

US Women's History

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Putting women at the center of interpretation, this course explores the impact of historical events on the lives of American women and the varied roles women played in shaping American history. A major focus will be to understand how class, ethnicity, and race influenced American women's work, family life, and organized activities from the invasion of North America by Europeans to the 1990s. Topics include: Native American women's lives; gender and family life under slavery; the impact of industrialization on women of different classes; the ideology of separate spheres; women's political activities including the antislavery movement, the suffrage movement, the 19th Amendment, and the resurgence of feminism in the 1960s; and transformations in the lives of modern women including work, politics, sexuality, consumption patterns, and leisure activities.

1. To examine American women's lives across time, paying particular attention to the ways that race, class, and ethnicity shaped their experiences; and to understand the social and political arrangements that structured women's status. The course seeks also to understand how women both resisted and accommodated to this situation.
2. To gain familiarity with the kinds of sources historians of women use in constructing their interpretations, and to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of those sources.
3. To analyze and evaluate the various historical explanations for women's past experiences.

Required Texts (Available at the Engineers Bookstore)

Nancy Cott (ed): *The Roots of Bitterness*
Linda Kerber (ed): *Women's America*
Charlotte Perkins Gilman: *Herland*
Toni Morrison: *The Bluest Eye*

Supplementary materials:

Other required readings (designated by an *) are available on WebCT

Grading

Participation and Attendance: 20%

Midterm: 25%

2 Book Reports: 30%

Final Group Project: 25%

Policy on Lateness and Attendance

You are allowed three unexcused absences. For all other absences you must provide a written, official excuse, such as a note from a doctor in the case of illness or an obituary, funeral notice or death certificate in the case of a death in the family. For every unexcused absence after the third you will lose half of a letter grade from your participation. You are also responsible for coming to class on time. If you come to class after I've taken attendance, you will be counted absent. If you know you may have to be late for a particular class, let me know ahead of time. If you know you have circumstances which will regularly make you a **few** minutes late, come and see me and we can work something out

Honor Code

Students in this class will be expected to abide by the Georgia Tech Honor Code and avoid any instance of academic misconduct, including but not limited to the substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals; false claims of performance or work submitted by the student; possessing, using, or exchanging *improperly* acquired written or verbal information in preparation for, or in writing, an exam or paper. If you have any questions, please consult with me and read the Honor Code, which is available at:

www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/Policy/code.in.sections.htm#AHC .

Reaction Posts and Leading Discussion

Over the course of the semester, there are nine class sessions which will be wholly or partially devoted to discussion of the readings (in addition to what ever informal discussions arise. They are indicated clearly on the syllabus by an asterisk (*) and the title "Discussion of the Readings." To facilitate discussion, students are required to write informal papers based on the readings. These "reaction posts" are designed to get you thinking and to give you an opportunity to reflect on the issues raised by the course. They should be approximately one page double spaced (300 words). You are required to do **six** of these postings, which are due **by 5 pm the day before discussion**. You should post your reactions in the discussion section of WebCT. These posts are not intended as summaries; they are exercises in critical thinking and an opportunity to digest and synthesize course material--to formulate questions, suggest alternative interpretations and shape our discussion. They will be graded on a pass/fail (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) basis and will count towards your participation grade. In general, while I expect you to adhere to some basic standards of grammar, spelling and presentation, these posts are more intended to give you an opportunity to reflect critically on the issues raised in lecture and in the course readings than they are to be formal writing assignments. In addition, you (in cooperation with your fellow students) will be responsible for leading **one** of these discussion sections. I will pass around a sign-up sheet after the first week of class as well as guidelines for discussion leaders.

Final Group Project

As a final project, the class will divide into groups and each group will construct a website based on outside research. I will discuss this in more detail over the course of the semester.

Participation and Classroom Conduct

Participation is a significant part of your grade in this class. You are expected to come to class prepared to contribute actively to classroom discussions and activities. This will not

only enhance your own learning experience but the experience of your fellow students. Good participation entails not only speaking and sharing your thoughts on a regular basis, but also being considerate and respecting the views of others. To earn high points in the participation part of the final grade, students will have demonstrated their awareness of the different functions of classroom comments by:

1. varying their discussion strategies,
2. considering what they say before they say it,
3. taking intellectual risks, and
4. always respecting the feelings of peers by not interrupting classmates while speaking and acknowledging interesting ideas.

Any successful learning experience requires mutual respect on the part of the student and the instructor. Neither instructor nor student should be subject to others' behavior that is rude, disruptive, intimidating, or demeaning. The instructor has primary responsibility for and control over classroom behavior and maintenance of academic integrity.

Instructor responsibilities:

- Start and end class on time.
- Treat all students with courtesy and respect.
- Be open to constructive input from students in the course.
- Ensure that opportunities to participate are enjoyed equally by all students in the course.

Student responsibilities:

- Come to class on time, and refrain from packing up belongings before class ends.
- Turn off all electronic devices that might create a disruption in class.
- Be quiet and give full respectful attention while either instructor or another student is speaking.
- When speaking, use courteous, respectful language and keep comments and questions relevant to the topic at hand.

I expect you to fulfill your responsibilities to me and to your fellow students. By the same token, if I am not meeting my responsibilities to you I expect you to let me know. In short, let's make our classroom a comfortable space for real intellectual dialogue, where everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

Introduction: What is Women's History?

Jan. 8 (M): Course introduction

Jan. 10 (W) What is Women's History?
Women's America: Introduction
Roots of Bitterness: Introduction

Jan. 12 (F) Reading Primary Sources

Part I. Colonial Communities

Jan. 15 (M) MLK's Birthday. No class

Jan. 17 (W) Readings

Women's America: Plane, Ulrich

*Jan. 19 (F) Discussion of Readings

Norton, Karlson

Roots of Bitterness (Part I: 3-44)

Part II. American Revolution, Democracy and Republican Motherhood

Jan 22 (M) Readings:

Women's America: Kerber

Jan. 24&26 (W&F) Film: A Midwife's Tale

Readings:

Women's America: Dayton, Mohr (183-192)

Roots of Bitterness: "Letter from an Indentured Servant"; "Diary of Mary Cooper"; "Moll Placket Hole"; "Abigail Adam's Letters"; A Father's Advice to His Daughter" and "Women's Work", "A Law for Regulating Midwives" (44-49).

Part III. The Cult of True Womanhood and Women's Expanding Spheres

Jan. 29&31 (M&W) Readings:

Women's America: Block, Boyden, Sicherman

*Feb. 2 (F) Discussion of Readings:

Women's America: Rosenburg,

*Catherine Beecher

Roots of Bitterness: Part III

Part IV. Women and National Expansion

Feb. 5 (M) Readings

Women's America: Brooks

*Feb. 7 (W) Discussion of Readings

Women's America: Pascoe

**"Cherokee Women and the Trail of Tears" and "Domestic Life in the Diggings"

Roots of Bitterness: 177-97; 224-35.

Feb. 9 (F) Guest Speaker

Part V. Slavery and the Civil War

Feb. 12&14 (M&W) Readings

Women's America: Belkin

*"Distress and Discord in Virginia Slave Families"

*Feb. 16 (F) Discussion

Women's America: Faust, Painter

Roots of Bitterness: Part V.

Part VI. Labor and Social Activism

Feb. 19&21 (M&W) Readings

Women's America: Sklar

*"Black and White Visions of Welfare"

*Feb. 23 (F) Discussion of Readings

Women's America: Yung, Orlek

Roots of Bitterness Part VII

Part VII. Race, Rights and Reform

Feb. 26(M) Readings

Women's America: Gilmore, Schecter

*Ida B. Wells

Roots of Bitterness: pgs.406-408

Feb. 28 (W) Film: Ida B. Wells

March 2 (F): **Midterm**

Part VIII. Claiming the Rights of Citizenship--Votes and Laws

March 5 (M) Final Project: Guidelines and Overview

March 7 (W) Readings

Women's America: DuBois, Hunter

*March 9 (F) Discussion of Readings

Women's America: "Reconstruction Amendments" (247), "Declaration of Sentiments" (214), "Equal Suffrage Amendment"

Roots of Bitterness: pgs. 420-422

March 12 (M) TBA

March 14 (W) TBA

March 16 (F) Discussion: *Herland*
First Book Report Due

March 19-23: Spring Break

Part IX. The New Woman: The 1920s and Post-Suffrage Politics

March 26 & 28(M&W)

Women's America: Cott, Hall

*"Black Women Leaders and Party Politics in the 1920s"

*March 30 (F) Discussion of the Readings

Women's America: Brumberg, Cowan, Margaret Sanger (pg. 370) Comstock Law (250)

*"Making Faces: The Cosmetics Industry and the Cultural Construction of Gender"

*"Feminist--New Style" (Norton)

Final project: preliminary bibliography and plan due

Part X. Women, the Great Depression and the Rise of the Welfare State

April 2 (M) Readings

Jones, Kessler-Harris, Reagan

*"Coping with the Great Depression in Chinatown"

*April 4 (W) Discussion: *The Bluest Eye*

Second Book Report Due

Part. XI. World War II and the Cold War: Rosie the Riveter and the New Domesticity

April 6 (F) **Film: Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter**

Readings: Evans

*April 9 (M) Discussion of Readings and Film

Matsumoto, Milkman

*"Prostitutes on Strike"

*"Can Women in War Industry be Good Mothers?"

*"This Changing World for Women"

April 11 (W): Cold War Domesticity and Political Activism

Women's America: Freedman, Swerdlow,

*"Atomic Age Motherhood"

Part XII. New Demands: Second Wave Feminism and Beyond

April 13&16 (F&M) Readings

Women's America: Dehart (598) Horowitz, Douglas, Bailey

*April 18 (W) Discussion of Readings

Women's America: Documents: pgs. 573-598

April 20 (F) Readings

DeHart and Lewis, Adair, Whalen, Evans

April 23&25: Work on Final Projects in Class

April 27: Last Day of Classes