



### WOMEN IN AMERICA, 1600-1865

This course seeks to introduce students to women's experiences in the past as a vital component of the making of the United States. In addition, we will explore the history (historiography) of the study of women. Students will read and analyze both primary accounts -- letters, diaries, slave narratives, and novels -- and recent secondary studies that use methods of social history and gender analysis to reconstruct our understanding of American history. During the semester, we will have both lectures, class discussions, and class presentations, a mid-term exam, and a final paper.

**Dr. Phyllis Hunter**

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**Office Hours: W 3:30-4:30 Thurs 4:00-5:00**

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**TEXTS:**

Nancy Hewitt and Kirsten Delegard, *Women Families and Communities: Readings in American History*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2008

Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980

Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple* with Introduction by Cathy Davidson. Oxford University Press, 1986. (Originally published in London in 1791 as *Charlotte, A Tale of Truth*. 1<sup>st</sup> American edition published by Matthew Carey in Philadelphia in 1794.)

These texts are available for purchase at the University Bookstore.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

1. Students will learn the changing customs and conditions of life for women in America from 1500 to 1865.
2. Students will explore, through readings, class discussions, and writing assignments, the socially constructed nature of gender and how ideas about gender changed over time.
3. Students will learn about the changing representations of women in the past
4. Students will learn to develop interpretations of primary and secondary sources on the history of women as demonstrated in class discussion, writing assignments, and class presentations.
5. Students will be able to apply historical interpretation and gender analyses to a case study of an individual women who lived during a part of the historical period covered.
6. Students will gain experience in presenting their findings to the class orally and in writing.

**REQUIREMENTS****CLASS PARTICIPATION:**

The most important requirement for this course is a careful reading of the

assignments and thoughtful participation in class discussion and group exercises. The assigned reading must be done before coming to class. When you read: take notes, write down questions, talk to the text as you read along. Become an active reader, imagine you are looking at the same evidence and having a conversation with the author about it. Then share your ideas and questions in class. You will be graded on class participation.

Attendance is required and more than three absences will adversely affect your grade. Please bring the appropriate texts, reading notes, and any relevant handouts to class with you.

### FINAL PAPER:

In this paper students are to use primary sources and the understanding of developments in American women's history gained during the course to research and interpret a woman or community of women that lived during the period under study (1600-1865). The lives of your subjects must be carefully grounded in appropriate historical context. I hope you will choose something that relates closely to your own life -- a paper on your own ancestors or a study of women in your home town if it was settled during the period -- a topic you will enjoy delving into. You might want to research the role of women in your favorite sport or craft, or in a place you have visited with family or friends. Another possibility is to follow up on something in the reading that you find particularly intriguing. You will be doing a 5-10 minute presentation of your final project to the class. You will also turn in a written paper. Both elements will be part of your grade. The length of the paper should be 6-8 pages with at least three additional pages of supplementary materials such as copies of inventories, letters, maps, deeds, and other primary sources. Detailed instructions will be provided later in the course.

### COURSE GRADES:

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Class Participation                    | 30%        |
| Mid-term Exam and shorter written work | 30%        |
| Final /Paper                           | <u>40%</u> |
|  | 100%       |

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

Read consistently and participate in class -- we will all have a lot more fun and begin to feel the joy of learning, of grappling with questions, of understanding how other historians have answered those questions, and of begin to develop our own historical interpretations. Since this course does not have a final exam, what you do from week to week will be directly related to your success in the course. It won't work to wait until the

last minute.

If you have items you have come across in other reading, on TV (if you have time for this!), movies, etc. that relate to the course -- even present day concerns -- bring them to class and share them with us. If you have any concerns or problems related to the course or things you are interested in and want to discuss further, come to office hours -- or just stop in to say hello!

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### DOING WOMEN'S HISTORY

Mon – Aug 25 Introduction  
Wed – Aug 27 Lecture: The History of Women's History

### NATIVES AND STRANGERS

**Reading:** Hewitt, *Women Families and Communities*, “Introduction”  
and Chapter 1 (Townsend)

Mon – Sept 1 OFF Labor Day  
Wed – Sept 3 Class discussion and Pocahontas.

### COLONIAL AMERICAN WOMEN

**Reading:** Hewitt, *Women Families and Communities*, Chapter 3 (Ulrich)

Mon – Sept 8 Lecture: Regional Differences  
Wed. – Sept 10 Class Discussion

Mon – Sept 15 Midwife’s Tale  
Wed. – Sept 17 Library Workshop on Diaries (in CITI lab at Library)

**Reading:** Hewitt, *Women Families and Communities*, Chapter 2 (Morgan)

Mon – Sept 22 Class Discussion **Due:** Selection of Diary Woman  
Wed – Sept 24 Visit to Petitions Project

### WOMEN IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

**Reading:** Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters*, Chapters 2 and 3

Mon – Sept 29 Class Discussion  
Wed – Oct 1 Mary Silliman’s War

**Reading:** Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters*, Chapters 6 and 7

Mon -- Oct 6 Class Discussion



Wed -- Nov 26      OFF! Thanksgiving  
Mon -- Dec 1        *Little Women*

### **FINAL PROJECTS**

Wed -- Dec 3            Presentations on Final Papers  
Mon -- Dec 8            Presentations on Final Papers

Fri -- Dec 12            **Final Papers Due by noon in my folder or box.**