

Dr. Elizabeth Bryant
Room 420
Wednesday 17:00-18:30

The Politics of Gender in U.S. History

Course Description:

This course explores the politics of gender in the United States focusing on the uses of sexuality for social control from the American Revolution to the present. This class will emphasize U.S. women's history, but also trace how the changing definition of gender for both males and females has impacted general historical trends. We will discuss historiographical and theoretical developments from early efforts to "place women in history" to more recent attempts to utilize gender as a category of historical analysis and work to understand it in relation to race, class, and sexuality.

Course Objectives:

To study gender as a system of power relations that manifests itself in many realms of American history.

To understand the diversity of gendered experiences in American life.

To examine how women have attempted to define, maintain, or gain power in changing historical circumstances.

To understand some of the political, social, & economic constraints imposed on women.

To understand how idealized forms of masculinity and femininity changed in the United States.

To develop writing and critical thinking skills.

To take what you have learned in this course and see the continuing implications and relevance.

Assessment:

Exams: There will be one midterm and one final which can include multiple choice, fill in the blank, true/false, short answer and/or essay questions. The material covered on the test will come from class lectures and the assigned articles. Please note: the final exam is not cumulative, but several questions will test you on important themes that have been repeated throughout the semester. Each exam is worth 35% of your grade.

Attendance and Participation: This includes but is not limited to pop quizzes and participation in class discussions. You will not be successful in this course without regular class attendance. This is worth 10% of your grade.

Paper: Each student will complete a paper analyzing the use of gender stereotypes in film. Guidelines for this will be handed out in class. This is worth 20% of your grade.

Reading Materials:

All articles assigned for this course will be available on AGH's Scholar's Panel

Schedule:

**** Please note that this schedule is tentative and schedule to change at the instructor's discretion**

Week 1: Introduction; Women in the American Revolution

Week 2: The Cult of Domesticity and the idea of "Separate Spheres"

Week 3: Women in Antebellum America and the idea of "True Womanhood"; Women's Social Activism

Week 4: Seneca Falls Declaration; Racial Challenges to the Women's Rights Movement

Week 5: The Civil War

Week 6: Industrial America and the New Working Woman

Week 7: The Progressive Movement; the Suffrage Movement; Urban Reform

Week 8: American Women in the Jazz Age and Great Depression

Week 9: Test 1

Week 10: World War II; Rosie the Riveter vs. Sally the Secretary

Week 11: 1950s and the June Cleaver Ideal

Week 12: The *Feminine Mystique*; birth control; changing sexual norms in 1960s America

Week 13: Emergence of the Modern Feminist Movement; Equal Rights Amendment; Abortion

Week 14: New Concepts of Masculinity and Femininity; AIDS; Emergence of the Homosexual Rights Movement

Week 15: Melting Pot America vs. Salad Bowl America and the Politicization of the Women's Rights Movement in the Face of Political Correctness; New Politics of the Body; Changing Familial Structures in America

Week 16: "I'm not a feminist but..." - A Modern Examination of the Women's Rights Movement and Where It Can Go from Here