HIST 399 (A)
Women and Gender in World History before 1500

MW 10-11:20 175 LIL

The first part of a two-term survey, this course introduces students to diverse histories of women and gender before the modern period. In addition to learning about women in the past, we will discuss different concepts of femininity, masculinity, and gender variance. Rather than attempting to “cover” millennia of global history in a strictly chronological fashion, the course is organized around core themes that connect gender history across cultures and periods. Most lectures and readings will therefore take a comparative approach. While I have selected case studies that will illustrate these themes in roughly chronological order, the topics may occasionally require us to look forward and back in time. The overall course will also explore large patterns, including:

- Changes and continuities in gender from the ancient world to classical and medieval societies
- Historical processes, such as cross-cultural interactions, that have shaped gender ideologies
- Gender multiplicity within particular cultures and periods
- The intersection of gender hierarchy and identities with those of ethnicity, status, region and religion

Required Reading


   - Students planning to take part B of this course (women’s and gender history since 1500) will use the same textbook for both halves of the survey.
- This term’s books can be purchased at either powells.com or amazon.com; a copy of each will be placed on reserve at the library. **Note:** Because *A Bull of a Man* is only available in hardcover and as an eBook, it is rather expensive. I will place two copies on reserve to make it accessible to those who decide not to buy it.
- Additional articles and primary sources will be posted on Blackboard.

### Policies

By remaining enrolled in this class, you are agreeing to uphold the following policies:

**Assignments**

Although students sometimes sign up for women’s history hoping for an “easy A,” this is a reading- and writing-intensive course. Detailed guidelines for the assignments are given below (pages 5-6); please ask well in advance of the due-date if you have any questions.

After the first day of class, all reading and written assignments must be completed **before class begins.** Late work will not be accepted. If for any reason you are unable to complete an assignment by its due-date, use the extra credit option. Depending on the quality of your work, you may recover up to five of the lost points.

All work should be completed independently. Plagiarized assignments will fail, and I will report all instances of plagiarism. By plagiarism, I mean representing the words or ideas of another writer as your own. For more details, go to: [http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/tabid/68/Default.aspx](http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/tabid/68/Default.aspx)

**Classroom Decorum**

Show respect by listening to and acknowledging what others say; don’t leave abruptly or talk while others are speaking. Come on time, stay awake, work offline unless otherwise directed, silence your phone, and don’t touch it during class. I rarely interrupt class to draw attention to disrespectful behavior, but I always notice it.

**Access**

Over the course of the semester, I look forward to meeting individually with all of the students in this course, either during my regular office hours or by appointment. Although I am not constantly online, I will return emails within 24 hours. I am also committed to meeting the needs of students with disabilities who are registered with Disability Services and who may need individual arrangements.
# Tentative Schedule

## Week 1  
**Sources**  
- **M. Sep. 26** Course introduction  
  - Read: Wiesner-Hanks, ch. 1 (all).

- **W. Sep. 28** The problem of sources  
  - Read: *The Invisible Sex*, excerpt on Blackboard; begin *Women’s Work*
  - Note: Today’s office hours rescheduled to Friday, Sep. 30, 10a-12p.

## Week 2  
**Language**  
- **M. Oct. 3** Locating women or interpreting gender?  
  - Read: Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender: a Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” on Blackboard.

- **W. Oct. 5** Patriarchal “civilizations” vs. matriarchal “cultures”?  
  - Read: Wiesner-Hanks, ch. 2 (pp. 25-36) and ch. 6 (137-151); Ifi Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, excerpt on Blackboard

## Week 3  
**Representativeness**  
- **M. Oct. 10** Laboring women in the ancient world  
  - Reaction paper 1 due: *Women’s Work*

- **W. Oct. 12** Beloved exceptions: goddesses, queens, and sometimes pharaohs  
  - Begin *A Bull of a Man*

## Week 4  
**Normativity**  
- **M. Oct. 17** Ideas of women and women of ideas  
  - Read: Wiesner-Hanks, ch. 4 (all) and ch. 7 (pp. 170-178).

- **W. Oct. 19** Perfect manhood  
  - Paper 2 due: *A Bull of a Man*

## Week 5  
**Agency**  
- **M. Oct. 24** What the rise of three world religions meant for women and gender  
  - Read: Wiesner-Hanks, Ch. 5 (all)
  - Midterm review

- **W. Oct. 26** Midterm

## Week 6  
**Sexuality**  
- **M. Oct. 31** Sex work: courtesans, concubines, eunuchs  
  - Read: Wiesner-Hanks, ch. 8 (195-206); TBA on Blackboard; begin *The Murder of Regilla*

- **W. Nov. 2** Gender and same-sex eroticism  
  - Read: TBA on Blackboard

## Week 7  
**Domesticity**  
- **M. Nov. 14** Marriage: masculinity, femininity, and power  
  - Paper 3 due: *The Murder of Regilla*
W. Nov. 16  Navigating seclusion
  • Read: Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* and Dorothy Ko, *Cindarella's Sisters*, excerpts on Blackboard; begin *A Flourishing Yin*

**Week 8**  Corporeality
M. Nov. 21  Women and asceticism
  • Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*, excerpt on Blackboard
W. Nov. 23  Bodies of knowledge
  • Paper 4 due: *A Flourishing Yin*

**Week 9**  Transgression
M. Nov. 28  Imperial Inquisition: witches, sodomites, and third genders
W. Nov. 30  Final review
  • Independent analyses due.
  • Extra credit museum write-ups due.

**Final Exam: Thursday, Dec. 8, 10:15**
## Assignments & Grading

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Introductory students</strong> (new to history/WGS)</th>
<th><strong>Optional for advanced students</strong> (all seniors, junior history/WGS majors)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Participation 10%</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Come to every class having read the assigned reading for the day. Be prepared to engage substantively with the material in class discussions.</td>
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<td>• See me in office hours at least one time during the term. If you find that you are having a hard time participating in class discussions, it will benefit you to attend office hours more frequently.</td>
<td>• Your participation grade accounts for respectful behavior as well as the quality of your remarks (see classroom decorum policy).</td>
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<td><strong>Reading 40%</strong></td>
<td><strong>Writing 40%</strong></td>
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<td>• For each assigned book other than the textbook, write a brief (2-4 pages) response:</td>
<td>• Instead of writing four response papers, upper division students may <strong>choose</strong> to write one original paper (15-20 pages) that takes women and/or gender before 1500 as its central focus. This would be a good choice for those planning a senior thesis or preparing a writing sample for grad school applications. Due Nov. 30—no exceptions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What is the subject of the book, and what is its thesis?</td>
<td>• There are three options for this paper:</td>
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<td>• What sources and methods does the author use to prove her/his thesis?</td>
<td>1. History (primary research)—see me for guidance.</td>
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<td>• What can you tell about the author’s standpoint?</td>
<td>2. Historiography (secondary research) How have scholars treated this subject? What are their major debates? What are the political and cultural implications? Where, in your opinion, should scholarship go from here?</td>
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<td>• How does the author approach the history of women and gender? Does s/he explicitly define terms like women, men, gender?</td>
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<td>• What are the stated and unstated assumptions about gender in this book?</td>
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<td>• What is the most original or important contribution of the book?</td>
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<td>• What would have improved the book?</td>
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Note: Participation grade accounts for respectful behavior as well as the quality of your remarks (see classroom decorum policy).
3. Cultural analysis (museum studies, art history, literary and/or popular representations of this subject).
   - Discuss and confirm your topic with me by Monday, Oct. 10. If I have not seen you in office hours by that date, I will assume that you will be writing all four response papers with the introductory students.

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<tr>
<th>Midterm exam 20%</th>
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<td>• An in-class, blue-book exam on Oct. 26</td>
<td>• See left. Note: you will be accountable for having read all the assigned readings prior to the midterm, so be sure to stay caught up, even if you are writing an independent analysis.</td>
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<td>• It will consist of a few short identification paragraphs (IDs), a longer essay, and a multiple choice section.</td>
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<td>• The IDs and essay will test your ability to synthesize lecture material. The multiple choice section will test your reading comprehension of all the assigned books.</td>
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<td>• Same basic format as the midterm; no surprises, although some sections may be longer than they were on the midterm.</td>
<td>• See left. Note: you will be accountable for having read all of the assigned readings, so be sure to stay caught up, even if you are writing an independent analysis.</td>
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<td>• Visit one of the campus museums and analyze any pre-1500 exhibit or collection. How are the materials gendered? How do gender politics shape the ways in which materials are selected and displayed? 2-3 page write-up due Nov. 30—no exceptions.</td>
<td>• See left.</td>
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