

Comparative Studies

History 781: Studies in Women's History
 Professor Susan Hartmann, 253 Dulles Hall
 292-1871 hartmann.1@osu.edu

Autumn 2003
 Office hours: T 10-11
 W 1:30-3

This intensive reading course is designed to familiarize students with major works and central questions in the field of women's history. Focusing on the United States while including some comparative studies, the assigned readings examine women's public lives, labor, and relationships to the state in the 19th and 20th centuries. Particular attention will be paid to differences among women based on class, race, ethnicity, and nationality.

In addition to understanding how historians have interpreted women's public lives and gender systems in a variety of times and places, students are expected to develop their abilities to analyze, compare, and critically evaluate historical studies and to improve their discussion and writing skills.

Assigned Readings

Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* (U. North Carolina, 2002)

Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (North Carolina, 1994)

Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (California, 1995)

Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Columbia, 1999)

Sara Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century's End* (Free Press, 2003)

Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford, 2001)

Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry 1930-1950* (New Mexico, 1987)

Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (Columbia, 2000)

Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women In Defense Of Themselves, 1894-1994* (Norton, 1999)

Course Requirements:

1. Participation in class discussion, including preparation of discussion questions for four of the books (30 % of course grade). Students are encouraged to use the course listserv to raise and address new questions or to comment on questions not fully addressed in class discussion. Listserv address: h781au03@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu

2. Short (2 page) papers on four of the books (30 % of course grade). The papers should summarize and critically evaluate the author's argument and evidence and

compare/contrast it with how other readings deal with similar subjects. E.g., What questions do the scholars bring to the subject; what sources have they used; how have they defined the women in their studies; what interpretations or conclusions do they draw and how do these differ from other readings?

An "A" grade for the course requires regular and timely preparation of these papers as well as informed and regular participation in class discussion.

3. An 8-10 page essay discussing one of the questions posed in recent general examinations in the field of women's history (see last page). Students are encouraged to submit first drafts of their papers by December 1 for feedback. Papers are due December 9 (40 % of course grade).

Schedule:

9/25 Introduction

American Women's Movements

10/2 Boylan, Origins of Women's Activism

10/9 White, Too Heavy A Load

10/16 Evans, Tidal Wave

Gender and Labor

10/23 Clark, Struggle for the Breeches

10/30 Enstad, Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure

11/6 Ruiz, Cannery Women, Cannery Lives

Gender, Citizenship, and Nationalism

11/13 Kessler-Harris, In Pursuit of Equity

11/20 Burton, Burdens of History

11/27 Thanksgiving: no class

12/4 Thompson, Colonial Citizens

12/9 Final papers due

Please note:

Department policy requires all students to be officially enrolled in the course by October 3. No requests to add the course will be approved by the department chair after that time. Enrolling officially and on time is solely the responsibility of each student.

Students with disabilities who need accommodations should see me at the start of the quarter so that specific arrangements can be made.

Final Essay: Write an essay on one of the following questions, which resemble general examination questions in the field of women's history. The 8-10 page paper should refer to at least five books, and students should use as many of the readings from this class as apply to the questions. In addition, feel free to discuss other works that you are familiar with and that are relevant to the question.

1. One of the major differences between women's movements in the United States and women's movements in the Third World, according to many scholars, is the association of liberalism with the former and nationalism with the latter. It might be argued, however, that nationalism is central to all women's movements; what differs is the stage of national development during which women's movements emerge. What do you think? Consider the literature on women's movements in different times and places in addressing this question.
2. Scholars of gender history tend to emphasize the particular historical conditions that construct gender differently in different times and places. Considering the literature you have read on gender, can you identify any common patterns? Can you generalize at all, say, about the impact of political and economic conditions on the development of gender systems? Consider specific empirical works on different times and places in addressing this question.
3. Write an essay on women's political activism in the 19th and 20th centuries focusing on the issue of difference. Is it appropriate to talk about a political culture common to women, or did class, race, and ethnic identity produce important differences in the motivations, goals, strategies, and achievements of politically active women? Were there any moments in which either unity or diversity was particularly pronounced?
4. How have historians of women dealt with religion as an institution that women shaped and as a force that shaped women's lives? Have historians emphasized religion as a constraint on women or have they focussed on its liberatory elements? How might you explain differences in historians' approaches to women and religion?
5. Scholars of contemporary feminism in the United States have often pointed out that important policy changes for women actually preceded the resurgence of a mass women's movement in the 1960s. Does this pattern hold true for earlier periods of policy change in the United States and for women's history in other nations? In general, what role has state

action--in contrast to other factors--played in promoting feminist change?

6. What alliances have working women formed to advance their interests? Specifically, to what extent have working women and working men formed a common struggle on behalf of their economic interests? Indicate the times and places in which this was the case (if any), and analyze the factors promoting cross-sex activism around economic issues and those inhibiting it.