

**George Mason University  
Department of History and Art History**

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**Office hours: Mondays 12-2 p.m. and by appt.**

**Spring 2012**  
**M, W 10:30-11:45 a.m.**  
**Nguyen Engr. Bldg. 1103**

## **History 389, Section 001: U.S. Women's History Since 1890**

This course examines the experiences of women in the United States from the end of the nineteenth century to the present. Topics include women's organized efforts for voting and citizenship rights and gender equality; the changing nature of women's work and leisure; and issues of sexuality and personal life. The course also highlights the impact of race, class, and region in shaping women's experiences.

### **Required books:**

Linda K. Kerber, Jane Sherron DeHart and Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women's America, vol 2: Refocusing the Past*, 7th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2010).

Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Temple University Press, 1986).

Susan Cahn, *Sexual Reckonings: Southern Girls in a Troubling Age* (Harvard University Press, 2007).

Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (Penguin, 2000).

### **Course requirements and grading:**

Short-answer quizzes (20% total). There will be 6 unannounced quizzes given in class over the course of the semester. Your 4 highest quiz grades will count toward your final grade for the course. There will be no make-ups, which means you can miss no more than 2 quizzes without lowering your grade. Quizzes will be based primarily on the assigned readings.

Participation, discussion questions, and short assignments (20%). In addition to taking attendance, I will keep track of students' level of engagement in discussions and other class activities. Two or three absences over the course of the semester will not affect a student's grade (unless you miss more than two quizzes), but more than three absences will count against participation. I will provide a progress report on participation at mid-semester.

Every student will be required to submit questions to help guide our discussions at least once during the semester. We will work out the schedule for this in class. I may also give short assignments in class or as homework from time to time.

Essay (30%). Students will write one essay of 8-10 pages (typed, double-spaced, in a 12-pt. font, with one-inch margins). Topics are due 2/29; essays are due on 4/18 by email. See pp. 3-4 below.

Final exam (30%). The final will be an open-note essay exam held in our classroom on May 9 from 10:30 a.m.-1:15 p.m. I will supply paper; no blue book required.

**Course policies:**

Participation, decorum, and honor code: This class will include some lecture and a lot of discussion. I expect students to come to class on time and well prepared. That means completing readings and other assignments before class, silencing cell phones and putting away all other distractions, listening actively, taking notes, and engaging with the instructor and other students in a thoughtful (both reflective and polite) way. It also means not packing up or leaving early, sleeping, texting, checking email or using a laptop for anything other than note-taking, or talking when the professor or another student has the floor. I consider mutual respect key to a good learning environment, and students' participation grades will reflect this in addition to evaluating their intellectual engagement during class meetings.

Participation also means staying on top of any course news, which will be delivered by email. Please make sure to check your official GMU email address or forward mail from it to an account you do check daily.

Students in this course are bound by George Mason University's Honor Code, which states: "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work." I will pursue any concerns about academic dishonesty and will report suspected students to the University's Honor Board for disciplinary action, including a failing grade in the course. For help understanding and avoiding plagiarism, see <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/plagiarism.html>.

Accommodations: Students who require academic accommodations should contact me and must make arrangements through the Office of Disability Services ([ods.gmu.edu](http://ods.gmu.edu); 703-993-2474). I cannot provide accommodations without ODS documentation.

Other useful information:

Writing Center ([writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)): A114 Robinson Hall, 703-993-1200

Counseling and Psychological Services ([caps.gmu.edu](http://caps.gmu.edu)): 703-993-2380

Last day to drop with no tuition penalty: Tuesday, January 31

Last day to drop (with tuition penalty): Friday, February 24

Selective withdrawal period: February 27 - March 30

**Course schedule (subject to revision):**

Jan. 23	Course introduction	Note: You should be ready to discuss the reading on the 1st day for which it is assigned.
Jan. 25	Women in the Post-Civil War United States Reading: <i>Women's America</i> , Intro, pp. 1-23	
Jan. 30	The West Reading: <i>Women's America</i> , pp. 341-48, 356-68	Reminder: Start reading Peiss, <i>Cheap Amusements</i> for discussion on Feb. 8.
Feb. 1	The South Reading: <i>Women's America</i> , pp. 349-55, 368-78	
Feb. 6	Industrial America Reading: <i>Women's America</i> , pp. 378-401	
Feb. 8	<b>Discuss Peiss, <i>Cheap Amusements</i></b>	
Feb. 13-15	Progressive Reform Reading: <i>Women's America</i> , pp. 402-19	Reminder: Start reading Cahn, <i>Sexual Reckonings</i> .

- Feb. 20-22 The Woman Suffrage Movement  
Reading: *Women's America*, pp. 420-40
- Feb. 27 After Suffrage  
Reading: *Women's America*, pp. 441-51
- Feb. 29 **Discuss Cahn, *Sexual Reckonings*, pp. 1-180**      Reminder: Start reading  
**Essay topics due (hard copy)**      Ransby, *Ella Baker and the*  
*Black Freedom Movement*.
- March 5-7 The Great Depression and New Deal  
Reading: *Women's America*, pp. 512-29
- Spring Break
- March 19-21 The Culture of Mid-Twentieth-Century America  
Reading: Ransby, *Ella Baker*, 1-147 and Cahn, pp. 181-210
- March 26-28 World War II  
Reading: *Women's America*, pp. 530-43, 553-65
- April 2-4 The Cold War and the Feminine Mystique  
Reading: *Women's America*, pp. 575-98, 617-30, 691-94 & Cahn, pp. 211-68
- April 9 The Civil Rights Movement  
Reading: *Women's America*, pp. 631-51 & Cahn, pp. 269-316
- April 11 **Discuss Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*, 148-374**
- April 16-18 The Women's Movement      Reminder: Read Rosen,  
Reading: *Women's America*, pp. 652-63, 694-711      *The World Split Open*.  
**Essays Due by noon on April 18**
- April 23 The 1970s  
Reading: *Women's America*, pp. 712-30
- April 25 **Discuss Rosen, *The World Split Open*, pp. 3-262**
- April 30 The 1980s and the Recent Past  
Reading: *Women's America*, pp. 731-45 and Rosen, pp. 263-344
- May 2 Course Wrap-Up  
Reading: *Women's America*, pp. 764-80
- May 9 Final Exam, 10:30-1:15 p.m.**

**Essay Assignment (8-10 pages, due April 18, 30% of course grade)**

This assignment asks you to write an analytical essay using one of the assigned books for the course (Peiss, Cahn, Ransby or Rosen) and two other scholarly monographs on a related topic. Think of this as a historiography or literature review with only three sources, focused on a single topic.

A good historiography analyzes each source in depth and also compares and contrasts the sources under review. You should ask and attempt to answer the question of how scholarship on your topic has developed over time, and you should consider lingering questions or avenues for further inquiry. Your essay should have an introduction and a thesis statement that previews the findings of your analysis of the three sources. In the body of your essay, you will most likely want to treat each book one-by-one, although it is certainly possible to go point-by-point rather than book-by-book or to revisit a book you've already discussed as the essay develops. Strive for a well organized essay with clear topic sentences introducing each new paragraph. Also make sure to write a strong conclusion. Chicago-style footnotes are also required; see below.

**On February 29, you must turn in a one-paragraph description of your topic (in hard copy) that indicates which one of our assigned books you want to write about and lists two (or more) additional monographs you have identified.** I will approve of your choices, help you select from your list, or suggest alternatives. For the purposes of this course, a "scholarly monograph" is defined as a book based on documented research in primary sources and supported by research in secondary sources. It should have footnotes or endnotes and either a bibliography, an essay on sources, or full citations of sources in the notes themselves. It must be at least 150 pages long, not counting notes and bibliography. Books published by university presses are especially likely candidates, and students are encouraged to look for scholarship from the 1990s and 2000s rather than older work.

**Essays are due by email attachment by noon on April 18 and must be typed, double-spaced, in a 12 pt. font with one-inch margins. Please include your last name in the filename of your Word (or compatible) document. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for every 24 hours past the deadline, starting at 12:01 p.m. on the 18th.**

To insert footnotes in Word, go to the References menu. The first reference to each source should include a full Chicago-style citation, such as:

<sup>1</sup> Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 5.

All subsequent references can use a short author-title form, such as:

<sup>4</sup> Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 5. (In both examples, 5 is a page number.)

As long as you provide a full reference for each source in the notes, no bibliography is required.

Some possible topics:

- For Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*: immigrant and/or working-class women, leisure
- For Cahn, *Sexual Reckonings*: girls and adolescence, sexuality, women in the South
- For Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*: black women's activism, the civil rights movement, biography as a form of women's history
- For Rosen, *The World Split Open*: second-wave feminism, divisions among women, the perils of writing the history of the recent past