

AMH 3931

Special Topics in American History: Crime and Gender

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Fall 2020

T | Period 7 (1:55 PM - 2:45 PM)

R | Period 7 - 8 (1:55 PM - 3:50 PM)

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Course Summary

This is a brand new, fairly innovative course. It was going to be that way even before the pandemic screwed up my plans. I think that this version will go well, and I am very optimistic about it. But things will be tricky and will perhaps require some adjustments as we go.

During this semester we will contemplate how 19th Century Americans thought about – and wrote about – the intersection of gender and crime. We will read about crimes (and court cases), but we will mostly be concerned with how contemporaries talked about them and particularly how they looked at events “through the lens of gender.” How did ideas about gender find their way into published public conversations? In order to understand these episodes we will need to figure out how the laws functioned, but this is not really a course about legal history.

The other distinctive feature of this course is that roughly half your work will be in group projects. Each small group will select a court case that appeared in the press. Your task will be to learn about the case and the back story, research contemporary responses, dig up how the episode found its way into popular culture, and come up with a story that your group can tell. You will tell that story in a web-based program that can be shared with the outside world. In short, each group will be learning about a rather obscure story, and then sharing that story with each other and with readers.

There will be lots of presentations and discussion along the way.

On-Line Teaching and Class Protocols

This course will be taught on-line. That of course requires that you have access to a computer and a functioning WiFi connection. If your equipment is dicey, you should make it a point to log on before class to be sure that you are ready. I will sometimes begin classes with a short quiz. Those quizzes will

assess if you are there and ready to discuss the materials. We will be using the various functionalities of Canvas and Zoom. In order to take this course you must have the proper equipment to do the work. (So, for instance, it is not sufficient to say that you cannot do some task because you are only using your phone.)

You probably have other courses on line this semester or in the recent past. I will do my best to communicate what we are doing and what I am asking you to do. It is important that you do not assume that whatever you did in another course is identical to what we will be doing.

This class will use many components of **Canvas**. There is a Canvas page for the class and you should familiarize yourself with the various pages. A few specifics:

- Various written requirements will be described here, in **the Course Syllabus**.
- Individual written assignments will be on separate pages under "Assignments." Those assignments will be summarized by the end of July. In most cases the specifics might come later. The dates will appear under "**Course Summary**" at the bottom of this page.
- I will make regular use of the "**Announcements**" pages for giving you regular updates on the class. Specifically, I will note whether we are meeting on Canvas or Zoom (or both). These will usually appear by Sunday before each week. You should check these announcements regularly.
- I will use the "**Quiz**" function periodically to assess your preparation. Quizzes will be timed. You may use your notes, but not the books.
- I very much dislike Canvas's "**Speed Grader**" It is bad software. But I guess that I will use it, sacrificing quality for speed.
- Grades for quizzes will appear on the "**Gradebook**," but they will not be on the same point scale as the other materials. I will not use the Gradebook feature for recording or announcing final grades, but it will allow you to keep track of intermediate grades.
- Some days when the class has read something substantial we will convene for "**Discussion**" on Canvas. I like this format for discussions, partially because several people can be typing comments at the same time and responding to each other. Some days we will do that instead of using Zoom (which has other virtues and drawbacks).
- On some days the class will meet together, but quickly convene into working groups. We will usually do that on Canvas.

On some days we will meet on **Zoom**.

- When we do, you will register. (This allows me to keep track of attendance and it will keep out the hundreds of interlopers.)
- When you are on Zoom you should keep the video option on. We will negotiate the microphone feature as we go.
- When on Zoom I will use the "poll" feature, sometimes as a quiz and sometimes just to assess your thoughts. They will also function as a way of taking attendance. Like with the quizzes on Canvas, one of my goals will be to get a quick assessment of whether you were "in class" and prepared when the poll is given.
- I think that I will use Zoom for group presentations.

Unless I tell you otherwise (and some days I will), classes meet at the appointed time either in Zoom or on Canvas, or both. The expectations are essentially the same as if we were meeting in Keene-Flint. I expect you to be "in class" when class begins and to stay in class until I end things. During the double period I might take a break in the middle, but more often I will just end class early. As with class in an

ordinary classroom, you should not be consulting your phone or walking off to grab a snack during class. That takes more discipline when we are all at home, but it seems reasonable to ask.

Group Projects and Group Work

Roughly half your work for this semester will be focused on researching your particular episode, sharing your findings with the rest of your group, and preparing a digital presentation for the class (and the world?). This means that the stakes for this group work are very high.

Each group will fill out a *Group Contract*, summarizing what you will be doing this semester. It will be due on October 1st.

Each week each group will submit a *Weekly Update* summarizing what you each accomplished in the previous week. You will take turns writing this update.

The syllabus indicates various weeks when you will be working together on your projects and various weeks when you will be presenting updates for class discussion. The details will evolve as we proceed.

Preparation, Note-Taking, and Assessment

You should acquire a spiral bound notebook and take hand-written notes on everything you read for class (one article and three books). I want you to take notes because every study tells me that the act of taking down notes (not merely underlining) is crucial to really understanding what you read. And those notes will become the basis of your contributions to discussion. When I give you short quizzes you may use your notes, but not the original materials.

In this on-line world I do worry that folks will yield to the temptations that these teaching formats allow. I am hoping for the same level of preparation before classes and the same level of focus during class time that I would normally see. One way to ensure that will be that I will give pretty regular short quizzes in both Canvas and Zoom. Some will assess how carefully you did the readings. Some will assess how fully you followed discussions in class. Those quizzes will be short and timed. If you are not at your computer when the quiz occurs you will be marked as absent for the day.

Readings for Purchase

You will be reading at least one article, reproduced digitally. The entire class will also be reading and discussing three monographs. One concerns a woman charged with accessory to murder and also conspiracy to kidnap the governor of Pennsylvania. One concerns the murder of a young woman. The third concerns an enslaved woman who was accused of murdering her “owner” and rapist. All are interesting stories.

You should acquire copies of the following:

- Susan Branson. *Dangerous to Know: Women, Crime, and Notoriety in the Early Republic* (2013). https://www.amazon.com/Dangerous-Know-Notoriety-Republic-2011-08-10/dp/B01FKUZJDC/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr= (Links to an external site.)

- Amy Gilman Srebnick, *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers: Sex and Culture in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Oxford University Press). <https://www.amazon.com/Mysterious-Death-Mary-Rogers-Nineteenth-Century/dp/B01FIXF5ZS> (Links to an external site.)
- Melton McLaurin, *Celia, A Slave* (Avon, 1999). https://www.amazon.com/Celia-Slave-MeltonMcLaurin/dp/0380803364/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=celia+a+slave&qid=1594004711&s=books&sr=1-2 (Links to an external site.)

All three books are available in various forms, all of which are inexpensive. Needless to say, when the class discusses each book the excuse “my book has not arrived yet” is of no value. This is college. Get the books in time to read them.

Grading

- Final Essay on the readings 20%
- Final Essay on your project 20%
- Group Project 20%
- Presentations and updates 20%
- Preparation and discussion 10%
- Quizzes on readings 10%

Missed class meetings or excessive lateness will result in reduced grades. I will start reducing grades once you have missed two classes. You should of course let me know if there are reasons for missing class, but my assumption is that the first few missed classes are part of the final calculation. (That is, if you just don't attend class a few times in September and then get sick in November those November absences will be the two free ones.)

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> (Links to an external site.).

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx> (Links to an external site.).

Generally speaking, if planned (approved) events are going to require you to miss class, you will be given additional work.

Accommodations

Please do not hesitate to contact me during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed.

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/> (Links to an external site.)).

The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

If you have an accommodation letter you should plan to meet with me (via zoom) in the first two weeks of class.

Course Evaluations

Students may complete their evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A_ufl.bluera.com_ufl_&d=DwIGaQ&c=sJ6xIWYx-zLMB3EPkvcnVg&r=1qtWVKU2uNohMAWR5pYYVu0F_ty9jxk4wI-DcSEfmKub76k8eaDIYyGQkZMpCQZ6&m=KCQMaruvDccGkQ95LBWWejChKpHpd3olzGps63zo0Ao&s=2ry1lk1Sd2MT9xMTXgaRslOLmzE7-Mky8W2E_HUO3wQ&e= (Links to an external site.) .

Class Meetings and Assignments

WEEK 1 - INTRODUCTIONS

1. Tuesday September 1 Introduction
2. Thursday September 3 Explain Projects

WEEK 2 - GROUPS

3. Tuesday September 8 Discussion: Anna Dickinson and Gendered Rhetoric

Read: Gallman essay (to be linked)

4. Thursday September 10 Divide into groups

WEEK 3 - Gender and Crime in Philadelphia

5. Tuesday September 15 Gender and Crime
 - Read: Branson, *Dangerous to Know*, pp. 1-68.
6. Thursday September 17 Telling the Story
 - Read: Branson, *Dangerous to Know*, pp. 69-139.

WEEK 4 - Selecting Group Projects

7. Tuesday September 22 The Options
8. Thursday September 24 Groups Make Picks

WEEK 5 - Edgar Allen Poe, “The Mystery of Marie Roget”

9. Tuesday September 29 Introducing Mary Roget and Mary Rogers
10. Thursday October 1 A Mystery Short Story
 - Read: Poe, “The Mystery of Marie Roget”
 - **Group Contracts due in class**

WEEK 6 - Mary Rogers - I

11. Tuesday October 6 Newspaper Stories about Mary Rogers
 12. Thursday October 8 *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers - I*

- Read: Srebnick, 1-83.

WEEK 7 - Mary Rogers - II

13. Tuesday October 13 Thoughts on a web page
 14. Thursday October 15 *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers - II*

- Read: Srebnick, 85-161

WEEK 8 Group Work

15. Tuesday October 20 Meetings on Zoom – details TBA
 16. Thursday October 22 Meetings on Zoom – details TBA

WEEK 9 - Group Work (details TBD)

17. Tuesday October 27 Group Work
 18. Thursday October 29 Group Work

WEEK 10 - Presentations to the Class

19. Tuesday November 3 Group Presentations
 20. Thursday November 5 Group Presentations

WEEK 11 - *Celia, A Slave*

21. *Tuesday November 10 Celia – Part I*

- Read: Melton A. McLaurin, *Celia, A Slave*, Introduction, Chapters 1-4

22. *Thursday November 12 Celia – Part II*

Read: McLaurin, *Celia, A Slave*. To end of book

WEEK 12 - Web Pages

23. Tuesday November 10 TBD
 24. Thursday November 12 TBD

THANKSGIVING

Tuesday November 24 No class for Thanksgiving

Thursday November 26 Thanksgiving

WEEK 13 - What did you come up with?

25. Tuesday December 1 Group Presentations

26. Thursday December 3 Group Presentations

CONCLUSION

27. *Tuesday December 8 Conclusions*

Group Projects Due in class

Final Paper Due at 1:50 (before class)

December 17th - Final Date

Final Essay due at 5:00