First Wave American Feminism

Spring 2015

Adelaide Johnson (left), June Lewis, and June Adams at the dedication of Johnson's college entrance portrait, Monument to Louisa Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony, at the U.S. Capitol, National Park Co. February 15, 1913.

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Class Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:50

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This course explores the quest for gender equality from the end of the American Revolution through the emancipation of women in 1820, a period when scholars have identified as the “First Wave” of American feminism. The course investigates the social movements, political thought, and the changing trajectories of power for “women” in the “long nineteenth century,” situating the female gender in the changing intersectional contexts of race, class, sexuality, household status, and citizenship. The course focuses in particular on the origins of notions of gender justice—how and when they emerged, what aspects of women’s lives they addressed, their resistance for differently situated women, and how the discourses were shaped by their contexts. To that end, it identifies particular moments: the ideology of the American Revolution; antebellum reform movements including utopianism, and abolitionism, post-Civil War sectionalism, racism and reaction within and among various parts of the “Woman Movement” (as it was then called); anti-lynching activism in national and international perspective; the temperance movement as imperial and domestic reform; populism and related labor and socialist agitation; birth control and eugenic activism; progressivism and global missionary endeavors.

Requirements:
The course requires (1) regular course attendance, (2) class participation, (3) completion of weekly reading assignments and (4) four assigned BlackBoard postings due on particular dates before class (see the end of this syllabus for information on BlackBoard postings).

In addition, three major written projects are also assigned:

1. A “mini-edition” compiled as part of an archival research team which will work together on a particular collection in the Oberlin College Archive to produce a portfolio that includes:
   a. A cooperative produced introduction to the collection, about 500-1,500 words in length, which explains the project’s significance as a whole
   b. An individually produced transcription of 500-2,000 words from a particular document or series of documents. Each transcription will include:
      - A heading of document identifying information
      - A 150-500 word introductory note
      - Appropriate annotation notes that identify elements of the document that may be unfamiliar to readers
   c. A group bibliography
   d. Visuals relevant to your transcription, including the provided scans of transcribed documents

2. An individually completed critical book review/essay based on a volume chosen from the list supplied in the forthcoming assignment handout. This book review should also reference other materials explored in the context of this course.

3. A final examination essay, addressing the work of the course synthetically, completed during, or before, the examination period assigned for the course, Thursday, May 14, 2-4 pm.

Approximately one half of the class will produce their archival projects in the first half of the semester, due on March 20, at class time; the other half will produce their archival projects for the second half of the semester, with these projects due May 8 at class time. During the first week of class, you will be asked for your preferences for due dates. You will also be asked for your preferences for teammates.

Students whose archives projects are due the first half of the semester will produce their book review essay for the second half of the semester, due on May 8; students whose archives projects are due the second half of the semester will produce their book review essay for the first half of the semester, due on March 20.

For further descriptions of these assignments, including information on BlackBoard postings and grading, please see BlackBoard site and the handouts to follow.

A Note on Assigned Readings:
Most reading assignments are available online at the History 213 BlackBoard site. You are encouraged to print or download these readings out, annotate them as you read, and bring them to class for discussion. Two important exceptions:

Please make arrangements to purchase or borrow
   Allison L. Snider, Suffragists in an Imperial Age, Oxford University Press, 2008
   (Assigned for April 30)
Thursday, February 19
Margaret Fuller: Constructing Romantic Feminism

Questions to Consider:
- Why does Fuller use the term "Romantic"? What does this term signify to Fuller?
- In what ways does Fuller critique the prevailing views of women at the time?
- What does Fuller mean when she refers to the "intellectual heroism" of women? Give specific examples from her writing.
- What is Fuller's vision for women's role in society, and how does she propose to achieve it?

Assignment: Required Reading 45

Thursday, February 24

For Students Writing Book Excerpts Due March 19

For Students Writing Book Excerpts Due March 19

Assignment: Required Reading 46

American Slavery, Racism, Nationalism, and Women's Rights

Thursday, February 21

Required Reading:
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain (1884). The text in the collection, all.
- *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair (1906). The text in the collection, all.

Thursday, February 22

Revolutionary Becky: Domesticity, Women's Rights, and the Sexualization of Virtue: Moral Reform in the North

Required Reading:

Thursday, February 23

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Assignment: Required Reading 46

American Slavery, Racism, Nationalism, and Women's Rights

Required Reading:
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain (1884).
Questions to Consider:
- What traditions do the Grimkés use in appealing to women? And in which women are they appealing?
- What for them is the relationship of slavery and the situation of women?
- On what basis do they argue for the equality of women?
- What changes do they seek, and how do they imagine that these changes will come about?

Assignment: Required Posting #4

Thursday, February 26
Getting to Seneca Falls: Education, Work and Family

Tuesday, March 3
Early Black Feminisms

Unveiling of bust of Sojourner Truth at Emancipation Hall, U.S. Capitol, April 18, 2009
Just before Truth’s bust was revealed, First Lady Michelle Obama had some remarks on what the event means to her: “The power of this bust will not just be in the words that define Sojourner Truth’s face; it will also be in the message that defines her legacy,” she said. “Forever more, she will be one of our country’s greatest monuments of liberty and equality, justice and freedom. Sojourner’s Truth story will be told again and again and again and again.”

Required Readings: (all on History 213 BlackBoard Site)
- Maria W. Stewart, “Mrs. Stewart’s Farewell Address” (1833)
- Sojourner Truth, Two versions of the Akron Speech (1851)
- Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, (1861)
- Lucy Stanton, “Plea for the Oppressed” (1850)

Questions to Consider:
- How does Stanton describe the origins of the Seneca Falls Convention?
- What issues were raised at the Convention? How “thinkable” were they in context?
- What controversies did the Convention spark?
- How did the Rochester Convention differ from Seneca Falls?

Assignment: Required Posting #5

Thursday, March 5

Convening Women: 1848-1852
- Required Readings:
  - Elizabeth Cady Stanton biography from Notable American Women:
  - Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “The First Woman’s Rights Convention,” from Elizabeth Cady Stanton As Revealed in Her Letters, Diary, and Reminiscences. on History 213 BlackBoard site;
  - “The Seneca Falls Convention and the Rochester Convention, 1848” from Chapter IV: New York in Stanton et al., History of Woman Suffrage, Volume 1, on History 213 BlackBoard Site
- Lois D. Ginzberg, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Introduction,” pp. 3-14

Questions to Consider:
- How does Stanton describe the origins of the Seneca Falls Convention?
- What issues were raised at the Convention? How “thinkable” were they in context?
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- How did the Rochester Convention differ from Seneca Falls?

Assignment: Required Posting #6

Special Event
Friday, March 6 at 4:30
Talk by Lori Ginberg, OC 1978, Professor of History and Women’s Studies, Penn State University
"Rights, Racism, and A Very Radical Proposition:
The Complex Legacies of Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s Feminism."

Tuesday, March 10:
Multiple Sources, Multiple Goals: Rights and Respect
Your book choice is...
Tuesday, April 14

Race, Gender and Reconstruction

- Required Reading:
  - Crystal Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching*, Chapters 1-3
  - Be sure to make arrangements in advance to have this book!

- Questions to Consider:
  - In what ways did Black women and white women experience the end of the Civil War differently?
  - How did Rebecca Felton understand “Chivalry” and “protection”? Did she have a “feminist” understanding of white southern women?
  - What propelled Ida B. Wells into public activism?
  - How did Wells “perform” gender?

Thursday, April 16

Race, Gender and “Redemption”

- Required Reading:
  - Crystal Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching*, Chapters 4-8
  - You may also find this website of interest, but warning: it is disturbing: http://www.withoutsecurity.org/main.html

- Questions to Consider:
  - Can you compare and contrast the ways Wells-Barnett and Felton explained the connections between lynching and rape?
  - Did Felton change in the ways she understood the intersections of race and gender? Did her thinking about white women change? Did her thinking about Black women change?
  - How would you explain the reason that Rebecca Latimer Felton became the first woman seated in the US Senate?
  - Why did Wells-Barnett remain so controversial?

- Assignment: Required Posting #9

Tuesday, April 21

Labor Feminism: Working Women and Their Allies

- Required Readings (all on History 213 BlackBoard Site)
  - Florence Kelley, “Working Women’s Need of the Ballet” (1902)
  - Louis Brandeis and Josephine Goldmark, Brief for Defendant, Muller v. Oregon (1907) excerpts
  - Official Report of Strike Committee, Chicago Garment Workers Strike, 1911
  - Supreme Court Decision, Muller v. Oregon (1908) Questions to Consider:
    - Did women’s industrial issues differ from men’s?
    - What differences do you see in difficulties in organizing women into unions?
    - What kinds of arguments do Brandeis and Goldmark make about protecting women? What do you make of these in historical context?

- Assignment: Posting #10

Thursday, April 23

“The Reunification” of the Suffrage Movement: At What Cost?

- Suffrage and Empire: Part One
  - Required Reading:
    - Allison Snider, *Suffragists in An Imperial Age*, Chapters 1-3
    - Be sure to make arrangements in advance to have this book!
  - Questions to Consider:
    - How did suffragists think about American expansion?
    - What notions of gender did Euro-American women bring to their consideration of questions of empire?

- Suffrage and Empire: Part Two
  - Required Reading:
    - Allison Snider, *Suffragists in An Imperial Age*, Chapters 4-5 and Epilogue
  - Questions to Consider:
    - How did suffragists use empire to advance their cause?
    - Was there a difference in the ways suffragists thought about Western expansion and territorial acquisition? Why or why not?
    - Did Black and white women share positions on imperialism and suffrage?

- Assignment: Required Posting #11

Tuesday, May 5

The Twisted History of Reproductive Self Sovereignty

- Required Readings: (all on History 213 BlackBoard Site)
  - Emma Goldman, “Woman Suffrage,” (1911)
  - Emma Goldman, “The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation,” (1911)
  - Emma Goldman, “Marriage and Love,”
  - Margaret Sanger, “Family Limitation” (1917)
  - Margaret Sanger, Excerpts from *Woman and the New Race*, (1924), pp. viii-x, 1-12, 23-46,
  - Margaret Sanger, “The Case for Birth Control,” (1924)

- Questions to Consider:
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**Diagram:**

[Diagram image]

**Note:**

This equipment should be handled with care. Please follow the instructions on the packaging and transport it securely. If any issues arise during transportation, please contact us immediately. Thank you for your cooperation.