

HISTORY 375: WOMEN IN AMERICA SINCE 1870
SPRING 2011
TU/TH 12:00-1:15 in BRNG 2290

Professor Nancy Gabin
University Hall 121
494-4141 or 494-4132
ngabin@purdue.edu

Office Hours:
Tuesdays 1:30-2:30
other days and times by appointment

Teaching Assistant Erica Morin
Recitation Hall 409
496-7544 or 490-5738
eamorin@purdue.edu

Office Hours:
Wednesdays 10:00-12:00
other days and times by appointment

There is a Blackboard Vista website for History 375 with all the course handouts, lecture outlines, some reading assignments, grades, and other material. Log on: www.itap.purdue.edu/tlt/blackboard/

This course surveys the history of women in the United States from 1870 to the present. By examining the social, political, and economic forces that have shaped that history, the course assesses the sources of change and continuity in women's lives. Attention is paid to the variety of the female experience in America. We will consider topics such as the changing meanings and understandings of gender; the changing meanings and significance of family, motherhood and personal relationships; changes in women's education and shifts in female employment; women's involvement in political and social movements; women's relationship to the state; expressions and regulations of female sexuality; and women and popular culture. Stressing diversity as well as unity, the course emphasizes the importance not only of gender but also of race, ethnicity and class in women's lives. The course satisfies the gender requirement in the CLA core curriculum. It is open to all undergraduates.

BOOKS

Follett's and University Bookstore have ordered the following books. Feel free to buy used copies from local sellers or from internet dealers such as ebay.com, half.com, bn.com, and amazon.com. One copy of each book also is on reserve at the Undergraduate Library (HICKS). Other required readings—internet sources and several articles posted on Blackboard—are indicated on the course outline below and/or will be announced in class.

- Ellen DuBois and Lynn Dumenil, *Through Women's Eyes: An American History with Documents, 2/e, Volume Two: Since 1865*. Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers: A Struggle between a Father of the Old World and a Daughter of the New*. Persea Books.
- Gina Barreca, *Babes in Boyland: A Personal History of Co-Education in the Ivy League*. University Press of New England.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Women in America in 1870

January 11-13

Read: For 1/11-1/13: DuBois and Dumenil, *TWE*, Chapter 6 (start)

Women's Lives in Late Victorian America, 1870-1900

January 18-February 1

Read: For 1/18-1/20: DuBois and Dumenil, *TWE*, Chapter 6 (finish)
Yeziarska, *Bread Givers* (Foreword & Introduction and Book I)
For 1/25-2/1: DuBois and Dumenil, *TWE*, Chapter 7
Yeziarska, *Bread Givers* (Books II & III)

Politics and Power, 1900-1920

February 3-10

Read: For 2/3-2/10: DuBois and Dumenil, *TWE*, Chapter 8
Kathy Peiss, "Putting on Style," *and/or* Tera Hunter "Work that Body" PDFs

The New Woman in the Prosperity Decade

February 15-24

Read: For 2/15-2/24: DuBois and Dumenil, *TWE*, Chapter 9 (pp. 520-535, 556-562)
 Kathleen Blee, "Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement," PDF

MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS ON TUESDAY MARCH 1

From the Flapper to Rosie the Riveter, 1930-1950

March 3-10

Read: For 3/3-3/10: DuBois and Dumenil, *TWE*, Chapter 9 (pp. 535-555, 563-583)

Spring Break No Class March 15-17

Beyond the Feminine Mystique: Changing Lives in Postwar America

March 22-April 19

Read: For 3/22-3/31: DuBois and Dumenil, *TWE*, Chapter 10
 Michelle Nickerson, "Moral Mothers and Goldwater Girls," PDF
 For 4/5-4/19: DuBois and Dumenil, *TWE*, Chapter 11
 Gina Barreca, *Babes in Boyland*

Women in the Modern Era, 1980-2011

April 19-28

Read: For 4/19-4/28: DuBois and Dumenil, *TWE*, Chapter 12
 Maureen Sullivan, "Lesbian Mothers and Baby Making," PDF

FINAL EXAM DURING FINALS WEEK—dates and times to be announced

GRADING

Exams:

There will be two exams: a midterm and a final. The midterm on Tuesday March 1 will cover the course material from the first half of the course; the final—dates and times to be announced—will cover the material from the second half of the course. Each exam will consist of several short-answer questions and one essay question. To help you prepare for the exams, you will receive in advance a list of short-answer questions and essay questions from which the exam will be drawn word-for-word. Each one-hour, in-class exam is worth 0-60 points.

Informal Essays:

Over the course of the semester, you will write two essays responding to questions based primarily on the reading material. You decide which two of six dates you will submit essays. Essays must be submitted in hard copy in class—no email submissions and/or late submissions will be accepted and no backtracking. Each essay is worth 0-30 points. **Read-and-respond questions for the informal essay options begin after the grading summary below.**

In-class Responses:

There will be several opportunities during the semester to respond spontaneously and very informally to class material (lectures, films, discussion, etc.). These unscheduled, unannounced and generally ungraded in-class written response pieces will be worth a total of 20 points. No make-ups for the in-class responses.

TO SUMMARIZE THE GRADING:

Informal essays (2 @ 30)	60 points= 30 %	193-200 pts = A+	153-158 pts = C+
In-class responses	20 points= 10 %	185-192 pts = A	145-152 pts = C
Midterm	60 points= 30 %	179-184 pts = A-	139-144 pts = C-
Final	60 points= 30 %	173-178 pts = B+	133-138 pts = D+
Total	200 points=100 %	165-172 pts = B	125-132 pts = D
		159-164 pts = B-	119-124 pts = D-
			0 - 118 pts = F

READ-AND-RESPOND QUESTIONS and ESSAYS

Over the course of the semester, you will write two short essays. The essays are due in class on the dates listed below. You decide which two of six dates you will submit essays, but keep in mind that there will be no extensions granted or backtracking allowed. Each essay should be 2-3 pp. or 550-600 words. Each one is worth 0-30 points.

The purpose of these essays is not so much to improve your writing skills as it is to stimulate thinking about issues, questions, and problems suggested by your study of American women's history since 1870. The goal is for you to discover, develop, and clarify your own ideas and we will be looking for evidence that you are thinking seriously about history. You should do the appropriate reading and reflecting; then write in response to the question for 45-60 minutes. Do not do any research beyond the material assigned for and presented in class. **Your essays should show that** you are wrestling with concepts explained in the reading, in lectures and films shown in class, and in discussions and that **you have done your reading** and reflection before attempting your essays. For the most part, you will be rewarded for the process of thinking rather than the act of composing.

INSTRUCTIONS: CHOOSE ANY TWO OF THE FOLLOWING SIX ESSAY OPTIONS. THEN SELECT ONE OF THE NUMBERED QUESTIONS UNDER THE ESSAY OPTION TO ANSWER.

Essay Option 1. Answer one of the following four questions. Due by Thursday February 3, 2011

1. How new was the New South for African American women in the decades after the Civil War?
2. Nineteenth-century women's higher education proceeded along two parallel lines: the struggle for coeducation and the establishment of all-women's institutions. What were the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?
3. Keeping in mind the different origins, backgrounds, and situations of people in the late 19th century American west, consider the extent to which life on the frontier and in the west emancipated women. Were women regardless of race, ethnicity, and class freer of conventions in the late 19th century west?
4. What was the promise of America to immigrant women like Sara Smolinsky? Was their sense of the promise different than that for immigrant men? In the end, is *Bread Givers* a story of success or failure? Does Sara Smolinsky become an American? Is Sara Smolinsky a fully modern American woman?

Essay Option 2. Answer one of the following three questions. Due by Tuesday February 15, 2011

1. What comparisons can you draw between women's experiences during the Great Migration and the turn-of-the-century wave of European immigration? Draw on *Bread Givers* as well as *Through Women's Eyes* and the article by Kathy Peiss and/or Tera Hunter in answering this question.
2. Did city life liberate women in the late 19th-early 20th centuries or did it reinforce male power and control? Draw on *Bread Givers* as well as *Through Women's Eyes* and the article by Kathy Peiss and/or Tera Hunter in answering this question.
3. How does *Iron Jawed Angels* help you to understand the woman suffrage movement? What does it add to the coverage of the movement in *Through Women's Eyes*? What does it omit?

Essay Option 3. Answer one of the following three questions. Due by Thursday February 24, 2011

1. Which side of the debate over the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1920s would you have been on?
2. Were flappers feminists?
3. Was the activism of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan more similar to or different from that of female labor unionists or the racial justice campaigns spearheaded by African American women or the legislative lobbying of the Women's Joint Congressional Committee?

Essay Option 4. Answer one of the following four questions. Due by Thursday March 31, 2011

1. You are a woman who worked in a defense factory during World War II. After August 1945 the factory reconverted to the production of automobiles and gave your job to a returning G. I. Write a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt telling her how you feel about losing your job.
2. How accurately do recent films like *Revolutionary Road*, *Mona Lisa Smile*, *The Notorious Bettie Page*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Pleasantville*, or *Cadillac Records* and/or television shows like *Mad Men*, *American Dreams*, or *I'll Fly Away* reflect the female experience, gender roles, and gender relations in the 1950s-early 1960s? You do

not have to see all or even most of these films or television shows. You can comment on just one or two or three of these in your essay.

3. What insights do the personal accounts in Chapter 10 of *Through Women's Eyes* offer about the distinct experiences of women in the civil rights movement?
4. Was conservative women's activism more different from or similar to that of liberal women such as civil rights activists and peace advocates in the 1950s-early 1960s?

Essay Option 5. Answer one of the following four questions. Due by Tuesday April 19, 2011

1. In what ways do the documents on women's liberation in Chapter 11 of *TWE* suggest the diverging concerns of white feminist women and feminist women of color? What similarities do they indicate?
2. Revolutions imply a change in the center of power within a society. What then was "revolutionary" about the sexual revolution? Was it different for women than for men? How does *Babes in Boyland* help you to understand this question?
3. Ask a woman you know (a relative or an acquaintance) about her experience of the 1960s and/or the 1970s. Did her experience mirror in any way that of the women quoted or described in Chapters 10-11 of *TWE* and Gina Barreca and her friends in *Babes in Boyland*?
4. Was Gina Barreca's coming-of-age and college experience more similar to or different from Sara Smolinsky's in *Bread Givers*? What accounts for the similarities and differences?

Essay Option 6. Answer one of the following five questions. Due by Tuesday April 26, 2011

1. From the perspective of women's history, what is novel about the most recent wave of immigration? Do you see parallels between the experiences of immigrant women of the late 19th-early 20th century and those of the late 20th-early 21st century?
2. Was the feminist revival of the 1990s more similar to or different from the movement of the 1960s and 1970s?
3. Does globalization bring American women closer to women around the world or does it increase the distance and inequality among women?
4. Do you see lesbian families as a challenge to or an affirmation of the traditional family? Why and how?
5. Consider whether popular culture reinforces, modifies or challenges conventional ideas about gender roles and relations. Do you agree, for example, with the idea that Madonna is a feminist icon? How about Beyoncé or Lady Gaga or Taylor Swift? What about the women of *Sex and the City* or *Ugly Betty* or *Desperate Housewives*? What other figures in popular culture might be included in an assessment of popular culture and feminism since 1990?