

Seminar in Teaching American History

Women in Early American History

Summer 2006 – Mount Wachusett Community College

Dr. Susan Williams

Course Description:

- ☞ This course will explore the history of American women from the pre-colonial era up to the beginning of the twentieth century. Through a combination of readings in secondary sources and deep analysis of primary sources, in-class and on-line discussions, fieldwork, and interpretive projects, students will gain an understanding of the important issues, sources of evidence, and methods of studying American women's lives.

Course Objectives:

- ☞ Students will gain an advanced content knowledge of American history as viewed through the lens of gender. They will learn about theoretical perspectives for using gender to analyze historical events, as well as much about historiography and current scholarship in the field of Women's History.
- ☞ Students will be able to carry over course content and knowledge into their own classrooms, resulting in an enriched teaching of American history.
- ☞ Students will learn about new resources for learning and teaching about women's history—supplementing traditional literary and archival sources with material culture sources (materials from online archives as well as from museums and historic sites).
- ☞ Students will learn to use new technologies for communication, analysis of evidence, and presentation of research.

Course Requirements:

- ☞ Readings: all students will read a selection of primary and secondary sources that will offer topical overviews and in-depth analysis, as well as the opportunity to analyze and interpret evidence about historical events significant for women's history. Students will be assigned to serve as discussion leaders for specific readings (sign up on Blackboard website).
- ☞ Field Work: the class will make at least one field trip to a regional history museum (Historic Deerfield, Old Sturbridge Village, Strawberry Banke Museum, Canterbury Shaker Museum).
- ☞ Virtual Field Trips: students will take "virtual" field trips to online museums and historical agencies to collect information and evidence related to specific research assignments. They will develop electronic scrapbooks related to those field trips.
- ☞ Research Paper/Lesson Plans: each student will prepare a final project, whether a set of lesson plans, a research paper, or some other form of presentation (video, multimedia program) by the end of the course. Your final project, whatever form it takes, must include one lesson plan that can be uploaded to the TAH Grant website. For students seeking professional development points, the requirement for this portion of the grade is three lesson plans (or the equivalent). For students seeking graduate credit, the requirement is six lesson plans (or the equivalent).

Evaluation:

- ☞ Research Project/Lesson Plans, 40%
- ☞ Field Work Journal and E-Scrapbook, 40%
- ☞ Discussion Leadership, 10%

- ☞ Regular and thoughtful participation in class discussions, 10%
- ☞ Attendance at all class meetings is mandatory. Absences will be reflected in your discussion grade.
- ☞ *To receive a 4.0*, a student must perform at the highest level on all assignments, demonstrating historical imagination, creativity, and a deep understanding of the subject matter. *To receive a 3.5*, a student must perform at a high level on all assignments. *To receive a 3.0*, a student must perform at an acceptable level on all assignments. A grade *below 3.0* is considered probationary for graduate work at Fitchburg State College. *All work* must also demonstrate clear and well-developed thoughts emanating from a student's research, as well as proficient, clear, and effective communication and writing skills.

Methodology:

- ☞ Students will read secondary sources related to course topics and prepare for class discussions about those sources. Student leaders will be assigned for each discussion.
- ☞ Students will read and/or examine primary sources related to each topic. These may be literary sources (published texts, letters, diaries, legal proceedings) or material culture sources located online (through virtual field trips) or through actual fieldwork. Over the course of the semester, students will write a journal about any fieldwork they do as well as develop personal "scrapbooks" of these primary sources, both of which will be submitted for evaluation as part of their overall course assessment. These scrapbooks will be presented to the class as a whole via PowerPoint on the final class meeting day.
- ☞ Each student will develop a final course project, which may be a traditional research paper, a four-week unit plan, a teaching website, an oral history project, a video, a set of Podcasts, or other form of presentation (to be determined in consultation with the instructor). Students will present their projects at the conclusion of the course for feedback and evaluation.

Reading List/Course Resources

- ☞ The following texts will form the basis of our discussions. Please try to have them all read prior to the beginning of the course:
 - Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (1997)
 - Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun : Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (2001)
 - Carol F. Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (1998)
 - Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves of the Plantation South* (1987)
 - Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)
 - Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman`s Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835: Second Edition* (1997)
 - Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (1987)
 - Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860* (1981)
 - Sarah A. Leavitt, *From Catharine Beecher to Martha Stewart* (2002)
 - Vivian Gornick, *The Solitude of Self: Thinking about Elizabeth Cady Stanton* (2005)
- ☞ Primary Source Readings: links to online primary sources will be available on the BlackBoard course site.
- ☞ BlackBoard course website: <http://blackboard.fsc.edu>

Course Format:

- ☞ This course is designed as a seminar, with intensive discussions about readings and research. A BlackBoard website will enable asynchronous discussions and provide a common place to share research queries and to publish findings.
- ☞ The class will make both virtual and “real” fieldtrips to historic sites related to the history of women in America. These will be done both collectively and individually, to enable the group to share common experiences and evidence and those which they discover on their own.
- ☞ Scheduling: the class will meet for six full days (July 31, August 1, 3, 7, 8, 10), from 8:00am-3:30pm.

Statement of Policy regarding Disabilities:

If you need accommodations because of a documented disability, or if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please discuss this with me before the second class meeting.

Course Schedule (subject to revision) :

| Date | Themes | Topics | Readings | Other Work |
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| Class 1 | What is Women’s History? Women in 17 th c. America | Native Ams Chesapeake New England Work, marriage, family | Mary Beth Norton, <i>Founding Mothers & Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society</i> (Vintage) (Paperback) | Virtual Field Trip: Historic Deerfield |
| | Women and Conflict in Early America | Captivity Salem Revolutionary War | Mary Rowlandson Karlsen, <i>Devil in the Shape of a Woman</i> | Virtual Field Trip: UVA Salem Witch Trial site |
| Class 2 | Building Homes: Gentility and Consumerism | Houses and furnishings as women’s work | Ulrich Leavitt Cott Nylander, “Provisions for Daughters” | Field Trip: Historic Deerfield |
| Class 3 | Women and Slavery | Afr-Am womanhood White women & slavery | Deborah Gray White, <i>Ar’n’t I a Woman?</i> Harriet Jacobs | |

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| Class 4 | Women's Work in Industrial America, Reforming Industrial America | Lowell, Separate Spheres Women Reformers | Thomas Dublin, Cott, <i>The Bonds of Womanhood</i> ; Stansell; Leavitt | Film: <i>Emmeline</i> Virtual Field Trip: Women Working: 1800-1930 |
| Class 5 | Women and Politics: Fighting for Suffrage | 1848 Convention Success in 1920 | Stansell; Vivian Gornick, <i>The Solitude of Self: Thinking about Elizabeth Cady Stanton</i> (2005) | |
| | Professionalizing Womanhood, The "New Woman" | Birth control & Sexual revolution Home economics movement Education War work | Barbara Sicherman, "Reading and Ambition: M. Carey Thomas and Female Heroism," <i>AQ</i> 45:1 (Mar 1993): 73-103. Sarah A. Leavitt, <i>From Catharine Beecher to Martha Stewart</i> (2002) | Virtual Field Trip: Home Economics Archive |
| Class 6 (note: this class will meet only until 2:00 pm) | Presentation of Scrapbooks, Research, and Wrap-Up | | | |
