

HONR 306
Women in American Society
Spring 2005

Professor Terri L. Snyder
EC-648, (714) 278-3748
Hours: 11:30-12:30; 2:30-3:00 TR
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Course Description. This course studies gender relations in American culture, surveying the experiences of women from an interdisciplinary viewpoint. Because this is a large task we cast our net widely, considering the impact of legal doctrine, political events, educational philosophy, and scientific and technological developments, as well as the effect of region, migration, industrialization, and consumerism on the lives of American women. Our inquiry also extends to the subject of difference: we will consider how and why differences of race, class, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation have shaped female experience and cultural definitions of femininity. Finally, since the readings illustrate several approaches to the study of women, they allow us to sample a variety of methodologies used in the cultural analysis of gender.

Learning Goals. HON 306 provides an overview of several intersecting themes in the social sciences from an interdisciplinary perspective and meets general education III.C.2 (Implications and Explorations in the Social Sciences), IV (Lifelong Learning), and V (Cultural Diversity). It draws upon an array of primary and secondary documents in order to consider psychological, sociological, cultural, and biological perspectives on the various meanings of womanhood in America and how these meanings change over time. Second, the course analyzes the experiences of women at various points in their life cycles, that is, from birth to old age. At different life cycle stages the course examines the ways in which the convergence of biology, psychology, technology, and culture influence the life experiences of individual women. Third, the course considers various historical and cross-cultural perspectives on women in the U.S. and focuses on diversity and how particular cultural and ethnic histories shape women's experience. Fourth, American Studies 306 examines civic responsibility as it has been historically related to women and considers key legal decisions affecting women. These approaches allow for an analysis of women in the political and familial realms and encourage students to weigh the causes and consequences of public and private decisions.

Assessment and Requirements. Course requirements include a written midterm examination (20 points) and a final examination (20 points); students are required to write two response papers (10 points each; 20 points total), report on a biography (10 points), lead discussion over primary documents (10 points), secondary readings (10 points), and participate in class discussion (10 points). Late papers are not accepted; missed examinations, discussions, reports and classes cannot be made up without a written and verifiable excuse. Every student will be granted one absence; thereafter each absence will be assigned a penalty of 5 points from your total grade at the end of the semester; lateness and/or early departures may also be penalized as absences, depending

on their rate of occurrence. All work is expected to originate with the student; plagiarism in any form on any assignment or examination will result in a failing grade for the class. Please complete the assigned readings by the date indicated on the syllabus and bring the appropriate book to class.

Books. All of these books are available in paperback at Titan Bookstore; please do not substitute editions. Most students will find it useful to bring their texts to class with them.

1. Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron DeHart, eds., *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 6th edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Paperback. ISBN: 0195159829.

2. Daniel A. Cohen, *The Female Marine and Related Works: Narratives of Cross-Dressing and Urban Vice in America's Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997). Paperback. ISBN: 1558491244.

3. Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, Revised Edition (New York: Norton, 1999). Paperback. ISBN: 0393314812

4. Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Random House, 1993). Paperback. ISBN: 140003341.

5. Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers*, 3rd edition (New York: Persea Books, 2003). Paperback. ISBN: 0892552905.

6. Maxine Hong Kingston, *Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (New York: Random House, 1989). Paperback. ISBN: 0679721886.

7. Julia Alvarez, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* (New York: Plume, 1992). Paperback. ISBN: 0452268060.

8. Margaret Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale* (New York: Anchor Books, 1998). Paperback. ISBN: 038549081X

9. ER=These texts can be found on Electronic Reserve.

10. Reference Texts Useful in the Class:

Notable American Women

Dictionary of American Biography

On line Texts:

Reader's Companion to American History (RCAH)

Reader's Companion to U.S. Women's History (RCWH)

Encyclopedia of North American Indians (ENAI)

All can be found at Houghton Mifflin American History Database Index,

<http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/>

HON 306
CLASS SYLLABUS

DATE TOPICS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENT

GENDER AND IDENTITY IN EARLY AMERICA

- 2/1-3 Introduction to Class; Overview of Early America
Reading: K&H, 25-29
Documents: Richter, *Iroquois Creation Myth* (ER)
 King James Bible, *Genesis* (ER)
- 2/8-10 Legalities and Gender in Early America
Reading: K&D, Norton; Coverture (RCWH)
Documents: K&D, 55-54, 79-82
Biography: Anne Hutchinson (RCAH)
- 2/15-17 Race, Status, and Gender in Early America
Reading: K&D, Plane, Berkin; White, Chapter Two
Documents: K&D, 67-68
Biography: Pocahontas (ENAI)
- 2/22-24 Sex and Citizenship in Revolutionary America
Reading: K&D, Dayton, Kerber
Documents: K&D, 114-18
Biography: Mary Wollstonecraft (Locate On Your Own)
- 3/1-3 Women and Print Culture in Early America
Reading: White, Chapter One
Documents: Cohen, 57-132
- 3/1** **Response Paper 1 Due**
- 3/8-10 Women, Mastery, and Slavery
Reading: K&D, Faust
Documents: K&D, 193-99; Morrison, *Beloved*, I-II
Biography: Angelina and Sarah Grimke (RCAH)
- 3/15-17 Women and the Legacy of Slavery
Reading: K&D, Hine; White, Chapter Five, Epilogue
Document Morrison, *Beloved*, III
Biography Harriet Tubman (RCAH)
- 3/22 Overview of Modernizing America
Reading: K&D, 129-31; 297-99

3/24 Midterm Examination

3/29-31 No Class; Spring Break

GENDER AND IDENTITY IN MODERNIZING AMERICA

4/5-7 Politics, Reform, and Suffrage
Reading: K&D, Schechter
Documents: K&D, 214-17, 247-51

4/12-14 Immigration and Gender
Reading: K&D, Lerner
Document: K&D, 281-84; Yezierska, *Bread Givers*

4/19-21 Acculturation and Gender
Reading: K&D, Yung
Document: K&D, 584-85; Kingston, *Woman Warrior*

4/21 **Response Paper 2 Due**

4/26-28 Sexualities and Reproduction
Reading: K&D, Reagan, DeHart and Lewis
Documents: K&D, 370-78, 630-36, 643-46, 664-669
Film: *The Pill*

CONTEMPORARY CULTURE AND GENDER

5/3-5 Feminism
Reading: DeHart and Lewis
Documents: K&D, 573-593

5/10-12 Feminist, Popular Culture, Dystopian Visions
Reading: K&D, Brumberg, Douglas
Document: Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*

5/17-19 Post-Feminism
Reading: K&D, Bordo
Document: Alvarez, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*
Film: *Real Women Have Curves*

5/24 Final Examination, 12-1:50 p.m.