

AMST 450
Women in American Society
Section 6, Spring 2005

Professor Terri L. Snyder

EC 648; (714) 278-3748

snyder@fullerton.edu

Office Hours: 11:30-12:30; 2:30-3:00, TR

Graduate Assistants

Melissa Anderson, cmander2@student.fullerton.edu and

Kristiane Joy, krisrjoy@yahoo.com

Office Hours: 9:15-9:45 T, EC 623

Course Description. This course studies gender relations in American culture, surveying the experiences of women from an interdisciplinary viewpoint. Because this is a large task we cast our net widely, considering the impact of legal doctrine, political events, educational philosophy, and scientific and technological developments, as well as the effect of region, migration, industrialization, and consumerism on the lives of American women. Our inquiry also extends to the subject of difference: we will consider how and why differences of race, class, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation have shaped female experience and cultural definitions of femininity. Finally, since the readings illustrate several approaches to the study of women, they allow us to sample a variety of methodologies used in the cultural analysis of gender.

Assessment and Requirements. Course requirements include two examinations, a midterm (50%) and a final (50%), scheduled on the dates indicated below. Examinations may include both written, essay length take-home and in-class components. In accordance with the General Education writing requirement, a portion of the mid-term exam will include an essay written outside of class; your response to the question asked will be typewritten (4-5pages) and due in class on the date scheduled for the mid-term exam. Your grade on this portion of the midterm will be based not only on your examination of relevant course materials, but also on clarity of expression, organization of ideas, conceptual understanding, and grammar. An optional essay will be available to students after the midterm examination. Make up examinations and late papers are not allowed without an official, compelling excuse. All work is expected to originate with you; plagiarism in any form on any assignment will result in a failing grade for the class. Thoughtful participation in class discussion will be assessed positively in determining your final grade, particularly in borderline cases. Correspondingly, consistent absences, late arrivals to or early departures from class will be assessed negatively. Please complete the assigned readings by the date indicated on the syllabus.

Learning Goals. This course fulfills GE categories III.C.2 (Implications and Explorations and Participatory Experience in the Social Sciences), IV. (Lifelong Learning), and V. (Cultural Diversity), except for American Studies majors who are using the course to fulfill major requirements. American Studies 450 provides an overview of several intersecting themes in the social sciences from an interdisciplinary

perspective. It draws upon an array of primary and secondary documents in order to consider psychological, sociological, cultural, and biological perspectives on the various meanings of womanhood in America and how these meanings change over time. Second, the course analyzes the experiences of women at various points in their life cycles, that is, from birth to old age. At different life cycle stages the course examines the ways in which the convergence of biology, psychology, technology, and culture influence the life experiences of individual women. Third, the course considers various historical and cross-cultural perspectives on women in the U.S. and focuses on diversity and how particular cultural and ethnic histories shape women's experience. Fourth, American Studies 450 examines civic responsibility as it has been historically related to women and considers key legal decisions affecting women. These approaches allow for an analysis of women in the political and familial realms and encourage students to weigh the causes and consequences of public and private decisions.

Books. The following books are required for the class and can be purchased at Little Professor Bookstore. Please do not substitute editions. Readings designated (ER) can be obtained via electronic reserve from the University Library. Most students will find it helpful to bring the appropriate reading to class with them.

1. Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron DeHart, eds., *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 6th edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Paperback. ISBN: 0195159829.
2. Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers*, 3rd edition (New York: Persea Books, 2003). Paperback. ISBN: 0892552905.
3. Julia Alvarez, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* (New York: Plume, 1992). Paperback. ISBN: 0452268060.

AMERICAN STUDIES 450 SYLLABUS

DATE CLASS TOPIC AND READING ASSIGNMENT

PART ONE: GENDER IDENTITY IN EARLY AMERICA

2/1-3 Introduction to Class; Early American Gender Systems
Reading: K&D, Introduction, 25-29
Documents: Richter, *Iroquois Creation Myth* (ER)
 King James Bible, *Genesis* (ER)

- 2/8-10 Early American Legalities
Reading: K&D, Karlsen
Documents: K&D, *Trial of Anne Hutchinson*; *The Law of Domestic Relations*
- 2/15-17 Households and Sexuality in Early America
Reading: K&D, Norton, Plane, Dayton
Documents: K&D, *The Law of Slavery*
- 2/22-24 Work and Education
Reading: K&D, Ulrich, Berkin, Block
Film: *A Midwife's Tale*
- 3/1-3 Politics and Print Culture
Reading: K&D, Kerber
Documents: *The Female Marine* (ER)
The Speech of Polly Baker (ER)

PART TWO: GENDER IDENTITY IN INDUSTRIALIZING AMERICA

- 3/8-10 Households, Marriage, and Sexuality
Reading: Smith Rosenberg, Mohr
Documents: Birth Control Advertisements (Handout)
- 3/15-17 Work and Education
Reading: K&D, Boydston, Faust
Documents: K&D, The Testimony of Slave Women
Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (ER)
- 3/22 Midterm Examination
- 3/24 Print and Popular Culture
Reading: K&D, Sicherman
Documents: *Little Women* (ER)
- 3/29-31 No Class, Spring Break
- 4/5-7 Politics and Legalities
Reading: K&D, Painter
Documents: K&D, *Claiming Rights I, II*; *After the Civil War*
- 4/12-14 Immigration and Reforming America
Reading: K&D, Schechter, Gordon
Documents: Yeziarska, *Bread Givers*
K&D, *Claiming an Education*

PART THREE: GENDER AND IDENTITY IN MODERN AMERICA

- 4/19-21 Sexuality
Reading: K&D, Reagan, Freedman
Documents: K&D, *Margaret Sanger*
Film: *The Pill*
- 4/26-28 Work and Education
Reading: K&D, Franke
Documents: K&D, *Dimensions of Citizenship, II, IV*
 K&D, *The Changing Workplace*
- 5/3-5 Popular Culture
Reading: K&D, Brumberg, Douglas, Bordo
Documents: Judy Blume, *Are You There God? Its Me, Margaret* (ER)
- 5/10-12 The Politics of Feminism
Reading: K&D, DeHart and Lewis
Documents: K&D, *Making the Personal Political*
 K&D, *Dimensions of Citizenship III*
- 5/17-19 Post-Feminism
Document: How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents
Film: *Real Women Have Curves*
- 5/24 Final Examination, 9:30-11:20