

HISTORY 780:  
Graduate Seminar in U.S. History: Antebellum Reform

Dr. Barbara Loomis

Fall 2006

Old Science 272, ext. 87537

E-mail: [barbaral@sfsu.edu](mailto:barbaral@sfsu.edu)

Home: 510-658-9271

Office hours: Monday, 2-4, 5-6:30, Wednesday, 2-4,  
and by appointment

**Course overview:**

This graduate-level seminar samples the rich array of historical interpretations of antebellum reform. We will indulge ourselves in reading some informative and innovative research, and in the process, we will address some of the larger interpretive questions posed by the movements to transform society in the years between 1820 and the beginning of the Civil War. Students will have three major responsibilities in the course: to digest, critique, and discuss the required readings each week, to analyze these readings in one-page essays due weekly and in a longer, 6-8 page historiographical essay, and to write a 15-20 page essay. While the main premise of the course is that most students will undertake a primary research project, the long essay may also be an extended review of secondary literature about a single topic. (A separate handout will explain the requirements for the secondary literature review.)

**Readings:**

Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840*.

Lori Ginzberg, *Untidy Origins*

Paul Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century America*.

Timothy McCarthy and John Stauffer, eds., *Prophets of Protest*.

Richard Newman, *Transformation of American Abolitionism*.

James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors*.

Ronald Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860*.

### **Requirements:**

1. Class participation: discussing the readings each week and presenting an oral report of your own research findings – 25% of the grade.
2. Written work:
  - a. One-page essays, which answer a question posed about the readings for each week (explained more fully in a separate hand-out). Worth 10% of the grade.
  - b. A 6-8 page historiographical essay on all or some of the class readings – 20% of the grade.
  - c. A 15-20 page essay, along with preliminary projects, which may be based either on research in primary sources or on extensive readings in secondary literature. NOTE: ***In order to pass the course, all students must turn in a rough draft and a revised final copy of the essay, with footnotes and bibliography.*** This set of projects will account for 45% of the total grade.

### **Calendar of Events:**

- Aug. 28: Introductions  
The Rediscovery of Antebellum Reform
- Sept. 4: LABOR DAY--no class
- Sept. 11: Walters, *American Reformers*, entire.
- Sept. 18: Johnson and Wilentz, *Kingdom of Matthias*.
- Sept. 25: Boylan, *Origins of Women's Activism*
- Oct. 2: No class meeting—at work on initial primary research project.
- Oct. 9: Ginzberg, *Untidy Origins*.  
Primary source reports due; we will also discuss this first foray into the library.
- Oct. 16: Stewart, *Holy Warriors*
- Oct. 23: Newman, *Transformation of American Abolitionism*

Preliminary **Research Proposal** due today.

- Oct. 30: McCarthy and Stauffer, eds. *Prophets of Protest*  
 Nov. 6: Historiographical essays due today.  
 Finalized **Research Proposal** due today, with **Bibliography** (in accurate, *University of Chicago Manual* style). Note the handout, providing guidelines, which suggests a possible merger of these two assignments.
- Nov. 13: No class meeting—I'll be available for individual consultations until at least 8:00—later if you schedule an appointment.
- Nov. 20: NO CLASS--Thanksgiving holiday week.
- Nov. 27: Class meets briefly for progress reports. Bring a thesis statement and a working outline of essay to class.
- Dec. 4: ROUGH DRAFTS DUE. Bring two copies to class: one for me and one for your editor/partner.
- Dec. 11: No class meeting. At work, communing with your word processor.
- Dec. 18: Presentation of research findings. Presentations not to exceed 10 minutes.**ALL DRAFTS DUE TODAY!!!**