICA
 essay: Cynthia Griggs Fleming, "Black Women Activists and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee: The Case of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson," *Journal of Women's History* 4:3 (1993), 64-82. (Academic Search Complete; also Project Muse and Periodicals Archive Online)
 text: Alice Walker, *Meridian* (1976; reissue edition 2003), (Part I) Meridian: "The Last Return" through "The Attainment of Good."

- 4/5 WOMEN AND CIVIL RIGHTS
text: Walker, *Meridian* (1976), finish.
10. 4/10 ASIAN AMERICAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN
essay: Judy Yung, Chapter 3: "First Steps: The Second Generation, 1920s," *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (1995), 106-125. (e-reserve)
text: Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1976; 1989), "No Name Woman," "White Tigers."
- 4/12 CHINESE AMERICAN DAUGHTERS
text: Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (1976), finish.
11. 4/17 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PAPER CONFERENCES
- 4/19 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PAPER CONFERENCES
- 4/21 *Introduction and first section of research paper due*
12. 4/24 JEWISH IMMIGRANT WOMEN
essay: Sonya Michel, "Mothers and Daughters in American Jewish Literature: The Rotted Cord," in Elizabeth Koltun, *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives* (1976), 272-282. (e-reserve)
text: Kim Chernin, *In My Mother's House: A Memoir* (Anniversary edition 2003; originally published 1983 as *In My Mother's House: A Daughter's Story*; reprinted 1994), Part I: "Wasn't I Once Also a Daughter?"
Note: if you read the 1994 edition, read the Foreword after you finish the book; in the 2003 edition, the 1994 Foreword has moved to the end of the book to become the new Epilogue.
- 4/26 JEWISH MOTHERS AND JEWISH DAUGHTERS
text: Kim Chernin, *In My Mother's House: A Memoir* (Anniversary ed. 2003; orig. pub.1983; reprinted 1994), Part II; Part III; What Remains, September 2002; Epilogue
13. 5/1 WORK-IN-PROGRESS REPORTS
- 5/3 WORK-IN-PROGRESS REPORTS
14. 5/8 WRITING A WOMAN'S LIFE
text: Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (1988; 2008 reprint edition with Introduction by Katha Pollitt), Foreword, Introduction, Ch. 1-3 (xi-xvii, 11-75)
- 5/10 WOMEN WRITING WOMEN'S LIVES: "When the hope for closure is abandoned" (Heilbrun)
text: Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (1988; 2008 reprint ed.), Ch. 4-7 (76-131)

Research papers due: Wednesday, May 17, 5:00 pm