

History 2609 (249) / GSWS 2601
Spring 2022
MW 1:15-2:40, Adams 103

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

This intermediate seminar will take a long view of some of the writing women in North America, from the 17th to the 20th centuries, whose “voices” were saved in private letters and journals, autobiographies, poetry, short stories, novels, essays, addresses, prescriptive literature, and journalism. In celebration of 50 years of Women at Bowdoin, the course will culminate with an examination of women's voices at Bowdoin, using the “Forty Years: The History of Women at Bowdoin” website as both a source and a guide to further readings. We will explore the form, content, and goal of women's writing from a historical perspective, to understand their particular expectations, reactions and responses to the opportunities and “boundaries” of their lives (roles, status, domain) as these were defined by the era, communities, and society in which they lived and wrote. We will examine an era-focused selection of readings each week, comparing the issues women addressed, the questions they asked, the assumptions they made, and their gendered perspectives as these were also shaped by race, class, and ethnicity. In most weeks, articles 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 writings.

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 (1-2 pages) of the assigned readings for that class. I encourage you to print the assigned articles and to purchase the assigned books or request a copy from a CBB or MaineCat library; one copy of each book is on reserve in the library.

During the first half of the course, students will write two short (3-4 pages) essays based on a careful reading of one of the assigned “primary” texts [15% each]. During the second half of the course, students will design and pursue research projects that focus on an aspect of women's experience in North America, using women's voices—the 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 <https://www.bowdoin.edu/dean-of-students/ccs/community-standards/the-codes.html>.

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)

Anne Gardiner Perkins, *Yale Needs Women: How the First Group of Girls Rewrote the Rules of an Ivy League Giant* (2019)

Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (2008 reprint edition)

Links to the *History 2609 (249) / GWS 2601 Reading Guide* and other sources can be found on Blackboard or at: <https://tildesites.bowdoin.edu/~smcmahon/courses/hist249/index.html>

1. 1/24 INTRODUCTION

1/26 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. 1/31 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.

2/2 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. 2/7 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.

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)

2/9 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. 2/14 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).

2/16 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. 2/21 ENSLAVED 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.
- 2/23 LIBRARY TOUR with Barbara Levergood, Reference Librarian, and. We will meet at 1:15 pm at Bookhenge, HL Library
6. 2/28 SC&A TOUR with Marieke Van Der Steenhoven, Special Collections Education and Outreach Librarian, and Individual Research Conferences
- 3/2 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).
7. 3/7 THE "REALITY" OF WOMEN'S LIVES
 essays: 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)
- 3/9 LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY LOCAL COLOR AND REALIST FICTION
 short stories: 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).
- 3/11 *Research paper prospectus due*
Spring break
8. 3/28 LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY "RACE LITERATURE" AND BLACK WOMEN WRITERS
 essay: Victoria Earle Matthews (1861-1907), "The Value of Race Literature" (1895)
 short stories: Victoria Earle Matthews (1861-1907), "Zelika—A Story," (1892); "Aunt Lindy: A Story Founded on Real Life" (1893).
 Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson (1875-1935), "Violets"; "A Carnival Jangle"; "Little Miss Sophie" from Alice Ruth Moore, *Violets and other Tales* (Monthly Review, 1895).
- 3/30 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PAPER CONFERENCES

9. 4/4 COEDUCATION AND THE “TRANSFORMATION” OF NEW ENGLAND MEN’S COLLEGES
text: Anne Gardiner Perkins, *Yale Needs Women: How the First Group of Girls Rewrote the Rules of an Ivy League Giant* (2019), Prologue, Ch. 1-8, xv-193.
- 4/6 COEDUCATION continued
text: Perkins, *Yale Needs Women*, Ch. 9-12, Epilogue, 194-298.
10. 4/11 WOMEN AT BOWDOIN: Prehistory of Coeducation
- 4/13 WOMEN AT BOWDOIN: Process of Coeducation
11. 4/18 WOMEN AT BOWDOIN: *The Bowdoin Orient*
- 4/20 WOMEN AT BOWDOIN: Curriculum; Women’s Resource Center
12. 4/25 WOMEN AT BOWDOIN: Extracurriculars; Athletics
- 4/27 WOMEN AT BOWDOIN: Social Life & Fraternities; Timeline
13. 5/2 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PAPER CONFERENCES
- 5/4 WORK-IN-PROGRESS REPORTS
14. 5/9 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)
- 5/11 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: Tuesday, May 17, 5:00 pm