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HIST 370.01: Women in America through the Civil War

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History 370: Women in America through the Civil War

Professor Jabour

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Class Hours: MWF 9:10 a.m.-11 a.m.

Office Hours: MWF 10-11 a.m. and by appointment

This course, the first half of a two-semester sequence on U.S. women's history, offers an interpretive overview of women's experiences in America through the Civil War. The class will explore ideals of womanhood, women's work and education, changes in housework and motherhood, women's activism, and the emergence of American feminism. Special attention will be paid to how women's experiences were shaped by class, race, and region as well as by gender.

Course Readings

Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin, eds., *Women and Power in American History*

Sheila Skemp, *Judith Sargent Murray: A Brief Biography with Documents*

Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1785-1835*

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl Written by Herself*

Kathryn Kish Sklar, ed., *Women's Rights Emerges within the Antislavery Movement*

Course Goals

This course will acquaint students with the major issues and events of women's history in the United States from the colonial era through the Civil War. Students also will learn to interpret historical materials and to communicate their ideas effectively through speaking and writing. Course requirements are designed to measure students' understanding of the material presented in class through written examinations and to enable students to offer their own analysis of the material in class discussion and writing assignments.

Course Requirements

1. Class Participation (10 percent)

Class participation consists of regular, prompt attendance; reading and other preparation for class; occasional in-class assignments (usually brief written responses to class readings or lecture material), and significant contributions to class activities. In-class assignments will be returned marked with a check, plus, or minus. It is your responsibility to ask about your participation standing if you have any questions or concerns.

2. First Essay (20 percent)

Your first essay will be based on the documentary, *Mary Silliman's War*, and/or Sheila Skemp's biography of Judith Sargent Murray and the accompanying documents. The paper should be 3-5 typed, double-spaced pages. Further details will be provided in class.

3. Midterm Exam (20 percent)

The midterm exam tests for comprehension of assigned reading and lecture material to date.

4. Second Essay (20 percent)

Your second essay will be based on Harriet Jacobs's memoir, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. The paper should be 3-5 typed, double-spaced pages. Further details will be provided in class.

5. Final Exam (30 percent)

The final exam tests for comprehension of assigned reading and lecture material over the entire semester.

Assignments and Grading

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates noted on the syllabus. Extensions will be permitted at my discretion. Students needing extensions should make arrangements with me significantly prior to the deadline. The day before or the morning of a deadline is not sufficient. Unless other arrangements are approved well in advance of the deadline, grades for late assignments will be dropped one letter grade for each day the assignments are late. For example, a B paper handed in a day late would be recorded as a C. Except in extraordinary circumstances, there is no make-up for an absence from class.

Grades will be assigned according to the following criteria: A=outstanding; B=good; C=inadequate; D=seriously inadequate; F=unacceptable. Although the University does not compute pluses and minuses in your GPA, they will be used on your individual assignments and to compute your overall grade. Students taking the class Pass/No Pass must receive a solid C (not a C-) in the course to receive a Pass grade.

Extra Credit and Rewrites

Opportunities to earn extra credit will be announced in class. Extra credit options announced in class will be given a due date; no credit will be given for work submitted after that date. Extra credit is not a substitute for the course requirements. Students who have failed to fulfil any of the course requirements, including attendance, will not receive extra credit. Extra credit will be factored into the overall grade for the course.

Because one of the goals of this course is to improve writing skills, students may choose to rewrite their papers. Rewrites are particularly recommended for students who receive a C or lower on their papers. Rewrites will be due one week after papers are returned in class. Only students who hand in the original paper on time will be permitted the rewrite option. Rewritten papers should be substantially revised with regard to organization, argument, and/or evidence as well as grammatical and stylistic improvements. The grade for the rewritten paper will be substituted for the original grade. Please note that papers that are not substantially improved may not receive a higher grade than the original paper.

Course Policies

Incompletes are intended for use by students who have fulfilled all course requirements (including attendance) prior to a medical, family, or personal emergency that prevents the student from completing the remainder of the course. Incompletes will be granted at my discretion based on this criteria. Students must arrange incompletes as early as possible.

Students must practice academic honesty. Plagiarism or cheating of any kind will result in a failing grade in the course. More severe penalties, including suspension or expulsion from the University, may apply. Ignorance is no excuse for plagiarism.

Course Schedule

In general, the class format will be lectures on Mondays and Wednesdays and either discussions of the assigned reading or a class activity on Fridays. Exceptions will be made where necessary to maintain the lecture schedule.

I. Disparate Images: Women in the American Colonies

September 4-8: The First American Women (No Class Monday)

Read: Jensen, "Native American Women and Agriculture"

September 11-15: New Women in a New Land

Read: Ulrich, "A Friendly Neighbor"; and Carr and Walsh, "The Planter's Wife"

September 18-22: Women Rebels

Read: Koehler, "The Weaker Sex"; and Kulikoff, "The Beginnings of the Afro-American Family"

September 25-29: Women in Revolutionary America

Film: *Mary Silliman's War*

Read: Skemp, *Judith Sargent Murray*, pp. 3-120

FIRST ESSAY DUE MONDAY, OCTOBER 2

II. Emerging Ideals: Woman's Sphere in Antebellum America

October 2-6: Defining Woman's Sphere

Read: Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, Introduction and Chaps. 1 and 2

October 9-13: Living in Woman's Sphere

Read: Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, Chaps. 3 and 5; and Sklar, "Victorian Women"

October 16-20: Expanding Woman's Sphere

Read: Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, Chap. 4 and Conclusion; and Smith-Rosenberg, "Beauty, the Beast and the Militant Woman"

MIDTERM EXAM

III. Varieties of Experience: Women's Lives in Antebellum America

October 23-27: Western Women

Read: Riley, "Women and Indians"; and Cheng, "Chinese Immigrant Women"

October 30-November 3: Working Women

Read: Lasser, "Domestic Balance of Power"; and Dublin, "Women, Work, and Protest"

November 6-10: Immigrant Women (No Class Friday)

Read: No reading assignment. Get started on Jacobs, *Incidents*.

November 13-17: Southern Women

Read: White, "Female Slaves"; and Jacobs, *Incidents*, pp. 5-155

SECOND ESSAY DUE MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20

IV. Changes in Prospect: Women's Activism in Antebellum America

November 20-24: Women, Work, and Reform (No Class Wednesday or Friday)

Film: *Hearts and Hands*

Read: Lerner, "The Political Activities of Antislavery Women"

November 27-December 1: Women's Rights

Read: Sklar, *Women's Rights Emerges*, 1-72, 77-190

December 4-8: Women and the Civil War

Read: Sklar, *Women's Rights Emerges*, 72-76, 191-204

December 11-15: Woman Suffrage

Film: *One Woman, One Vote*

Read: No reading assignment. Prepare for final exam!

FINAL EXAM