

## The Fight for Women's Rights, 1820–1920

### Professor Catherine Clinton

Spring 2025

#### Course Description

One century ago, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified making it illegal (and unconstitutional) to deny or abridge American citizens' right to vote based on their gender. We will concentrate on the civic campaigns and political battles for women to win the franchise while trying to answer the questions of how and why the struggle for women's suffrage took over a century. We will examine women's involvement in reform as well as the intersection of gender, sexuality, and citizenship in the years leading up to the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

#### Course Readings

1. Baker, Jean. *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
2. Jones, Martha. *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All*. New York: Basic Books, 2020.
3. Tetrault, Lisa. *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848–1898*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
4. Ware, Susan. *Why They Marched: Untold Stories of the Women Who Fought for the Right to Vote*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

#### Course Requirements

- Contribute to nine discussion boards
- Complete five short papers (1–2 pages)
- Participate in at least three Q&As
- Complete a 15-page research paper or project of appropriate rigor

#### Learning Objectives

1. To evaluate historical arguments and points of view

2. To examine issues of gender, work, status, and citizenship during women's battle for equal rights
3. To explore how women's suffrage became a big tent for broader women's issues in the nineteenth and into the twentieth century
4. To learn to interpret primary sources
5. To introduce historical writing as a skill
6. To scrutinize evidence to assemble arguments and contrasting points of view
7. To understand the role of popular culture and public history as part of the push for women's equality
8. To appreciate how present-day debates are informed by historical interpretations

## **Class Schedule**

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### **Week One:** February 6: Founding Mothers

#### Readings

- Basker, James G. and Justine Ahlstrom, eds., *Women Who Made History: Historians Present Documents from the Gilder Lehrman Collection*: Chapter 1 – Phillis Wheatley; Chapter 2 – Mercy Otis Warren; Chapter 4 – Mary Katherine Goddard.
- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "The Ways of Her Household," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, ed. Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 39–48.

#### Assignments

- Discussion Board One
    - First post due: Sunday, February 9
    - Second post due: Wednesday, February 12
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### **Week Two:** February 13: Women's Work and the Cotton Revolution

#### Readings

- *Women Who Made History: Historians Present Documents from the Gilder Lehrman Collection*: Chapter 5 – Enslaved Women.
- Linda K. Kerber, "A Constitutional Right to Be Treated Like American Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship" in *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays*, ed. Linda K. Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 17–35. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

## Assignments

- Discussion Board Two
  - First post due: Sunday, February 16
  - Second post due: Wednesday, February 19
- Short Paper One due: Wednesday, February 19
  - Write a response paper - You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

### **Q&A Session One: Tuesday, February 18, at 8:00 p.m. ET**

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## **Week Three:** February 20: Righteous Reformers

### Readings

- Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966), 151–174. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
- Catherine Clinton, "Ties That Bound," in *The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 40–53.

### Supplemental Reading

- Carl Ostrowski, "The Angel in the Penitentiary: Women and Incarceration," in *Literature and Criminal Justice in Antebellum America* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 99–123. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

## Assignments

- Discussion Board Three
    - First post due: Sunday, February 23
    - Second post due: Wednesday, February 26
  - Final Paper/Project Question due: Wednesday, February 26
    - In roughly 1–2 pages, outline the question your final project or paper will attempt to answer. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic, a brief description of your research plan, and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing.
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## **Week Four:** February 27: Abolitionists All!

### Readings

- *Women Who Made History: Historians Present Documents from the Gilder Lehrman Collection*: Chapter 6 – Angelina and Sarah Grimke.
- Nell Irvin Painter, “Voices of Suffrage, Sojourner Truth, Frances Watkins Harper, and the Struggle for Women’s Suffrage” in *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*, ed. Jean H. Baker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 42–55. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

### Assignments

- Discussion Board Four
  - First post due: Sunday, March 2
  - Second post due: Wednesday, March 5
- Short Paper Two due: Wednesday, March 5
  - Write a response paper - You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

## **Q&A Session Two: Tuesday, March 4, at 8:00 p.m. ET**

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## **Week Five:** March 6: Seneca Falls and Onward

### Readings

- *Women Who Made History: Historians Present Documents from the Gilder Lehrman Collection*: Chapter 7 – Elizabeth Cady Stanton.
- Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women’s Suffrage Movement, 1848–1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). (all) ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

### Assignments

- Discussion Board Five
  - First post due: Sunday, March 9
  - Second post due: Wednesday, March 12
- Revised Question and Proposed Bibliography due: Wednesday, March 12
  1. Revise your initial proposal to incorporate your section professor’s feedback.  
AND

2. Create an annotated bibliography containing at least five sources. Each of these sources should be followed by a short paragraph describing the source and what it will contribute to your final project/paper.
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## **Week Six:** March 13: Warring Women

### Readings

- *Women Who Made History: Historians Present Documents from the Gilder Lehrman Collection*: Chapter 8 – Colored Ladies’ Lincoln Association; Chapter 9 – Southern White Women.
- Faye Dudden, “New York Strategy: The New York Women’s Movement and the Civil War” in *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*, 56–76. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
- Tera Hunter, “Reconstruction and the Meanings of Freedom,” in *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*, 276–286.
- See also in *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*
  - Document: After the Civil War: Reconsidering the Law: Reconstruction Amendments, 1868, 1870.
  - Document: After the Civil War: Reconsidering the Law: *Bradwell v. Illinois*, 1873.
  - Document: After the Civil War: Reconsidering the Law: *Minor v. Happersett*, 1875.

### Assignments

- Discussion Board Six
  - First post due: Sunday, March 16
  - Second post due: Wednesday, March 19
- Short Paper Three due: Wednesday, March 19
  - Write a response paper - You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

## **Q&A Session Three: Tuesday, March 18, at 8:00 p.m. ET**

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## **Week Seven:** March 20: Purity, Temperance, and Beyond

### Readings

- Clinton, “Sexuality and Stereotypes” in *The Other Civil War*, 147–165.
- Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual,” *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*, 189–201.
- See also in *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*

- Document: After the Civil War: Reconsidering the Law: Comstock Law, 1873.

#### Supplemental Reading

- Ruth Bordin, *Women and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873–1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981).

#### Assignments

- Discussion Board Seven
    - First post due: Sunday, March 23
    - Second post due: Wednesday, March 26
  - Short Paper Four due: March 26
    - Write a response paper - You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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#### **Week Eight:** March 27: Transforming the Nation-State

#### Readings:

- Martha S. Jones, *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All* (New York: Basic Books, 2020). (all)

#### Supplemental Readings

- Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

#### Assignments

- Project/Paper Preview due: Wednesday, April 2
  - Project: Submissions of the project preview will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.
  - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first five pages of your final paper.

**Q&A Session Four: Tuesday, April 1, at 8:00 p.m. ET**

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#### **Week Nine:** April 3: Women's Struggle for Freedom

#### Readings

- *Women Who Made History: Historians Present Documents from the Gilder Lehrman Collection*: Chapter 12 – Ida Wells Barnett; Chapter 13 – Fannie Barrie Williams

- Susan Ware, *Why They Marched: Untold Stories of the Women Who Fought for the Right to Vote* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019). (all)

### Assignments

- Discussion Board Eight
    - First post due: Sunday, April 6
    - Second post due: Wednesday, April 9
  - Short Paper Five due: Wednesday, April 9
    - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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**Week Ten:** April 10: Shifting Suffrage Tactics

### Readings

- *Women Who Made History: Historians Present Documents from the Gilder Lehrman Collection*: Chapter 10 – Susan B. Anthony.
- Ellen Carol Dubois, "The Next Generation of Suffragists: Harriot Stanton Blatch and Grassroots Politics," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*.
- Linda Ford, "Alice Paul and the Politics of Nonviolent Protest," in *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*, 159–173. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
- Rebecca Edwards, "Pioneers at the Polls: Woman Suffrage in the West," in *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*, 90–101. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
- Marjorie Spruill, "Race, Reform and Reaction at the Turn of the Century: Southern Suffragists, the NAWSA and the Southern Strategy in Context," in *Votes for Women*, 102–117. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
- Robert Booth Fowler and Spencer Jones, "Carrie Chapman Catt and the Last Years of the Struggle for Women's Suffrage: 'The Winning Plan,'" in *Votes for Women*, 130–142. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

### Assignments

- Rough Draft due: Wednesday, April 16
  - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first ten pages (at minimum) of your final paper.
  - Project: Submissions of the project rough draft will differ from project to

project according to type. Determine with your Section Professor an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in.

### **Q&A Session Five: Tuesday, April 15, at 8:00 p.m. ET**

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#### **Week Eleven:** April 17: Winning the Vote

##### Readings

- Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman and the New History," *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 1/2 (Autumn 1975): 185–198.

##### Supplemental Reading

- Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895–1915* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

##### Assignments

- Discussion Board Nine
    - First post due: Sunday, April 20
    - Second post due: Wednesday, April 23
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#### **Week Twelve:** April 24: Continuing Battles

##### Readings:

- Nancy Cott, "Equal Rights and Economic Roles: The Conflict over the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1920s," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 503–512.

##### Supplemental Reading

- Charlotte Bunch, "Women's Rights as Human Rights: Toward a Re-Vision of Human Rights," *Human Rights Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (Nov. 1990): 486–498.
- Jill Lepore, "The Right Way to Remember Rachel Carson," *The New Yorker*, March 19, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/03/26/the-right-way-to-remember-rachel-carson>
- Kathryn Schulz, "The Many Lives of Pauli Murray," *The New Yorker*, April 10, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/04/17/the-many-lives-of-pauli-murray>

##### Assignments:

- Final Draft due: Wednesday, April 30



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## **Course and Program Policies**

It is the responsibility of students to know, understand, and abide by course and program policies.

For a full overview of program policies, review the Gettysburg College–Gilder Lehrman Institute Student Handbook.

### Course correspondence

Correspondence with faculty and administrators should be formal. Include a subject line, addressee, and closing. Put the name and number of your course in the subject line.

### Plagiarism and AI

This program uses Turnitin to check for instances of plagiarism and AI. Plagiarism and papers composed fully or in part by AI will not be tolerated. This includes self-plagiarism. A student caught plagiarizing or composing papers with AI for the first time may receive a zero on the assignment. A student caught plagiarizing or composing with AI for a second time may be permanently removed from the program.

Your section professor will set the policies for use of AI for research or purposes other than composing your papers.

### Late work

Assignments should be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time on the due date unless otherwise specified by your section professor. If you think you will be unable to submit an assignment on time, it is your responsibility to contact your section professor to ask for an extension before the assignment's due date. Late assignments will be docked 5% if less than a week late, 10% if one week late, and an additional 10% for each subsequent week.

### Grading scale

Letter Grade	Number Grade	Grade Points
A	95%–100%	4
A-	90%–94%	3.67
B+	87%–89%	3.33
B	84%–86%	3

B-	80%–83%	2.67
C+	77%–79%	2.33
C	74%–76%	2
C-	70%–73%	1.67
D+	67%–69%	1.33
D	64%–66%	1
D-	60%–63%	.67
F	0%–59%	0

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### **Assignment Descriptions**

#### Short Papers (25% of grade – 5% per short paper)

Students will complete five short papers. Each should be approximately 500 words long. The purpose of these papers is not to merely summarize weekly readings but to demonstrate that you have read them analytically and contextually. Students have the option of responding to a prompt created by their section professor or to one of their own design. Student-created prompts should reflect the themes discussed in course readings and be included at the beginning of the paper. If you need help getting started, you can complete one of the options listed below.

Complete a thesis identification - Select one of your assigned readings and focus on identifying the thesis as well as the evidence the authors use to support that thesis.

Complete a primary source evaluation - Evaluate a primary source from the Gilder Lehrman Collection or elsewhere. Primary sources must be relevant to that week's readings. Keep the following questions in mind:

- Who is the author of this document?
- Who was their intended audience?
- How might both author and audience impact the content of the document?
- For what reason was this document created?

Complete a book review - Focus on one of the secondary sources assigned in this course and critique it. Keep the following questions in mind:

- What is the author's argument?
- Does the author adequately support their argument?
- Are you convinced of their argument? If not, why not?
- How does this source fit into the larger discussion of its topic?

### Discussion Board Posts (18% of grade – 2% per discussion board)

Students will interact in nine discussion boards in this course. Discussion boards are led by section professors, who will provide specific instructions for participation in their section. You are required to make at least one post to each discussion board and respond to **at least two other students**.

### Question-and-Answer Sessions (15% of grade – 5% per reaction)

Throughout the semester the lead professor of each course will conduct five Q&As. Students **MUST** attend at least three of these sessions for each course they are taking. **In order to receive credit for attending each Q&A, you must attend the session live and complete a 1–2-paragraph Q&A Reaction within 24 hours of participation.** Note: If you cannot attend three of the five Q&As, you may receive credit by viewing archived Q&As and completing a 500-word review of topics covered for each missed Q&A. **Makeup assignments must be completed within two weeks of the missed Q&A.**

### Final Project/Paper (42% of grade)

For the final assignment of each course, you will choose to complete either a research project or 15-page research paper. Research projects are a public-education tool designed for the general population, teachers, and/or students of varying ages. Sample projects include (but are not limited to) vodcasts and podcasts, documentary editing and transcription, websites, annotated readers, walking tours, or museum exhibits. Lesson plans *will not* be accepted. A 5-page paper narrative must accompany the project. Your section professor must approve research projects.

The research paper can be a traditional position paper that uses original research to prove a thesis statement or a historiography paper that critically examines how American historians have interpreted the same event differently and why shifts in historical debates may have occurred.

Both final assignment options require you to ask an open-ended historical question (something that does not have an easy yes or no answer) that you do not yet know the answer to. You will then use the research process (pulling from a variety of resources, mostly primary source documents) to explore that question and create a thesis-driven answer. Regardless of whether you choose to pursue a project or paper, finals are scaffolded throughout the semester. This method breaks up a large grade into smaller constituent grades and allows time to incorporate instructor feedback into assignments.

### Scaffolded Assignments

- Final Project/Paper Proposal (2%)

In roughly 1–2 pages, you should outline the main question, topic, or purpose of your final project or paper. This should include a description of the project or paper you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic (answer the questions who, what, where, and when), a brief description of your research plan (this does not need to be super specific, but should outline how many

weeks you plan to research, if you need to schedule research trips or if your sources are published or available digitally, and when you plan to begin writing) and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing (what is the significance of this topic? What does it add to our historical knowledge? Are you filling a gap that other historians have overlooked such as considering race, ethnicity, or gender?).

- Revised Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (3.5%)

This assignment will give you the opportunity to incorporate the feedback you received on the first draft of your proposal. In addition to incorporating your section professor's comments, you will also submit a proposed bibliography listing five sources you plan on utilizing in your research for your final product. Each of these sources should be followed by a brief summary (3–5 sentences) of the source and what it will contribute to your research process.

- Project or Paper Preview (5%)

This will give you the opportunity to show the progress you have made on your final project or paper and get some early-stage feedback from your section professor. For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in. For a final paper, this should be roughly the first five pages of what will ultimately be your final submission.

- Rough Draft (10.5%):

For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in. For a final paper, this should be, at minimum, the first ten pages of what will ultimately be your final submission.

- Final Product (21%):

**Final Project:** Much like the final paper option, a final project is meant to prove that you have mastered the content covered by this course. We encourage you to be creative in your approach to this project, though it should be equivalent in rigor and workload to a final paper.

**Final Paper:** Final papers should be at least fifteen pages in length. These can take the form of research papers or historiography papers.