

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Department of History

Women in American Society to 1870
History 520

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I. Course Objective:

The objective of this course is to introduce students to the study and enjoyment of women's history as a discipline and a subject. Students will develop a basic understanding of how women's lives in America changed, from the sixteenth century to the present. They will also acquire methods and tools with which to analyze the writings in women's history.

II. Course Requirements:

- (1) Reading all required texts
- (2) Class attendance and participation in discussion sessions
- (3) Writing a midterm and final examination
- (4) Keeping a learning log for discussion sessions. See Learning Log sheet.
- (5) Two short (5-7 page) essays on topics to be assigned.

II. Grades will be based on the following:

- (1) Tests - 40%
- (2) Discussion sessions - 20%
- (3) Essays - 40%

IV. Required Reading:

- (1) Mary Ryan, Womanhood in America, 3 ed., which is now out of print, is recommended as background reading for this class. Copies will be on reserve in the Helen C. White Reserve Room. You may be able to purchase a used copy or to have copies made of the relevant sections that cover the period to 1870.
- (2) Reader. A xeroxed reader will be available, location and price to be announced.
- (3) Nancy Cott, Root of Bitterness: Documents of the Social

History of American Women (Boston: Northeastern University Press edition, 1986). You may find used copies of the earlier 1972 edition which is essentially the same.

In addition, a few articles will be included on the syllabus as required reading. Be sure to look at the required reading for each session and read it before coming to class. Recommended readings are listed under each session topic but are not required. However, students are expected to sample several of these as their interest dictates. Copies of all material will be on reserve in the Helen C. White Reading Room. Several movies will be shown. Questions will be distributed the session ahead.

VI. Schedule of Lectures:

I. Introduction

1. January 21 - Introduction to Class
2. January 23 - Sign up for Discussion Session and discuss Learning Log.

Required Reading: Reader-Ellen Carol DuBois, et al., "New Visions in the Disciplines," from Feminist Scholarship: Kindling the Groves of Academe.

II. Women in Colonial Empires

A. Indigenous Women: Native Americans

1. January 26 - The Varieties of Female Experience: Subordination, Complementarity, and Interdependence in Precommercial Societies

Sex, gender, the biological record, theories of the evolution of women, subordination, and the varieties of female experience in different cultures.

Recommended Reading: Gerda Lerner, "Origins," in The Creation of Patriarchy; Nancy Tanner, On Becoming Human, esp. Ch. 1; Adrienne L. Zihlman, "Women as Shapers of the Human Adaptation," in Frances Dahlbert, et al., Woman the Gatherer.

2. January 28 - Native American Women as Potters and Builders

Two short slideshows and discussion of the Mimbreno potters of Southern New Mexico and women of different cultures as builders. Iconography and architecture in women's history.

Required Reading: Reader-Jensen, "Early Woman in New Mexico."

3. January 30 - Pueblos, Navajos, Apaches: Culture and Demography

The first southwestern contacts, the demographic catastrophe,

cultural change, cultural continuity. Case study of the Salinas.

Required Reading: Reader-Foote and Schackel, "Indian Women of New Mexico, 1535-1680."

4. February 2 - The Native Cultures of California

The culture and economy of California women and the response to colonization.

Required Reading: Reader-Jensen and Lothrop, "Native California Women."

5. February 4 - Food in the Gathering Cultures: Acorns

Film, "Acorns: Staple Foods of California."

6. February 6 - The Fur Trading Women

Women of the northwest who worked to develop the fur trade.

Recommended Reading: Sylvia Van Kirk, Many Tender Ties: Women in the Fur-Trade Society.

7. February 9 - Seneca Women and Agriculture

Seneca women as a case study for discussion of the role of women in agriculture and the gender division of labor.

Required Reading: Reader-Jensen, "Native American Women and Agriculture: A Seneca Case Study"

B. Women of Colonial Spain

1. February 11 - Hispanic Women on the Frontier

Indian resistance to colonization, the Pueblo revolt of 1680, women's role in the reconquest, the settling of California.

Required Reading: Reader-Salomé Hernández, "Nueva Mexicanas as Refugees and Reconquest Settlers, 1680-1696;" Jensen and Lothrop, "Californianas."

2. February 13 - Sor Juana de la Cruz: A Reading

The life of Sor Juana de la Cruz, 17th century Mexican writer, as told by herself.

Required Reading: Reader-"Sor Juana de la Cruz" and "Foolish Men Who Accuse/Hombres necios que acusais;" Bible, Genesis, 1:28-3:24; The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, 11:1-16; The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians, Ch. 5 and 6, all verses.

Recommended Reading: A Woman of Genius: The Intellectual

Biography of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz

3. February 16 - Santos of New Mexico

Slideshow of iconography of the Virgin and female saints in New Mexico, mariology and its political significance.

C. Women of Colonial England

1. February 18 - The Anglo-European Tradition: Southern Women

Required Reading: Reader - Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland;" Jean Butenhoff Lee, "The Problem of Slave Community in the Eighteenth Century Chesapeake," and Cott, Root of Bitterness, 31-33, 77-82, 89-90 (The Trappan'd Maiden, Letter from an Indentured Servant, "The Lady's New Year's Gift, or Advice to a Daughter).

Recommended Reading: Allan Kulikoff, "The Beginnings of the Afro-American Family in Maryland," in The Private Side of American History.

2. February 18 - The Anglo-European Tradition: Puritan Women

Two models for women in Puritan society, the "vertuous" woman and the religious sectarian who challenged church authority. The ideology of female piety and familial subordination.

Required Reading: Jean Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, Ch. 5, Verses 21-25; Reader - Laurel Thatcher, "Vertuous Women Found," and Lyle Kohler, "The Case of the American Jezabels: Anne Hutchinson and Female Agitation During the Years of Antinomian Turmoil." Cott, Root of Bitterness, Intro., 34-38 (Examination of Mrs. Ann Hutchinson and Church Trial of Mistress Ann Hibbens).

3. February 20 - Witchcraft Accusations and Trials

What social scientists think causes witchcraft accusations through the case study of the Salem witchcraft trials.

Required Reading: Cott, Root of Bitterness, 65-73 (Mercy Short, "Bewitched," Susanna Martin, "Trial for Witchcraft").

Recommended Reading: Thomas Forbes, The Midwife and the Witch, Ch. 8, 10; Boyer & Nessenbaum, Salem-Village Witchcraft: A Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England; Demos, Underlying Themes in Witchcraft: Confessions and Accusations; Mary Douglas, Witchcraft: Trials and Accusations.

4. February 23 - The Quaker Exception

The emergence of Quaker women as preachers, their spirituality and public life.

Required Reading: Reader - Jensen, "'Centre Then, O My Soul': Ministering Mothers;" Cott, Root of Bitterness, pp. 83-88 (Sarah Osborn's Religious conversion;" "A Friend's Journal."

5. February 25 - Women and Property

The origins of English common law and Spanish community property; kinship and inheritance; divorce.

Required Reading: Reader - Ditz, "Patriarchal Households and Inheritance by Women;" Jensen, "Reproducing the Family Farm." Cott, "Divorce and the Changing Status of Women in Eighteenth Century Massachusetts."

6. February 27 - Women and Patriarchy in Colonial Empires

Overview and comparison of Native American, Spanish, and English women in the colonies.

III. Women in the New Republics

1. March 2 - Women, Revolution, and Republicanism

The debate about the development of liberal, revolutionary, and republican politics and how they affected women.

Required Reading: Reader - Norton, "Eighteenth Century Women in Peace and War: the Case of the Loyalists;" Wilson, "The Illusion of Change: Women and the American Revolution;" Cott, Root of Bitterness."

2. March 4 - Patriot Women in the New States

Applying the new ideals of republican womanhood. Case study of Abigail Adams.

Recommended Reading: Rossi, Feminist Papers, 3-15; "Abigail Adams," in Notable American Women.

3. March 6 - Hispanic Women in the Mexican Republic

Were they more liberated than Anglo-American women?

Required Reading: Reader - Le Compte, "The Independent Women of Hispanic New Mexico, 1821-1846."

4. March 9 - Mary Wollstonecraft and the Revolutionary Tradition

The ideas of Wollstonecraft and the relation of the ideology of women's rights to the development of capitalism.

Recommended Reading: Rossi, Feminist Papers, 15-85; Wollstonecraft's Letters, Maria, a Novel.

Required Reading: Reader - Faragher and Stansell, "Women and Their Families on the Overland Trail to California and Oregon, 1842-1867;" Miller, "Cross-Cultural Marriages in the Southwest."

April 1 - Midterm Examination; review in discussion sessions preceding.

V. Women in the Marketplace

1. April 3 - Women and Commercial Agriculture

The transition from subsistence-plus to commercial agriculture and how it affected women's labor, access to property, and status. Case study of butter-making.

Required Reading: Reader - Jensen, "Churns and Butter-Making Technology."

2. April 6 - The Textile Industry

The transition from subsistence-plus agriculture and domestic production of yarn to the commercial textile industry. Life and times in the Lowell mills.

Required Reading: Cott, Root of Bitterness, 126-140, 148-156 (Lucy Larcom, Susan Miller, Petition). Reader - Dublin, "Women and Outwork in a Nineteenth-Century New England Town: Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire, 1830-1850," and Dublin, "The Social Relations of Production in the Early Mills."

3. April 8 - Needlework and the Industrial Revolution

The transition from home sewing to factory sewing.

Required Reading: Reader - Ava Baron and Susan E. Klepp, "'If I Didn't Have My Sewing Machine...': Women and Sewing Machine Technology."

4. April 10 - Women and the Industrial Revolution

An overview of the effect of the industrial revolution on rural and urban women.

Required Reading: Daniel Walkowitz, "Working-Class Women in the Gilded Age: Factory, Community and Family Life Among Cohoes, New York, Cotton Workers;" Lucie Cheng Hirata, "Chinese Immigrant Women in Nineteenth Century California."

VI. Women in Public

1. April 13 - Women and Reform

Defining a place in public through moral reform.

Required Reading: Reader - Ryan, "The Power of women's

IV. Women in the Nineteenth Century Household

1. March 11 - Southern Women and Slavery

The work of black and white women, the creation of family and culture.

Required Reading: Reader - White, "Female Slaves: Sex Roles and Status in the Antebellum Plantation South;" Cott, Root of Bitterness, 181-208.

Recommended Reading: Dorothy Sterling, ed., We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century, Part I.

2. March 13 - Dependent Women

When the family failed. The controversy over public assistance.

Required Reading: Reader - Jensen, "The Social Geography of Dependency."

3. March 23 - Farm Household Labor

Types of labor and who controlled it.

Required Reading: Reader - Jensen, "Farm Household Labor."

4. March 25 - Women, Fertility and Sexuality

The desire for smaller families, relations between women and women, women and men.

Required Reading: Reader - Cott, "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850;" Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth Century America." Cott, Root of Bitterness, pp. 113-116, 117-125, 141-147, 157-177.

5. March 27 - Women and Health Care

The effect of disease on women's lives, the work of women as herbalists, nurses, midwives, and doctors. The male challenge to women's work in health care in the early nineteenth century and the anti-abortion movement.

Required Reading: Cott, Root of Bitterness, 263-303; Smith-Rosenberg, "the Abortion Movement and the AMA, 1850-1880."

Recommended Reading: Rossi, Feminist Papers, 323-377.

6. March 30 - Women on the Frontier

The frontier household, marrying out, marrying in, not marrying at all.

Networks: A Case Study of Female Moral Reform in Antebellum America."

2. April 15 - Spirituality

Women's changing attitudes toward spirituality and their role in churches.

Required Reading: Reader - Review Jensen, "'Centre Then, O My soul': Ministering Mothers."

3. April 20 - Women and Education

Increasing literacy, the changing ideology and practice of women as students and teachers.

Required Reading: Reader - Jensen, "'Not Only Ours but Others:' Teaching Daughters."

Recommended Reading: "Daughters of Columbia," in Our American Sisters, 76-92; Richard M. Bernard and Maria A. Vinovskis, "The Female School Teacher in Ante-Bellum Massachusetts," Journal of Social History 10(1977), 332-345.

4. April 22 - The Shakers

Film on the Shakers. Read over questions before seeing it.

5. April 24 - Stealing the Language

The struggle to develop an autonomous female identity in literature and a public women's literature.

Recommended Reading: Alicia Suskin Ostriker, Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry in America; and Cora Kaplan, "Aurora Leigh," in Feminist Criticism and social Change.

6. April 27 - Anti-Slavery

From religious to secular reform and the demand for a public voice in politics.

Required Reading: Reader - Jensen, "'True Earnest Workers': Reforming Sisters."

7. April 29 - Temperance and Property Rights

The decline of anti-slavery and the rise of temperance and married women's property rights reform.

7. May 1 - A Tea Party, A Conference, A Movement

Seneca Falls and the emergence of the Women's Rights Movement.

Required Reading: Reader - DuBois, "Women's Rights Before the Civil War."

8. May 4 - Women in Civil Wars: The North and the South

The affect of the war on black and white women, north and south. Black emancipation and reconstruction.

Required Reading: Reader - Jones, "Freed Women? The Civil War and Reconstruction;" Cott, Root of Bitterness, pp. 209-216.

Recommended Reading: Wertheimer, We Were There, 132-150; Massey, Bonnet Brigades.

9. May 6 - Women in Civil Wars: The West

How war affected white women outside the war zones; the Indian wars on the frontiers.

Required Reading: Reader - Riley, "Women in Wartime: The Iowa Experience;" Jensen, "Indian and White Women on the Frontier."

10. May 8 - Women's Emancipation in the Nineteenth Century: So Near, So Far

Review in discussion sessions

Final, week of May 11.

Terms

The following are concepts that I will use from time to time. They are mostly terms used either to save time or to help us focus more clearly on social conditions. Don't try to learn them, just read them over and refer to them as needed.

1. Sex - the biological division of human beings into one half (women) who have the potential to bear children, the other half (men) who do not.
2. Gender - the cultural definition of appropriate behavior for each sex in a culture. It usually changes over time in response to economic and political changes.
3. Subordination of women - a condition imposed on women, and sometimes voluntarily accepted, in exchange for protection or privilege.
4. Patriarchy - the institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of that dominance into society.
5. Matrilineal - descent recorded through the female line, traditionally in many Native American Indian and some African agricultural communities.
6. Matrilocal - when sons and daughters adopt the residence of the mother. Matrifocal - when the mother is the main influence in a household.
7. matriarchy - when women hold the dominant power in a society. Although the term is sometimes applied to groups of women, it is usually used incorrectly because, as far as scholars have been able to determine, women have never held power as a group over men. Usually people are referring to matrilineal or matrilocal societies when they use this word. Examine the context within which it is used as it is sometimes used in a negative sense, i.e., something is wrong with that society, it is unnatural. It is sometimes simply used to mean that women have some control over their own lives.
8. Gender division of labor - the tendency of cultures to divide up labor according to sex. In our society, women are the majority of teachers, librarians, secretaries, nurses, domestic workers, and food processors. In other cultures, the division is often similar.
9. Non-wage labor - the work women do outside the money economy, usually at home for the use of the family.
10. Subsistence economy - an economy where goods are produced, exchanged, and distributed without cash or capital.
11. Subsistence-plus economy - an economy where households

produce subsistence and in addition a small surplus to trade for items they do not produce.

12. Money economy - an economy where goods are produced, exchanged, and distributed in relation to cash and capital.

13. Pre-commercial - cultures and economies before the development of a money economy and large scale trade.

14. Pre-industrial - cultures and economies before the early nineteenth century factory industrialization or where industry is not yet developed. Post-industrial - that utopia where we will all have what we need (and want?).

15. Domestic production or home industry - a system of manufacturing of goods in the household for the market. Women have been especially important in manufacturing of textiles, clothing, pottery, basketmaking, and in processing food.

16. Mode of production - the way in which a culture produces the material and nonmaterial necessities for its survival and perpetuation.

17. Socialization - the process of making an individual human being into a member of a culture. It involves teaching values, attitudes, and ways of relating to others that will help the person to survive in that culture.

18. Social change - what history is all about. The process of finding new problems within our solutions to earlier problems.

19. Ethnicity - the culture of a particular group that is based on race, national identity, or religion.

20. Class - the social divisions in a society based on who owns which means of production. Usually, I will use the terms upper class, middle-class, and working class. Sometimes I will use the term wealthy, middling, and poor when referring to early American history.

21. Power - the ability to act effectively on persons or things, take or secure favorable decisions that are not of right allocated to the individual or their roles. Not necessarily recognized.

22. Authority - recognized or legitimized power.

23. Women's rights - a movement for equality of women in a culture, to obtain the rights and opportunities accorded to men. It implies organization of women to achieve political power.

24. Women's suffrage movement - refers to the post-civil war political movement that focused on women gaining the right to vote. Its adherents were suffragists (in England suffragettes, note difference), its opponents anti-suffragists.

25. Feminism - a consciousness of or movement to change the relations of subordination of women in a culture. The term came into being first in the late nineteenth-century.

26. Women's emancipation - freedom from oppressive restrictions imposed by sex; self-determination; and autonomy.