

HI 301: WOMEN AND GENDER IN US HISTORY  
FALL 2017



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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10-11; Thursdays, 1:45-3:45; and by appointment  
(Email works best for contacting me)

Office hours for Mariah Gruner (Teaching Fellow):  
Wednesdays, 11:30 am – 1:30 pm in Room B08 at 226 Bay State Road; and by  
appointment  
Email for Mariah: [mgruner@bu.edu](mailto:mgruner@bu.edu)

Course website (copy and paste the link below):  
[https://learn.bu.edu/webapps/blackboard/execute/modulepage/view?course\\_id=\\_40938\\_1  
&cmp\\_tab\\_id=\\_122363\\_1&editMode=true&mode=cpview](https://learn.bu.edu/webapps/blackboard/execute/modulepage/view?course_id=_40938_1&cmp_tab_id=_122363_1&editMode=true&mode=cpview)

*COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:*

Current events have put women in the spotlight in ways unimaginable a few years ago. In some ways, women are more publicly visible and influential than they ever have been, routinely occupying places we used to think were reserved only for men: as Supreme

Court justices, as corporate executives, as TV comedians, and, of course, as presidential candidates. At the same time, our society continues to debate, sometimes heatedly, an array of issues related to women's roles, ranging from employment opportunities to their access to health care. Many women saw the election of 2016 as a potential threat to women's rights, leading to one of the largest public demonstrations to occur in recent US history, the "Women's March" of January 2017. All this points towards American women's distinctive, and constantly changing, historical experiences and some of the ways women themselves have shaped the broad contours of American history.

In this course, we will ask: what have been the distinctive experiences of women in US history, extending from the 1600s through today? In what ways, too, have "women" exerted influence as a distinctive group, and in what ways have women been divided by class, race, ethnicity, and more? Despite the power that elite white women have often wielded, how have less privileged women and women of color shaped the historical landscape?

Another central question drives this course: how has US history, in terms of its broad political, cultural, and socio-economic developments been shaped not only by the specific activities of women, but also by gender? In other words, how have the various ideas and attitudes associated with "male" and "female" had a profound impact on the way historical events in the US have unfolded?

After taking this course, students will be able to:

- \*Explain how women's historical experiences in the US have changed over time.
- \*Explain how gender has been a central factor in US historical development.
- \*Explain how women of different class, racial, and ethnic backgrounds have shaped US history and have crafted their own narratives about the female experience.

This course counts towards the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies minor. You can learn more about the program and the minor at their website: <http://www.bu.edu/wgs/>

#### *COURSE REQUIREMENTS:*

There will be one in-class midterm (worth 30% of the final grade) and one final exam to be given during the final examination period (30%). There will also be two 5-6 page papers. In one assignment you will work with a few different scholarly essays in the *Women's America* collection, analyzing and evaluating the way historians make their arguments. In the other, you will focus more specifically on 2-3 primary source documents, analyzing those documents in the context of a specific historical moment. More detailed instructions on these papers will be forthcoming (each worth 20% of the grade; see syllabus for due dates).

Mariah Gruner is the Teaching Fellow assigned to HI 301. Over the course of the semester she will hold several discussion sessions where students can ask questions about the readings and assignments. She will also offer guidance on how to prepare for the exams and how to prepare the short papers. Except for the December 12 meeting (see

syllabus), these sessions are optional. Students are, however, *strongly advised to attend* as they can certainly make a difference in comprehending the material and improving your grade.

Aside from our classroom activities, the Boston area (and BU more generally) offers many opportunities for learning more about women, women's history and the history of gender. The Boston Women's Heritage trail, for example, includes a range of sites devoted to the history of women in Boston (<https://bwht.org/>). Just beyond Boston, in Concord, stands Louis May Alcott's Orchard House (<http://www.louisamayalcott.org/index.htm>), home to one of the authors we will be studying. And, there is a constantly changing slate of offerings in terms of lectures, film showings and special exhibits. On the Blackboard website, under "Course Documents", you will find a "Beyond the Classroom" list which will be updated during the semester as we learn about new events. Hopefully, you'll find some things on the list that pique your interest! Students will receive extra credit for attending/participating in one and providing a one-page summary (due no later than December 1), explaining how the site/event/film/etc. relates to themes we have discussed in class and how it may have raised new questions.

It will be possible to submit papers and summaries electronically, but you must be sure to follow these instructions: you must compose and submit your paper as a WORD document and you must submit the paper, by the due date and time, to BOTH the blackboard site and to my email address. All correspondence regarding these papers must be done using your BU email address. It is also your responsibility to *check your BU email after submitting your paper to make sure there has been no problem with the submission of your paper.*

**Late papers will be reduced by a partial grade (i.e., a B+ to a B) for each late day.**

**ACADMIC CONDUCT:** Cheating – plagiarism included – is absolutely forbidden. Plagiarism means presenting somebody else's work as if it is your own, *even if you do so unintentionally*. It is the responsibility of all students to know and understand the BU Academic Conduct Code that deals with plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct. This code is posted at: <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

**POLICY ON TECHNOLOGY:** Studies show that students do not benefit from multi-tasking and that some students' tendency to shop or face-book during class time can be a distraction for everyone. Evidence also suggests that students really don't learn better by taking notes on electronic devices. So, unless there is a demonstrated need, laptops, cell phones, and other electronic devices are NOT PERMITTED in class. The only exception to this rule will be when students must access a reading assignment from the web or from Blackboard that is being discussed in class.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:** Students are allowed a TOTAL OF TWO UNEXCUSED ABSENCES. More than two absences will require a conversation with the instructor. A student with more than three absences will need to do extra work. More than four

absences will result in a significant reduction of the final grade.

#### *INSTRUCTIONAL FORMAT:*

Our class will consist of lectures, discussions, and some inter-active and collaborative work. My class lectures offer an opportunity for understanding many of the broad themes of the course, but also more specific stories. I use this time, as well, to review images from different periods of history and also to engage students in discussion. Unless you receive different instructions from me, please *complete the assigned reading by Thursday's class* as there will likely be some discussion of that material, especially the shorter essays and documents. The syllabus indicates dates when we will discuss the books. Additionally, I have set aside certain times on the schedule when we will have more focused discussions about readings in the course. Finally, there are also times for more structured discussions and debates about specific historical events.

#### *READINGS:*

The books below are available in the bookstore. Whenever possible, it's best to have a hard copy of the reading material so that you can mark passages and write notes in the margins. If it doesn't break the bank, try to print out at least some of the shorter reading assignments that are posted on Blackboard or are on the web.

#### **BOOKS:**

Linda Kerber and Jane De Hart, eds., *Women's America: Refocusing the Past* (8<sup>th</sup> edition; Oxford University Press) (Indicated as *WA* on the syllabus.)

Please note that the bookstore has ordered the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of this book and the page numbers on the syllabus correspond to that edition; however, if you can find an earlier and cheaper edition – 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> – you could work with that and then make adjustments on the pages. There will be some essays that only appear in the 8<sup>th</sup> edition (those marked with \*\*) so if you end up with an earlier edition, you should also get to know someone in the class who has the 8<sup>th</sup> edition so you can copy the relevant essays.

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Penguin/Random House)

Louisa May Alcott, *Hospital Sketches* (Applewood Books)

Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers* (Persea Books)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (Dover)

Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are* (Penguin/Random House)

Recommended text: Sara Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (Simon & Schuster)

From time to time, I will also post, on the course website, additional documents, illustrations, and external links that we will consider in class.

You can also find copies of the syllabus, the on-line version of reading materials, study guides for the midterm and final (when available), and instructions for the short papers (when available) at the course website.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### Week 1

September 5: Introduction; discussion of Native American Women in Early America

September 7: European Women in Early America; Witchcraft in Colonial New England

**READING:** \*\*Kathleen M. Brown, “The Anglo-Indian Gender Frontier” in *WA*, 12-23; Carol Karlsen, “The Devil in the Shape of a Woman” in *WA*, 53-66.

### Week 2

September 12: Women in the American Revolution

September 14: Women of the South: Slaves and Mistresses

**READING:** \*\*Linda Kerber, “Why Diamonds Really Are a Girl’s Best Friend: The Republican Mother and the Woman Citizen” in *WA*, 117-125; Slave laws in *WA*, 106-108.

### Week 3

September 19: Separate Spheres in Antebellum America

September 21: Beyond the Separate Spheres

**READING:** Jeanne Boydston, “The Pastoralization of Housework,” in *WA*, 128-139; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual” in *WA*, 189-201; Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life*, read intro material up to “A Perilous Passage in the Slave Girl’s Life”.

#### Week 4

September 26: Urban, Southern, Western Women

September 28: Women and Reform: Church, Benevolence, Abolition

**READING:** Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life*, read from “A Perilous Passage in the Slave Girl’s Life” up to “The Loophole of Retreat”; John Mack Faragher, “The Separate Worlds of Men and Women on the Overland Trail” (website); “The Grimke Sisters, Sarah and Angelina, Talk Truth to Power”, in *WA*, 238-242; excerpt from Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little House on the Prairie*, 1-27 and 38-51 (website).

#### Week 5

October 3: Women’s Rights and Seneca Falls: Structured Debate

October 5: Women and the Civil War; Discuss *Incidents in the Life*

\*\*Special Session with Teaching Fellow: October 5 in CAS B06B, 2:15-3:45 PM\*\*

**READING:** Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life*, read from “The Loophole of Retreat” through the end; “Declaration of Sentiments” in *WA*, 247-250; Gerda Lerner, “The Meanings of Seneca Falls, 1848-1998” in *WA*, 221-227.

#### Week 6

*NO CLASS ON OCTOBER 10 (BU ON MONDAY SCHEDULE)*

October 12: MIDTERM EXAM

**READING:** Drew Faust, “Enemies in our Households” (website); Alcott, *Hospital Sketches*. Read all of Alcott’s text. If you have an edition of *Hospital Sketches* that includes material on Alcott’s life and career, read that as well.

#### Week 7

October 17: Aftermath of War; Discuss *Hospital Sketches*

\*\*Special Session with Teaching Fellow: October 18 in CAS 226, 4:30-6 PM\*\*

October 19: Political Motherhood in the Gilded Age

**READING:** Tera Hunter, "Reconstruction and the Meanings of Freedom" in *WA*, 276-286; Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers*, v-88

Week 8

October 24: Women in the West

October 26: "New Women" at Work and at Play

**READING:** Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers*, 89-184

*FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE VIA EMAIL AND BLACKBOARD ON THURSDAY  
OCTOBER 26*

Week 9

October 31: Women & Progressive Reform

November 2: Gender, Jim Crow, Suffrage; Discuss *Bread Givers*

**READING:** Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Florence Kelley and Women's Activism in the Progressive Era" in *WA*, 350-360; Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers*, 185-297

Week 10

November 7: Should Women Get the Vote? What Should Women do Next? (debate)

November 9: Politics of Reproduction and Birth Control

**READING:** Ellen Carol DuBois, "The Next Generation of Suffragists: Harriet Stanton Blatch and Grassroots Politics," in *WA*, 405-411; Glenda Gilmore, "Forging Interracial Links in the Jim Crow South" in *WA*, 300-310; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*, 1-81

## Week 11

November 14: Feminism in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century; Discuss Herland

**\*\*Special Session with Teaching Fellow: November 14 in CAS B06B, 4:45-6:15 PM\*\***

November 16: Women in the 1920s and 1930s

**READING:** Margaret Sanger, “I Resolved that Women...” in *WA*, 457-464; Nancy Cott, “Equal Rights and Economic Roles” in *WA*, 503-512; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*, 82-124. Meridel LeSueur, “Women on the Breadlines” (1932), find at: <http://historymuse.net/readings/womenonbreadline.html>

## Week 12

November 21: World War II & Aftermath

November 23: NO CLASS/THANKSGIVING BREAK

**READING:** Ruth Milkman, “Gender at Work: The Sexual Division of Labor During World War II” in *WA*, 536-548; Betty Friedan, “The Problem That Has No Name” in *WA*, 606-610; Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 3-60.

*SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE VIA EMAIL AND BLACKBOARD ON MONDAY  
NOVEMBER 20*

## Week 13

November 28: Women & Civil Rights

November 30: Second Wave Feminism

**READING:** **\*\*Danielle McGuire, “Sexual Violence and the Long Civil Rights Movement,”** in *WA*, 591-605; Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 61-191.

## Week 14

December 5: Radical Feminism & Women & Media



December 7: Backlash and the Future of Feminism

**READING:** Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 192-307; Carol Hanisch, “A Critique of the Miss America Pageant” in *WA*, 731-733.

Week 15

December 12: Final review session with teaching fellow

*Special office hours with Professor Silber: Saturday December 16, 10-12 noon.*

**FINAL EXAM: SATURDAY DECEMBER 16 12:30-2:30 PM**