

History 246/GWS 251
Spring 2011
TT 11:30-12:55, Sills 205

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, cultural, economic, and political values and institutions often conceived of and controlled by men, but also contributed to and/or contested by women, both individually and in groups. Yet women's roles and experiences differed profoundly across time and space, and within class, racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. The historical analysis of gender roles and relations provides a way of understanding both similarities and differences in the experiences of women in American society and it reshapes the questions that historians ask about society in general.

The course examines the social, economic, cultural, and political history of women in 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 requirements: The course consists of two class meetings each week. The reading assignments for each class should be completed by that class meeting; the further readings 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 246/GWS 251 Reading Guide* on *Blackboard* provides questions to help focus your reading for the class discussions. If you miss a discussion section meeting, you are expected to write an informal but thoughtful evaluation (2-3 pages) of the assigned monograph. All reading assignments are available either on e-reserve through the Library Reserves link on *Blackboard* or by link to an online source or database from the *Reading Guide* on *Blackboard*. You are encouraged to purchase the assigned texts from the bookstore; a copy of each of the assigned books is on reserve in the library.

The essay assignments are an integral part of the course. Two critical analyses of primary documents (5-7 pages each) will be due during the semester [together, 40% of final grade]. A final take-home essay (10-12 pages) is due by the scheduled final-exam date for the course [40% of final grade].

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 Colby, Bates, and Bowdoin Academic Honesty Site at <http://library.bowdoin.edu/1st/CBBhonesty.shtml>. The Extension and Deadline Policy for the course can be found on the course home page.

- Texts:* Laurel Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (1982; reprinted 1991)
Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (1986)
Jean Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (1985)
Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (1986; 2nd edition 2009)
Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers* (1925; new edition 1999)
Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: "Civilizing" the West? 1840-1860* (1998)
Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (1998)

The *History 246 Reading Guide*, Electronic Reserve Reading Links, and other online Resources can be found on *Blackboard Academic Suite* at <http://blackboard.bowdoin.edu/>, or at <http://www.bowdoin.edu/faculty/s/mcmahon/courses/hist246/index.shtml>

WEEK 1

1/25 “WOMEN’S HISTORY” – “WOMEN HISTORY”: Introduction

1/27 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

2/1 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)

2/3 ENGLISH WOMEN IN NEW ENGLAND: Traditional ideas and new circumstances

readings: C. Dallett Hemphill, “Women in Court: Sex-Role Differentiation in Salem, Massachusetts, 1636-1683,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 39 (1982), 164-175. (JSTOR)

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)

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

History 246: Collections of Primary Documents (LINK)

Extension and Deadline Policy (LINK)

WEEK 3

2/8 RELIGIOUS CONFRONTATION (continued) AND SOCIAL CONFLICT: The Salem Witchcraft Episode

readings: Carol F. Karlsen, “The Economic Bias 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)

2/10 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

2/15 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)

2/17 MIDWIFERY ON THE MAINE FRONTIER IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC: The Midwife and the Historian

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

First Paper Due: Thursday, February 17 (critical analysis of a primary document written between 1600 and 1800)

WEEK 5

2/22 “WOMAN’S SEPARATE SPHERE”: Myths, realities, and historiography

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

2/24 *DISCUSSION*: MID-ATLANTIC FARM WOMEN: The evolution of women’s traditional roles in the household economy, 1750-1850

Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (1986)

The Nineteenth Century

WEEK 6

3/1 THE WORLD OF URBAN, WHITE, MIDDLE-CLASS WOMEN: Domestic “roles” and fashionable expectations

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

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper,” *New England Magazine* 11, issue 5 (January, 1892), 647-656, online at *Cornell University Library, Making of America* (LINK)

3/3 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)

WEEK 7

3/8 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. (BUSINESS SOURCE PREMIER)

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)

3/10 *DISCUSSION*: SOUTHERN WOMEN

Jean Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (1985)

WEEK 8

3/29 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)

3/31 *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 2009). Read the Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1-5, Chapter 9 [2nd edition, 2009]: pp. xiii-162, 267-298

WEEK 9

- 4/5 WORKING-CLASS WOMEN: The “Uprising of the 20,000” and the Triangle Shirtwaist Co. Factory Fire
Film: Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl: A Documentary Produced by the American Social History Project (1993)
Film: New York: A Documentary, directed by Ric Burns (PBS 1999)
- Second Paper Due: April 5* (critical analysis of a primary document written between 1800 and 1900)
- 4/7 DISCUSSION: IMMIGRANT WOMEN: Balancing old-world and new-world expectations
Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers* (1925; reprinted 1975, 1999)

WEEK 10

- 4/12 NATIVE-AMERICAN WOMEN
readings: Nancy Shoemaker, “The Rise or Fall of Iroquois Women,” *Journal of Women’s History* 2.3 (1991), 39-57. (e-reserve)
Theda Perdue, “Cherokee Women and the Trail of Tears,” *Journal of Women’s History* 1.1 (1989), 14-30. (e-reserve)
- 4/14 DISCUSSION: FRONTIER WOMEN
Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: “Civilizing” the West? 1840-1880* (1998)

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
readings: 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), at *Sunshine for Women*. (LINK)
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Declaration of Sentiments,” Seneca Falls (1848), at *Zulich Home Page*, Wake Forest 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 THE "NEW WOMAN" AND THE PUBLIC OPTIONS FOR SINGLE WOMEN

readings: Jane Addams, Ch. IV, "The Snare of Preparation," Ch. VI, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements," *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1910), at *Intute*, The Intute Consortium. (LINK)

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

WEEK 13

4/3 THE "NEW WOMAN" (continued): Continuity and change in perceptions and experiences of girlhood, womanhood, marriage, and sexuality

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

Jeanne Halgren Kilde, "The 'Predominance of the Feminine' at Chautauqua: Rethinking the Gender-Space Relationship in Victorian America," *Signs* 24.2 (Winter 1999), 449-486. (JSTOR)

further 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. (e-reserve)

4/5 DISCUSSION: WOMEN AND THE CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION

Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of an American Beauty Culture* (1998)

WEEK 14

5/10 STRIVING FOR "AUTONOMY" IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Final Take-Home Essay Due: Friday, May 20, 5:00 p.m.