

**WOMEN, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY IN POSTWAR AMERICA**  
**HIS 350R (39425) / WGS 345 (47075) / AMS 370 (30650)**  
Fall 2011 T-Th 3:30-5:00 GAR 0.120

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**Course Overview:** This course intensively examines U.S. women's history between World War II and the 1970s. In doing so, it also explores understandings of womanhood, manhood and sexuality that became central to the cultural politics and social conflicts of the postwar period. By weaving together these topics – women's history, popular culture, and postwar social movements – we raise fresh questions about well-known episodes of U.S. history. Why, for example, do most Americans remember Rosa Parks only as a demure seamstress who initiated the Montgomery Bus Boycott because she was too tired to give up her seat to a white? If every young woman hoped to be like Donna Reed or June Cleaver in the fifties, then where did the sixties movements come from? We also explore how various groups (e.g., suburban girls, working-class women, civil rights activists, immigrants, and others) differently negotiated ideas of family, work and sexuality. In doing so, we examine roots of issues that continue to have political purchase today, such as reproduction, sexuality, job equity, welfare, race, and ethnicity.

**Course Activities:** This is primarily a discussion seminar, but class will occasionally include short lectures and films. Readings include historical documents, memoirs, scholarly articles and full-length historical studies. The course has a **substantial writing component**, and is designed to help you develop skills in historical writing and analysis. Students will write regularly to encourage critical engagement with the texts and class discussion of readings. Graded assignments include weekly reading summaries, a short media research paper based on popular magazines of the postwar era; and a "Postwar Women's Memoir Project" based on interviews with women who came of age between World War II and the 1970s.

**Evaluation and Requirements:**

- 5% Attendance, promptness, class participation
- 30% 350-word weekly analyses of readings (6 total, 5% each)
- 20% Media research essay, 5 pages
- 30% Final Postwar Women's Memoir Project essay, 10-12 pages
- 15% Final Postwar Women's Memoir Project group presentation

**Required Readings:**

*Required short readings available on Blackboard or in Coursepack available at Speedway in Dobie Mall) (noted as cp)*

*Required Books available at University Co-op Bookstore and on reserve at PCL:*

- \* Boyd, Nan Alamilla, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965*
- \* Douglas, Susan J. *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*
- \* Malka, Susan Gelfand. *Daring to Care: American Nursing and Second-Wave Feminism*
- \* Meyerowitz, Joanne, ed. *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (noted as NJC on syllabus)
- \* Orleck, Annelise. *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*
- \* Rosen, Ruth. *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*

- \* Santiago, Esmeralda. *Almost a Woman*
- \* Shakur, Assata. *Assata: An Autobiography*

Attendance and participation: Because this seminar is based on class discussion of readings and other material, I expect regular class attendance, promptness, completion of readings, and thoughtful participation in discussion. After 2 unexcused absences, three points will be deducted from your final grade for each additional unexcused absences. For excused absences (medical emergencies, official U.T. business) you will need a written note. Religious holiday observances are considered excused absences. Please arrive on time. Important announcements will take place at the beginning of each class.

350-word papers on readings for one class class (6 total): We will divide the class into two groups (A, B), which will submit papers on alternating weeks. For *primary sources* (original documents), identify the author(s), the intended audience, and the context in which the document was written; analyze the point(s) being made in the document; and comment on what historians can learn from this document. For *secondary readings* (by historians and other scholars), *briefly* summarize the key points the author is making and assess their significance. Papers are due by class time, and should be submitted by email as Word attachments.

Media Research Essay: Focusing on a particular theme, analyze images and/or articles from one or more popular magazines or journals published between 1945 and 1960, that illuminate understandings of women, gender and/or sexuality in the popular culture of postwar period. Where relevant, point out and analyze conflicting images. (You will receive a handout further explaining this assignment.) Papers are due in class Week 7, Thursday Oct. 6

Postwar Women’s Memoir Project: You will be conducting an oral history with a woman who “came of age” between 1945 and 1970. The interview will serve as a primary source for a final paper and group presentation that address a major theme of the course. You should begin considering whom you would like to interview right away, and consult with me if you need assistance in locating an interviewee. More detailed assignment handout to follow.

Schedule:

Week 9 (T 10/18):	Preliminary interview summary due in class (1-page).
Week 10 (T 10/25):	Proposal due in class (1 page).
Week 10 (T. 11/1):	Bibliography on theme due in class
Week 12 (T 11/8):	Taped oral history should have been conducted by now Transcription of key portion(s) of interview due in class
Week 15 (Th. 12/1):	Draft of paper due in class

Final exam date (Th. 12/8, 9-12 a.m.):            Final draft of paper and group presentation

Final group presentation: Based on your individual Women’s Memoir Projects, you will work collaboratively with your group to develop a presentation that thematically brings together all of your projects. Group presentations will be made at the time allocated for the final exam.

**Important Notes:**

Plusses and Minuses will be used in this course.

Papers should be typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. Except for the 350-word reading responses, they should be submitted in hard copy. Failure to submit papers when they are due will result in a drop of one grade for each day the assignment is late.

Citations: For works included on the class syllabus, clearly identify the author and title in the body of the paper and then include the page numbers in parentheses following a quotation or reference to specific content. For works not included on the syllabus, use footnote in Chicago Manual of Style format. See Diana Hacker, Research and documentation Online, Bedford/St. Martins: [http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04\\_c10\\_s2.html](http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04_c10_s2.html)

Academic Integrity: The University of Texas adheres strictly to guidelines regarding academic integrity, including plagiarism. *These guidelines extend to all material found on the worldwide web*, as well as to print material. Penalties for violations may include loss of credit for the course. See [http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/history/about/academic\\_integrity/](http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/history/about/academic_integrity/)

Special accommodations: will be provided, upon request, for qualified students with learning disabilities. Contact the Dean of Students office at 471-6259 or [ssd@uts.cc.utexas.edu](mailto:ssd@uts.cc.utexas.edu). Please inform me the early in the semester if you qualify for accommodations.

## Class Schedule

### Week 1, Introduction

Aug. 25: Intro: What is women's history? Do gender and sexuality have a history?  
What can we learn through a study of the post-World War II era?

### Week 2, Women, Gender and History

Aug. 30: Who Defines Women's History?  
Sept. 1: Interpreting the history of women during and after World War II  
350-WORD PAPER: GROUPS A & B

### Week 3, Conflicts in History: Women, Popular Culture, and the Cold War

Sept. 6: Reading Betty Friedan  
350-WORD PAPER: GROUP A  
Sept. 8: Workshop: Research in Women's and Gender Studies  
***Class will meet at PCL Lobby. Be sure to be on time. Women's Studies bibliographer Lindsey Schell will conduct a training in online resources for women's history students, in PCL Room 1.339.***

### Week 4, Conforming and Transgressing

Sept. 13 Gender and the Mass Media  
Sept. 15 In and Out of Wedlock  
350-WORD PAPER: GROUP B

### Week 5, Queer Sexuality in Postwar America

Sept. 20 Lesbian and Gay Struggles before Stonewall  
350-WORD PAPER: GROUP A  
Sept. 22 Narrations of Sexuality

### Week 6, Rethinking Women's Activism in the Fifties

Sept. 27 Narrating the Early Civil Rights Movement  
350-WORD PAPER: GROUP B  
Sept. 29 Civic Activism

### Week 7, Equality and Difference: Gender and Working-Class Women

Oct. 4 Postwar Transformations of Labor  
Oct. 6 Salt of the Earth  
MEDIA PAPER DUE IN CLASS

Week 8, Coming of Age: Memoir, Narrative and American Culture

Oct. 11 Negotiating Cultural Clashes

350-WORD PAPER: GROUP A

Oct. 13 Identity and the Mass Media

Week 9, Equality and Liberation:

Oct. 18: Feminism and Women's Liberation

MEMOIR PROJECT PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW SUMMARY DUE

Oct. 20: Race, Gender and Women's Liberation

350-WORD PAPER: GROUP B

Week 10, Meanings of Liberation

Oct. 25 Sexuality

MEMOIR PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE

Oct. 27 Sisterhood and Its Complications

350-WORD PAPER: GROUP A

Week 11, Women and the Antipoverty Movement

Nov. 1 The Antipoverty Movement

MEMOIR PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Nov. 3 Welfare Rights

350-WORD PAPER: GROUP B

Week 12, Women, Work and Feminism

Nov. 8 Gender and Caring

MEMOIR PROJECT TRANSCRIPTION DUE

Nov. 10 The Paradoxes of Equality

350-WORD PAPER: GROUP A

Week 13, 4/8 Gender, Race and Liberation

Nov. 15 Writing Workshop

WORKING SESSION ON THE 'PROBLEMATIC' IN HISTORICAL ESSAY WRITING

Nov. 17 Is 'Woman Revolutionary' an Oxymoron?

350-WORD PAPER: GROUP B

Week 14, Women and the New Right

Nov. 22: Gendered Conservatism

Nov. 24 Thanksgiving Break

**Week 15, 4/29, Cultural Conflicts and the Media**

Nov. 29: Feminism and the Mass Media

WORKING GROUPS MEET FOR 30 MINUTES OF CLASS

Dec. 1: Looking at Women

WORKING GROUPS MEET FOR 30 MINUTES OF CLASS

MEMOIR PROJECT DRAFT DUE

**FINAL PAPER AND GROUP PRESENTATION DUE AT SCHEDULED EXAM TIME**

Thursday, Dec. 8, 9 a.m. -12 p.m, Location to be announced