
Professor: Dr. Andrea Pearson

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Office Hours: T 2:20-3:20 open; F 2:20-3:20 and after class by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

Women's Voices Through Time is a course that introduces important issues in Women's and Gender Studies through theory, historical texts, fiction, poetry, visual art, and videos. I hope that our work together will open up new ideas and interests, develop your analytical skills in understanding theory, reading both recent and historical texts, and viewing art, and encourage you to explore and express your personal responses to a range of issues related to women's identities, ideas, and creative activities. The course has five significant goals, which will be interwoven throughout the semester's work.

Our first goal will be to gain knowledge of the basic issues that have shaped women's historical experiences across the diversities of Western cultures. Using the textbook *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions*, we will look at varied aspects of women's lives: women's places in society and the family, their education and work experiences, their socialization as children, their relationship to their bodies, their representation in art and public media, and their histories of achievement and resistance, as explained by a variety of women scholars, writers, and activists (and a few men). Our readings and discussions will encourage awareness of how dominant and subversive concepts of gender identity and racial/ethnic diversity (especially in the United States) have influenced women's choices and actions across the centuries.

The second goal will be to understand these issues more deeply through personal testimonies found in essays, fiction, poetry, and visual art. These all record and articulate the "voices" of individual women across a range of historical and contemporary Western cultures. We will ask: How have women viewed their own experiences of culturally shaped gender roles? How have they analyzed and resisted oppressive social patterns? And how have they shaped their ideas and feelings into culturally significant artistic expressions?

Our third goal is to find effective ways to speak out ourselves and also to listen carefully, thoughtfully, and respectfully to each other during the semester. Our relationships to each other will be shaped during a variety of activities that depend on everyone's participation and mutual respect to be successful. Both women and men are welcome in this course, and we will all gain from hearing each others' stories and ideas. There will be introductory lectures on topics as we go through the course, in addition to group discussions and activities focused on the readings that you will do as homework, and videos and artworks we will see in class. Your comments and your active listening are intrinsic to the success of this course!

The fourth goal is to share skills and resources. Some participants already have developed strong skills at reading conceptual materials and assessing their meaning; others of you are better at analyzing historical texts or literary fiction and poetry. All these skills will be useful in this course and we can all learn to deploy them more effectively from each listening to each other in class discussions!

The fifth and last goal is to expand the understanding each of us brings to class about the diversity of women's lives, ideas, hopes, and possibilities. Each of you has important personal and cultural ideas and experiences that I hope you will contribute to this course. We need to hear from everyone and to listen to each other with respect and interest!

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK AND READINGS

- **Textbook:** Susan M Shaw and Janet Lee, *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions. Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 4th edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009). Available at the AU bookstore. You may use an earlier edition but by doing so you agree to take personal responsibility for differences between the two.
- **Assigned readings and worksheets; optional worksheets:** These will be available on the class Blackboard website (see below) from which you can download and print them out. You should bring current readings to class with you on the appropriate days.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

- **Regular class attendance is expected! A sign-in attendance roster will be circulated at each class meeting.** It is your responsibility to sign the roster each time. You may miss up to three class periods without penalty. Absences for religious holidays and medical and family emergencies will be excused, as will absences for students representing the university at an officially-sanctioned event. You must provide a written explanation for any absence to have it excused. Without valid excuses, more than three absences will lower your course grade by a full letter (an A becomes a B; a B a C, etc.).
- **Do not be late!** Class starts promptly at 3:35 and announcements are often made at the beginning of class. There is no place on campus that is more than a ten-minute walk from our classroom! If your previous class tends to run over, please let Dr. Pearson know this and she will contact the professor.
- **Your participation is also very important.** Not everyone likes to speak in class, but participation demonstrates your involvement in the classroom community. I hope you will express both your interest in the issues and your familiarity with the assigned readings.

WRITTEN WORK: WORKSHEETS, EXAMS, SHORT RESEARCH PAPER

- **Worksheets: Women and the Visual Arts.** Six worksheets posted on Blackboard will help you focus on works of art and readings from a book called *Exhibiting Gender* by Sarah Hyde, in preparation for class discussions. The worksheets will be handed in according to the course calendar and graded check plus, check, or check minus based on your thoroughness and thoughtfulness. Your answers should be clearly articulated; grammatical and spelling errors will bring down your grade. Since the worksheets do not demand a set of correct answers, I will not write comments on them. Instead, I will respect what you have to say. What you write will be confidential.

Missing worksheets will be assigned an F. Keep copies for yourself just in case.

- **Worksheets: Daily Readings.** Worksheets corresponding with most of the other required readings for the course will be available on Blackboard. These are designed for guidance only; they will not be collected.

- **Short Research Paper:** This 5-page, double-spaced paper will focus on a topic that interests you. You will need to find at least five articles, poems, fiction, essays, or other sources relevant to the course and use them to discuss how the authors or organizations approach the issue that you choose. You may use internet sources and/or published sources. **Your job is to explain how each source reflects on the topic you selected, and to discuss how the authors or organizations approach the issue that you choose.** That is, you must take an analytical and critical look at the material you are using, and compare and contrast each source's perspective.
- **Exams:** The exams will focus on issues discussed since the previous exam, except for the Final Exam which will cover material from the entire semester. Material from *Exhibiting Gender* and the worksheets and discussions related to it will not be included. The tests will give you an opportunity to show that you have done the readings and thought about important conceptual ideas. They will be primarily essay exams but they may have also a short section of terms to define. For a good grade you will explain the major conceptual issues that form the basis of our class readings and discussions, refer to specific readings and the main points their authors expressed, and make intelligent connections between various readings and the larger conceptual frameworks in which they were presented. Your answers should demonstrate that you grasp the big ideas of the course as well as specific examples *and* issues.

The exams are open book and open notes. I encourage you to discuss the questions with your classmates **before** you take the exam, but the following restrictions apply:

1. The notes were produced before you or anyone you are consulting read the exam.
2. You may not consult with anyone while you are taking the exam.
3. You may not consult with anyone who has already taken the exam.
4. Don't do anything else that would prevent the work for the exam from being your own.

PRESENTATIONS

- **Together with at least one other person in the course, each student will contribute to sharing resources through a 10-minute classroom presentation.** Dr. Pearson will assign to each group a resource, most often electronic, as the centerpiece for the presentation. The presentation should not only summarize the resource but also discuss its merits and shortcomings (if any). You will be evaluated on organization, clarity, and presentation skills (annunciation, eye contact, use of technology, etc.) and on how closely you adhere to ten minutes (it is inconsiderate to other students to exceed the allotted time).

OTHER RESOURCES: Blackboard Site, Group Email, and MDID Image Website:

- **Blackboard** is the online system used by most professors at American University. Our class Blackboard site lets you access an online copy of the [syllabus](#), [worksheets](#), and the [required articles](#) that are on E-reserves. To reach our Blackboard site, go to www.blackboard.american.edu which will give you the log-in page. Log in with your AU ID and password. If you have any problem accessing the site or these materials, contact Dr. Pearson promptly.
- **Group Email:**
You will be automatically registered on the Blackboard class email list using your AU email address. If this is not the address you normally check, be sure to forward your AU email to your other account. To find out how to do this, go to www.american.edu and click on my.american.edu, then look in the Technology section for forwarding instructions.

- **Cell Phone Policy:**
Our classroom must be a cell-phone-free space! Please remember to turn your cell phone off before class. You may not leave class to make or receive a call except in an emergency, and please wait to check messages until class is over!

GRADING SYSTEM

Grade percentage formula:

Worksheets	15%
Short Research Paper	20%
Presentation	20%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
Exam 3 (Final Exam)	15%

Explanation of Grade Standards:

Worksheets: Check plus = A, Check = B, Check minus = C, Missing sheet = F.

Research Paper, Presentations, and Exams (also, see above under Presentations) - Letter Grades:

- A** Reflects superior work in all areas: writing and speaking show originality and issues and ideas are presented with clarity, precision, and depth, in clear, correct English; demonstrates mastery of the content of the course; shows leadership and enthusiasm in class and constructive group participation and cooperation.
- B** Reflects good control of course content; ideas and issues are well presented in clear, correct English; class and group participation and cooperation are commendable.
- C** Reflects basic competence in understanding, writing, speaking, and grasp of course content; good class/group participation and cooperation.
- D** Reflects less than competent work, deficiencies in control of content, in written or spoken English, and/or in class/group participation and cooperation.
- F** Fails to meet requirements adequately, unacceptable level of class work, presentation skills, or writing. A grade of F will be given to any missing components of the course.

Grades for late assignments, presentations, and exams will be lowered by one letter for each day. Worksheet grades will be lowered one step for each day (a check plus becomes a check, a check becomes a check minus, a check minus becomes an F). Absences for religious holidays and medical and family emergencies will be excused, as will absences for students representing the university at an officially-sanctioned event. You must provide written documentation in such cases.

Keep copies of all your assignments! Please make a copy (photocopy or computer disk) of all assignments that you turn in, in case the paper is misplaced or otherwise disappears.

DISCLAIMER: SOME DIFFICULT MATERIAL WILL BE COVERED IN THIS COURSE

Please be aware that this course covers some difficult and controversial material. We will be viewing and discussing some texts and images that address human sexuality and diversity that may be disquieting, distressing, or express political viewpoints with which you do not agree. Some of the readings take positions about racial and gender identity, oppression, and resistance or attitudes about our bodies with which you may not agree; discussions may lead you to feel uncomfortable, angry, or resentful. We urge each participant to listen carefully to other people's opinions and express your own views in ways that are firm but respectful of other people's viewpoints. If you find you are having trouble dealing with some parts of the course, please come speak to Prof. Pearson as soon as possible to express your concerns!

A CAUTIONARY REMINDER ABOUT ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

I take plagiarism and academic dishonesty very seriously, and I am required to report cases to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, whose policy is to fail students for the course. Please read the university's Academic Integrity Code closely, and be sure to ask me if you have any questions. The code is available online at <http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/index.htm>.

In writing papers, you must properly cite all sources (1) directly quoted, (2) paraphrased, or (3) consulted in any fashion. Sources include all printed material as well as the Internet. Proper citation means using a standard citation format: MLA, APA, or Chicago.

It is also considered plagiarism if you merely rework source material, placing an author's thoughts in other words without contributing your own ideas. For that reason, you must include some kind of source note whenever drawing on someone else's interpretation. A source note can be a sentence or more in your paper, or it can be a footnote. A source note should clarify the extent to which your interpretation is indebted to your source, explaining both (1) what you use and (2) where you depart or differ from the source.

Information presented during your presentations must be work done by you and your assigned partner(s) only. You must use your own words and cite others when applicable.

You must receive prior permission from me if you want to submit a paper or part of a paper that you have written for a previous class or are writing for a current course.

In sum, I expect all the work you do for this course to be your own and that you will credit others when appropriate.

COURSE CALENDAR: TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

WVFFV = readings in the textbook; **BB** = readings to be downloaded from Blackboard. Please note that we are not reading the whole textbook and we are not covering every chapter in order. There is quite a bit of jumping around. Where you see **WVFFV**, look for reading numbers and page numbers to find the assigned sections. Note: The schedule and readings are subject to change if extenuating circumstances arise.

T 1/13 Introduction to WGST 150: Women's Voices Through Time

Overview of course syllabus, goals, topics, and logistics; small group introductions

F 1/16 Women, Culture, and Concepts of Feminism and Gender Difference

WVFFV # 2 pp. 28-31: Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, "A Day without Feminism"

WVFFV # 8 pp. 56-57: Anna Quindlen, "Still Needing the F Word"

WVFFV # 36 pp. 254-255: Gloria Steinem, "If Men Could Menstruate"

BB: Jennifer Reid Maxcy Myhre, "One Bad Hair Day Too Many, or the Hairstory of an Androgynous Young Feminist" from *Listen Up. Voices from the next feminist generation*: 84-88

T 1/20 Presidential Inauguration – no class

F 1/23 Women's Voices: Two Fictional Views of Gendered Relationships

BB: Susan Glaspell, "A Jury of Her Peers," in *American Women Writers. Diverse Voices in Prose since 1845*, ed. by Eileen Barrett and Mary Cullinan (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1992, orig. 1917): 324-340

BB: Ursula LeGuin, "Coming of Age in Karhide," from *The Birthday of the World and Other Stories* (New York: Perennial Books/Harper Collins 2002; original publication 1995): 1-22.

T 1/27 Visual Arts Worksheet 1, and Gender and Inequality in Women's Lives

BB: Visual Arts Worksheet 1 and Reading 1

WVFFV Chapter 2 pp. 59-75: "Systems of Privilege and Inequality"

WVFFV # 10 pp. 84-86: Marilyn Frye, "Oppression"

F 1/30 Visual Arts Worksheet 2, and Gender Inequality and Resistance in Western Women's Historical Writings

BB: Visual Arts Worksheet 2 and Reading 2

BB: Christine De Pizan, Part One: 1 to 7 from *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405)

BB: Mary Wollstonecraft, excerpt from *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792)

BB: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Address Delivered at Seneca Falls" (1848)

BB: Sojourner Truth, "A'n't I A Woman?" (1851)

T 2/3 Gender Inequality and Other Oppressions in America Today

WVFFV # 12 pp. 87-91: Suzanne Pharr, "Homophobia. A Weapon of Sexism"

WVFFV # 13 pp. 91-98: Peggy MacIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege"

WVFFV # 14 pp. 99-101: Gloria Yamato, "Something About the Subject Makes It Hard to Name"

WVFFV # 15 pp. 101-106: Donna Langston, "Tired of Playing Monopoly?"

F 2/6 Inequality and Resistance: Contemporary Women's Essays and Poetry

BB: Audre Lorde, "That Summer I Left Childhood Was White" from *Calling Home. Working Class Women's Writings. An Anthology*: 78-82

BB: Kesaya E. Noda, "Growing Up Asian in America," from *Making Waves*: 243-251

BB: Rita Arditti, "But You Don't Look Jewish," from *Skin Deep. Women Writing on Color, Culture, and Identity*: 24-29

T 2/10 EXAM 1 – CLASS DOES NOT MEET. Hard copy of exam due to Dr. Pearson in Katzen 142 by 4:50 pm.

F 2/13 Visual Arts Worksheet 3, and African American Women Singers Resisting Gender Injustice

BB: Visual Arts Worksheet 3 and Reading 3

Video in class: excerpt from “Wild Women Don’t Have the Blues” (VHS 741)

WVFF # 72: 534: “If Women Ran Hip Hop”

T 2/17 Visual Arts Worksheet 4, and Introduction: Teaching and Learning Gender

BB: Visual Arts Worksheet 4 and Reading 4

WVFF Chapter 3 pp. 124-139: “Learning Gender in a Diverse Society”

WVFF # 20 pp. 142-145: Judith Lorber, “The Social Construction of Gender”

F 2/20 Bodies, Nature, and the Power of Social Expectations

WVFF Chapter 5 pp. 223-243: “Inscribing Gender on the Body”

BB: Susan Griffin, “An Answer to a Man’s Question, “What Can I Do About Women’s Liberation” from *No More Masks. An Anthology of Twentieth-Century American Women Poets*: 363-364

BB: Harriet Lerner, “Speaking the Unspeakable,” from *Lilith* (Spring 2005): 28-30

T 2/24 Women, Bodies, Advertising, and Desire

WVFF # 35 pp. 249-254: Joan Jacobs Brumberg, “Breast Buds and the ‘Training’ Bra”

WVFF # 37 pp. 255-266: Lisa R. Rubin et al, “Body Ethics and Aesthetics Among African American and Latina Women”

WVFF # 42 pp. 285-286: Jonathan Watts, “China’s Cosmetic Surgery Craze”

F 2/27 Some Personal Histories: Living Our Lives Inside Our Bodies

BB: Daphne Muse, “The Bob--Not an Afro, But Still a Liberating Do” from *Skin Deep. Women Writing on Color, Culture and Identity*: 124-131

WVFF # 38 pp. 266-278: Rose Wietz, “What We Do for Love”

WVFF # 40 278-280: Lisa Miya-Jervis, “Hold That Nose”

BB: Aisha Hekim-Dyce, “Reality Check” (about go-go dancing) from *Listen Up*: 118-125

T 3/3 Anorexia and Fatness: Women’s Fears and Projections

BB: Abra Fortune Chernik, “The Body Politic” from *Listen Up*: 103-111

BB: Nomy Lamm, “It’s A Big Fat Revolution” from *Listen Up*: 133-141

Review WVFF pp. 238-241: “Eating Disorders”

F 3/6 EXAM 2 – CLASS DOES NOT MEET. Hard copy of exam due to Dr. Pearson in Katzen 142 by 4:50 pm.

T 3/10 and F 3/13: SPRING BREAK!

T3/17 Bodies and Expectations: Are Two Sexes Enough? Are Our Concepts Inadequate?

WVFF # 19 pp. 140-142: Anne Fausto-Sterling, “Two Sexes Are Not Enough”

WVFF # 21 pp. 145-153: Pamela J. Bettis and Natalie Guice Adams, “Short Skirts and Breast Juts: Cheerleading, Eroticism, and Schools”

WVFF # 22 pp. 154-155: Nellie Wong, “When I Was Growing Up”

F 3/20 Visual Arts Worksheet 5, and Introduction: Working At Home and On the Job: Women's Options

BB: Visual Arts Worksheet 5 and Reading 5

WVFFV Chapter 8 pp. 426-447: "Women's Work Inside and Outside the Home"

T 3/24 Work, Class, and Gender for Women in the United States

Video in class: "Fast Food Women" (VHS 1833)

WVFFV # 59 pp 448-451: Pat Mainardi, "The Politics of Housework"

WVFFV # 61 pp. 464-470: Barbara Ehrenreich, "Maid to Order. The Politics of Other Women's Work"

WVFFV # 64 486-493: Carrie N. Baker, "The Women's Movement Against Sexual Harassment"

F 3/27 Immigrants and Working-Class Women Outside the United States

WVFFV # 62 pp. 470-482: Evelyn Hu-Dehart, "Surviving Globalization: Immigrant Workers in Late Capitalist America"

BB: Tillie Olsen: "I Want You Women Up North to Know," from *Calling Home*: 91-94

BB: Chea Villanueva, "Factory Girls" from *Making Waves*: 295-296

T 3/31 Professional Women: Gender in the Corporate Marketplace

WVFFV # 63 pp. 483-485: Martha Burk, "Power Plays: Six Ways the Male Corporate Elite Keeps Women Out"

BB: Janet Rosenberg et al., "Now That We Are Here: Discrimination, Disparagement, and Harassment at Work and the Experience of Women Lawyers," *Gender and Society* 7:3 (Sept. 1993): 415-433

F 4/3 Visual Arts Worksheet 6, and Introduction: Gender, Love, and Intimacy: Voices from History

BB: Visual Arts Worksheet 6 and Reading 6

WVFFV Chapter 4 pp. 170-185: "Sex, Power, and Intimacy"

BB: Anne Bradstreet, "To My Dear and Loving Husband" and "A Letter to Her Husband, Absent Upon Public Employment" from *Women's Work*: 24-25

T 4/7 RESEARCH PAPERS DUE IN CLASS, and Women Writing Theory about Love and a Different Idea of "the Erotic"

WVFFV # 27 pp. 193-197: bell hooks, "Romance: Sweet Love"

BB: Audre Lorde: "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" from *Sister Outsider*: 53-59

F 4/10 Dr. Pearson lecturing elsewhere – class activity TBA

T 4/14 The Opposite of Desire. Women, Rape, and Violence; Strategies for Resisting Violence

WVFFV Chapter 10 pp. 555-577: "Resisting Violence Against Women"

WVFFV # 80 pp. 593-600: Joetta L. Carr, "Campus Sexual Violence"

WVFFV # 84 pp. 606-610: Jane Fonda, "Reclaiming Our Mojo"

F 4/17 – F 4/24 PRESENTATIONS

T 4/28 Activism for Equality and Justice for Women

WVFFV Chapter 13, pp. 707-721: "Activism, Change, and Feminist Futures"

WVFFV # 100 pp. 722-725: Lisa Marie Hogeland: "Fear of Feminism: Why Young Women Get the Willies"

WVFFV # 101 pp. 725-729: Phyllis Rosser, "Too Many Women In College?"

WVFFV # 102 pp. 729-732: Michael Kimmel: "Real Men Join the Movement"

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE FRIDAY, MAY 1, BY 4:40 PM in Dr. Pearson's office.

APPENDIX. FULFILLING GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS: CURRICULAR AREA

Questions on the following information? Contact Prof. Langa at hlanga@american.edu.

WGST 150, "Women's Voices Through Time," is one of five foundation courses in AU's General Education program Curricular Area 2, Cluster 1: Cultures of the West. After taking WGST 150, you can complete the Area 2 Gen Ed requirement with one of the following second level courses.

ANTH 235G Early America: The Buried Past	JWST 205G Ancient/Medieval Jewish Civilization
ARTH 205G Art of the Renaissance	JWST 210G Voices of Modern Jewish Literature
HIST 205G American Encounters 1492-1865	LIT 235G African American Literature
HIST 215G Social Forces that Shaped America	LIT 240G Asian American Literature
GEN ED 220G: Special Topic each semester	LIT 265G Literature and Society in Victorian England
See schedule of classes	

Goals of Curricular Area 2 and Course Objectives of Women's Voices Through Time

- *Understand the historical and philosophical traditions that shape the western world.*

WVTT will help you to become acquainted with how Western culture has described and defined women's identities, capacities, and social roles, and how the actual voices of women confirm or challenge these views. While some women's writing has been part of the Western canon, much of women's creative work lies outside the dominant traditions of white male privilege. We will explore both contemporary women's analyses and expressive responses to women's "condition" and look at how the rich creative legacy of women across centuries provides an alternative narrative of human capabilities.

- *Read and discuss both historical and contemporary analyses of women's experience and identity in varied cultural traditions.*

We will look at how women's scholarly analyses, creative writing, and artworks can be used to explore and understand the complexity and diversity of female experience, and how cultural constructions of feminine propriety have shaped women's thinking and creative endeavors.

- *Examine and assess evidence, draw conclusions, and evaluate the meaning of these conclusions.*

Working through these texts will allow us to evaluate the complexity of historical, political, and social constructions of gender difference.

- *Examine historical and philosophical issues critically and comparatively.*

How people perceive themselves and their "proper" positions in their society has been and remains today a significant issue addressed by both historians and philosophers. We have learned to ask "What has been defined as "natural"? How is cultural knowledge asserted and maintained? What are the ethical dimensions of particular social distinctions of power and privilege? WVTT will provide many opportunities to engage in discussion of these kinds of questions.

- *Consider the contributions of ethical and religious systems to human life.*

Ethical and religious values have been central to the definitions of women's place in society and their opportunities and limitations. Through analysis of significant aspects of women's lives both historically and in contemporary American cultures, the ways in which religious and ethical systems either silence women's experiences or facilitate their expression will be considered.

- *Discuss the complex interplay between the rich varieties of human cultural traditions and the necessity of change.*

Over the semester we will explore diverse women's voices from a range of historical and contemporary cultural contexts, primarily within the Western tradition. We will see how women have pressed and continue to press for changes that will provide a more gender-inclusive and equal social life for all people.

- *Recognize that Western intellectual traditions are defined by diversity not uniformity, by influences from the rest of the world, and by challenge to authority as well as conformity.*

Through readings and art work created by women from varied cultural traditions, we will experience the value of distinctive voices and recognize the complexity of women's experiences.