HIST 121
Women and Gender in World History
T/R 12:00-1:20
111 Lillis

This course introduces students to the history of women and gender from the ancient world to the modern period. Lectures and readings are organized in answer to a set of analytical questions, rather than attempting to cover all of human history. How have diverse women influenced and experienced world history? Have women and men always been defined as “opposite” sexes? When and why did some understandings of “women’s nature” change? Why have certain aspects of gender resisted change for long periods of time? We will compare some answers found in various societies, proceeding in roughly chronological order.

By the end of the class, students should understand:

- How women participated in bringing about world historical events;
- The historical construction of gender roles and power relationships;
- How to interpret primary documents in historical context; and
- How to apply gender analyses to primary and secondary sources.

Required Reading

5. Primary and secondary sources posted on blackboard.

Assignments and Grading

30% Reading and writing
20% Participation
20% Midterm exam
30% Final exam

Guidelines
• **Reading and writing:** Read and interpret each of the three assigned book-length primary sources—*The Ramayana*, *La Respuesta/The Answer*, and *Red Azalea*—in historical context. Write a short paper (3-4 pages) showing your comprehension of the book and analyzing its implications for the history of women and gender. Each paper is worth 1/3 of your reading & writing grade (10% of your total grade). Papers should be submitted as word files via Safe Assign on Blackboard; please use double-spaced, size-12, Times New Roman font and standard margins.

Written assignments should show that you have read and understood the entire book by summarizing the narrative or mentioning the most important episodes. Doing this much will earn a passing grade. In order to excel, it is crucial to show your interpretive skills. Some questions to spur your analysis: How are women represented in the text? What can you tell about the standpoint of the writer or speaker and their intended audience? What stated or unstated assumptions about gender shape their message? What does the source reveal or suggest about women and gender in world history? How does the book fit into the context described in lectures and the textbook? How does it relate to other sources we have read?

• **Participation:** You are required to attend and participate in discussion sections. After one absence for any reason, your participation grade will be lowered by one letter grade for each additional absence. Prepare to participate by reading the assigned materials in advance. Please bring a copy of the reading with you. The GTF will assess the quality, as well as the quantity, of your comments and questions. Do not bring up unrelated information in an attempt to hide your lack of preparation.

*Note:* attendance in lectures is not required. However, students will need to listen carefully to the information presented there in order to pass the exams. If you miss a lecture for any reason, it is your responsibility to borrow the relevant notes from a classmate (please do not ask me to repeat the lecture during office hours). There will also be occasions when your active participation will be called for during the lecture hour. Therefore, when you do attend lecture, your focus on the subject at hand is expected. I may ask any student to leave for the day if she or he is asleep, texting, talking, whispering, watching videos, or engaged in any other distracting behavior during the lecture. This policy is intended to make it possible for everyone to concentrate.

• **The midterm exam** will consist entirely of identifications (ID’s) from lectures, textbook and blackboard readings covering the first half of the class. Write a separate paragraph identifying each concept, event, or person named. Then explain in your own words why the term is significant to women’s and gender history. Strong answers will show both comprehension and original thought.

• **The final exam** will consist of three sections: (1) ID’s from the second half of the class, (2) an interpretation of a passage from a primary source read during the second half of the class, and (3) a cumulative essay. All three sections will test your knowledge of lecture material; strong answers will show both comprehension and original thought.
Grading rubric: Graduate teaching fellows are trained to grade according to the History Department’s standards, as follows. In the event of a grading dispute, I will read your paper or exam closely in light of these standards. Consider carefully whether your work will bear such detailed scrutiny before disputing a grade.

A+: Work of unusual distinction. Therefore, in the History Department, this grade is rarely awarded.

A: Work that distinguishes itself by the excellence of its grasp of the material and the precision and insight of its argument, in addition to being well executed and reasonably free of errors.

B: Work that satisfies main criteria of the assignment, and demonstrates command of the material, but does not achieve the level of excellence that characterizes work of A quality.

C: Work that demonstrates a rudimentary grasp of the material and satisfies at least some of the assigned criteria reasonably well.

D: Work that demonstrates a poor grasp of the material and/or is executed with little regard for college standards, but which exhibits some engagement with the material.

F: Work that is weak in every aspect, demonstrating a basic misunderstanding of the material and/or disregard for the assigned question.

Schedule

Week 1. Where to begin?
T April 1: Course introduction
R April 3: “Since the dawn of time”: gender in stories of human origins
- Read: Invisible Sex, p. 1-26; Wiesner-Hanks, 1-12, 83-100.

Week 2. Does patriarchy define civilization?
T April 8: What is patriarchy, and where did it come from?
- Read: Wiesner-Hanks, p. 13-54; sources on blackboard
R April 10: Matriarchy and complementarity
- Sources on blackboard; begin The Ramayana

Week 3. Which women do we study?
T April 15: Beloved exceptions: goddesses, queens, and sometimes pharaohs
- Read: Wiesner-Hanks, 137-158; continue The Ramayana
R April 17: Representative women: working with ideals in the ancient world
- Read: Wiesner-Hanks, p. 55-82; finish The Ramayana

Week 4. How did the first world religions define gender?
T April 22: Sacred agency and social constraint: Hinduism and Buddhism
- Primary source interpretation #1 due: The Ramayana
R April 24: Gender in hadith and canon law
• Read: Wiesner-Hanks, p.109-136; sources on blackboard
• Extra credit opportunity: Knight Library Browsing Room, 4 p.m. Reflections
  Unheard: Black Women in Civil Rights

Week 5. **What did sexuality have to do with gender?**
  T April 29: Courtesans, sapphists, and half-eaten peaches
  • Read: Wiesner-Hanks, 195-223; sources on blackboard
  • Bring a blank greenbook to section. Do not write your name on your greenbook.
  R May 1: Midterm

Week 6. **To what extent were women confined to a “private sphere”?**
  T May 6: Women’s education: patterns in world history before 1500
  • Read: Wiesner-Hanks, p. 170-195; begin *La Respuesta*
  R May 8: Seclusion, mobility, and the question of women’s culture
  • Continue *La Respuesta*

Week 7. **How did gender shape empires?**
  T May 13 Gendered contact, conquest, and resistance
  • Primary source interpretation #2 due: *La Respuesta*
  R May 15 Women in motion: slaves, servants, and *filles du roi*
  • Wiesner-Hanks, p. 137-169; sources on blackboard

Week 8. **How many genders existed in the early modern world?**
  T May 20 Bodily scrutiny
  • Read: Jennifer Morgan, "Some Could Suckle over their Shoulder"; Elizabeth Reis essay and sources on blackboard
  R May 22 No class

Week 9. **To what extent did modernity bring about gender equality?**
  T May 27 Liberalism and the invention of women’s “rights,” 1763-1920
  • Read: Sources on blackboard
  R May 29 Women in revolt, 1871-1929
  • Read: Sources on blackboard; begin *Red Azalea*

Week 10. **How has the history of women and gender shaped feminists’ goals?**
  T June 3 Decolonization, “domestic containment” and cultural revolutions
  • Read: continue *Red Azalea*
  R June 5 Sisterhood is global? Challenges and possibilities
  • Reading Response due: *Red Azalea*
  • Bring 2 blank greenbooks to section. Do not write your name on your greenbooks.

**Final exam:** 8:00 Friday June 13.