

## History 937: History of Women and Gender in the U.S. since 1870: Bodies and Things

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### Course Description

This graduate seminar delves into the questions and methods of gender history, primarily in the US after 1870, through the topic “Bodies and Things”. The late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the US saw the growth of consumer culture and a dramatic expansion in products and images circulating through daily life. This proliferating presence of *things* called upon people’s attention or action in various ways. It has become almost cliché to say that gender, race, class, sexuality, age, and other markers are “culturally constructed,” but what were the mechanisms for this? In part, they were constructed when an interaction with things transformed the body. The ‘self,’ then, both deployed things and was created by them (consider how smoking cigarettes is an action taken by a body that transforms that body through style, addiction, toxin). In addition, as Ellen Furlough and Victoria de Grazia suggested a decade ago, things themselves may take on sex, gender or race connotations within particular historical contexts (consider how “race records” or lipstick represent, or even confer, race and/or gender). The question of agency quickly becomes vexed when we consider bodies and things within the context of an increasingly transnational capitalism. This course will explore things and the body in the US through a variety of themes and methodologies. As we explore this particular topic, we will be reading in and discussing the characteristics of the field of U.S. gender and women’s history.

### Required Texts

The following books are on sale at A Room of One’s Own Bookstore located at 307 W. Johnson:

- Noliwe Rooks, *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture and African American Women* (Rutgers 1996)  
Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America’s Beauty Culture* (Owl Press, 1999)  
Margaret Finnegan, *Selling Suffrage: Consumer Culture and Votes for Women* (Columbia, 1999)  
Erica Rand, *The Ellis Island Snow Globe* (Duke 2005)  
Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown*, (California, 2001)  
Ji-Yeon Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown: Korean Military Brides in America* (NYU 2004)  
R Marie Griffith, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity* (U California, 2004)  
Andrea Tone, *Devices and Desires: A History of Contraceptives in America* (2001).  
Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Harvard, 2004).  
Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All Girl" Bands of the 1940s* (Duke 2001).

A *Packet* of required and essential readings is on informal reserve in the Historical Society Reading Room, SE Corner. Packet contents are listed near the end of the syllabus.

### Course Requirements

1) Participation in Seminar Discussions (10%).

2) Thesis/Analysis Papers (60%) These are three page, *maximum*, 12 point, double-spaced essays on the week's readings. Everyone will write for the first three weeks (9/12; 9/19; 9/26). For the remainder of the semester, everyone will sign up for 3 times to write. (No one will write on 10/3; 10/17; 11/7; 12/12) For further information, see "Writing Thesis/Analyses Papers." Thesis/Analysis papers for each week are always due at the beginning of class. No late papers will be accepted

3) Historical and Historiographical Questions (5%):

Students will sign up for two weeks in which they will be responsible for writing two discussion questions for the class: one historical and one historiographical. These questions must be well crafted to prompt students to engage central themes, debates or methods in the scholarship for that week. Students who write questions should also take responsibility to facilitate quality discussion that week. (No one will write discussion questions for 10/3; 10/17; 11/7; 12/12.) For further information, see "Creating Historical and Historiographical Discussion Questions."

4) For class periods held on 10/3; 10/17; 11/7; 12/12 no one will write papers or discussion questions. Instead, *everyone* will write one paragraph in response to that week's reading that they post to the class listserve [history937-1-f06@lists.wisc.edu](mailto:history937-1-f06@lists.wisc.edu) by noon on Monday, the day before class. Paragraphs may pose a question, compare with another reading or discussion we've had, or present a thoughtful critique (positive or negative). Please be substantive-- do not simply tell us whether you liked the book or not or whether you found it well written. Everyone will be responsible for reading the paragraphs of all other class members before the seminar meeting. This aspect of the course will be counted within the participation grade.

5) Seminar Paper (25%). This 15-20 page paper represents historical research and analysis of a particular "thing" in relationship to gender and the body. Topic chosen by student in consultation with professor. Paper should engage theoretical and methodological concerns raised in the course. A proposal will be due Sunday November 5 by 5pm. Send via email to Nan and your assigned peer review group. Papers are due December 19 by 5:30 pm in my box--5002.

### Course Schedule:

Week 1 9/5 Introductions

*Reading:*

Toni Morrison, excerpt from *The Bluest Eye* (distributed by email)

Week 2 9/12 How Bodies Became Commodities: Foundations of Consumer Culture

*Reading:*

Jennifer Morgan, excerpt from *Laboring Women* Packet

Walter Johnson, excerpt from *Soul by Soul* Packet

Lawrence Glickman, "Introduction: Born to Shop? Consumer History & Am History" Packet

Week 3 9/19 Things and Imperial Desire

*Reading:*

Paige Raibmon, excerpt from *Authentic Indians* Packet

Kristin Hoganson, "Cosmopolitan Domesticity: Importing the Am Dream 1865-1920" Packet

Marilyn Maness Mehaffy, "Advertising Race/Racing Advertising" Packet

Week 4 9/26 Thing Theory, Gender Theory

*Reading:*

Bill Brown, "Introduction: The Idea of Things and the Ideas in Them" Packet  
Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," Packet  
Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" Packet  
Denise Riley, "Does a Sex Have a History?" Packet  
Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-Am Women's History and Metalanguage..." Packet

Week 5 10/3 Beauty Culture I

*Reading:*

Noliwe Rooks, *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture and African American Women*  
Davarian Baldwin, "'Making Do': Beauty, Enterprise and... Race Womanhood" Packet

Week 6 10/10 Beauty Culture II

*Reading:*

Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture*

Week 7 10/17 Style and Political Subjectivity

*Reading:*

Margaret Finnegan, *Selling Suffrage: Consumer Culture and Votes for Women*  
Lawrence B. Glickman, "'Make Lisle the Style': The Politics of Fashion..." Packet

Week 8 10/24 Commodities, Immigration, Nationalism

*Reading:*

Erica Rand, *The Ellis Island Snow Globe*

Week 9 10/31 Germs, Drugs, and the Definitions of Vice

*Reading:*

Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown*  
David Herzberg, "'The Pill You Love Can Turn on You': Feminism, Tranquilizers..." Packet

Week 10 11/7 Cigarettes: Freedom, Mobility, Toxicity

*Reading:*

Allan M. Brandt, "Engineering Consumer Confidence in the Twentieth Century" Packet  
Sarah S. Lochlann Jain, "'Come Up to the Kool Taste'" Packet  
*FINAL PAPER PROPOSALS DUE SUNDAY 11/5 BY 5PM. SEND TO NAN AND GROUP.*

Week 11 11/14 Bodies and Technology I: Contraceptives

*Reading:*

Andrea Tone, *Devices and Desires: A History of Contraceptives in America*

Week 12 11/21 Bodies and Technology II: Hormones

*Reading:*

Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transexuality in the United States*  
<http://humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/cgs/transformingknowledgeconf.htm> Listen to "Audio  
File: Introduction and Joanne Meyerowitz" her title: "The New Gender History"

Week 13 11/28 Food and Nation

*Reading:*

Ji-Yeon Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown: Korean Military Brides in America*  
Amy Bentley, "Meat and Sugar: Consumption, Rationing, and Wartime Food..." Packet

Week 14 12/5 Food, Religion and Self

*Reading:*

R Marie Griffith, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity*

Week 15 12/12 Sacred and Profane in the Production of Raced Music Markets

*Reading:*

Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All Girl" Bands of the 1940s*

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Rethinking Vernacular Culture: Black Religion..." Packet

Joan W. Scott, "Feminism's History" Packet

Seminar Papers are due December 19 by 5:30 pm in my box--5002

**Packet Contents:**

Jennifer Morgan, "Introduction" "'Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology" and "'The Breedings Shall Goe with Their Mothers': Gender and Evolving Practices of Slaveownership..." from *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (2004).

Walter Johnson, "Turning People into Products" and "Acts of Sale" from *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (1999).

Lawrence Glickman, "Introduction: Born to Shop? Consumer History and American History," in Glickman, ed., *Consumer Society in American History: a Reader* (1999).

Paige Raibmon, "Picking, Posing and Performing: Puget Sound Hop Fields and Income for Aboriginal Workers"; "Indian Watchers: Colonial Imagination and Colonial Reality"; "The Inside Passage to Authenticity..." from *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter From the Late-Nineteenth Century Northwest Coast* (2005).

Kristin Hoganson, "Cosmopolitan Domesticity: Importing the American Dream 1865-1920" *The American Historical Review* 107:1 (Feb 2002).

Marilyn Maness Mehaffy, "Advertising Race/Racing Advertising: The Feminine Consumer-(Nation), 1876-1900" *Signs* 23:1 (1997).

Bill Brown, "Introduction: The Idea of Things and the Ideas in Them" from *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (2003).

Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," from Brown ed., *Things* (2004).

Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" from *Gender and the Politics of History* (1988).

Denise Riley, "Does a Sex Have a History?" in *"Am I That Name?": Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (1988).

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-Am Women's History and Metalanguage of Race" from Darlene Clark Hine, King and Reed, eds., *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible": A Reader in Black Women's History* (1995).

Davarian Baldwin, "'Making Do': Beauty, Enterprise and the 'Makeover' of Race Womanhood" from *Chicago's New Negroes: Race, Class and Respectability in the Black Metropolis, 1910-1935* (forthcoming, 2007).

Lawrence B. Glickman, "'Make Lisle the Style': The Politics of Fashion in the Japanese Silk 'boycott, 1937-1940'" *Journal of Social History* 38:3 (Spring, 2005): 573-608.

David Herzberg, "'The Pill You Love Can Turn on You': Feminism, Tranquilizers, and the Valium Panic of the 1970s" *American Quarterly* 58:1 (March 2006) 79-103.

Allan M. Brandt, "Engineering Consumer Confidence in the Twentieth Century," in Sander Gilman and Zhou Xun, *Smoke: A Global History of Smoking* (Reaktion, 2004).

Sarah S. Lochlann Jain, "'Come Up to the Kool Taste': African American Upward Mobility and the Semiotics of Smoking Menthols" *Public Culture* 15 (2): 295-322.

Amy Bentley, "Meat and Sugar: Consumption, Rationing, and Wartime Food Deprivation" from *Eating For Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (1998).

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Rethinking Vernacular Culture: Black Religion and Race Records in the 1920s and 1930s," from Wahneema Lubiano ed., *The House that Race Built* (1998).

Joan W. Scott, "Feminism's History" *Journal of Women's History* 16:2 (2004).

### Writing Thesis/Analysis Papers

Thesis/analysis papers may not exceed three pages, typed, double spaced, 12 pt.

As their name indicates, thesis/analysis papers have two parts. First, write the thesis of the main book or article in your own words, without using quotations from the book. *This should take up no more than 1/2 of the first page of your paper.* Being specific, complete and succinct in stating the thesis or main argument of the work is the goal of this part of the assignment.

Second, write an analysis of the book and/or articles. Since you have already stated the thesis of the central piece, there is *no reason for further summary*. Rather, here YOU critically engage the works and tell me your analysis of it/them. You do not need to "cover" each reading or part of the reading but should focus on what most interests you. Your analysis can take a number of forms. You may ask questions about and discuss the author's purpose or guiding research questions, method, use of sources, particular innovations, and problems or shortcomings. In doing so, you may critically consider historical phenomenon raised by the work. It is often useful to ask yourself what this work contributes to historical studies, and what problems remain. Make sure that this part of the paper is analysis (defined as your thoughts/opinions + reasoning/evidence), not summary. (Another useful definition of "analysis" likens it to taking apart a clock to reveal its mechanisms and explain how it works. You might think of "taking apart" a book's argument to reveal its components and their functions. Then tell me what you think about this and why.)

### Creating Historical and Historiographical Discussion Questions

A crucial part of becoming skilled at critical thinking and analysis is learning to ask good questions. Because of this, I will ask you to write TWO questions for two different weeks of the semester (sign up the first week). When you write questions, you should come to class early to put them up on the board. Discussion will begin with question writers explaining what motivated their questions. Question writers should also take responsibility for facilitating discussion that week by being ready with follow-up questions and by relating student comments to each other.

The two questions: The purposes of the questions are to direct the class to delve into the central issues and concerns in the reading for that week. They will be graded by how well they do so. One question will engage the **historical** material presented by the author. For example, for Eric Foner's A Short History of Reconstruction, the historical question will engage some aspect of Reconstruction that he talks about (e.g. questions about the effects of Black political participation). The other question will engage **historiographical** concerns, that is, it will engage not the history itself per se, but how the history was crafted and written. Again, using Foner's book as an example, historiographical questions will engage some aspect of how Foner shaped his book, analyzed his sources or intervened in the established historical debates about Reconstruction, African American history or other fields (e.g. questions about the difference between Foner and the Dunning School, or the place of African Americans in his study, or how he integrates considerations of culture with considerations of politics, or the implications of his study for future studies of reconstruction, etc.).

Some tips: Questions that begin with "who" "what" "where" and "when" can often be answered with specific information. For this reason, they often do not make good discussion questions. Questions that begin with "how" or "why" ask for explanations. They are usually the analytical questions and tend to make for better discussion questions. If you have identified an issue that interests you but do not have a question, try asking "how" and "why" about it and see what happens.

Questions that identify controversies or ambiguities or paradoxes tend to work well.

Make sure that you do not ask a "more information" question that can only be answered with knowledge outside of that in class readings. Perhaps someone will have that information, but it will not make for a good discussion.