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Office Hours: 2:30-3:30 Tu/Th

HIST 121
Women in World History
T/Th 4:00-5:20
128 Chiles

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
- How to apply gender analyses to primary and secondary sources

Required Reading

1. Textbook: Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History: Global Perspectives*, Second ed., (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).
2. R.K. Narayan, *The Ramayana: a shortened modern prose version of the Indian epic* (Penguin, 2006).
3. Primary and secondary sources posted on Canvas.

Assignments and Grading

- 30% Reading and Writing
- 20% Discussion Section
- 20% Midterm Exam
- 30% Final Exam

- *Reading and writing:* You will be required to write two essays in this course, each worth 15% of your total grade. Completion of the essays is required; you may not decide that you are satisfied with a lower overall grade and forgo one or both essays. Papers should be submitted through Canvas. Details on how to do this will be provided in discussion section. Please use double-spaced, size 12 Times New Roman font and standard margins.

Essay 1: Read and interpret the assigned book-length primary sources *The Ramayana* 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. Your essay 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?

Essay 2: You will interpret primary sources posted on Canvas. Details about the topic of the essay will be provided after the midterm.

- *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.

- *Exams*: The midterm and final exams will consist of a combination of the following elements.
 1. Identifications from lectures, textbook readings and readings from Canvas. A strong identification will consist of a separate paragraph describing the concept, event or person named. Then explain in your own words why that ID is significant to women's history.
 2. Interpretation of a passage from a primary source reading.
 3. A wider interpretive essay.

All three types of questions 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?

9/29 Tuesday: Course Introduction

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks 1-20

10/1 Thursday: Does patriarchy define civilization?

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks, p. 25-33, 55-65.
- Begin reading *The Ramayana*
- Sources on Canvas

Week 2 How do systems of government relate to patriarchy?

10/6 Tuesday: The politics of patriarchy: Women of ancient Greece

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks, p. 83-98, 137-151
- continue *The Ramayana*
- Sources on Canvas

10/8 Thursday: Sacred agency and social constraint: Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks: 109-121
- continue *The Ramayana*
- Sources on Canvas

Week 3: How did the first world religions define gender?

10/13 Tuesday: Gender in monotheism

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks, p. 121-129
- Sources on Canvas

10/15 Thursday: What did sexuality have to do with gender in the pre-modern world?

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks, 195-206
- Sources on Canvas

10/16 Friday before midnight: Primary source interpretation #1 due: *The Ramayana*. Submit through Vericite on Canvas.

Week 4: Sexuality and Patriarchal Bargains

10/20 Tuesday: Women of the Middle Ages in Europe: Patriarchal Bargains

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks, 36-39, 170-178
- Sources on Canvas

10/22 Thursday: Gendered contact, conquest and resistance in ancient Meso-American Civilizations

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks, p. 33-36
- Sources on Canvas

Week 5: How did gender shape empires?

10/27 Tuesday: Race and Gender Colonial Latin America

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks, 39-45, 206-209
- Sources on Canvas

10/29 Thursday: MIDTERM

Week 6: To what extent did modernity bring about gender equality?

11/3 Thursday: Industrial Revolution: New patterns of work in the long 19th century

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks: p. 45-50, 65-72
- Sources on Canvas

11/5 Tuesday: Activist Women and first wave feminism

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks, p. 98-104
- Sources on Canvas

Week 7: What issues mobilized women to collective activism?

11/10 Imperialism and Activism

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks 158-162
- Sources on Canvas

11/12 Thursday: Guest Lecture by Quinn Akina: Hawaii

Week 8: What is the relationship between women and the power of the modern state?

11/17 Tuesday: Women in Totalitarian States: Does citizenship bring liberation?

- Sources on Canvas

11/19 Thursday: Guest lecture by Hillary Maxson: Women in Modern Japan

11/20 *****Essay 2: Women's Rights Due before midnight. Submit through Vericite on Canvas.*****

Week 9: Is the personal political?

11/24 Tuesday: The personal and the political: Women's Liberation

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks 151-158
- Sources on Canvas

11/26 Thursday: * * * Thanksgiving Holiday * * *

Week 10: How has the history of women and gender shaped feminists' goals?

12/1 Tuesday: Second Wave Feminism in a global context

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks, p. 178-189
- Sources on Canvas

12/3 Thursday: Issues facing women today

- Read: Wiesner-Hanks: 209-218
- Sources on Canvas

Final Exam: 12:30 Monday, December 7th