In this course, we will read recent and classic works in U.S. women’s history, covering the period from the 1600s to the present. In addition to providing a rough chronological survey of U.S. women’s history, this course focuses on three themes: reproductive labor, coalitions and political activism, and legal constructions of gender, sexuality, and marriage in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The course also considers different approaches to women’s history. For example, two of the monographs we’ll read are by journalists, not historians. Three of the monographs are biographies (a “triple” biography and two single biographies). One is a family history. We will consider what these disparate genres contribute to our understanding of the course’s key themes.

Course Themes
Reproductive labor refers to the work of keeping human beings alive – raising and training infants and children, cleaning bodies and homes, feeding family members, caring for the elderly, and maintaining cultural traditions or religious practices around birth, marriage, illness, and death, among other tasks. In U.S. culture, this work has been coded as female and erased as “labor” (it is seen as part of “private” or “family” rather than economic life, and therefore unpaid or severely underpaid). The erasure of reproductive labor as labor has had repercussions for women of all classes, but repercussions have been especially severe for politically and economically disempowered women. This course looks at how this critical labor came to be erased, and at the implications of this erasure over the past 200 years.

The pressure of unpaid reproductive labor has implications for the creation of coalitions that are necessary for effective activism and social change. Particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries, and arguably to the present, political and cultural restrictions have impacted most women. For example, women have been restricted from voting, making contracts, gaining professional credentials, or serving on juries. They have been subject to often contradictory
ideological beliefs about their physical and mental capabilities, beliefs that have been wielded to restrict their actions, limit their economic self-sufficiency, belittle their cultural contributions, and hedge or deny their control over their own bodies and sexuality. As a result, their ability to express their desires has been restricted or demonized, while they have also been subjected to mechanisms of control ranging from mockery and condescension to demonization, sexual harassment, assault, or rape, as well as lack of control over pregnancy and offspring.

Yet women, like men, also differ in countless ways – by race, class, religion, ethnicity, immigration status, sexuality, and gender identity, for a start. Many if not most experience multiple forms of subordination. For example, at times when abortion was illegal for all women, it could still be accessible to women with money and connections. A working-class woman of any race might have been restricted from higher education both because she was female and because she was working class, and/or because she was non-white. Voting rights for women did not enable Black women to vote in places where Black people, male and female, were barred from the ballot.

Such differences mean that there is no single way that women experience restrictions based on a society’s gender roles. They also mean that creating coalitions to fight shared restrictions can be fraught. Therefore, some of our readings will consider forces that either foster or impede activist coalitions among women. What tactics have women employed to make change historically? What has helped them make alliances across difference, and what has hindered them? How have women both used and subverted gender roles in their quest for increased social power, or for other changes aimed at remedying imbalances of power in society? How has reproductive labor, race, class, and many other social hierarchies among women worked to enable or thwart social change?

Several of our readings will focus on law (including marriage law). This is because laws have played a powerful role in shaping ideas about gender (as well as race and other social hierarchies). We will examine both how laws shape gender, and how legal challenges have been wielded by those seeking to change mainstream ideas about sexuality, gender roles, and gender identity.

Vocabulary/ other critical concepts include
-Human sexual dimorphism or biological sex differences (or “sex”): physical differences between males and females, which have been conceptualized in diverse ways across times and cultures, and which are currently understood as primarily consisting of differences in (visible) genitals and (invisible) chromosomes and hormones.
-Gender or gender roles (or “sex roles”): the attributes that a given society assigns to what it perceives as males and females, along with the types of labor or activities and levels and types of power that a given society understands as appropriate to males and females.
-Sexuality: what an individual desires sexually, and how individuals act upon those desires. In the 19th century, sexuality was viewed as an outgrowth of biological sex differences (male bodied people were assumed to instinctively desire females). Over the course of the twentieth
century, sexual desire has increasingly been understood as a force that develops independently of biological sex differences (one’s body does not determine one’s sexual desire).

- Gender identity: One’s inner sense of oneself as a “man” or “woman” (or both/ neither). How an individual understands their relationship to their society’s gender roles, regardless of the individual’s biological sex at birth.

- Cis-gender and transgender identities: cis-gender people are those whose gender identity, or inner sense of oneself as a “man” or “woman,” is the same as the sexual identity they were assigned at birth. Transgender people are those whose gender identity, or inner sense of oneself as a “man” or “woman,” differs from the sexual identity they were assigned at birth.

- Sexism: the set of ideas that limit women’s sphere of action.

- Patriarchy: rule of the fathers. Term is used broadly to refer to cultures that trace descent through males rather than females, and that privilege (some) males over (most) females.

- Misogyny: words or actions used to police women and ensure that they stay “in their place” (however that might be defined). People of any gender can be misogynists. Misogynists can love some women – their mothers, for example, or others that love, nurture, support, and defer to men. The rage of misogynists is turned against women who defy their society’s roles for women -- not those that accept and enact those roles.

- Intersectionality: an analysis that starts from the understanding that no human being has a singular social identity. At the very least, people in U.S. society are both raced and gendered, in addition to their class position (one is a white working-class man, a middle-class African-American woman, an elite white man, a working class South Asian transgender woman, etc.). To understand how social hierarchies function, these multiple dimensions of identity should be taken into account.

How Sex Changed
Finally, note that mainstream, Euro-American ideas about biological sex, sexuality, gender roles, and gender identity have changed over the course of U.S. history, sometimes quite dramatically. Below are some very broad shifts. In what ways, if any, did shifts in gender work to overcome sexism and misogyny? How does an intersectional approach complicate potentially liberatory aspects of these shifts? How can it help us understand how new gender roles have been incorporated so that they support older forms of sexism and misogyny?

- 1600s-late 1700s: “normal” women believed to be more sexual/carnal than men.
- Early 1800s-early 1900s: “normal” women believed to lack sexual desire altogether. Ideally, pure women ought to “tame” their husbands’ more aggressive sexual needs. Same-sex romantic relationships are common but not categorized as sexual (even if they were).
- 1920s to 1990s: “normal” women are sexual beings, and should desire sex with men. They should use sexual pleasure as a way to strengthen their marriage. Same-sex relationships are stigmatized (though they still occur).
- 1990s to present: Twentieth-century ideas about “normal” women persist, alongside newer ideas that sexual desire bears no set relationship to one’s biological sex. Biological sex is understood as amorphous and as something that can be altered. One has a right to choose one’s gender identity. One can choose to reject the idea of binary gender.
Course Goals
- Introduce students to classic and recent works on women and gender in U.S. history.
- Give students a sense of major shifts in U.S. women’s history, 1700s to the present.
- Introduce students to key concepts in women’s history, such as reproductive labor, coalitions and political activism, and legal constructions of gender, sexuality, and marriage.
- Train students to analyze and discuss complex historical scholarly arguments.
- Train students to write short, analytic responses to readings; to compare how central themes covered in the class are treated by different authors; and to master a longer paper that compares multiple authors’ treatment of a key concept or theme covered in the course.

Books to buy (books that we are reading in their entirety)
- Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers, They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019)
- Gaiutra Bahadur, Coolie Woman: The Odyssey ofIndenture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014)
- Kirsten Swinth, Feminism’s Forgotten Fight: The Unfinished Struggle for Work and Family (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018)

These books are available for purchase at the Rutgers University bookstore. Contact information for the bookstore:
- phone: 973-353-5377
- fax: 973-353-1623
- email: sm409@bncollege.com
- website: newark-rutgers.bncollege.com
- address: Hahne's Building 42 Halsey Street Newark, NJ 07102
-Some of these books are available online through Rutgers Library, with various restrictions around the amount of time that you can use them or the amount of text that you can download. However, it is a great idea to buy books once you are in graduate school. That way you can mark them up and build your personal library.

- I’ve also assigned additional short readings (articles or sections of books). These are on Canvas (under “Files”), or in JSTOR or other online databases. They are marked with an asterisk * on the syllabus.

**Grading:**
- Attendance (can lower your final grade if you miss classes)
- Response Papers: 50%
- Weekly Questions and Class Participation: 20%
- Final Exam: 30%

**Course Requirements**
- Attendance. Our class is a group process, and that group process won’t happen if you don’t attend. Try not to miss any classes. If you miss three classes, your grade will be lowered. Because participation matters, if you miss four classes (about 1/3 of the class), you will **automatically fail the course**.

- Response papers: 50% of final grade (due seven times over the course of the semester): Because the course depends on thoughtful engagement with the material, students will prepare for seven of course’s fourteen class meetings by writing a response paper of 1 to 4 double-spaced pages addressing the readings assigned for that week (you are free to choose which seven weeks you will write response papers for). Papers must be submitted on Canvas by noon on the day of class in which we are reading the works you’ve written about. Your response should refer to the assigned texts – either by paraphrasing in your own words or by brief quotations; regardless, you should follow each reference with a parenthetical citation of the page number(s) in the book’s print edition to which you are referring. If you cite works other than the texts assigned for that week, use footnotes in Chicago style (for a basic guide, see [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)). Bibliographies are optional for your response papers, but mandatory for your final exam.

As you read, try to identify the major argument or thesis of each chapter of every book, as well as the major argument or thesis of the book as a whole. If you do that, you will find it easier to write a response paper of substance. For the shorter articles or book excerpts, follow the same process. Identify key arguments or theses of sections of the articles, and of the article or excerpt as a whole.

If you are responding to a week in which there are articles as well as monographs assigned, your response paper should indicate knowledge of all of the reading assigned for that week’s class. To structure your response paper, you could note three ideas, arguments, or concepts of substance (not small factual matters) that you learned from the reading or readings, one of
which you can consider at length. You could also write about a few ideas or arguments (or even one idea or argument) that seemed confusing or unclear in the reading or readings. Again, the most important thing is to respond to a major theme or argument of the reading or readings, rather than some small factual statement made in the book.

Important:
- The first response paper will be for the class of Sept. 9th. I won’t be collecting response papers for our first meeting on Sept. 2nd.
- Your response papers should include a brief comparison with something we have already read for the class. (For the Sept. 9th response paper, you would refer back to one of the readings for Sept. 2nd). Although this can be a very brief reference, please go beyond noting that a concept, theme or topic was discussed in more than one reading. Instead, write a few sentences focusing on the differences in how a shared theme was treated by two authors.

How Response Papers Will Be Graded: Response papers can be tricky. You will find some books or articles easier to respond to than others. It can take several tries, and a lot of feedback from me and from your fellow students, before you master how to highlight key themes and how to write insightful comparisons between books. Therefore,
- I will only count your six highest response paper grades when I calculate your cumulative response paper grade for the course. I will drop your lowest grade when making the grade calculation, in other words.
- Nevertheless, you must hand in seven response papers in total. If you only hand in six, your final response paper grade will be lowered by one full grade (from “A” to “B,” for example). If you only hand in five, your final response paper grade will be lowered by two full grades (from an “A” to a “C,” for example). If you hand in four or less, you will get an “F” for the response paper section of your grade, even if you got all “A’s” on the four papers that you handed in.

Components of Class Participation Grade (20% of final grade):
- Attend an Office hour: 20%
- Class questions: 40%
- Class discussion/participation: 40%

- Office hour meeting with professor (20 to 30 minutes, via Zoom). You are each required to meet with me on Zoom for about a half hour, some time between Sept. 2 and Oct. 7, so that we can discuss your academic interests as well as any academic concerns you might have. My office hours are from 4 to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays. You can sign up for a slot during those times (on Canvas, under “Calendar”), or you can email me to set up a time that is more convenient. Either way, we will meet by or before Oct. 7, so that we can get to know each other somewhat early in the semester. This meeting makes up 20% of your class participation grade (if you come to the office hour appointment, you get an “A” for that section of the class participation grade. If you don’t, you get an “F” for that proportion of your class participation grade.)

Class Questions: to encourage class participation, every student must bring at least one question about the week’s reading to class every week. Each of you will verbally present your
question at the start of class. Your question or questions could come out of your response paper, if you write one for that week. It could also be a question that is not related to your response paper. **You must post your question or questions on Canvas (under “Assignments”) by noon each Thursday that we meet for class.**

**How to write a good discussion question:** The goal of your discussion question is to stimulate discussion of the most important ideas contained in the book or articles that we have read. Writing a good discussion question is similar to writing a good response paper. In both cases, try to engage with some of the book or articles’ key arguments, so that we can better focus on the authors insights. **Avoid narrow questions about specific facts, or any questions that elicit “yes or no” answers.** Avoid questions that are overly general in nature. Avoid questions that the book’s content or argument could not possibly answer (ones that focus on the future, for example). The best discussion questions **highlight a major theme** of the book or reading.

I will work with you to strengthen your questions over the course of the semester, so expect emails from me with suggestions on how to rethink or rephrase your class questions. I will consider the quality of your questions when the final participation grade is tabulated, taking improvements into account.

A final (and hopefully easy) way for you to raise your participation grade is to mark or copy down a few key lines or key paragraphs that strike you as core to a book’s argument. Please mark such sections in every book or article we read. I will sometimes ask you to share the sentences or sections you noted with the class. They will count towards “participation/discussion.” These marked sections can also be used in your response paper and your class question.

-Final exam (30% of final grade), in form of take-home review essay on the course readings. Exam due date to-be-announced. Past exam questions will be posted on Canvas (in Files, under “Previous Exams.” If you find a theme you’d like to write about – that is, if you’d like to write your own exam question -- show me the question no later than Dec. 9 (our last class meeting). I may rewrite it for clarity, but I will OK it if it is broad enough to engage the major themes of at least half of the books we’ve read. I will then add it to the list of potential exam questions.
Syllabus

Thursday Sept. 2:
Why women’s history? Patriarchy, sexism, misogyny, gender, and intersectionality


Thurs. Sept. 9:

- Camilla Townsend, Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma

Thurs. Sept. 16: NOTE: Class will start one hour later today (at 6:30 instead of 5:30) because of Yom Kippur
Women and Reproductive Labor: The North:


Thurs. Sept. 23:
Women and Reproductive Labor in the South: White Women and Slavery
- Stephanie Jones-Rogers, They Were Her Property

Thurs. Sept. 30:
Abolitionism and Women’s Rights
- Dorothy Wickenden, The Agitators
Thurs. Oct. 7:
Marriage and the Creation of Race
-Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*

Thurs. Oct. 14:
Conflict and Coalitions: Domestic Workers, Middle-Class Reform, and the early 20th century Suffrage Movement
-Vanessa H. May, *Unprotected Labor*


*Cathy Cahill, “‘Our Democracy and the American Indian’: Citizenship, Sovereignty and the Native Vote in the 1920s,” Journal of Women’s History 32:1 (Spring 2020), 41-51

Thurs. Oct. 21:
Other Migrations: Gaiutra Bahadur’s Family History
- Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman*


Thurs. Oct. 28th:
Race, Sex, and American Liberalism

-Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White*

Thurs. Nov. 4:
Sex, Gender, and Transsexuality
-Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*

Thurs. Nov. 11:
From the Great Depression to the Women’s Liberation Movement and Beyond: Life of Pauli Murray
- Rosalind Rosenberg, *Jane Crow: The Life of Pauli Murray*

**Thurs. Nov. 18:**
Political battles over Black Women’s Reproductive Labor
-Crystal R. Sanders, *A Chance for Change*

**Thurs. Nov. 25:** Thanksgiving: NO CLASS

**Thurs. Dec. 2:**
Fighting for Work and Family
-Kirsten Swinth, *Feminism’s Forgotten Fight*

**Thurs. Dec. 9th:**
Changing Marriage Laws and their Effects

**Additional Important Information: See Following pages**
Academic and Classroom Environment

Names and Pronouns: An important part of creating a respectful learning environment is knowing and using the name you use, which may differ from your legal name, as well as the gendered pronouns you use (for example, I go by she/her/hers). Please feel free to let me know your name and/or the pronouns you use at any time.

Citizenship and Community: We will be reading and discussing material on which we may not all agree; some of the themes and imagery we encounter in the sources may seem offensive or otherwise controversial. In this context especially, it is crucial for us to combine the free expression of ideas with respect for each other. This is your community and your class; each one of you has a responsibility to that community.

Policy on Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism): As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University’s educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community. The entire Academic Integrity Policy can be found here: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/.

Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. Cheating is both a moral and an ethical offense. It violates both your own integrity and the ethics of group commitment: when you cut corners and cheat, you undermine those students who took the time to work on the assignment honestly. As a standard minimum penalty, students who are suspected of cheating or plagiarism are reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Pending investigation, further penalties can include failure of the course, disciplinary probation, and a formal warning that further cheating will be grounds for expulsion from the University.

Please learn to resist the urge to cut and paste, either literally or figuratively, by using other people’s ideas. If I find that you have used other people’s ideas (e.g., Wikipedia, Amazon reviews, book jacket descriptions, etc.), I will not accept the assignment because I will not be able to consider it your own work. You will get a failing grade for that assignment and will not be able to make it up.

All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge. To receive credit, every assignment must have your signature under the following phrase: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.”

Rutgers Learning Center (tutoring services): Room 140, Bradley Hall. You can contact them at (973) 353-5608, or check their website: https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/learning-center
Writing Center (tutoring and writing workshops): Room 126, Conklin Hall
(973) 353-5847. The Writing Center has remote tutoring available this semester. You can email them at
nwc@rutgers.edu, or check their website:
http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter

Accommodation and Support Statement
Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning
environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following
resources to further the mission of access and support:

Covid-related Resources: These two links provide a comprehensive list of available resources:
https://www.newark.rutgers.edu/covid-19-operating-status#SupportingOurStudents; and
https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/covid19.

For Individuals with Disabilities: The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the
determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to
disability. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and
submitted documentation) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary
and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided. The LOA must be given to
each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as
early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can
be found at ods.rutgers.edu. Contact ODS at (973)353-5375 or via email at
ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to
assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may
contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-1906 or via email at
TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for
absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (e.g., illness,
personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to University Policy 10.2.7 for
information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be
contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist
students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (e.g., broken or sprained limbs,
concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury
should submit a request using the following link: https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu.
For English as a Second Language (ESL): The Program in American Language Studies (PALS) can support students experiencing difficulty in courses due to English as a Second Language (ESL) and can be reached by emailing PALS@newark.rutgers.edu to discuss potential supports.

For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. For more information, students should refer to the University’s Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct located at http://compliance.rutgers.edu/title-ix/about-title-ix/title-ix-policies/.

Please be aware that all Rutgers employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as advocates, counselors, clergy and healthcare providers as listed in Appendix A to Policy 10.3.12) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the University. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the University’s Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak with a staff member who is confidential and does not have this reporting responsibility, you may contact the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance at (973)-353-1918, or at run.vpva@rutgers.edu. Learn more about here: http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/vpva

For support related to interpersonal violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance can provide any student with confidential support. The office is a confidential resource and does not have an obligation to report information to the University’s Title IX Coordinator. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based line available to students; you can text (973) 339-0734 for support.

For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a support plan to address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Students, faculty and staff may contact the CARE Team by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or emailing careteam@rutgers.edu.

For Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-being: The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. Students should contact the Counseling Center to schedule an appointment: counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805. If you are not quite ready to make an appointment with a therapist but are interested in self-help, check out TAO at Rutgers-Newark for an easy, web-based approach to self-care and support: https://tinyurl.com/RUN-DAO.

-For emergencies, call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) by calling (973) 353-5111.