HIST 72200/WSCP 81000:
“Love, Marriage, and Motherhood in U.S. History”
Tuesday, 4:15-6:15pm, Room 3306
Fall 2016

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3:00-4:00pm

Introduction

This course explores gender and the politics of the family in the United States, considering the intimate, private lives of American women over time and place as well as the public manifestations and ramifications of the same. We will study how ideals of wifehood and motherhood have been constructed, and how who has created and had access to these ideals has changed over time. We will analyze the evolving meanings and value assigned to women’s reproductive labor, particularly the larger forces that influenced and were influenced by women’s various roles and responsibilities within their families. Throughout the semester, we will play close attention to questions of race, ethnicity, class, region, and sexuality. We will also consider how the social history of women’s family lives intersected with politics (domestic and international), law, medicine, social movements, and the economy, among other issues.

Course Information

Students will read a book each week and are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the reading. All readings are required. The books are available on reserve at the GC library and can also be purchased from any number of booksellers and on-line retailers.

Attendance is also required. Please let me know in a timely manner about any emergencies that prevent you from being able to come to class.

I will collect all students’ e-mail addresses during the first class and I will communicate with the class from time to time via e-mail. You are responsible for the material in these e-mails. If you think that you are not receiving all communications, please let me know.

Classroom courtesy is important. Please be respectful to me and your fellow students and turn off all cell phones and other personal devices during class.
Course Assignments

Participation:

Class participation is an essential element of this course; the class will prove most valuable to you if you are prepared for each discussion. This preparation involves not only reading each book, but also arriving in class ready to participate in a lively discussion. Excellent participation involves coming to every class session with an analysis of and questions about the readings in mind, engaging with others about ideas, respecting the contributions of others, and consistently elevating the level of discussion.

To help in this preparation, students will e-mail me three discussion questions pertaining to the reading by 11:00am on class days. These questions should not merely seek information, but rather should analyze and assess the readings with the goal of stimulating discussion. These questions will be graded on a check plus/check/check minus basis and will be part of your participation grade.

Writing assignments:

An important goal of this course is for students to learn how to write thoughtful and effective academic book reviews. Students will build towards this goal with a number of short writing assignments, culminating in a longer, multi-book review in the style of the Journal of Women’s History.

- Each of the first two papers will be a synopsis of the week’s reading. This paper will be a very short (two paragraphs, no more than 250 words) analysis that identifies the book’s topic, narrative, argument, claim to a place in the historiography, major sources, and significance. A good synopsis requires a thorough understanding of the book (on its own merits) and demands economical writing on your part. For the first synopsis, you will write about either Plane’s Colonial Intimacies or Morgan’s Laboring Women. For the second synopsis, you will write about either Cleves, Charity and Sylvia or Casas, Married to a Daughter of the Land. Each of these papers is due at the beginning of class (before the discussion of that book for the day). No late papers will be accepted.

- Each of the next two papers will be an 800-word book review in the style of the American Historical Review (AHR). From the AHR website: “We expect reviewers to write thoughtful and engaging critiques that explain the basic argument of a book, assess its strengths and weaknesses, and place the work in historiographical context. We prefer that they do so in a way that addresses readers outside the confines of their area of specialization.” For the first review, you will write about Plant, Mom or Kulchin, Fit to be Tied. For the second review, you will write about Rivers, Radical Relations or Dunak, As Long as We Both Shall Love.

- The final paper will be a 3000-word (approximately 9-10 pages), three-book review in the style of the Journal of Women’s History (JWH). Reviews in the JWH take a historiographical point of view and ask big questions about the state
of the field. The topic is of your choosing. You must use at least two books that have not been discussed in class. Please plan on discussing your topic with me some time in the middle of the semester (mid to late October).

- All papers will be graded with attention to style as well as content. Good writing is an indispensable skill on the graduate level. I will not expect perfect prose in any of your assignments, but near-perfect prose is the goal. Paragraphs and sentences should be well formed and conceived. Punctuation and grammar should be proper and clean. Citations should be correctly presented in the style found in the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

- Late papers will not be accepted for the synopsis or book review assignments. For the final paper, any assignment turned in late will be dropped by one-third a letter grade each day it is late (i.e. a paper that would have received an A- if turned in on time would be dropped to a B+ if one day late). No late papers will be accepted after a week and you will receive a “zero” for the assignment. I will only modify this policy under exceptional circumstances.

- Plagiarism, defined as representing another’s words or ideas as your own or without proper citation, will not be tolerated and will result in an “F” for any given assignment. For details about avoiding plagiarism and the Graduate Center’s policy on academic dishonesty, please visit: http://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/Publications/AvoidingPlagiarism.pdf?ext=.pdf

### Grading

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- Two synopsis papers: 5% each
- Two book reviews: 15% each
- Final paper: 35%
- Course Participation: 25%

Note that there are no extra credit assignments for this course.

### Course Schedule

**August 30:** Course Introduction


**September 6:** Marriage and Race in Early America

September 13: Reproduction and Race in Early America


September 20: Reproduction and the American Revolution


September 27: Same-Sex Marriage in the New Nation

Reading: Rachel Hope Cleves, *Charity and Sylvia: A Same-Sex Marriage in Early America* (Oxford University Press, 2014)

October 14: Marriage in the Borderlands


October 18: Fiction, Marriage, and Race


October 25: Motherhood and the Welfare State


November 1: Motherhood and Modernity


November 8: Reproductive Rights


November 15: Adoption across Borders

November 22: Beyond the Heterosexual Family


November 29: Marriage and Consumer Culture

Reading: Karen M. Dunak, As Long as We Both Shall Love: The White Wedding in Postwar America (New York University Press, 2013)

December 6: Marriage and Power

Reading: Marcia A. Zug, Buying a Bride: An Engaging History of Mail-Order Matches (New York University Press, 2016)

December 13: Final paper due by 4:15pm. All final papers must be submitted by e-mail.