

History 791B Research Seminar in U.S. Women and Gender History

Spring Semester 2005

Professor Joyce Avrech Berkman

Office: 605 Herter Hall: Phone: 545-6759

Home: 66 Cottage Street, Amherst, MA 01002: Phone: 549-0659, 549-0089
(between 9 AM and 9 PM)

Email: jberkman@history.umass.edu

Office Hours: T/Th 2:45-4:15 and by appointment

791B SYLLABUS: A WORK-IN-PROGRESS

The overarching goal of this Research Seminar is your completion of a major research paper or project in U.S. Women's History. This requires your command of the intellectual and scholarly background as well as research and writing skills required of your topic for scholarly publication. To meet this end, we will study the craft of historical research and writing through close reading of periodical articles and of each class member's first draft of their seminar paper. I envision this Research Seminar as a collaborative scholarly community in which each individual has a stake in the intellectual and scholarly growth of each other. Although your paper or project is individual in nature, you will have a partner with whom to try out ideas, to troubleshoot, and to critique closely your paper or project first drafts.

I have tried to keep assigned readings light, so that most of your effort can be devoted to your research and paper or project. I look forward to regular discussion with each of you about your work. In addition to pre-arranged conferences in my office, I welcome your stopping by my office for informal conversation.

Please know that I regard this syllabus as a provisional document. I'm open to adjustments as we travel along.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One: January 26: Introduction to the Seminar (examining Acknowledgments for insight into historical research)

Week Two: February 2: What makes for effective Journal Articles?

Assignment:

1. Gunja Sengupta, "Elites, Subalterns, and American Identities: A Case Study in African-American Benevolence," American Historical Review, 109,4 (October 2004): 1104-1139.

2. Daniel E. Bender, "'Too Much of Distasteful Masculinity': Historicizing Sexual Harrassment in the Garment Sweatshop and Factory," Journal of Women's History, 15, 4(Winter 2004): 91-116.

Week Three: February 9: No Class: Dennis McNally, Five College History Program Lecture, 7:30 PM Memorial Hall

Assignment:

We will meet for individual conferences. Bring your proposal and complete bibliography of primary and secondary sources

Week Four: February 16: Visit to University of Massachusetts Archives, meet at the Archives with Director of Archives Robert Cox and with Curator of Manuscripts and Archives Danielle Kovacs.

Weeks Five and Six: February 23 and March 2: No Class

Assignment:

Research on your paper: see me for appointment, as needed, and meet with your partner to determine how you can best assist each other.

Week Seven: March 9: Workshop

Assignment:

1. Your provisional paper thesis and chief questions (prepare copies for each class member).
2. Bring a basic writing manual.
3. Bring the essays handed out for February 2 discussion. We will examine style elements very very closely.

SPRING BREAK

Week Eight: March 23: Exorcising the Demons: yours and others

Assignment:

1. Interview a faculty member, preferably one of the relatively new faculty members in our department, about the tough and tricky and frustrating aspects of their research and writing and about the lucky finds and rewards along the way.
2. Self-reflection on your own research experience in the past and currently

Week Nine: March 30: Examine another periodical article

Assignment:

1. Phyllis Mack, "Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency: Reflections on Eighteenth-Century Quakerism," *SIGNS*, 29, 1(Autumn 2003): 149-177.

Week Ten: April 6: No class: Individual Conferences

Week Eleven: April 13: Presentations

Assignment:

1. Provide me with a hardcopy of your paper and place three or four hardcopies of your paper by Monday morning, April 11th in the manilla envelope on my office door. If seminar students prefer electronic versions, they can let you know.

Ditto above for Weeks Twelve (April 20), Thirteen (April 27), Fourteen(May 4) -- see that hardcopies are in my envelope by the Monday of the week of your presentation.

During this period of time I will schedule to meet with each of you subsequent to your presentation.

Week Fifteen: May 11: Seminar Wrap-up and Potluck

NOTE: FINAL DRAFT due no later than Friday, May 20.

COURSE READINGS:

1. I plan to provide copies of each of the journal articles for you.

2. Although I have not ordered a writing manual, I strongly recommend that you purchase one or take one out of a library for the entire semester. You should have a more substantial work than Strunk and White or Terabian, which are barebones presentation of elements of style. Perhaps too detailed, the Bible for history scholars and editors, The Chicago Manual of Style, is a worthy investment. Diane Hacker's writing manuals typify many that occupy a reasonable middle ground. Finally, regarding research, Jacques Barzun and Henry Groff, THE MODERN RESEARCHER, remains a reliable resource.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: (Rough breakdown of grading percentages)

1. Completion of two drafts of a publishable paper. (70%)
2. Active and informed participation in class discussion of assigned work. (10%)
3. Assisting your partner at different stages of the research and writing process and leading the seminar's discussion of your partner's first draft.(10%)
4. Providing at least two members of the Seminar with a critique of the content and style of their first draft (and providing me with a copy of that critique).(10%) One of these two members can be your partner.

GUIDELINES FOR CRITIQUE OF ESSAYS:

Consider the following:

1. What were the author's thesis statement and goals: strengths and shortcomings in meeting these?
2. What were the author's chief arguments and conclusions? Examine the adequacy of supporting evidence/documentation, illustrative details, logical reasoning. What were the most convincing arguments and conclusions and why?
3. Did the author acknowledge the nature and possible impact of her/his subjective engagement with the topic.
4. Did the author exercise critical analysis and empathic sensitivity in conveying an individual's or group's experience?
5. In what ways did the author sufficiently/insufficiently ground their study in women's history of the period under study?
6. Ditto: existing scholarship on the topic? Did the author explain her/his contribution to existing scholarship?
7. Writing style: clarity, concision, and precision of statement, tight organization overall and within paragraphs, fluent transitions from paragraph

to paragraph, variety of word choice and sentence syntax, fluid integration of quotations (only as long as necessary), grammar, and punctuation.

TEACHERLY ALERT: Except in extraordinary circumstances (computer problems don't qualify), I do not permit extensions on deadlines for work. I recommend that you aim to complete work several days before the deadline.

Since we meet only once a week, regular attendance is crucial. If weather or car conditions or a virus prevent your coming (and please don't attend if you are contagious), let me know and arrange with another class member to find out what took place on that seminar meeting.

SMILING NOTE: I keenly look forward to this Seminar. I welcome your suggestions for ways to make your and other seminar participants' experience more satisfying.