

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
Department of History  
Fall Semester, 1986-87

HISTORY 901-4  
Professor Gerda Lerner  
THURS. 1:00-3:00 P.M.

Office Hours:  
Wed. 10:00 -12:00  
5123 Humanities  
Phone: 263-1852

BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS HISTORY AND LITERATURE

BOOKS REQUIRED:

Most of the books required for this course are available in paperback. The publishers have been listed in parentheses. Students do not have to buy these books, but they may want to own one or more of them. ALL the paperback books will be available at Brown's Book Store and at A Room of One's Own.

Books marked HC (hardcover) and all the other books as well are on reserve at Helen C. White Library and at the Historical Society.

Books for Section VI will all be in the general collections, not on reserve. There should be no problem of availability, since each book will be needed by only one student.

REQUIREMENTS:

Students are expected to do their reading assignments IN ADVANCE of the classes for which the assignment is made. In units where several weeks are allotted for one unit, students may read one book each week in preparation.

There will be several short written papers, but no final exam or paper.

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WEEKS

I. LITERATURE AS A SOURCE FOR HISTORY

1 - 2 Each student will read <sup>two</sup>~~three~~ biographies, one for each week.  
Select ONE from this group:

Louise Meriwether, Daddy was a Number Runner (Jove)  
Anzia Yezierska, Breadgivers (Persea)  
Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (Bantam)  
Paule Marshall, Brown Girl, Brownstones (Feminist Press)

Select <sup>ONE</sup>~~TWO~~ from this group:

James Farrell, Studs Lonigan, Vol. 1 (Avon)  
Claude Brown, Manchild in the Promised Land (New American Library)  
James Baldwin, Go, Tell it on the Mountain (Dell)  
Henry Roth, Call it Sleep (Avon)  
Michael Gold, Jews without Money (Avon)

II. HISTORY AS A SOURCE FOR LITERATURE - THE GREAT DEPRESSION

3 - 5

All students read entire John Steinbeck, Grapes of Wrath (Penguin)

Each student read any 100 pages in ONE of these:

Studs Terkel, Hard Times (Washington Square Press)  
Caroline Bird, The Invisible Scar (Longman, D.McKay, Pocket Books)  
(HC)\*

6 - 8

III. THE "PERSONA" AS MORAL LEADER

All students read

6 L. Larabee (ed.) The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (Ballantine)

7 - 8

Each student read ONE of the following:

John Woolman: The Journal of John Woolman (Citadel)  
Frances Willard, Glimpses of Fifty Years (HC) (Continued next page)

\*(HC) denotes Hardcover.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Eighty Years and More (Schocken)  
Alfreda Duster (ed.) Crusade for Justice, The Autobiography of Ida  
B. Wells (HC)  
Malcolm X and Alex Haley, The Autobiography of Malcolm X (Bal-  
lantine)  
Clarence Darrow, Autobiography (HC)  
Paul Cowan, The Making of an Unamerican  
Booker T. Washington, Up from Slavery  
W.E.B. DuBois, The Autobiography of W.E.B. DuBois

9-10-11

IV. THE PROBLEMS OF THE BIOGRAPHER

All students read

- 9 Gerda Lerner, The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers  
for Women's Rights and Abolition (Schocken)
- 10 Read material in Xerox packet.  
Review Lerner, Grimke Sisters, pp. 282-339  
Read Alice Rossi, The Feminist Papers, pp. 282-322 (PB, Reserve)
- 11 No reading assignment.

12 - 14

V. CONTROVERSIAL INTERPRETATIONS

Assignment schedules will be made in class

Each student select one person and read at least TWO of the books under  
that person in the reading list.

See separate bibliography.

\*(PB denotes Paperback.

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All written assignments are to be typed, double-spaced with 2 inch margins all around. Cover page should state your name, the topic, date and Assignment 1, 2, etc.

Assignment 1 (Given Week 1, due Week 2)

Select one theme of the four below and write a brief account (no more than four pages):

- a) a turning point in my life
- b) a painful experience in my life
- c) a joyful experience in my life
- d) a significant experience in my life

Assignment 2 (Given Week 2, due Week 4)

Specifications will be given in class.

Week 5 Read assignments 1-2 in class.

Assignment 3 (Given Week 9, due Week 11)

Read in chronological order.

Read all the material assigned for Week 10. Compare the interpretations by historians with the evidence from primary sources you have available. On the basis of what you have read, write a 4-6 page interpretation of the relationship of the two sisters with each other (and, if you wish, with Theodore Weld) and the impact the relationship had on their development as feminists.

Assignment 4 (Given Week 10, due by schedule beginning Week 12)

Pick a person from the list available. This will automatically put you in an appropriate group. Read the person's biography in DAB or NAW. Read the person's autobiography (or letters) as available, and at least two other biographies. Then write a 10 page essay -- either your interpretation of that person's life or a discussion of the various interpretations you have read.

Meet with the people in your group; exchange essays and discuss, critique and improve the essays. Then offer a  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour class presentation on the group of people you have all studied. This can take any form you wish -- dramatization; panel discussion; synthesis of issues and interpretations; critique of the books read. The main aim is to achieve some sort of coherence -- what do these figures have in common? Is there anything that characterizes the interpretations they have received? (How does all the autobiography relate to the biographies?) By what process would you arrive at an interpretation, considering the historiography? Discuss one or more (but not all) of these questions.