

Misericordia University
Department of History and Government

HIS 328: American Women's History

Course Credits: 3

Semester: Spring 2018 (#01)

Prerequisites: Completion of the History / Political Science Core

Dr. Jennifer M. Black, History Dept.

Course Description:

From the University Catalog:

This course explores women's experiences in the United States from Colonial times to the present. It surveys women of different ethnic, racial, and class backgrounds, exploring how women were affected by, and how they themselves influenced the historic events of the nation.

Course Goals & Objectives

University Goals: This course addresses the following University goals:

3. Consider ethical issues and values and make reasoned judgments about them.
4. Think independently and creatively, analyze information critically, and solve problems.
5. Respect and understand cultural differences.
7. Communicate and interact effectively.
8. Understand and appreciate the arts, humanities, science, and technology.

Program Goals: This course addresses the following Program Goals:

1. Develop historical knowledge (UG#5, 6, 8)
2. Evaluate and employ historical methods. (UG#3, 4, 8)
3. Recognize the provisional nature of historical knowledge (UG#3, 4, 7, 8)
4. Create historical arguments and narratives. (UG# 3, 4, 7, 8)
5. Use historical perspective to inform active citizenship (UG# 1, 2, 5)

Course Objectives: Upon successful completion of this course, a student will be able to:

1. Identify, explain, and historicize select themes and issues in US women's history
2. Identify and explain select historiographic arguments related to US women's history
3. Critically examine primary and secondary texts, making reasoned assessments of the arguments and evidence presented within
4. Develop effective written and verbal analyses that synthesize primary and secondary sources

Teaching / Learning Strategies:

These goals will be assessed through written assignments, classroom discussion, service-learning experiences, and in-class presentations.

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Required Texts

Emerson W. Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft: The Salem Trials and the American Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). ISBN: 9780190627805

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (New York: Dover, 2001). ISBN: 9780486419312

Jill Lepore, *The Secret History of Wonder Woman* (New York: Vintage, 2014). ISBN: 9780804173407

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, 2005 [1929]). ISBN: 9780156030410

*Additional readings as required in the syllabus, and posted on Blackboard.

Recommended Reference Source:

Linda Kerber et al., *Women's America* 8th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Evaluation Methods & Student Assignments

In this class, you will have two exams, a research project, and a series of discussion assignments. The final course grade will be comprised of the following:

Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Annotated Bib / Project Proposal	5%
Research essay:	20%
Participation / Discussions:	25%

Participation & Discussion Posts:

In this course, you will be graded on your active weekly participation to class discussions and the online discussion board. This includes coming to class on-time and prepared (with readings, notes, etc.), ready to ask questions, analyze images, and digest the authors' arguments.

Throughout the semester, each student will choose one week to lead discussion (for one session that week). For that week, the student will create a discussion related to a topic from women's history related to the period we're covering that week, and will prepare materials to help lead the discussion for the day. The goal of the discussion is to relate historical content in to current events / issues related to women in society today. Detailed instructions on leading discussions are attached. Failure to regularly participate on a weekly basis, and / or missing more than two class meetings will negatively affect your grade in the course.

Research Essay:

Each student will research and write an essay that links an issue from women's history to contemporary events. We will practice historicizing contemporary events in our weekly discussions. Students will also submit an annotated bibliography and project proposal partway through the semester, in advance of the final research project. Detailed instructions will follow.

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Assignment Formatting:

Please be sure that your essays are typed, on plain white paper, with all the margins set to one-inch. You should double space the body of the paper only (not the headings and title). Please use Times New-Roman 12-point font size. You will be graded on both the style and content of your papers; thus, please be sure to proofread for correct grammar and spelling. Make sure your paper is clearly organized with an introduction, argument (thesis statement), topic sentences, evidence, and conclusion. Papers must meet the minimum word-count requirement to receive full credit; however no penalty will be given for papers exceeding the suggested limit. You are required to submit a hard copy in class AND upload a copy to the Blackboard (assignments listed under "Content") by the due date and time.

Late Policy:

Assignments submitted after the due date will incur a grade deduction of one third for each day late (i.e. if the original grade is a B+ and the paper was submitted one day late, it drops to a B), with a maximum penalty of two full letter grades.

Grading Scale for Course Grades:

<u>Superior:</u>	<u>Very Good:</u>	<u>Satisfactory:</u>	<u>Poor:</u>
A = 93-100%	B+= 87-89%	C+ = 77-79%	D = 65-69%
A- = 90-92%	B = 83-86%	C = 73-76%	F = 64% & below
	B- = 80-82%	C- = 70-72%	

Course Policies

Each week we will spend part of our time discussing the assigned readings, and the remainder of our time engaging in extensive image analysis, some time looking at primary sources (which may include images and film), and some time relating the historical content to current events. Therefore, readings should be completed before our first class meeting each week, and regular attendance is mandatory (you will be allowed two absences without penalty). Please bring all readings for the week to class, for reference during class discussion (including resources posted on Blackboard). You are encouraged to question and think critically about the material presented and use class as a place for exchanging those thoughts and questions with other students.

If you have specific questions or concerns about the assignments or your performance in the class, please come to see me as soon as possible. Addressing these issues early in the semester is key to your success in this class and, more generally, as a student. I am happy to meet with students either in office hours or by appointment to discuss course assignments, paper drafts (within a reasonable time-frame), questions, concerns, writing mechanics, general history, or anything else you'd like to discuss.

Classroom Etiquette:

In this course we will often discuss potentially controversial issues having to do with race, gender, sexuality, class, and politics. Our investigation of primary sources and images in this course may lead to such controversy. We each need to strive to maintain a tolerant and respectful environment in class. Open disrespect of another classmate will not be tolerated.

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Likewise, disruptions (coming in late, engaging in side conversation, use of cell phones, web surfing, texting, etc.) are detrimental to the class as a whole and will not be tolerated. Please make an effort to arrive to class on time—students who consistently arrive late will lose participation points. I reserve the right to ask any student who is disruptive or disrespectful to leave the classroom.

Weekly Schedule

**Hyperlinked articles are also linked through blackboard*

Week 1 (Jan 16-18): Introduction to Women's History

1/16: Class introduction, review of assignments & NAWLD

1/18: Reading: Baker Introduction (p1-13)

Joan W. Scott, "[Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,](#)"
American Historical Review 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053-1075. **Also on Blackboard.**

Week 2 (Jan 23-25): Puritan Women in the Colonial Period

Reading: Baker chapters 1-3 (p14-97)

Week 3 (Jan 30-Feb 1): Witches in their Midst

Reading: Baker chapters 4-6 (p98-193)

Week 4 (Feb 6-8): A Storm of Witchcraft

Reading: Baker chapters 7-9 (p194-286)

Week 5 (Feb 13-15): Women's Slavery in the American South

Readings: Jacobs p1-54

Week 6 (Feb 20-22): Escaping Slavery

Readings: Jacobs p55-102

Week 7 (Feb 27-Mar 1): Free at Last

Readings: Jacobs p103-164

*EXAM 1 in class, 3/1/18

Week 8 (Mar 5-9): NO CLASS / SPRING BREAK

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Week 9 (Mar 13-15): Gender and Sex in the Nineteenth Century

Readings: Elizabeth Evans, "Sisterhood Subpoenaed: Abortion on Trial at an 1892 Women's Medical College," *Nursing Clio* (18 Oct 2017). [Avail. online.](#)

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "[The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America.](#)" *Signs* 1, no. 1 (1975): 1-29. **Also on Blackboard.**

Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors* (New York, 1892). [Avail. online.](#) (18p)

Week 10 (Mar 20-22): "If Shakespeare Had a Sister"

Readings: Woolf, intro and p1-77

*Annotated Bib & Project Proposal Due 3/22/18

*WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE: Mar 26th—Last day to withdraw without academic penalty

Week 11 (Mar 27): A Room of One's Own

Readings: Woolf p78-112

*NO CLASS March 29 / Easter Recess

Week 12 (Apr 3): Reimagining Love in the Twentieth Century

Readings: Lepore intro and part I (p.xi-78)

*NO CLASS April 5 / Dr. Black away at a conference

Week 13 (Apr 10-12): A New Kind of Hero

Readings: Lepore part II (p79-180)

Week 14 (Apr 17-19): Wonder Woman

Readings: Lepore part III (p181-280)

Week 15 (Apr 24-26): Ms. Magazine and the Women's Movement of the 1970s

Readings: Lepore epilogue & afterword (p281-323)

*EXAM 2 in class, 4/26/18

Week 16 (May 1): Women & Feminism Today

Readings: Review of [Lean-In from the New York Times](#)
Browse "[Lean-in.org](#)" online

Susan Faludi, "[Sandberg Left Single Mothers Behind.](#)" CNN 13 Mar 2013

Gary Cutting, "[Leaning on Others.](#)" *NY Times* (15 Oct 2015)

*Research Essay due Monday 5/7/18 at 5pm in MY OFFICE and on Blackboard.

Instructions for Leading Discussion

Due date: Rolling

Each student will lead discussion once during the semester. For that week, the student will create a discussion related to a topic from women's history (see list below), and will prepare materials to help lead the discussion for the day. The goal of the discussion is to relate the historical content to current events / issues related to women in society today. Students will research and obtain a primary source from the online database, North American Women's Letters and Diaries (NAWLD), and will link it to contemporary events by finding a related news article today (i.e. abortion in the past, abortion today). After researching and preparing summaries and questions of the materials you've found you will be responsible for generating and leading discussion for the day's class. You are also welcome to bring visual aids to further generate discussion.

1. Before class:

- a. Carefully read the assigned reading for the week, considering the information it gives you on the time period we're discussing. What ancillary topics come through in this reading? How does the reading shed light on women's place in society in this time period?
- b. Next, research and find a primary source in NAWLD related to the time period we're studying for the week, and ideally related to one of the ancillary themes you found in the reading (search instructions will be shared the first week of class). Consider picking a topic from the list of potential themes below. **You may reopen, but should not duplicate, any previous discussions in the class.** For example, if someone else has already discussed slavery, you may cover a different topic related to slavery but you should not, in any way, duplicate what the other student has covered in their previous discussion. Once you've found a source, print or save a PDF of it.
- c. Next, you will need to find a recent news article (i.e. last 5-10 years) that relates to the topic addressed in your primary source. You may use any reputable news source (i.e. *New York Times*, *CNN*, *Washington Post*, *Huffington Post*, local news stations / newspapers, etc.—NO blogs or Wikipedia articles). If you have questions about whether your source is reputable, please consult with me first. Once you've found the news article, print or save a PDF of it.
- d. Next, carefully read and annotate your primary source, and the news article you've found. For the primary source: How does it depict the topic? What challenges did women face in this regard? What benefits or rewards did they have? For the news article: What's the situation for women in this regard today? What challenges do women still face? What benefits / rewards have emerged? How have things changed in the years / decades between your primary source and your contemporary news article?
- e. Once you have selected your primary source and news article, read them thoroughly and prepare a short summary of the primary source, and comment on how the issue stands today (about two paragraphs). You may also wish to construct bullet points for yourself of the ideas you wish to cover in class, since you will be summarizing

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these sources aloud for the group. If either piece turns out to be a dud (i.e. uninteresting, too short, or irrelevant), then choose a new source / article.

- f. Then prepare a list of 6-8 questions designed to spark discussion. These questions should not be answerable with a one-word answer (i.e. name, event, or “yes / no”)—but should be substantive and intended to provoke a connection between the historical events we’re discussing and current trends today (i.e. How did this current event evolve out of the historical antecedents you found? How might this story be different if x or y had (or hadn’t) happened? What is missing from this story, and why do you think it’s missing?).
 - g. By 10am the day before your presentation: Post your NAWLD source (with a citation) on Blackboard with a short synopsis, add some comments about the issue today (with a link to your news article), and include your questions. Contact me if you would like to make any handouts for the class. Feel free to bring in any additional visual aids (powerpoints, etc.) that you would like to use to generate discussion.
 - h. EVERYONE ELSE: the rest of the class should read the materials posted to the blackboard in preparation for Thursday’s discussion. Use the discussion board to pose any initial questions, comments, points of confusion, etc.
2. During class: Spend about 5-10 minutes briefly summarizing the primary source you found, and relate it back to the readings for the week if possible. Provide any broad commentary that might help frame our discussion. Then move into your discussion questions, as a way to generate discussion with the class members. Once we’ve fully digested the primary source, we will move on to your news article (same process). Again, concentrate on connecting the historical content to the same theme today. Bring a hard-copy of your source, article, summaries, and questions to turn in.

Grading: Participation and Discussion Lead are worth 25% of your final grade. Your submissions will be evaluated on the accuracy of the summary, critical evaluation of the authors’ arguments, and quality of the discussion questions. Failure to complete any component of your discussion lead will result in a deduction of points. Failure to participate regularly in our class discussions (as an audience member) will also result in a deduction of points.

Potential Topics:

Birth control / Family Planning
Creative expression (art, literature, music,
etc.)
Education
Familial / domestic obligations
Gender ideals / separate spheres
Health & medicine
Immigration
Marriage / marital rights
Motherhood / childrearing

Philanthropy / Volunteer work / Activism
Pregnancy / Abortion
Racial identity
Relationships (hetero and homo, social and
sexual)
Sexuality
Working women
*Any other topics you wish, with instructor
approval