

**History 3106**  
**WOMEN IN U.S. HISTORY, 1870 TO THE PRESENT**  
Spring 2008  
Tues, Thurs – 2:00-3:15      Whittemore 257

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Office Hours: Tues, 12:30-1:30; Thurs, 3:30-4:30, and by appointment or drop in

**Course webpage on Blackboard:** <http://learn.vt.edu>

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This course will survey the social, cultural, economic, and political developments that shaped American women's lives in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Through readings, images, discussion, and writing, we will examine how women challenged the constraints of their historical times to move beyond their prescribed and limited roles. As we study the ways in which women confronted the forces of industrialization, war, culture, and politics, we will come to understand not only what changed in women's lives, but what women thought about these changes. And by analyzing the impact of race, class, and ethnicity on women's experiences, we will confront the commonalities that have linked women as well as the differences that have divided them.

**Required Readings:**

- Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron DeHart, *Women's America*, 6th edition (K&D)
- Mary Beth Norton and Ruth Alexander, *Major Problems in American Women's History*, 4th edition (Major Problems)
- Linda Lawrence Hunt, *Bold Spirit: Helga Estby's Forgotten Walk Across Victorian America*
- Susan Ware, *Still Missing: Amelia Earhart and the Search for Modern Feminism*
- Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*
  
- other readings TBA – including online assignments and handouts

All books can be purchased at the University Bookstore, Volume Two Bookstore, and the Tech Bookstore. Additional readings to be announced (TBA) and distributed either online or in classroom handouts. All of the required books are or soon will be available on reserve at Newman Library.

**General Course Requirements:**

This is a course that requires reading, writing, listening, and talking. Classes will be structured around a combination of lectures, occasional videos, and regular discussions, all of which will relate to the assigned readings for the day. As a result, the course requires your active and informed participation in order to succeed. Please be sure to complete the assigned readings before the class meets – otherwise it will be difficult, at best, for you to contribute to our discussions.

The readings for each class session vary in length. I've tried to break up the books so that not too much is assigned for any given day and so that there are periodic breaks in the reading load. You know more than anyone how quickly or slowly you can read. Make sure to review the schedule so that you can plan in advance and pace yourself accordingly. Don't be afraid to ask questions or to come see me for help.

#### Class Preparation and Participation:

It is essential that you **come to class prepared to discuss that day's assigned readings**. Read the books, articles, and document carefully beforehand and take notes if you feel that's necessary to help you remember key points. Make sure to keep track of any questions that the readings raise for you as you go along, and be sure to bring the assigned readings with you to class so that you can refer to them during discussion.

Your **Written Reflections** on the readings (see below) will give you the opportunity to think about and reflect on the assigned material before you come to class, and thus help you become a more informed and active participant. You are required to hand in eight of these Reflections over the course of the semester. You may also find it helpful to take notes on the readings even if you're not preparing a Written Reflection for that week since the act of writing will help you gather and clarify your thoughts.

I will determine your class participation grade, which will comprise 20% of your final grade, through a combination of attendance records (since you can't participate if you're not in class) and my assessment of your level of participation. Just coming to class and sitting in your seat is not enough. You all have something to say and questions to ask – avail yourselves of the opportunities that this class provides.

#### Written Work:

To help you articulate your ideas both in class and out, you will each be required to turn in 8 short (2-3 pages, double-spaced) **Written Reflections** on the reading over the course of the semester. These Written Reflections will provide an opportunity for you to think critically about the readings for each week and come to terms with the significance and meaning of the readings. Simple summaries of the books or articles will not suffice. Nor will emotional or gut-level responses (although your personal perspective will certainly inform your analysis). Instead, use these papers to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the week's readings, to respond to the major arguments made by the different authors, to critically examine the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the reading assignments, and/or to relate these readings to items read earlier in the semester.

You will have 12 opportunities to submit Written Reflections (see Course Schedule), but you only need to turn in 8. Two (2) of these, which will be based on specific questions about specific types of evidence, are required of everyone in the class. The other 6 papers can be turned in any week of your choice. Pace yourself wisely – don't leave them all for the end! The papers are due

at the beginning of class on the dates designated and should address some aspect of the assigned readings for that particular week (not just the readings for that day). Papers should be concise, well-written, and carefully proofread. *No late papers will be accepted.*

Make sure to save electronic and hard copies of all of your papers because ... at the end of the semester, you will compile your Written Reflections into a **Final Portfolio** that will include five (5) of your favorite papers from the class and a 4-page summary/analysis of the material you presented in these five papers and what they reveal about what you learned from this class. Your completed Final Portfolio will be due by 10:00 am, Friday, May 2nd – the time and date designated by the university for your final exam.

All written assignments must be completed in order for you to receive a passing grade in this class.

### Final Portfolio

Make sure to save electronic and hard copies of all of your papers because ... at the end of the semester, you will compile your written work into a **Final Portfolio** that will include:

- five (5) of your favorite Written Reflections from the class
- and a 4-5 page summary/analysis of the material that you discussed in the above assignments.

Your completed Final Portfolio will be due by 10:00 am, Friday, May 2nd – the time and date designated by the university for your final exam. It will be worth 15% of your final grade.

### **Computer Requirements:**

This class requires access to an up-to-date computer and the web – for access to the class webpage and for e-mail communication.

### Course Webpage

The class webpage on Blackboard houses the basic syllabus for the class, specific assignments, and links to online readings. While we won't rely on it heavily, it's there as a resource. Make use of it if you need to and on the weeks when online readings are assigned.

### Communication

I will communicate with you periodically via e-mail. If you check your e-mail through an account other than your Virginia Tech account (ie: Hotmail or Yahoo), make sure you configure your Virginia Tech e-mail account to forward your mail. Otherwise you will miss out on important announcements.

If you wish to communicate with me via e-mail, please be sure to type "Hist 3106" in the subject header line. Otherwise, I may delete the message without reading it since I get too much spam and virus-laden e-mails these days to open up messages that I don't immediately recognize.

Finally, some things are best discussed in person rather than electronically. If you have a complicated or sensitive problem to discuss, please feel free to come and introduce yourself to me. I am always available during my office hours as well as after class.

**Honor Code:**

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and adhere to the Virginia Tech Honor Code on all assignments for this course, particularly those aspects of the Honor Code related to plagiarism. <http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu>

As the Virginia Tech Department of History explains on its website – [http://www.history.vt.edu/undergraduate/research\\_paper.htm](http://www.history.vt.edu/undergraduate/research_paper.htm) – plagiarism is “the use of the writing and/or ideas of another without proper acknowledgment.”

- If you use the exact words of another person, no matter how long or short the quote, you *must* put those words into quotation marks and include a citation to indicate their source.
- If you use someone else’s ideas or paraphrase someone’s words, you must cite that as well.

Failure to do any of the above constitutes plagiarism and will result in the filing of a report to the Virginia Tech Honor Court. If you’re unsure about whether an idea or words are yours or somebody else’s, err on the side of caution and include a citation.

Be forewarned: I read published book reviews (both online and in printed format) and am quite adept with online search tools. Please don’t become one of the several people that I report each semester to the University for Honor Code violations.

**Grades:**

Grades for the course will be based on the following formula:

Classroom Participation	20 %
Written Reflections (8 of 12)	65 %
Final Portfolio	15 %
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Total	100 %

All written assignments must be completed in order for you to receive a passing grade for this class.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

(subject to slight adjustments over the course of the semester)

### Week 1: Women, Gender, and Women's History

- Jan 15        *Introduction to the Course*
- Jan 17        *Gender, History, and Sources*  
                  "Introduction," K&D 1-23

## PART I – NEW WOMEN IN A CHANGING WORLD

### Week 2: From True Woman to New Woman

- Jan 22        *The 19th Century Feminine Ideal*  
                  *Bold Spirit*, ix-81
- Jan 24        *The Emergence of the New Woman*  
                  *Bold Spirit*, 83-167

**Written Reflection #1 due in class** (question to be distributed)

### Week 3: The Challenge of Persistent Constraints

- Jan 29        *The Limits of the New Woman's Liberatory Potential*  
                  *Bold Spirit*, 169-260
- Jan 31        "*Lifting as We Climb*": *Black New Women in the Age of Jim Crow*  
                  *Online Reading*: documents by Anna Julia Cooper, Mamie Garvin Fields  
                  Patricia Schechter, "Ida B. Wells and *Southern Horrors*," K&D 268-274  
                  Glenda Gilmore, "Forging Interracial Links in the Jim Crow South, K&D  
                  286-296  
                  Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women," K&D  
                  299-302

**Written Reflection #2 due in class**

### Week 4: Women in the World of Wage Labor

- Feb 5        *Gender and Work at the Turn-of-the-Century*  
                  *Major Problems*, Chapter 10, 260-292 (all documents and articles)  
                  Annelise Orleck, "From the Russian Pale to Labor Organizing in New  
                  York City," K&D 310-327

**Written Reflection #3 due in class**

- Feb 7        Class Cancelled

Week 5: Entering the Forbidden Sphere of Politics

- Feb 12        *Female Moral Authority and Maternalist Politics*  
                  *Online Reading:* Ruth Bordin, “Women’s Mighty Realm of Philanthropy”  
                  Kathryn Kish Sklar, “Florence Kelley and Women’s Activism in the  
                  Progressive Era,” K&D 327-339  
                  “Protecting Women Wage Workers,” K&D 340-341
- Feb 14        *The Many Dimensions of Municipal Housekeeping*  
                  *Major Problems*, Chapter 11, 293-332 (all documents and articles)

**Written Reflection #4 due in class**

Week 6: Feminism and Suffrage

- Feb 19        *Feminism and Woman’s Rights in the Early 20th Century*  
                  *Online Reading:* documents on Feminism’s First Wave
- Feb 21        *The Politics of Suffrage*  
                  Ellen Carol DuBois, “The Next Generation of Suffragists: Harriot Stanton  
                  Blatch and Grassroots Politics,” K&D 358-364  
                  *Online Reading:* documents on suffrage activism  
                  *Online Reading:* “The National Woman’s Party and the Enfranchisement  
                  of Black Women”

**Written Reflection #5 due in class**

Week 7: Suffrage and Feminism

- Feb 26        *Conflict and Resistance in the Woman’s Movement*  
                  in-class video: Iron Jawed Angels
- Feb 28        *Can Political Activism Redefine Womanhood?*  
                  in-class video: Iron Jawed Angels

**SPRING BREAK (No class Mar 4-6)**

**PART II – MODERNITY AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF AMERICAN  
WOMANHOOD**

Week 8: The Emergence of the Modern Woman

- Mar 11        *Modern Women in Modern Culture*  
                  *Online Reading:* Introduction to Modernity

**Class meets in Newman Library (details to be announced)**

- Mar 13      *The Contours of Change*  
              *Online Reading*; documents on Modern Womanhood  
              Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home," K&D  
              399-410  
              Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy  
              in the Appalachian South," K&D 410-422

**Required Written Reflection #6 due in class**

Week 9: The Sky's the Limit: Amelia Earhart and Women's Rising Expectations

- Mar 18      *A Model of Modern Femininity*  
              Susan Ware, *Still Missing*, 11-116

- Mar 20      *Feminism and Women's Politics in the Modern Age*  
              Susan Ware, *Still Missing*, 117-238

**Written Reflection #7 due in class** (question to be distributed)

Weeks 10 and 11: The Modern Woman in Times of Crisis

- Mar 25      *Gender and the Great Depression*  
              *Major Problems*, Chapter 12, 333-369 (all documents and articles)  
              Jacqueline Jones, "Harder Times: The Great Depression," K&D 429-432

**Written Reflection #8 due in class**

- Mar 27      Class Cancelled

- Apr 1      Class Cancelled

- Apr 3      "*For the Duration*": *Women and the Second World War*  
              Valerie Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women during World War II,"  
              K&D 459-465  
              Ruth Milkman, "Gender at Work: The Sexual Division of Labor during  
              World War II," K&D 466-477  
              Megan Taylor Shockley, "African America Women, Citizenship, and  
              Workplace Democracy During World War II," *Major Problems*,  
              379-388

in-class video: The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter

**Written Reflection #9 due in class**

Week 12: June Cleaver and Beyond

Apr 8            *Women's Lives in Postwar America: Prevailing Myths and Lived Experience*  
Joanne Meyerowitz, "Competing Images of Women in Postwar Mass Culture," *Major Problems*, 426-435

**Class meets in Newman Library (details to be announced)**

Apr 10           *The Contradictions of the Cold War Feminine Ideal*  
*Online Reading:* Elaine May, "Cold War, Warm Hearth: Politics and the Family in Postwar America"  
Amy Swerdlow, "Ladies' Day at the Capitol: Women Strike for Peace versus HUAC," K&D 517-532  
Daniel Horowitz, "Betty Friedan and the Origins of Feminism in Cold War America," K&D 481-495

**Required Written Reflection #10 due in class**

**PART III – CHALLENGING THE MODERN FEMININE MYSTIQUE**

Week 13: Prelude to a Revolution

Apr 15           *The Female Generation Gap*  
Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 3-98

Apr 17           *Women and the Struggle for Civil Rights*  
*Online Reading:* Paula Giddings, Chaps 15 and 16 from *When and Where I Enter*  
Charles Payne, "A Woman's War: African American Women in the Civil Rights Movement," K&D 532-536

**Written Reflection #11 due in class**

Week 14: Making Sense of the Second Wave

Apr 22           *Feminist Politics: Women's Rights vs. Women's Liberation*  
*Major Problems*, Chapter 15, 446-469 (documents only)

Apr 24           *Feminist Culture(s)*  
Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 99-192

**Written Reflection # 12 due in class**

Week 15: Women's History in Retrospect

Apr 29           *Continuity and Change in Women's Lives: Since the 1970s ... and since the 1870s*  
*Online Reading:* Maureen Dowd, "What's a Modern Girl to Do?"

**Final Portfolio due:** Friday, May 2nd, 10:05 AM