

**Art History 699/HIST 615: Gender and the American Artist, 1840-1940**

Fall 2014 Thursdays 4:30 to 7:10 Music/Theater Bldg. 1008

Prof. Ellen Wiley Todd Robinson B336

Office Hours: Thursdays 1:00 to 3:00

and by appointment

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**Introduction.** This course examines women artists, their quest for professionalization, their interactions with a variety of media, their representational strategies in the arts, and their negotiations within personal lives as they confront the social, cultural, and institutional changes in these decades. We will think historically and historiographically about these issues in American art by looking at interpretive literature on women artists alongside a series of primary documents and case studies. We will examine the different ways in which art historians and historians might formulate their questions about women and art. We will also take a week to think through some theoretical issues.

**Goals.** The central work of the course is a research paper. Our library session will help to master research databases in art history. Our discussions will focus as much on how our scholars did their research and conceptualized their projects as on their findings. Short papers will develop critical reading and writing skills. The multi-stage research/writing process will help you with forming your topic and organizing your claims along with the actual writing/writing process.

**Required Texts.**

Wanda Corn, with Charlene G. Garfinkle and Annelise K. Madsen. *Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian Exposition* (University of California Press, 2012).

Melissa Dabakis. *A Sisterhood of Sculptors: American Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rome* (Penn State University Press, 2014)

Kirsten Swinth. *Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2001)

Laura Wexler. *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2000)

I have placed a number of additional readings Blackboard (BB) <http://courses.gmu.edu> (see schedule of readings below.) Other major texts, complimenting our books are Erica Hirshler. *A Studio of Her Own: Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1940* (Boston: MFA, 2001) and *American Women Modernists: The Legacy of Robert Henri, 1910-1945*. Both are available on Amazon, but as exhibition catalogs they have gone quickly out of print. Kathleen Pyne's catalog from which I've included readings, is still available for purchase but I will include it on course reserve and Blackboard along with the others.

**Course Procedures/Requirements.** During our first week of class I will provide a framework, and we will discuss our individual/class final project—basically orchestrating the rest of our class time. This is a reading/discussion/research class requiring the full participation of all class members. It demands active involvement with the material—with its assumptions, its arguments, its conceptual and interpretive frameworks as well as their absences. Engage, challenge, and embrace the readings at multiple levels—for information and interpretive insight. Requirements are as follows:

1. Short Papers: Each of you will write 3 short 3-4-page critical papers on the reading, due in class no later than the week after they appear in the syllabus. Select one topic from A or B or C; and then select one topic from D or E. Everyone should do the Theory Paper. (We will take the introductory session to parcel out the paper and presentation topics so that all topics are covered). Sometimes articles or chapters for a week of class will be divided a bit differently. In addition pairs should take a leadership role each week, generating a brief outline of key points covered and questions for discussion beforehand; these may or may not be distributed to class as a one-page summary—you've plenty of work! Short papers will be a critical analysis of a chapter or group of readings—I've suggested topics in the syllabus below and these paper topics are also discussion topics. In general you will attend to the relation between the thesis and the way a scholar has worked from a set of assumptions, followed particular forms of evidence, or relied on a theory or set of methodologies.

2. Final Project Paper: This will be a scholarly research project, part individual, part collaborative. One option is for you to take on a question about the persona/biography/production of a woman artist and during the last weeks we might imagine the lives they live, both personal and professional. It IS possible that in working on the artist, you will be considering/grappling with a discussion of a single work or a small group of works. Another option is to investigate a small group of artists or to fashion a historical question for investigation. We will discuss the various possibilities and constraints we encounter, bearing in mind the contingencies of the various generations we inhabit. Ideally we will "represent" a range of chronological and media-based possibilities, of artists fashioning lives from different personalities, desires, beliefs. Part of the project is to be self-conscious about our own positions/values now and with respect to the past.

Your final paper (15-20 pages) should chart your journey through your available materials (on the artist but also on women's history from the period, or on related women who inhabited the artist's circle, including a full bibliography and notes) suggesting the kinds of conclusions you might make about your artist. Begin thinking about your artist as soon as possible: I would like to have Georgia O'Keeffe and Mary Cassatt off limits since they are iconic figures, but the literature on them is obviously crucial to our understandings of others. I will do a separate handout for the research paper.

3. Participation. This consists of your attendance (mandatory at all sessions except for excused illness), your thoughtful questions and contributions in general discussion and your more formal engagement with material on leadership days and during our final presentations.

I will want to meet with you individually to discuss your projects—only one person should choose a given artist or topic focus.

**Expectations/Evaluation/Grading.** This an upper-level graduate seminar for the M.A. in Art History and in History. It will demand more by way of reading, writing, intellectual

engagement, participation, and commitment to group goals than a combined grad/undergrad course. Classes will vary somewhat depending upon the topic; for most we will engage in in-depth discussions of assigned readings and specific questions; for others we may have an in-class project, working through selected examples with slides. It is essential that you do all assigned reading, attend class every time and participate in class. No one should dominate; all should speak. A weekly presentation format should make this easier OR we may decide we do not need this to be so formal.

The key to success is organization—both weekly and for the entire course. Start the reading for over the weekend. The readings are dense, occasionally difficult. Even "informational" readings require you to assimilate interpretive information; others ask that you read, for lines of argument, assumptions, evidence. You will also encounter difficult, often theoretical writing, but mostly in the theory week, and in Laura Wexler's text. Others are more straightforward in their writing.

PS. Much of above paragraph and those that follow is unnecessary/understood for grad students, but I do it for the syllabus in any case.

Honor Code: This is found in the university catalog and applies to this and all other courses. Cheating, plagiarism are expressly forbidden. For quick reference, plagiarism can be defined as: (1) presenting as one's own the words, work, or opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement or (2) borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement. Every single "direct" quote must be footnoted, even if you use the author's name in a sentence.

**Every sequence of ideas from elsewhere must also be footnoted.** I have noticed increasing sloppiness with this latter habit. If you paraphrase an idea from your readings...footnote it. Otherwise it is an honor code violation. All sources must be footnoted, no matter how ephemeral. This includes ALL websites, all museum brochures, all wall panels or label texts in museums. THIS MEANS YOU MUST FOOTNOTE NOT ONLY DIRECT QUOTES BUT ANY PARAPHRASES OF IDEAS, INFORMATION.

<u>Grading:</u>	Participation	30%	
	Attendance/discussion contrib.		10%
	Presentation(s) (10% class 10% project)		20%
	Three Papers	30%	
	Final Project	<u>40%</u>	
	Annot. Bib 10% Paper 30%		
<u>Total</u>		100%	

I use pluses and minuses; my scale is indicated below. You will earn some form of numerical grade so you will always have a clear indication of where you stand. Good papers include a thesis, claims supported by examples, and evidence from relevant readings and images. All written work will be graded on grammar, style, content, organization, and clarity. Spellcheck and proofread all papers before submitting them. I will meet with each of you on research topics, and you should consult with me for any changes.

A+ 100%; A 93-99%; A- 90-92% This is awarded for superior understanding of all concepts and factual material, for superior presentation in written work, imaginative projects that go beyond the assignment, and regular class participation. For surprising me.

B+ 87-89%; B 83-86%; B- 80-82% While B+ indicates above average mastery of the material, clear and well-produced written presentation on all assignments, B is for average

work, merely adequate understanding of factual material and merely competent written presentation. B- is hanging on the brink.

**C 70-79** This is a failing grade for graduate work if received as a final grade for the course.

In order to receive a grade for the course, all work must be completed. PLEASE email me if you find you are struggling and we can work on some problem-solving strategies.

If there are problems or if you need a moderate extension because of illness, contact me before the assignment is due. Email is the best resource for all communication.

**Key Dates for the Course:** Everyone writes A or B, Theory paper, and C, or D, or E

Sept. 2	Last Day to Drop with no tuition penalty. Last day to ADD	
Sept. 25	Short Paper Topic A Due (Choose topic 1,2, or 3)	
	Paper Topic chosen by this day (?)	
Sept. 26	Last Day to Drop	
Oct. 2	Library Meeting. Topics chosen and Prelim Bibliog Due	
Oct. 2 or 9	Theory Paper Due	
Oct. 13	Monday. Columbus Day Recess. Monday Classes meet Tuesday	
Oct. 23	Short Paper Topic B Due	(Wexler)
	Annotated Bibliographies due	
Oct. 30	Short Paper Topic C Due	(Pyne/O'Keeffe)
Nov. 6	Short Paper Topic D Due	(indiv artists)
Nov. 13	Short Paper Topic E Due on email	(tropes of womanhood)
	No class this day, work on projects	
Nov. 20	Rough Drafts Due, Catch-up Day Final Project Presentations Begin	
Nov. 26-30	Thanksgiving Break	
Dec. 4 & 11	Final Project Presentations: Final Projects Due December 11	

**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS:** Subject to slight modification as we move through the course. BB is for the Folder for this course in Blackboard. ([courses.gmu.edu](http://courses.gmu.edu)) Then to course content folder. Several of the JSTOR readings are actually in here. Readings must be completed for the class under which they are listed.

#### **WEEK #1: August 28**

##### Course Introduction, Set Up, and Short discussion

I'll bring in some introductory material, we'll divide up course readings and discuss the final project. We will discuss the list of possible artists and a handout for the research topic.

READ: For a brief introduction:

Laura R. Prieto. *At Home in the Studio: The Professionalization of Women Artists in America*. Introduction (1-11); Chap. 1("Peculiarly Fitted to Art") 12-40 and Chap. 2 ("Domesticating Professional Art") 41-63. I will send a pdf and post this to Blackboard

#### **WEEK #2: September 4**

##### American Women and Professionalization I: Living Abroad for Sculpture

READ: Melissa Dabakis. *A Sisterhood of Sculptors: American Artists in Nineteenth-Century Rome*

For Discussion: We will divide the class into three groups and consider some of the following questions. What does professionalization look like in the international context? How is it different for sculpture vs. other media? How do the politics of Rome AND the politics surrounding race and the civil war inflect their imagery. What is the role of "history" in this account?

PART I: Feminine Professionalism in Boston and Rome (4 people)

PART II. Women Sculptors and the Politics of Rome (4 people)

PART III. Civil War, Reconstruction and the Suffrage Debates (5 people)

**WEEK #3:** September 11

American Women and Professionalization II:

Art Schools, the Market, and Criticism

READ: Swinth, Chs. 1-5 Sarah Burns, Ch. 5, "Outselling the Feminine" (on Cecelia Beaux) in *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America*, 159-186. BB

For Discussion: One person per chapter and two people on Cecelia Beaux

1 Chapter One

2 Chapter Two

3 Chapter Three

4 Chapter Four

5 Chapter Five

6. Burns on Beaux. (2 people)

**WEEK #4:** September 18

American Women and Professionalization III:

The case of Boston

READ: Erica Hirshler. *A Studio of Her Own: Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1940*, pp. 53-117, (BB) and Bernice Kramer Leader, "Antifeminism in the Paintings of the Boston School."

*Arts Magazine* 56 (Jan 1982): 112-119. Anna Lea Merritt, "A Letter to Artists: Especially Women Artists." *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* 65 (March 1900): 463-469; Olive Shreiner. "The Woman Question." *Cosmopolitan* 28 (November 1899): 45-54; All on BB. Mrs. Russell Sage. "Opportunities and Responsibilities of Leisured Women." *North American Review* 181 (November 1905): 712-21. On JSTOR

Discussions: 3 people on each of the three questions below

Short Paper Topic A: Three possibilities (Also Discussion Topics)

1. Compare the approaches to professionalization taken by Swinth and Hirshler, bearing in mind that one is a scholarly monograph, the other a book to accompany a major museum exhibition. Pay attention to how this affects their conceptualizations and arguments, and their forms of evidence. You might also want to compare them briefly to the professionalization we find in Prieto and Dabakis. (3 people)
2. In her chapter on the Boston School, Hirshler refutes much of Leader's argument on "antifeminism." Discuss their claims—lines of evidence and argument. (3 people)
3. Compare and contrast the three period articles, one by an artist, (Merritt) one by a feminist (Shreiner) and one by a philanthropist (Mrs. Sage) (3 people)

**WEEK #5:** September 25

Thinking through Theory: Feminist Art History and its Models: Then and Now

Brief discussion of possible research topics

READ: Giles Edgerton (Mary Fanton Roberts). "Is There a Sex Distinction in Art? The Attitude of the Critic Toward Women's Exhibits." *The Craftsman* 14 (June 1908): 239-51; Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec., 1986), pp. 1053-1075 JSTOR; Lisa Ticknor, "Feminism, Art History, and Sexual Difference," *Genders* 3 (November, 1988): 92-128; Janet Wolff,

"Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics," in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, Amelia Jones, ed. (Routledge, 2003): 414-426. All on BB

Theory Paper Topic/Discussion points to consider: How is the attitude of the earlier period considered in later theoretical works? How does Joan Scott, a historian, approach the question of Gender in comparison to Lisa Tickner? How Does Wolff's argument and area of discussion differ from Tickner's, a generation earlier?

1. Mary Fanton Roberts. (2 people)
2. Joan Scott (2 people)
3. Lisa Ticknor (2 people)
4. Janet Wolff (2 people)

Short Paper Topic A due Here

#### **WEEK #6: October 2**

First Half of Class: Research Week I: Library Methods with Jennifer Rinalducci  
We will meet in the Fenwick instruction room 2nd floor (stairs, turn right at top, room on left)

SEE: <http://infoguides.gmu.edu/genderinart>

Final Project Artists/Topics should be selected by now. Prelim Bibliography due  
THEORY SUMMARY PAPER on questions above Due here or next week

Second Half of Class: American Women and Professionalization IV: "Fair Women"

The case of Women at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair

READ: Wanda Corn, with Charlene G. Garfinkle and Annelise K. Madsen. *Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian Exposition* (University of California Press, 2012).

Here we will discuss this work as a group, considering its structure, its relation to Women's history and Art History. What does it mean to stand back and compare a group of women to an exhibition opportunity when it comes in the context of a larger cultural event?

How do we contextualize the organizers, their gender politics, their efforts and where does Corn reside in these evaluations?

#### **WEEK #7: October 9**

Research Week II: No Class: Individual meetings on research topics

Appointments can begin early afternoon and go through class time and also be at other times this week if I am here

Weeks 8 and 9 will be heavy reading

#### **WEEK #8: October 16**

Women, Photography, and the Imperial Age

READ: Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism*

All read Introduction and Chs. 1-3 and then we will divide as follows:

Group 1: Ch. 4 on Johnston's Hampton Album (2 people)

Group 2: Ch. 5 on Kasebier's Indians (2 people)

Group 3: Ch. 6 on Alice Austen's immigrant photography (2 people)

Group 4: Ch. 7 on Jessie Tarbox Beals and the St. Louis World's Fair (2 people)

Short Paper Topic B: Examine your chapter and its discussion of a photographer's project in light of the frameworks Wexler sets out in the opening chapters.

#### **WEEK #9: October 23**

## Thinking Around Georgia O'Keeffe vs. Women Students of Robert Henri

READ: Swinth, ch. 6 and epilogue; *American Women Modernists: The Legacy of Robert Henri, 1910-1945*. everyone read Wardle, Ch. 1 and art historian Erika Doss's Chapter 5, "Complicating Modernism: Issues of Liberation and Constraint..." and historian Lois Palken Rudnick's "Modernizing Women: The New Woman and American Modernism"; Kathleen Pyne: *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*. Introduction, Chapters 3 and 4; and Anna Chave, "O'Keeffe and the Masculine Gaze," *Art in America* 78 (Jan, 1990), 114-124.

1. Swinth chapter (2 people)
2. Doss and Palken (2 people)

Kathleen Pyne: *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*/Chave on O'Keeffe

3. The Feminine Voice and the Woman-Child Ch. 3 (2 people)
  4. The Burden and Promise of the Woman-Child 4 (3 people)
- include a discussion with Chave here

Short Paper Topic C: Option 1. Full books on course reserve. Both *American Women Modernists* and *Modernism and the Feminine Voice* are scholarly catalogs, designed to accompany museum exhibits. Compare their approaches and discuss the possibilities and limitations of this kind of scholarly monograph. (You can think again about Swinth and look back to Wexler). Can you distinguish between the single-authored/multiple-authored approach? To what extent have these boundaries blurred over time?

Option 2. Pyne on O'keeffe vs. Chave on O'keeffe. What are their different projects in discussing O'Keeffe, bearing in mind that one is an article, one a book. What is the role of theory in these articles? Discuss both

Short Paper Topic B Due Here  
Annotated Bibliographies Due Here

## **WEEK #10: October 30**

### Individual Women and their Work: Case Studies

READ: Brandon Brame Fortune, "Not Above Reproach: The Career of Lucy Lee Robbins," *American Art* 12 (Spring, 1998): 40-65 BB/JSTOR; Griselda Pollock, "Mary Cassatt, Painter of Women and Children in Milroy and Doezeema," *Reading American Art* (Yale: 1998): 280-301BB; Tirza True Latimer, Introduction and Chapter on Romaine Brooks from *Women Together/Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris*; Cecile Whiting, "Decorating with Stettheimer and the Boys," *American Art* 14 (Spring 2000): 24-49 JSTOR; Renee Ater "Making History: Meta Warrick Fuller's Ethiopia," *American Art* 12 (Fall, 2003): 12-31; Ellen Wiley Todd, "The Question of Difference: Isabel Bishop's Deferential Office Girls," in Milroy and Doezeema, *Reading American Art* (Yale: 1998): 409-439. Ellen Wiley Todd, "Remembering the Unknowns: The Longman Memorial and the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Fire," *American Art* 23 (Fall 2009): 60-81. (All on BB) (For Presentations, 2 on each article/chapter)

1. Fortune (2 people)
2. Pollock (2 people)
3. Latimer (2 people)
4. Whiting (2 people)
5. Ater (2 people)
6. Todd/Todd (prepare questions for me; I'll do myself)

Short Paper Topic D: Compare two of the above articles as scholarly pieces on individual artists and their work. Consider the questions articles pose, and how the authors marshal theory, and visual/historical evidence to make their case.

Short Paper Topic C Due Here

**WEEK #11:** November 6

Tropes of Womanhood, Traditional, New, and Bad

READ: Caroline Ticknor. "The Steel-Engraving Lady and the Gibson Girl." *Atlantic Monthly* 88 (July 1901): 105-10; Margaret Deland. "The Change in the Feminine Ideal." *Atlantic Monthly* 105 (March, 1910): 289-302; Rafford Pyke. "Strength in Women's Features." *Cosmopolitan* 38 (November 1904): 111-114. (will email) Kathleen Pyne, "Evolutionary Typology and the American Woman in the Work of Thomas Dewing." *American Art* 7 (Fall 1993): 13-30. Annette Stott. "Floral Femininity: A Pictorial Definition." *American Art* 6 (Spring 1992): 61-78; Amanda Glesmann, "Reforming the Lady: Charles Dana Gibson and the 'New Girl' in *Women on the Verge: The Culture of Neurasthenia in Nineteenth-Century America*," (Stanford: Cantor Center, 2004): 53-68. All on BB except where otherwise indicated.

Short Paper Topic E: Compare one of the pieces from the period with one of the more recent articles to get a sense of how authors deploy period evidence and/or rhetoric. Ticknor with Glesmann, for example; Deland and Pyke with Pyne and Stott.

Two on each topic for presentations

1. Ticknor with Glesmann (2 people)
2. Pyke with Pyne (2 people)
3. Deland with Stott (2 people)

Short Paper Topic D due Here

**WEEK #12:** November 13

NO CLASS THIS WEEK: WORK ON RESEARCH PROJECTS, CATCH UP

Papers on Topic E may be emailed to me this week

**WEEK #13:** November 20

The Week we need to catch up with ourselves because there has been altogether too much to read, say, and do

AND begin with a minimum of three Final Project Presentations

Rough Drafts of Final Papers due Here

- 1
- 2
- 3

THANKSGIVING RECESS

November 26-30

**WEEK #14:** December 4

Research Presentations

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4



**WEEK #15:** December 11

Final Papers Due Here: Hard Copy and Submit to Blackboard  
Research Presentations/Professorial Cookies

1  
2  
3  
4  
5

List of Artists from which you can choose for your final paper. There are plenty of others so please check with me.

Berenice Abbott  
Marion Boyd Allen  
Alice Austen  
Peggy Bacon  
Jessie Tarbox Beals  
Margaret Bourke-White  
Cecilia Beaux  
Theresa Bernstein (Meyerowitz)  
Isabel Bishop  
Romaine Brooks  
Margaret Lesley Bush-Brown  
Imogen Cunningham  
Kathleen McEnery Cunningham  
Maria Oakley Dewing  
Elsie Driggs  
Abestenia St. Leger Eberle  
Lydia Field Emmett  
Gertrude Fisk  
Wanda Gag  
Anna Vaugan Hyatt Huntington  
Frances Benjamin Johnston  
Gertrude Kasebier  
Dorothea Lange  
Mary Fairchild Macmonnies Low  
Ellen Day Hale or Lilian Westcott Hale  
Elizabeth Olds  
Marie Danforth Page  
Lila Cabot Perry  
Emily Sartain  
Sarah Choate Sears  
Henrietta Shore  
Jessie Wilcox Smith  
Alice Barber Stephens  
Florine Stettheimer  
Minerva Teichert  
Candace Wheeler  
Marguerite Zorach

There are other topics as well. Please feel free to discuss with me