

HOTCUS Inclusive Curriculum Competition – Sample Syllabus

Module Handbook: Women in America



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## Introduction to ‘Women in America’

This is an option for Year 2 American Studies students who already have a grounding in the history of the United States. Structured around five broad categories that continue to shape women’s lives today, the module introduces students to core themes in American women’s history from the colonial encounter to the 1970s.

The module treats women’s history not as an ‘add-on’ but as integral to the broad sweep of American history, and challenges undergraduates to re-think how they have been taught so far. While many topics are familiar, the module underscores how women’s status – whether as wives in polygynous marriages, slaves, *feme covert*s or suburban consumers – determined who held power in American societies from the early modern period to the mid-twentieth century.

The historiographical approaches include political, legal, intellectual, social and cultural history; the primary sources range from Supreme Court decisions to Hollywood films, medical literature and pamphlets. Black women’s history is integral to the topics under discussion, whether higher education, suffrage, sexual violence, activism or marriage rights. Literature on Native American women’s history familiarizes students with unusual sources in early American history (archaeological evidence, dictionaries). Familiar sources (Harriet Jacob’s diary, usually read together with Frederick Douglass) are re-assessed in the light of new research. Many primary sources are written by women who were marginalized in various ways, for example because of their non-normative sexualities. While the module tries to expand U.S. history reading lists, the whole idea of a ‘canon’ is probed in week 8 on ‘The Woman Intellectual.’ As the module contains potentially distressing topics, there is a content notice.

Dr. Katharina Rietzler  
University of Sussex  
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## Module Description

In this module, we consider the changing experiences of women in America and analyse the ways in which sex and gender have intersected with race, class, ethnicity, and region to affect political, economic, and social developments in the United States. We explore historical and current debates about women’s work, the American family and citizenship, and the different ways in which women have challenged (or indeed supported) gender oppression. The lectures will cover the broad sweep of women’s history and gender relations in America from the colonial period to the present. Seminars will consist of guided primary source analysis of documents produced by, or about, women in America.

The module does not focus on the history of feminism but on the history of women. Women’s experiences were diverse, structured by race, class and region, sexuality and politics. As we cannot hope to cover the totality of women’s history from colonial America to the present in one term, we will focus on five themes: marriage, citizenship, bodies, minds and political activism.

## Module Themes

This module is divided up into five ‘themes’, covered by two lectures and seminars each:

- **wives** in which we analyse the institution of marriage, with a focus on colonial America. Marriage was central to establishing gender arrangements but it was only through a contested process that it came to be defined as the union of one man and one woman, with a clear hierarchy between the two. We will discuss polygamy, fluid gender boundaries, marriage and racial slavery, and the surprisingly long history of same-sex marriage in America.
- **citizens** in which we examine women’s access to political power in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century America. We will discuss married women’s property rights and the ideology of separate spheres (simply put, the idea that women are good citizens if they stay away from public life), as well as how women embraced or subverted that ideology. We will also explore the arguments that women put forward for and against female suffrage in the context of the shifting borders of the nineteenth-century American nation.
- **bodies** in which we discuss the racialized ways in which men and women have exercised power over (other) women’s bodies through controlling their sexuality and reproduction. We will analyse white women commodified the bodies of African American slaves in the antebellum South, and the ways in which white male sexual aggression was naturalized in mid-twentieth century America. We will also explore how women mobilized against sexual violence from the twentieth century onwards.
- **minds** in which we examine the ways in which women intervened in American intellectual life, and the various obstacles encountered by women intellectuals. After the Civil War, women increasingly entered institutions of higher education but this did not necessarily mean easy access to a paid profession. Race, gender identities and sexuality also structured the ways in which it was possible for women to lead a ‘life of the mind’.
- **activists** in which we consider how the personal became political in the post-1945 United States. Women played a constitutive role in new forms of political organizing both on the right and on the left, whether as ‘housewife activists’ in 1950s Southern California or as student leaders who criticized the patriarchal structures of the 1960s civil rights movement. Gender consciousness was central to political mobilization in the past, and we will debate whether this is likely to remain the case in the future.

## Content Notice

Some of the module content is of a sensitive nature, and may be intellectually and emotionally challenging for some students. Issues discussed in lectures and seminars include but are not limited to sexual violence, racialised violence, pregnancy, miscarriage and abortion, and violence and discriminatory practices against women and ethnic, racial and sexual minorities. Please consult the reading list and seminar descriptions to prepare yourself

to adequately engage or, if necessary, disengage for your own wellbeing. Please approach your tutor if you would like to discuss the module content in more detail.

## Module Assessment

Assessment is by coursework (30%) and a 2000-word take-away paper at the end of the term (70%).

### Assessment 1

In your coursework, you will be asked to write analyses of two short historical sources. The total word limit is 1500 words. As we will practice source analysis extensively in the seminars, good seminar attendance is essential. Please refer to the guidelines for source analysis and be mindful of the three steps: situate, analyse, evaluate.

#### Assessment 1 submission checklist:

- DO provide a brief summary of the sources you are working on in your analysis.
- DO be as precise as possible.
- DO submit only one document containing both analyses, via the Assignment tab on Canvas.
- DON'T worry about ticking all the boxes on the handout. The main aim is to produce a short text that helps an intelligent reader understand a short source. You should connect WHO said WHAT to WHY it is important for women's history.
- DO reference secondary sources if you can. Either footnotes or the MLA/Harvard referencing formats are acceptable.
- DO read your essays for any errors before submitting.

### Assessment 2 – Take-Away Paper

This is your final assessment, worth 70% of your final grade. It takes the form of a take-away paper (TAP), which will contain **five** questions. You have to answer **one** question. There will be at least one question for each theme that has been covered in lectures and seminars.

Here are some sample questions from previous years:

- What was 'women's work' in colonial America? Analyse with regard to two out of the following: English women, indigenous women, African women.
- Analyse the ways in which American women sought to gain more control over their own bodies in the 19th and 20th centuries.
- To what extent was it possible to be a 'woman intellectual' from ca. 1880 to 1960?
- 'To focus on the feminist movement is to misunderstand the real dynamics for change in the position of women in America since 1945.' Discuss.

# Detailed Seminar Programme and Reading List

## General Module Reading:

- Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011)  
[earlier editions are also fine], especially chapters 2, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20
- Sara Evans, *Born for Liberty* (New York: Free Press, 1997)
- Rebecca Edwards, “Women’s and Gender History”, in Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr, eds.,  
*American History Now* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), chapter 15
- Gerda Lerner, “Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges”, *Feminist Studies* 3  
(1975), 5-14.
- Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis”, *American Historical Review*  
91:5 (1986), 1053-1075.

## Week 1: Wives (irregular unions)

Marriage as an institution may seem timeless but a closer look reveals stark changes over time in North America. We will begin our exploration of the theme ‘wives’ by analysing a very recent change, the recognition of same-sex marriage by the American state in 2015. We will then move back in time to consider the colonial encounter in North America, a period when marriage was often beyond ‘one man and one woman’ and when race, kinship, age and economic status produced very different life experiences for women in polygynous (=multiple wives married to one husband) marriages.

### Questions to guide your reading:

1. What was polygyny and who benefitted from it in indigenous societies?
2. How much control did Algonquin women have over their marital and sexual relationships?
3. ‘Wives helped to make men.’ Explain this statement.
4. How accepting have Americans been of same-sex unions from the colonial period until recently?
5. What might marriage’s complex past teach us today?
6. How do the sources for this week (DOMA & Obergefell) deploy history to argue for legal change?

### Documents:

Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), 1996, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-104publ199/html/PLAW-104publ199.htm>

*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015, [https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556\\_3204.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf)

### Essential Reading:

Rachel Hope Cleves, “What, Another Female Husband?”: The Prehistory of Same-Sex Marriage in America, *Journal of American History* 101:4 (2015), 1055-1081

Sarah M. S. Pearsall, “Native American Men – and Women – at Home in Plural Marriages in Seventeenth-Century New France”, *Gender & History* 27:3 (2015), 591-610.

### Further Reading:

- Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2007)
- Juliana Barr, “A Diplomacy of Gender: Rituals of First Contact in the ‘Land of the Tejas’”, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 61:3 (2004), 393–434
- Kirsten Fischer, “The Imperial Gaze: Native American, African American, and Colonial Women in European Eyes”, in Nancy Hewitt, ed., *A Companion to American Women’s History* (Malden: WileyBlackwell, 2005), 3-19 [e-book]
- Sara McDougall & Sarah M. S. Pearsall, “Introduction: Marriage’s Global Past”, *Gender & History* 29:3 (2017), 505-528
- Sarah M. S. Pearsall, “‘Having Many Wives’ in Two American Rebellions: The Politics of Households and the Radically Conservative”, *American Historical Review* 118:4 (2013), 1001-1028
- Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998)
- Kathleen DuVal, “Indian Intermarriage and Métissage in Colonial Louisiana”, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 65: 2 (2008), 267-304.
- Nancy Shoemaker, ed., *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women* (New York: Routledge, 1995), especially Kathleen Brown, “The Anglo-Algonquian Gender Frontier”, 26-48.
- Susan Sleeper-Smith, “‘[A]n Unpleasant Transaction on This Frontier’: Challenging Female Autonomy and Authority at Michilimackinac”, *Journal of the Early Republic* 25:3 (2005), 417–443.

## Week 2: Wives (regulating marriage, constructing race)

This week we discuss the role of marriage in English settler societies. In order to do so, we will have to analyse the legal fiction of coverture which states that there is only one legal person in a marriage, the husband. Coverture was a feature of Anglo-American common law, it gave husbands rights over their wives and it thus determined the status of women in colonial America. In other words, whether you were a wife or not was an essential marker that defined your womanhood in very tangible, practical ways.

However, the concept of womanhood that was developed in 17th-century America was race-specific. Theories of intersectionality argue that race and gender cannot be considered independently, but must include interactions between the two, as they often reinforce each other. In our context, this becomes very clear when we look at the different legal categories that are applied to African and English women in 17th century Virginia. Here we witness the creation of a legal fiction that mandated that ‘women’s work’ had different meanings for English and for African women. It is by analysing such legal fictions, and by focusing on African women, that we can trace the emergence of racial slavery in colonial Virginia between the 1620s and the 1660s.

### Questions to guide your reading:

1. Why are African women in colonial America central to understanding the emergence of the institution of slavery?
2. How did English settlers see English and African women? How did race shape understandings of ‘womanhood’ in 17th-century Virginia?

3. What was ‘women’s work’ in 17th-century Virginia, and who was able to make a claim on it?
4. What is a *feme covert*?
5. How did American women use the law to enforce their rights as wives?
6. What can legal history tell us about women’s lives in colonial America? What can it not tell us?

Documents:

“According to the Condition of the Mother” and “For Prevention of that Abominable Mixture” in Jane Sherron De Hart, *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*, fifth edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 61-62

Essential Readings:

Terri L. Snyder, “Marriage on the Margins: Free Wives, Enslaved Husbands, and the Law in Early Virginia”, *Law and History Review* 30:1 (2012), 141-71.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23209657>.

Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1996), chapter 4: ‘Engendering Racial Difference, 1640-1670’, 107-136

Further Reading:

Nancy Cott, *Public Vows* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000)

Hendrik Hartog, *Man and Wife in America: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000)

Ann M. Little, “Building Colonies, Defining Families”, in Nancy Hewitt, ed., *A Companion to American Women’s History* (Malden: WileyBlackwell, 2005), 49-65 [e-book]

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

Week 3: Citizens (separate spheres)

This week, we move into our second theme: citizens. We will discuss the nature of citizenship – what is it that turns men and women into citizens? We will also explore how women’s rights as citizens fared in Revolutionary America, when the colonies became independent and went on to form a new republic, the United States. Women had a stake in the American Revolution, and their role was reconceptualised under the concept of Republican motherhood. In the first years of the new republic, from about 1800 onwards, we can trace the slow rise of an ideology that historians have called ‘separate spheres’. Within this framework the ‘public’ sphere of political activity, paid employment, wage earning and control over public institutions was designated masculine and the private sphere of domesticity, homemaking, family and morality was designated feminine. Femininity was defined by piety, sexual purity, domesticity and submissiveness. In American historiography, these four attributes are often called ‘the cult of true womanhood’, which applied almost exclusively to white middle-class women but shaped American conceptions of womanhood in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the seminar, we will explore whether ‘separate spheres’ was actually more an ideal than a reality; a manifesto rather than a description.

Questions to guide your reading:

1. What characteristics, roles and duties do the sources' authors ascribe to men and women?
2. How do the authors support and promote the ideology of separate spheres?
3. Do the sources undermine the notion of male supremacy/female dependency at all?
4. What connections do the sources draw between feminine virtue and the American nation?
5. Who was the audience for these sources and how might they have received the messages contained?
6. How far did prescriptive literature dictate social behaviour? What is the difference between prescriptive literature and lived experience?
7. Can you think of examples for the ways in which separate spheres ideology could be both instrumental and prescriptive?
8. What is the relationship between the ideology of separate spheres and ideas about civilization?
9. Does separate spheres work as a way of understanding American women's history?

#### Documents:

Keziah Kendall (1839), "What I have suffered, I cannot tell you" in Jane Sherron De Hart, *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, fifth edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 198-200

Susan Warner (1851) in Sharon Estes, "From the Periodical Archives: Susan Warner's 'How May an American Woman Best Show Her Patriotism?'" *American Periodicals: A Journal of History & Criticism* 19, 2 (2009), 213-218.

#### Essential Reading:

Kerber, Linda, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History", *The Journal of American History*, 75:1 (1988).

#### Further Reading:

Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, 2nd ed.)

Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

Nancy Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

Kim Warren, "Separate Spheres: Analytical Persistence in United States Women's History", *History Compass* 5 (2007), 262-277.

Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", *American Quarterly* 18:2 (1966), 151-174.

#### Week 4: Citizens (women's suffrage)

The debate on votes for women was always a debate about the meaning of citizenship – when suffragists spoke of "full citizenship rights", they meant the ballot. This week we discuss landmark events and documents on the route to the 19th Amendment to the American Constitution and touch on questions of race and American expansion which had important consequences for the women's suffrage. We will also discuss the anti-suffrage movement which attracted surprisingly many women, and not only those who embraced traditional



values. Yet most Americans who opposed votes for women, considered issue pre-eminent: votes for women would take women out of the separate, domestic sphere and threaten existing gender relations.

Questions to guide your reading:

1. What were the arguments of suffragists from the Civil War to World War I?
2. What were the arguments of anti-suffragists?
3. How were these arguments complicated by questions of race, religion and territorial expansion?
4. What were some of the alliances that suffragists forged, and broke, in this period?
5. Document Analysis: choose one document from the NAWSA Collection, try to find out as much as you can about it, and bring the document to the seminar

Documents:

[BROWSE AND CHOOSE ONE DOCUMENT] Library of Congress NAWSA Collection  
<https://www.loc.gov/collections/national-american-woman-suffrage-association/about-this-collection/>

Declaration of Sentiments, 1848, <http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/seneca.html>

Essential Reading:

Allison L. Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question, 1870-1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), chapter 3: “Western Expansion and the Politics of Federalism: Indians, Mormons, and Territorial Statehood, 1878-1887”

Manuela Thurner. “‘Better Citizens without the Ballot’: American Antisuffrage Women and Their Rationale during the Progressive Era”, *Journal of Women's History* 5, no. 1, 33

Further Reading

Kirsten Delegard, “Women’s Movements, 1880s-1920s”, in Nancy Hewitt, ed., *A Companion to American Women’s History* (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2005), 328-347 [e-book]

Kirsten Delegard, *Battling Miss Bolsheviki: The Origins of Female Conservatism in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) [e-book]

Faye E. Dudden, *Fighting Chance: The Struggle over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), chapter 7: ‘The Fight Over the Fifteenth Amendment’ [e-book]

Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998)

Kimberly Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008)

S.J. Kleinberg, *Women in the United States, 1830-1945* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 191-203

Louise M. Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990)

Manuela Thurner, “‘Better Citizens Without the Ballot’: American Anti-Suffrage Women and Their Rationale During the Progressive Era”, *Journal of Women's History* 5:1 (1993), 33-60

## Week 5: Bodies (reproductive labour)

We are moving on to a new theme this week: the issue of bodily autonomy and women’s control over their bodies. We will discuss the extent to which women were able to control their own bodies in a situation of extreme exploitation, plantation slavery in antebellum America. We will also return to a question that has come up time and again: how has women’s reproductive labour, their capacity to give birth to other human beings, been exploited in the past? Women’s reproductive capacity was central to the economic system of slavery, because captive women reproduced a captive workforce. We will analyse the realities of slavery in the antebellum South, and the roles of women’s racialized bodies in this system. Finally, we will have a closer look at the ways in which female slaves’ bodies were exploited but also forms of resistance to this exploitation.

### Questions to guide your reading:

1. What was the ideal of the Southern plantation mistress?
2. How did white women maintain and manage slavery in the antebellum South? Was the violent disciplining of slaves systematic or an aberration?
3. “Scholarly treatment of women's violence betrays the ways in which gender as a primary category of analysis depends on its absence.” What does Thavolia Glymph mean here?
4. Is breastfeeding 'work'?
5. Consider Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents*: what does this autobiographical document (Harriet=Linda) tell us about the slave-master relationship?
  - Does Linda have any choices about her reproductive life?
  - What are the moral dilemmas that Linda has to navigate?
  - How does the author appeal to her audience?
  - And what can a slave narrative such as Jacobs’ tell us about family life and reproduction under slavery in general?

### Documents:

*Harriet Jacobs Incidents in the Life of a Slave*

*Girl* <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/jacobs/hjhome.htm> READ AS MUCH AS YOU CAN BUT ESPECIALLY CHAPTERS 5-11, 16, 28.

“My Master Has Sold Albert to a Trader”: Maria Perkins Writes to Her Husband, 1852

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6380/>

### Essential Reading:

Stephanie Jones-Rogers, “[S]he could ... spare one ample breast for the profit of her owner’: White Mothers and Enslaved Wet Nurses’ Invisible Labor in American Slave Markets”, *Slavery & Abolition* 38:2 (2017), 337-355

Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chapter 1, ‘The Gender of Violence’

### Further Reading:

- Faust, Drew Gilpin, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2004)
- David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996)
- Emily West & R.J. Knight, “Mothers’ Milk: Slavery, Wet-Nursing, and Black and White Women in the Antebellum South”, *Journal of Southern History* 83:1 (2017), 37-68
- Emily West & Erin Shearer, “Fertility Control, Shared Nurturing, and Dual Exploitation: The Lives of Enslaved Mothers in the Antebellum United States”, *Women’s History Review*, special issue (2017), 1-15.
- Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers & Joseph Calder Miller, *Women and Slavery*, 2 vols., (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2007)
- Liese M. Perrin, “Resisting Reproduction: Reconsidering Slave Contraception in the Old South”, *Journal of American Studies* 35:2 (2001), 255-274

### Week 6: Bodies (sexual violence)

This week we will begin with a broad outline of historical debates on women's sexuality from the Reconstruction Era to the beginnings of the Second Wave. These concern rape and rape myths, and their function in American politics and society; the issue of bodily autonomy; and the ways in which women were, from the 1870s, increasingly prevented from access to contraceptives and abortions. We will then move on to the politicisation of rape in the context of the women’s movement of the 1960s and 70s. We will discuss important publications (one of these is the document 'Women and their Bodies' below), and legal reforms but also practical ways in which feminists tried to help women who had experienced rape and sexual assault. Ultimately, these efforts were part of a broader feminist vision that sought to free women from shame of their bodies and male control.

### Questions to guide your reading:

1. How did racialized notions of human sexuality shape definitions of sexual violence after 1945?
2. When and by whom was the phrase ‘sexual harassment’ coined?
3. In 2007, Carrie Baker wrote “challenges remain, but gender relations in the U.S. workplace have been fundamentally transformed” – with the benefit of hindsight, do you agree with this assessment?
4. Why was “Women and Their Bodies” such an important intervention when it was first published? How does the document address its readers?
5. How does the document link women’s knowledge and understanding of their bodies to the problem of sexual violence against women?

### Documents:

Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, “Women and Their Bodies” [precursor to *Our Bodies, Ourselves*] (1970), section on “Sexuality”

<https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/cms/assets/uploads/2014/04/Women-and-Their-Bodies-1970.pdf>

Catharine MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women* (New Haven: Yale U.P. 1979), 32-56

Essential Reading:

Lisa L. Dorr, "The Perils of the Back Seat: Date Rape, Race and Gender in 1950s America", *Gender & History*, 20:1 (2008), 27-47.

Carrie N. Baker, "Race, Class, and Sexual Harassment in the 1970s", *Feminist Studies* 30:1 (2004), 7-27

Further Reading:

Crystal N. Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009)

Estelle B. Freedman, *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), esp. 271-289

Andrea Friedman, "Sadists and Sissies: Anti-pornography Campaigns in Cold War America", *Gender & History* 15:2 (2003), 201-227

Wendy Kline, "'Please Include This in Your Book': Readers Respond to *Our Bodies, Ourselves*", *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 79:1 (2005), 81-110

Amanda H. Littauer, *Bad Girls: Young Women, Sex and Rebellion before the Sixties* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015)

Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Durham : Duke University Press, 2015)

Merril D. Smith, ed., *Sex Without Consent: Rape and Sexual Coercion in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2001)

Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010) [E 185.61 MAC]

Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) [D 769.8.S6 ROB]

Week 7: Minds (women's colleges)

Gender is, of course, not only about 'bodies', a point which becomes obvious once we delve into the long-standing debate on 'minds' and the role of women in America's intellectual life since the early 19th century. Historically speaking, women had to fight for their place in the academy, and the process by which women were admitted to universities in America (and in the UK) was not straightforward. Advocates of women's education have been most successful when they have claimed that an educated woman would be more domestic and a more devoted mother, rather than wanting to leave the home and go out into the world. This is also the background to the creation of women's colleges in the US, unique institutions that opened higher learning to a small group. This week, we will discuss the history and impact of women's colleges and analyse a visual source, the 1920s film *The Wild Party* (pre-Production Code!)

Questions to guide your reading/viewing:

1. Is *The Wild Party* a realistic portrayal of life at a women's college in the 1920s?
  - What can we learn from this document about American anxieties around women's education?

- How are female friendships portrayed? Is there a code of honour?
- How are relations between the sexes portrayed? (Think about Stella and Gil but also about the scenes in the bar and at the house party.)
- What is the relationship between the college and the outside world?
- How does the film deal with race and class?

2. Why did separatism in men's and women's higher education increase in the Progressive Era?

3. How important was social activism on college campuses?

4. How important was separatism for equality between men and women?

#### Documents:

*The Wild Party* (1929) starring Clara Bow, directed by Dorothy Arzner,  
<https://archive.org/details/StellasMerits1929ClaraBowFredricMarchMarcelineDayJackOakie>

#### Essential reading:

Lynn Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), chapter 1: 'From Seminary to University: An Overview of Women's Higher Education, 1870-1920', 13-51

Estelle B. Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930", *Feminist Studies* 5 (1979), 512-29.

#### Further Reading:

Stephanie Y. Evans. *Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850-1954: An Intellectual History*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007)

Lynn Gordon, "Education and the Professions", in Nancy Hewitt, ed., *A Companion to American Women's History* (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2005), 227-249 "[e-book]

Helen Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930's*. (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984)

Linda Kerber, *Toward an Intellectual History of Women* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997)

Barbara Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985)

Jenna Tonn, "Extralaboratory Life: Gender Politics and Experimental Biology at Radcliffe College, 1894-1910", *Gender & History* 29:2 (2017), 329-358.

Andrea Turpin, *A New Moral Vision* (Cornell University Press, 2016)

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, ed., *Yards and Gates: Gender in Harvard and Radcliffe History* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), available here:

[https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/4662764/Yards\\_Gates.pdf?sequence=3](https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/4662764/Yards_Gates.pdf?sequence=3)

Week 8: Minds (sexuality, identity and the woman intellectual)

This week we will discuss the 'woman intellectual'. Who is she? What makes her different from a 'man intellectual'? And what are her interests? We'll begin by discussing the 19th-century medical theories that underlay the assumption that women were not capable of having great ideas. Women were heavily involved in the debates on female brains and

challenged sexist ideas about their intellectual capabilities. The second question we'll address concerns how to write women back into the history of ideas. This is sometimes referred to as recovery, and it has been an object of feminist writing and research for some time. The third question we'll discuss in more detail in the seminars concerns identity. It can be argued that our identities matter to intellectual production, specifically our identities regarding gender and/or sexuality. We will discuss how concepts of gender identity and sexuality might matter for the project of writing women into the history of ideas, exploring the case study of the African American intellectual, lawyer and activist Pauli Murray and an anonymous source written by a lesbian woman.

Documents:

Jane MacKinnon, "The Homosexual Woman", *American Journal of Psychiatry* 103:5 (1947), 661-64

Essential Reading:

Margaret Gibson, "The Masculine Degenerate: American Doctors' Portrayals of the Lesbian Intellect, 1880-1949", *Journal of Women's History* 9:4 (1998), 78-103

Brittney C. Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), chapter 3: "Queering Jane Crow: Pauli Murray's Quest for an Unhyphenated Identity", 87-114

Further reading:

Mia Bay et al., eds., *Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015)

Nan Alamilla Boyd, "The History of the Idea of the Lesbian as a Kind of Person", *Feminist Studies* 39:2 (2013), 362-65

Berenice A. Carroll, "The Politics of Originality: The Class System of the Intellect", *Journal of Women's History*, 2:2 (1990), 136-163.

Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012) [HC 6120 USA (FAD)]

Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy & Madeline D Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge 1993)

Hilda Smith, "Women Intellectuals and Intellectual History: their paradigmatic separation", *Women's History Review* 16:3 (2007), 353-368.

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press 1986)

Hugh Stevens, *The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Week 9: Activists (conservative grassroots)

We have reached our final theme, women's activism. While Second Wave feminist activism is well-known, women's conservative activism in the post-1945 United States has arguably shaped American politics in similarly profound ways, not least in the 'rise of the Right' since the 1970s. Right-wing activists such as Phyllis Schlafly became household names in America. While Schlafly and her supporters derided feminists as 'women's libbers,' they used similar tactics of political mobilization. To conservative women, their activism represented a form of empowerment and of intervening in the public sphere, with concrete

outcomes, such as the failed ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. In its early decades after 1945, women's conservative activism was, as we will see in the readings, often a reaction to challenges to racial segregation in the US and foreign policy debates.

Questions to guide your reading:

Nickerson:

1. According to Nickerson, how did conservative women develop a 'political subjectivity' between 1950 and 1955?
2. Why was UNESCO a prime target for conservative activists?
3. In their own way, were these conservative campaigners feminists?
4. How important was the anti-communism of the late 1940s and early 1950s to grassroots conservatives?

Crain & Hamilton:

1. What do Crain and Hamilton mean by 'packaged thinking'? To what extent do the authors believe in an authentic 'women's point of view'?
2. Which organisations do they put under scrutiny?
3. To what extent is their analysis a revolt against paternalistic authority?

Documents:

Lucille Cardin Crain & Anne Burrows Hamilton, "Packaged Thinking for Women", *American Affairs*, Supplement to Autumn 1948 issue.

Essential Reading:

Michelle M. Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), chapter 3 on campaigns against progressive education, 69-102

Essential Viewing:

*Mrs. America* (FX mini series, 2020) – watch as much as you can.

Further Reading:

June Benowitz, "Reading, Writing and Radicalism: Right-Wing Women and Education in the Post-War Years", *History of Education Quarterly* 49:1 (2009), 89-111

Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 2005)

Kirsten Marie DeLegard, *Battling Miss Bolsheviki: The Origins of Female Conservatism in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012)

Christine K. Erickson, "'I have not had one fact disproven': Elizabeth Dilling's Crusade Against Communism in the 1930s", *Journal of American Studies* 36:3 (2003), 473-89

David R Farber & Jeff Roche, eds., *The Conservative Sixties* (New York: P. Lang, 2003), esp. essays by Nickerson & Critchlow

Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002)

Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018)

Alan Cecil Petigny, *The Permissive Society: America, 1941-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

## Week 10: Activists (1968)

The feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s took many inspirations from the social movements of this period – and the civil rights movement is, arguably, the most important of those. This week, we will begin by discussing the intersection of movements for racial justice and women’s liberation. Black and white women became involved in the civil rights movement in distinct ways, which shaped their political consciousness and the emerging feminist movement of the 1960s with its focus on legal reform and institution building. Pauli Murray’s analysis of ‘Jim Crow and Jane Crow’ drew important lessons from the battle against racist discrimination and underlined the need for a national women’s rights organization. Key feminist texts such as Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique* were concerned not just with the conformist stereotypes of femininity of the 1950s but also with concrete improvements to women’s legal status, an issue we have discussed throughout.

From the late 1960s, American feminism became more radical, questioning mainstream American culture in fundamental ways, and it also became more race-conscious, as women in movements for racial justice analysed their distinct oppression as women but also as people of colour and members of non-Anglophone cultures. In our final discussion, we will confront the current state of the women’s movement in the US and in Britain, and outline some trends that have shaped these movements since the 1970s.

### Homework this week:



Find out some basic facts about Second Wave feminism/feminist campaigns/feminist organisations in a non-US national or regional context of your choice, and be prepared to share with your peers.

### Questions to guide your reading:

1. How does Pauli Murray analyse the role of women in the civil rights movement, and what strategy does she advocate?
2. In Friedan’s text, can you trace themes that we have been discussing throughout the module (motherhood, education, bodily autonomy)?
3. Is Friedan discussing representations or reality?
4. What influence did Murray have on Friedan?
5. What would one of the conservative grassroots activists we talked about last week have made of Murray’s speech and *The Feminine Mystique*?
6. What were some of the core demands of 1960s student movements?

### Documents:

Pauli Murray, “The Negro Woman in the Quest for Equality,” speech at the NCNW Leadership Conference, New York, NY, November 14, 1963 (excerpts), <https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.uoregon.edu/dist/7/11428/files/2017/03/Murray-The-Negro-Woman-2clsq0g.pdf>

Betty Friedan *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963), chapter 2

### Essential Reading:

Carol Giardina, “MOW to NOW: Black Feminism Resets the Chronology of the Founding of Modern Feminism,” *Feminist Studies* 44:3 (2018), 736-65



Sara M. Evans, "Sons, Daughters, and Patriarchy: Gender and the 1968 Generation,"  
*American Historical Review* 114:2 (2009), 331-347.

Further Reading:

Rosalyn Baxandall & Linda Gordon, "Second-Wave Feminism", in Nancy Hewitt, ed., *A Companion to American Women's History* (Malden: WileyBlackwell, 2005), 414-432

Say Burgin, "White Women, Anti-Imperialist Feminism and the Story of Race within the US Women's Liberation Movement", *Women's History Review* 25:5 (2016), 756-770

Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York: Basic Books 2011)

Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminine Mystique* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998)

Rebecca Jo Plant, *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), chapter 5: Mother-Blaming and The Feminine Mystique: Betty Friedan and Her Readers

Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003)

