

## WOMEN IN MODERN EUROPE

History 347  
Spring 2012

Sarah Curtis  
Wednesday 4:10-6:55

“I read it [history] a little as a duty; but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars and pestilences in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all, it is very tiresome; and yet I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention.”

Catherine Morland to Mr. Tilney in Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*

“What one wants, I thought – and why does not some brilliant student at Newnham or Girton supply it? – is a mass of information; at what age did she marry; how many children had she as a rule; what was her house like; had she a room to herself; did she do the cooking: would she be likely to have a servant? All these facts lie somewhere, presumably, in parish registers and account books; the life of the average Elizabethan woman must be scattered about somewhere, could one collect it and make a book of it. It would be ambitious beyond my daring, I thought, looking about the shelves for books that were not there, to suggest to the students of those famous colleges that they should rewrite history, though I own that it often seems a little queer as it is, unreal, lop-sided.”

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

### Course objectives:

This course surveys the history of European women from about 1750 to the present. In addition to restoring women's voices to history, we will examine well-known historical events from the perspective of women's history, look at ideas about women, and examine the historical roots of issues and debates still informing the lives of European women. We will give some attention to issues of gender, masculinity, and sexuality.

### Reading:

Instead of a standard textbook, I am using a source reader, *Lives and Voices: Sources in European Women's History*, which provides documentary evidence of women's history. I hope that it will complement the background information I will be giving in class and provide material for discussion and interaction. Assignments in this book are abbreviated as LV in the schedule, and the numbers refer to the number of the **document**, NOT the page number.

We will also be reading three novels, one short story collection, and a memoir. They are available for purchase at the bookstore and are on reserve at the library:

Mary Wollstonecraft, *Maria or the Wrongs of Woman* (Norton)

Helen Zenna Smith, *Not So Quiet* (Feminist Press)

Alexandra Kollontai, *Love of Worker Bees* (Academy Press Chicago)

Erica Fischer, *Aimée & Jaguar: A Love Story, Berlin 1943* (Alyson Publications)

Faïza Guène, *Kiffe, Kiffe Tomorrow* (Houghton Mifflin)

**Films:**

You are required to view the following films during the semester (dates on schedule). They are available for viewing at the Media Access Center (advance reservations required), but you are also welcome to view them at home if you wish to rent them in a store or online.

*A Doll House* (1973 film with Anthony Hopkins and Claire Bloom)

*Vera Drake* (dir. Mike Leigh, 2004) OR *Four Days, Three Weeks, Two Days* (dir. Cristian Mungui, 2007)

**Museum show:**

Starting February 18, the Legion of Honor Museum in San Francisco will be showing a special exhibit on “The Cult of Beauty: The Victorian Avant-Garde, 1860–1900.” I am requiring that you attend this exhibit before March 7. We may be able to arrange group tickets. More information on the exhibit is available at: <http://legionofhonor.famsf.org/legion/exhibitions/cult-beauty-victorian-avant-garde-1860-1900>. Please save your ticket stub to show that you attended the exhibition.

**Course requirements:**

The requirements for this course include regular class attendance, participation in discussions, and completion of all written work. There will also be four papers (4-5 pp., 7-8 pp. for graduate students) during the semester (February 22, March 14, April 11, May 16) based on the assigned readings. Paper topics will be handed out in class.

**Grading:**

Grades will be determined as follows: each paper 20%, class participation 20%. Students who wish to take the course CR/NC can change their grading status via “My SFSU” by March 16.

Graduate students taking the course for upper-division credit will have one additional assignment. Graduate students enrolled concurrently in History 799 (1 unit) will complete a 15-20 pp. historiographical essay in addition to the assignments on this syllabus. Both assignments are due April 25. Please see information sheet. Graduate student grades will be determined as follows: each paper 15%, book review 15%, class discussion 25%.

Late papers will be marked down one half-grade (e.g. from an A to an A-) if they are turned in in the same week (please ask the history department to date stamp them if I am not in), two half-grades (e.g. from an A to a B+) if they are turned in by the following Monday, and one full grade (e.g. from an A to a B) if they are turned in the following Wednesday. **Papers more than one week late will not be accepted.**

If you are unable to complete the course requirements by the end of semester, it is your responsibility to withdraw from the course. I will issue no instructor-initiated withdrawals or incompletes. Student-initiated incompletes are reserved for serious medical excuses (with documentation) or other natural disasters within the last three weeks of the semester. The last day to drop a course without a “W” is February 3, and the last day to withdraw with a “W” (except in extreme circumstances) is April 20.

**Office hours and contact information:**

Monday 2:30-4:00, Wednesday, 10:30-12:00, and by appointment  
office location: Science 267                      phone: 338-2250  
e-mail: scurtis@sfsu.edu                      website: <http://bss.sfsu.edu/scurtis>

This course will have a TA, Amy Liebert ([alieber@mail.sfsu.edu](mailto:alieber@mail.sfsu.edu)), who will give 1-2 lectures and help facilitate discussion.

**Schedule:**

**Week 1            January 25**

**Introduction**

**What is Women's History?**

**Week 2            February 1**

**The "Woman Question" during the Enlightenment**

LV 89, 90 91, 92

Begin Wollstonecraft, *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*

**Week 3            February 8**

**Women and Citizenship in a Revolutionary Age**

LV 94, 95, 98, 99

Finish Wollstonecraft, *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*

**Week 4            February 15**

**The Impact of Industrialization**

LV 100, 101, 102, 104, 105

**Week 5            February 22**

**Home Sweet Home: The Cult of Domesticity**

*Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*, chap. 1 and skim another chapter  
(available at <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/b/beeton/household/>)

LV 112, 113

**PAPER DUE**

**Week 6            February 29**

**Challenges to Middle-Class Norms**

LV 110, 111, 114, 118, 119, 121, 122

**Week 7      March 7**

**The New Woman**

LV 123, 124, 125, 126, 127

Film: A Doll House

Alternatively, you can read the play (online text at Project Gutenberg,  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/2542>)

Attend museum show by March 7.

**Week 8      March 14**

**The Suffrage Question**

LV 107, 128, 129, 130

**PAPER DUE**

**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 9      March 28**

**New Roles: Women during World War I**

Smith, *Not So Quiet*

LV 131, 133, 137, 138

**Week 10     April 4**

**Women and the Communist Revolution**

Kollontai, *Love of Worker Bees*: “Three Generations”; “Sisters”

LV 141. 153

**Week 11     April 11**

**Flappers, Fashion, and Natalism**

LV 144, 147

**PAPER DUE**

**Week 12     April 18**

**Women and Fascism**

Begin Fischer, *Aimée and Jaguar*

LV 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 162

**Week 13      April 25**

**War and Holocaust**

Finish Fischer, *Aimée and Jaguar*

LV 159, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 169

**Week 14      May 2**

**Postwar Women: East and West**

Films: Vera Drake OR Four Months, Three Weeks, Two Days

LV 171, 174, 175, 176, 181, 182

**Week 15      May 9**

**The New European Woman**

Guène, *Kiffe, Kiffe Tomorrow*

LV 183, 185, 186

**FINAL PAPER DUE May 16**