Women, it seems, are more publicly visible than they ever have been. They now routinely occupy places we used to think were only for men: as Supreme Court justices, corporate executives, ghostbusters, and, of course, presidential candidates. By the time our course is over, we might see a woman, for the first time in US history, on track to be the next president of the United States.

This course seeks to explore what has, and has not, changed for American women by looking historically at the ideas and experiences of women in the United States, from the
1600s through the end of the twentieth century. Our goal will be to understand not just what women have done but also how many fundamental moments and issues in US history – including the formation of the early republic, religious revival movements, reform crusades, slavery, war and race relations – have hinged on certain notions of gender.

Studying women's history also means being aware of the way women have been divided by class, race, ethnicity, and more, and that while the voices of white, elite women tend to predominate, the experiences of less privileged women and women of color have also had significant effects on shaping the American past.

Course readings will include essays and documents drawn from an assigned reader (Women’s America), some primary texts, and a recommended textbook. Assigned readings will be discussed at numerous junctures throughout the semester.

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 4-5 page papers. The first will ask you to consider a combination of scholarly and primary source material found in the Women’s America collection. The second will ask you to explore the current presidential campaign as a historian. You should start, as soon as possible, by simply observing the way certain themes from the past are resonating in the current political scene or how new attitudes about gender, different from what we’ve seen before, are taking shape in this moment. To aid you in the project, I have created a folder in the “Documents” section of the course website labeled “The 2016 Presidential Campaign” and have already added some material. Please take note of stories that you come across in the news and feel free to pass these onto me. I will keep our campaign folder updated with your submissions and with new materials I find as well. More detailed instructions on these papers will be forthcoming (each worth 20% of the grade; see syllabus for due dates).

It will be possible to submit papers 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.

ACADEMIC 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.

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/](http://www.bu.edu/wgs/)

**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 (8th edition; Oxford University Press)* (Indicated as WA on the syllabus.)  
Please note that the bookstore has ordered the 8th 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 – 6th or 7th – you could work with that and then make adjustments on the pages. There will be some essays that only appear in the 8th 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 8th edition so you can copy the relevant essays.

Louisa May Alcott, *Hospital Sketches* (Applewood Books edition)  
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (Dover edition)  


From time to time, I will also post additional documents, illustrations, and external links
that we will consider in class. To access the course website, go to: https://learn.bu.edu/webapps/blackboard/execute/modulepage/view?course_id=_33992_1 &cmp_tab_id=_98439_1&editMode=true&mode=cpview

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 6: Introduction; discussion of Native American Women in Early America

September 8: 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 13: Women in the American Revolution

September 15: 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, 107-108.**

**Week 3**

September 20: Separate Spheres in Antebellum America

September 22: 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 27: Urban, Southern, Western Women

September 29: Women and Reform: Church, Benevolence, Abolition


**Week 5**

October 4: Women’s Rights and Seneca Falls

October 6: Women and the Civil War; Discuss *Incidents in the Life*


**Week 6**

*NO CLASS ON OCTOBER 11 (BU ON MONDAY SCHEDULE)*

October 13: Civil War Continued

*FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE VIA EMAIL AND BLACKBOARD ON OCTOBER 12*

**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 18: Aftermath of War; Discuss *Hospital Sketches*
October 20: 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

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**Week 8**

October 25: MIDTERM

October 27: Women in the West

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

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**Week 9**

November 1: “New Women” at Work and at Play

November 3: NO CLASS: INSTRUCTOR OUT OF TOWN

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

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**Week 10**

November 8: Women & Progressive Reform

November 10: Gender, Jim Crow, Suffrage; Discuss *Bread Givers*


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**Week 11**

November 15: The Politics of Reproduction and Birth Control

November 17: Feminism in the Early 20th Century; Discuss *Herland*

82-124.

Week 12

November 22: Women in the 1920s and 1930s

November 24: NO CLASS/THANKSGIVING BREAK

READING: Meridel LeSueur, “Women on the Breadlines” (1932), find at:
https://sites.google.com/site/womenduringthegreatdepression/home/women-on-the-breadlines
Douglas, Where the Girls Are, 3-60.

SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE VIA EMAIL AND BLACKBOARD ON MONDAY NOVEMBER 21

Week 13

November 29: World War II & Aftermath

December 1: Women & Civil Rights


Week 14

December 6: Second Wave Feminism

December 8: Radical Feminism & Backlash; Final Review


FINAL EXAM: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 12:30-2:30