

# **WOMEN’S AND GENDER HISTORY: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO THEORY, METHODS, AND ARCHIVES**

**MA Level Course, 4 credits  
Winter 2023–2024**

## **Course Syllabus**

### **INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

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**Instructor:** Dr Hannah Loney (she/her)  
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### **COURSE INFORMATION**

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#### **Course Description:**

The academic field of women’s and gender history has developed enormously since the late 1960s. Besides familiarizing students with this sub-discipline, this course will ask fundamental questions about what we mean by “history”; about (historical) knowledge production; about the categories that historians, scholars, and archivists use; and about “archives” – what they are and how do they function.

The course has three main components: first, we will address the history of the academic (sub)discipline of women’s and gender history. What is “women’s” history, where and when was the discipline developed? “Gender” has become a key concept: when was it introduced, and why? What *is* “gender”? How do postcolonial and decolonial perspectives affect our understanding of how gender worked in (former) colonial contexts? More generally, how have postcolonial perspectives influenced women’s history? Second, we will focus on research methodology, with a special emphasis on archives – both theoretically and practically. We will read and discuss literature that historicizes archives and approaches them as “artifacts of history” (Burton 2005, p. 6), and as sites of knowledge production, rather than neutral repositories of documents. We will become acquainted with some of the main women’s archives worldwide, including digital archives. Third, students will apply the knowledge acquired by writing a research paper about the state of women’s history and/or finding women or LGBTQI people in the archives in a country or region of their choice.

#### **Learning Outcomes:**

The course provides students with a basic knowledge of the academic discipline of women’s and gender history and its main concepts and challenges, including the impact of postcolonial and decolonial approaches and a critical approach to thinking about “history.” Students will become acquainted with some of the foundational writings in the field. They will practice how to “find women in the archives” and will apply this knowledge to the archival situation in a country or region of their choice.

*\*\* Please note that the full syllabus will be available on the course Moodle site.*

## ASSESSMENT

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Your final grade for this course will be based on the following elements:

- Class attendance and participation: 25%
- Reaction paper: 25%
- Class presentation: 25%
- Final paper: 25%

## CLASS SCHEDULE

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Week:	Date Starting:	Topic:
1	September 18	Introducing Women's History
2	September 25	The History of a Field
3	October 2	"Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis"
4	October 9	Criticisms of Scott's 1986 Article
5	October 16	Postcolonial and Transnational Women's History
6	October 23	Doing Historical Research
7	October 30	Women and Memory Forum
8	November 6	Colonial Archives
9	November 13	Gender and Cultural Memory
10	November 20	TBC
11	November 27	Presentations
12	December 4	Conclusion

## READINGS

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- Karen Offen et al (eds.), *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1991), Introduction, pp. xix–xxxvii (plus notes).
- Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 1–13.
- Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American History*, Black Women Writers (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Pub, 1994), Chapter 1: "Lifting the Veil, Shattering the Silence: Black Women's History in Slavery and Freedom," 3–26.
- Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053–1075.
- Jeanne Boydston, "Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis," *Gender & History* 20, no. 3 (November 2008): 558–583.
- Ruth Roach Pierson, "Introduction," in Ruth Roach Pierson and Nupur Chaudhuri (eds), *Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race* (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998), 1–19.
- Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, "Crossing Borders in Transnational Gender History," *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 3 (2011): 357–379.

- John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Chapter 4: “Voices and Silences,” 58–79 (plus p. 130 for Further Reading).
- Hoda Elsadda, “An Archive of Hope: Translating Memories of Revolution,” in *Translating Dissent: Voices from and with the Egyptian Revolution*, edited by Mona Baker (London: Routledge, 2016).
- Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1–15 and 44–53.
- Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, “Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* vol. 28, no. 1 (2002): 119.
- Antoinette M. Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), Epilogue, 137–144.