

Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Her World

GSWS 263/ HIS 260/W

MW 3:25-4:40pm

Online

Instructor: Brianna Theobald

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Virtual Office Hours: MW 1:30-2:30pm

Course Description: Disparaged as “the high priestess of feminism” by her critics and celebrated as almost a prophet by her supporters, Charlotte Perkins Gilman was one of the most famous women in the United States in the early twentieth century. Today, she is best known for her semi-autobiographical story “The Yellow Wallpaper,” which arguably chronicles a woman’s descent into madness, and *Herland*, a feminist utopian novel. In this course, we will read both works, as well as many other primary sources, to explore the Gilded Age and Progressive era. Gilman, a fascinating and flawed figure, will be the entry point for an exploration of feminism, suffrage, race, class, settler colonialism, and eugenics, among other topics. We will also consider Gilman’s various legacies. How did second-wave feminists view Gilman’s ideas, for example, and how do feminists remember Gilman in the twenty-first century?

Note that this will be an online course with regular synchronous Zoom sessions.

In accordance with the College credit hour policy, which awards 4 credit hours for courses that meet for the equivalent of 3 periods of 50 minutes each week, students are expected to devote at least one hour each week to identifying the main lines of argument in course readings, working alone or in groups. During weeks where there is no assigned reading, students are expected to dedicate at least comparable time to primary and secondary research for their final paper.

Required Reading:

Cathleen Cahill, *Recasting the Vote: How Women of Color Transformed the Suffrage Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979)

*Other editions are fine.

In addition to the above books, students will read primary sources, articles, and book chapters as indicated in the below schedule, all of which will be available on Blackboard.

Grade Breakdown:

94-100% = A	87-89% = B+	77-79% = C+	67-69% = D+
90-93% = A-	83-86% = B	73-76% = C	63-66% = D
	80-82% = B-	70-72% = C-	60-62% = D-

Assessment:

This is a discussion-based seminar, and students will be assessed in part on their **regular participation in our synchronous Zoom meetings**. To be adequately prepared for class, students need to have completed the assigned reading listed on the schedule below. I may sometimes assign in-class writing as an additional means of assessing student engagement with course material. I recognize, however, that these are not normal times, and I will not be taking attendance in the same way that I would if we were not in a pandemic. If there are circumstances that make it difficult for you to participate in ways that make your engagement visible to me, please let me know sooner rather than later, and we can devise alternative options.

Each student will **transcribe approximately 20 pages** of letters that Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote to her good friend Martha Lane. We will discuss this assignment at length during class on Feb. 8, and students will submit their transcriptions in three batches between Mar. 1 and May 5.

Students will write **one short paper** in this course. This reflection paper, 3-5 pages in length, will be in response to a prompt I will pose on Blackboard during Week 7 regarding Cathleen Cahill's *Recasting the Vote*. This paper is due at the start of class on April 19.

Finally, each student will complete a **capstone project** that you and I will agree on in early March. Each student should send a one-page project proposal to me via email by Friday, March 5, and I encourage students to consult with me before this deadline in order to ensure a feasible proposal. Examples of possible capstone projects include an online video, a website, a podcast, an annotated transcription project, or a research paper. **Note that students taking the "W" version of the course must write a 12- to 15-page research paper as their final project.** Projects can explore topics pertaining directly to CPG, or they can explore any of the broader themes and subjects we'll be exploring throughout the semester. In addition to materials we will be reading or using as a class, students are encouraged to draw on the abundance of digitized sources related to CPG, which we will discuss in class on Feb. 24.

Participation:	25%
Transcriptions:	25%
Cahill Paper:	20%
Capstone Project:	30%

Course Policies and Expectations:

A note on COVID and the extraordinary circumstances of 2020-2021: I recognize that the events of the last year have been incredibly disruptive for your learning—and for all of our lives. I've designed this course from scratch for our new reality, and I am hopeful that this will be a

rewarding and stimulating class for all of us. But I also know that we will all need to be patient with one another and extra diligent about maintaining regular communication. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you are having issues or problems in the course that we might troubleshoot together.

Late Assignments: Generally speaking, assignments will incur a 10-point penalty for every 24-hour period or portion thereof that passes from the deadline until the assignment is submitted. If an assignment is due at the start of class on February 13, and it is not turned in until the evening of February 13 or morning of February 14, ten points will be deducted. If it is not turned in until the evening of February 14, twenty points will be deducted. That said, if you are not going to be able to make any given deadline, it's always best to reach out to me beforehand; sometimes we can make alternative arrangements.

Accommodation Policies: I'm happy to make accommodations as recommended by UR Disability Services. Should you need accommodations, I encourage you to make these arrangements sooner rather than later.

Academic Integrity: Academic honesty is at the core of the historical discipline, and you'll find that it is something I care deeply about. All work submitted must be your own, prepared especially for this course. Unacceptable breaches of your obligation as a student include: submission of the same work or portions of the same work to more than one class, turning in work prepared by another person as if it were your own; and the unattributed use of text of any length from any source, including websites. I will report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty to the University's Board on Academic Honesty. That said, I am happy to discuss any and all questions you may have about what does and does not constitute plagiarism, provided this conversation occurs *before* you submit the assignment.

Schedule:

Week 1:

- M Feb 1: Introductions and Objectives
- W Feb 3: Family Histories
Reading: Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, chpt. 1

Week 2:

- M Feb 8: Female Friendships
Reading: Smith Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual"
- W Feb 10: Female Friendships
Reading: CPG Diary excerpts

Week 3:

- M Feb 15: Courtship and Marriage

Reading: Kerber, “Why Diamonds Really are a Girl’s Best Friend”

W Feb 17: Courtship and Marriage
Reading: CPG Diary excerpts
 Stetson, *Endure*, excerpts

Week 4:

M Feb 22: Sources on CPG

W Feb 24: Motherhood and Women’s Health
Reading: “The Yellow Wallpaper”

Week 5:

M Mar 1: Progressive Reform
Reading: Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, excerpts

1st transcriptions due: submit transcriptions for at least 6-8 pages of letters as email attachments by the start of class

W Mar 3: NO CLASS: Reading and research day.

Final project proposal due via email by Friday, Mar. 5 at 5pm.

Week 6:

M Mar 8: Utopianism
Reading: *Herland*

W Mar 10: Gender and Economics
Reading: Gilman, *Women and Economics*, chpts. 1 & 3

Week 7:

M Mar 15: Gender, Race, and “Civilization”
Reading: Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, chpt. 6

W Mar 17: Jim Crow America
Reading:
Optional but recommended: Gilman, “A Suggestion on the Negro Problem”
Required: Oliver, “W. E. B. Du Bois, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and ‘A Suggestion on the Negro Problem’”

Week 8:

M Mar 22: Eugenics
Reading: Gilman, “What We May Expect of Eugenics”
 Gilman, “Is America Too Hospitable?”

W Mar 24: Home and Family

Reading: Gilman, *The Home*, introduction & chpt. 7

Week 9:

NO CLASS this week. Use this time to focus on two tasks: 1) Reading Cahill, *Recasting the Vote*; and 2) Working on your final project.

Week 10:

M Apr 5: Martha Lane Letters

2nd set of transcriptions due: submit transcriptions for another 6-8 pages of letters as email attachments by the start of class

W Apr 7: Home and Family

Reading: Gilman, *Concerning Children*, chpts. 6 & 14

Week 11:

M Apr 12: Feminism and Suffrage

Reading: “Twenty-Five Answers to the Antis”

*Read CPG and George Houghton Gilman entries as well as five additional entries of your choice.

W Apr 14: Feminism and Suffrage

Reading: Allen, *The Feminism of CPG*, chpt. 6

HIS 260W rough drafts due via email at the start of class.

Week 12:

M Apr 19: The 1920s

Discuss Cahill, *Recasting the Vote*

Cahill papers due via Blackboard by the start of class.

W Apr 21: Debating Euthanasia

Reading: Gilman, “The Right to Die”

Week 13:

M Apr 26: Second-Wave Legacies

Reading: Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, chpt. 1

W Apr 28: Second-Wave Legacies

Reading TBA

Week 14:

M May 3: Twenty-First Century Legacies

Reading: Miller, “Stay at Home Parents Work Hard. Should They Be Paid?”

W May 5: Wrapping Up
All transcriptions due.

Final Project Deadline TBA