

WOMEN IN MODERN EUROPE

History 347
Fall 2008

Sarah Curtis
TTh 2:10-3:25

“I read it [history] a little as a duty; but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars and pestilences in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all, it is very tiresome; and yet I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention.”

Catherine Morland to Mr. Tilney in Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*

“What one wants, I thought – and why does not some brilliant student at Newnham or Girton supply it? – is a mass of information; at what age did she marry; how many children had she as a rule; what was her house like; had she a room to herself; did she do the cooking: would she be likely to have a servant? All these facts lie somewhere, presumably, in parish registers and account books; the life of the average Elizabethan woman must be scattered about somewhere, could one collect it and make a book of it. It would be ambitious beyond my daring, I thought, looking about the shelves for books that were not there, to suggest to the students of those famous colleges that they should rewrite history, though I own that it often seems a little queer as it is, unreal, lop-sided.”

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course surveys the history of European women from about 1750 to the present. In addition to restoring women's voices to history, we will examine well-known historical events from the perspective of women's history, look at ideas about women, and examine the historical roots of issues and debates still informing the lives of European women. We will give some attention to issues of gender, masculinity, and sexuality.

READING:

The following books are required and are available for purchase at the bookstore.

Bridenthal, Stuard, Wiesner, *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, 3d ed.

Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre* (Broadview Press)

Helen Zenna Smith, *Not So Quiet* (Feminist Press)

Alexandra Kollontai, *Love of Worker Bees* (Academy Press Chicago)

Erica Fischer, *Aimée & Jaguar: A Love Story, Berlin 1943* (Alyson Publications)

Fadela Amara, *Breaking the Silence: French Women's Voices from the Ghetto* (UC Press)

The *Becoming Visible* text is intended to give you background material to complement the lectures and is also on reserve in the library. The remaining books, all novels and memoirs, will form the basis of discussions and writing assignments.

FILMS:

You are required to view the following films during the semester (dates on schedule). They are available for viewing (but not borrowing) at the Media Access Center on the third floor of the library (advance reservations required), but you are also welcome to view them at home if you wish to rent them in a store or online.

A Doll House (1973 film with Anthony Hopkins and Claire Bloom)

Vera Drake (dir. Mike Leigh, 2004)

Four Days, Three Weeks, Two Days (dir. Cristian Mungui, 2007)

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES:

Some of the readings are available on electronic reserves at the library. They can be accessed via the internet on campus or at home at the following address: <http://eres.sfsu.edu/> (or by the link on the library web page or my web page). The password for this course is Tristan. (If you are having trouble logging in, check that you have capitalized and correctly spelled the password.) These readings are indicated on the schedule with the abbreviation ER. For readings directly accessible on the web, the URL is given in the syllabus; there is also a link from my web page.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The requirements for this course include regular class attendance, participation in discussions, and completion of all written work. The assigned readings should be finished by Thursdays, when we will discuss them. Also due that day – in class – is a thoughtful one-page response (typed, size 12 font, double-spaced) to the question posed on the syllabus; you will receive a tentative grade and written feedback from the TA. These will not be accepted late. At the end of the semester (December 11), you will turn in your entire portfolio of response questions for a final letter grade from the instructor; out of ten responses, the eight best will count towards this grade.

There will also be two formal papers (5-6 pp.) during the semester (due October 2 and November 6) as well as a take-home final due December 18. Paper topics will be handed out in class.

GRADING:

Grades will be determined as follows: each paper 20%, responses 20%, final 25%, class discussion 15%. Students who wish to take the course CR/NC can change their grading status via “My SFSU” by October 21.

Graduate students will have one additional assignment. Please see assignment sheet for details. Graduate student grades will be determined as follows: each paper 15%, book review 15%, responses 20%, final 20%, class discussion 15%.

Late papers will be marked down one half-grade (e.g. from an A to an A-) if they are turned in in the same week (please ask the history department to date stamp them if I am not in), two half-grades (e.g. from an A to a B+) if they are turned in by the following Tuesday, and one full grade (e.g. from an A to a B) if they are turned in the following Thursday. Papers more than one week late will not be accepted. Response questions will not be accepted late.

If you are unable to complete the course requirements by the end of semester, it is your responsibility to withdraw from the course. I will issue no instructor-initiated withdrawals or incompletes. Student-initiated incompletes are reserved for serious medical excuses (with documentation) or other natural disasters within the last three weeks of the semester. The last day to drop a course without a “W” is September 23, and the last day to withdraw with a “W” (except in extreme circumstances) is November 21.

OFFICE HOURS AND CONTACT INFORMATION:

Tuesday 3:30-5:00, Thursday, 12:30-2:00, and by appointment
office location: Science 267 phone: 338-2250
e-mail: scurtis@sfsu.edu website: <http://bss.sfsu.edu/scurtis>
TA: Georgianna Newell (georgianna.n@gmail.com)

SCHEDULE:

Week 1 August 26-28

The "Woman Question" during the Enlightenment

BV, chap. 9

Rousseau and Wollstonecraft documents (ER)

(Begin *Jane Eyre*, chaps. 1-10)

Response question: What is the most important difference between Rousseau and Wollstonecraft’s views of women’s education?

Week 2 September 2-4

Women and Citizenship in a Revolutionary Age

BV, chap. 10

(Continue *Jane Eyre*, chaps. 11-20)

Olympe de Gouges, “Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen” (available at

<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/drmanwom.html>)

Napoleonic Code (ER)

Week 3 September 9-11

The Impact of Industrialization

BV, chap. 11

(Continue *Jane Eyre*, chaps. 21-30)

Flora Tristan, “The Worker’s Union” (ER)

Week 4 September 16-18

Home Sweet Home: The Cult of Domesticity

Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management, chap. 1 and skim another chapter
(available at <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/b/beeton/household/>)

Flora Annie Steel, "The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook" (ER)
(Finish *Jane Eyre*, chaps. 30-39)

Response question: According to these two texts (Mrs. Beeton and Flora Annie Steel), what are the values and standards of a good housewife at home and in the colonies?

Week 5 September 23-25

The Victorian Woman

BV, chap. 14

Jane Eyre, Appendices B, C, D

Response question: Choose one female character in *Jane Eyre* and explain how she exemplifies Victorian women more generally.

Week 6 September 30-October 2

Paper due in class on Thursday

The Birth of Feminism? Women's Political Rights

BV, chap. 12

Josephine Butler, "The Contagious Diseases Acts" (ER)

Week 7 October 7-9

The New Woman

Film: *A Doll House*

Alternatively, you can read the play (online text at Project Gutenberg,
<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/2542>)

Response question: Why do you think many nineteenth-century playgoers were shocked by the ending of "A Doll House"?

Week 8 October 14-16

The Suffrage Question

BV, chap. 13

Emmeline Pankhurst, "Why We Are Militant" (ER)

Suffrage Drama: "How the Vote Was Won" and "Votes for Men" (ER)

Response question: What methods did suffragettes like Pankhurst or the characters in the plays think were necessary to get women the vote?

Week 9 October 21-23

New Roles: Women during World War I

Smith, *Not So Quiet*

Response question: In what ways have the service women in this novel been “masculinized” by the war?

Week 10 October 28-30

Women and the Communist Revolution

BV, chap. 15

Kollontai, *Love of Worker Bees*: “Three Generations”; “Sisters”

Response question: How has the Russian Revolution transformed relationships between men and women in these stories?

Week 11 November 4-6

Paper due in class on Thursday

Flappers, Fashion, and Natalism

BV, chap. 16

Week 12 November 11-13

Tuesday: Veterans’ Day Holiday

Women and Fascism

BV, chap. 17

Begin *Aimée and Jaguar*

Week 13 November 18-20

Graduate student book review due November 20

World War II: Collaboration and Resistance

Finish *Aimée and Jaguar*

Response question: According to this memoir, how much freedom did women have in Nazi Germany to live outside sexual and gender norms?

Thanksgiving Holiday

November 25-27

Week 14 December 2-4

Postwar Women: East and West

BV, chap. 18

Films: Vera Drake; Four Months, Three Weeks, Two Days

Response question: Discuss one significant difference between getting an illegal abortion in postwar Britain and late 1980s Romania.

Week 15 December 9-11

The New European Woman

BV, chaps. 19-20

Simone de Beauvoir, "I Am a Feminist" (ER)

Fadela Amara, *Breaking the Silence*

Response question: According to Amara, what is the status of Muslim women in secular and republican France?

Turn in entire portfolio of response questions written during the semester on Thursday, December 11. (I will not accept these with the final.)

Thursday, December 18, 1:30-4:00

Take-home final due

Graduate student assignment (due November 20)

Graduate students in history enrolled in History 342 will be expected to complete the regular assignments as well as a book review on one of the following books:

- Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern*
Olwen H. Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution*
Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*
Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man*
Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class*
Françoise Barret-Ducrocq, *Love in the Time of Victoria: Sexuality and Desire among Working-Class Men and Women in Nineteenth-Century London*
Rachel Fuchs, *Poor and Pregnant in Paris*
Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*
Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*
Bonnie G. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: The Bourgeoises of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century*
Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928*
Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women*
Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany*
Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915*
Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945*
Carolyn Eichner, *Surmounting the Barricades: Women in the Paris Commune*
Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914*
Laura E. Nym Mayhall, *The Militant Suffrage Movement: Citizenship and Resistance in Britain, 1860-1930*
Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*
Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*
Angela Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War*
Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War*
Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927*
Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*
Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics*
Mary Lowenthal Felstiner, *To Paint Her Life: Charlotte Solomon in the Nazi Era*
Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France*
Barbara Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to Market: Citizenship, Gender, and Women's Movements in East Central Europe*

Guidelines for writing book reviews

Book reviews should be 5-6 pp. long, typed, and double-spaced. The full bibliographic data for the book (author, title, place and date of publication, publisher) should be typed at the beginning of the review. If you quote from the book, you should indicate the source of quotations by placing page numbers in parentheses after the quote.

The review should summarize the main arguments and conclusions of the book(s), situating them in historical and historiographical context. You should discuss briefly the author's method and/or sources, and mention any serious flaws with the book. But I do not expect you to tear a book to pieces; concentrate on its strengths.

You should not simply summarize the contents of the book, although you do need to first answer the question: "**What is this book about?**" Assume that the reader of your review is familiar with the history of this period in a general way, but has not read the book or plunged deeply into arguments about it.

The next question you need to answer is: "**Why is this book important?**" In other words, what does it add to the field or subject of study, how does it fit in with other books on the subject (if known) or the way in which the subject has been generally studied. Since gender history is a lively field, you should try to situate the book in its historiographical context. You may wish to consult published reviews of the book in order to get a sense of this aspect of the book. Published reviews may also be useful as models of how to write book reviews.

The final question that you want to answer is "**What does the reader learn from the book?**" In other words, how does it advance our knowledge about the period? Here you may want to criticize the content or method of the book, but do not criticize a book for not being another book; pay attention to the author's own statements about what s/he is trying to accomplish.

If you have questions about what book to choose or how to write a book review, please come see me.