

History HIS2182A: A Social History of Women in Canada

Fall 2026

Instructor: **Mary Baxter**

Email: **mbaxte32@uwo.ca**

Office: **Department of History, Lawson Hall 2214**

Office Hours: **TBA**

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Course Description

This course surveys the history of women in the place we now call Canada from the early days of European arrival to the end of the twentieth century. It is a social history and draws on biography so looks at facets of women's everyday lives as these unfolded in the family, workplace and the community at large.

Referencing a range of historical sources, the course will identify and explore key factors that shaped women's experiences over time—such as gender ideologies, perceptions of women and how women interacted with these—while taking into account diversity of sexuality, race, ethnicity and class. These experiences will be explored as they manifested in the different periods of Canada's development from the early years of Indigenous-European relations, Victorian colonial expansion and the first wave of feminism through the world wars and the second-wave activism of the 1960s.

By the conclusion of the course, participants should be able to appreciate how women's past experiences inform and add context to the realities faced by contemporary Canadian women.

Antirequisite(s): History 2140; GSWS 2139A/B, GSWS 2140, GSWS 2208E.

Course Syllabus

You will write two reflection papers, one short biography and one exam. You are expected to complete the weekly readings. These readings and the weekly themes will be discussed in class. It is important to attend class regularly to keep up with lectures and class discussion. For this reason, you must attend at least 8 of 12 classes in order to pass this course, regardless of grades received for other assignments.

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Learning Objectives:

- Identify and discuss key themes and periods related to women's everyday lives and realities from pre-European contact to the late twentieth century
- Analyze how and why Canadian women's roles or aspects of their roles shifted or remained the same over time and the impact of these developments
- Understand how historical context and contingency shaped women's everyday realities through conceptions of class, race, sexuality, and ethnicity
- Relate contemporary issues in Canadian women's lives to their historical development
- Identify and discuss core concepts such as intersectionality, agency and gender and discuss the differences and inter-relationships between terms such as women's history, gender history and feminist theory
- Hone skills in communicating ideas and arguments through class discussion and written assignments including how to
 - analyze and critically assess secondary sources; and
 - identify, examine, interpret, and evaluate primary historical sources
- Identify and evaluate the components of a biography

Methods of Evaluation

Biography assignment 30%

You can choose EITHER to do an oral interview with a woman over the age of 65 OR research a historical figure and write a 1,500-word biography that discusses how this individual's experiences reflect the changes to women's lives within her/their lifetime. The assignment should also briefly discuss who the subject is and why this person is meaningful to you. It will include a bibliography, and you will use at minimum one primary source and two peer-reviewed secondary sources to complete the assignment. As well, you will include with your assignment submission a statement addressing if, and how you have used AI in this assignment. *This statement must be included even if you do not use AI.* The 1,500-word biography, worth 30%, is due Week 7 (Oct. 30).

Two reflection papers, 30%

On Week 4 (Oct. 2), you will hand in the first 500-word course [reflection](#) paper that responds to a prompt I will provide during the first class (Sept. 11). You will hand in a reflection paper of the same length that revisits the same topic on Week 11 (Nov. 27). Each paper will be worth 15% of the final mark.

Final exam 40%

The in-person exam will cover all lectures and required readings from the term and will consist of two sections: 1) multiple choice 2) one essay question.

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Advising. Please see https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI)

You may use generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in this course (with the exception of during the final exam). Any use of such tools must be fully cited, acknowledged, and explained. *AI statements and specific approaches to the use of AI in the study of history will be discussed and demonstrated where relevant during class.* If in doubt, please ask me for clarification and advice.

Absences and Late Assignments

All of your written assignments have a no-questions-asked 7-day grace period. This means that you can submit any of these assignments up to 7 days past the posted deadline without penalty. Because a grace period is in effect, requests for academic consideration will be denied. Late penalties begin after the 7-day grace period (on day 8) and consist of a 3% deduction per day, including on weekends.

Submit all assignments (other than the in-class assignments) through the Brightspace course site. Please **submit them in Microsoft Word**, using your first and last name and the name of the assignment. For example: Mary Baxter reflection paper. Please do not submit paper copies.

Regular class attendance is expected. You must attend at least 8 of 12 classes in order to pass this course, regardless of grades received for other assignments. If you anticipate having to be absent from class, please contact me at your earliest convenience via email at mbaxte32@uwo.ca.

For further advice on handling absences or accommodations, please see Social Science Academic Advising on [Absence & Academic Consideration](#), the university's policies on

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[Academic Consideration for Medical Illness](#), and the Department of History's own [Undergraduate Policies and Statements](#)

Plagiarism

The Faculty of Social Science's policy statement on plagiarism and the use of plagiarism detection software is outlined in the History Department's [Undergraduate Policies and Statements](#) page.

Course Materials

All course material will be made available on the OWL Brightspace course site.

DRAFT Course Schedule and Readings

Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Week One—**September 11**: Introduction: Women's History in the context of Canadian and Social Histories; Discussion of AI use

Readings

Lerner, Gerda. "Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges." *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 1/2 (1975): 5–14. <https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.2307/3518951>.

Sangster, Joan. "Forty Years of Women's History in the Canadian Historical Review." *Canadian Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (2020): 574–599. DOI: 10.3138/chr-2020-0049.

Week Two—**September 18**: The Women of First Nations and of New France

Readings

"Women in New France," pp. 37-65 and "The First Women," pp. 13-36 in Brandt, Gail Cuthbert, et al. *Canadian Women: A History*. Third Edition. Toronto: Nelson, 2011.

Mary Jane Logan McCallum and Susan M. Hill, "Our Historiographical Moment: A Conversation about Indigenous Women's History in Canada in the Early Twenty-First Century in Janoviček, Nancy, and Carmen J. Nielson. *Reading Canadian Women's and Gender History*. University of Toronto Press, 2019.

Week Three—**September 25**: Women Loyalists and Pioneers in the Maritimes and the Canadas

Readings

Hamilton, Sylvia. 1994. "Naming Names, Naming Ourselves: A Survey of Black Women in Nova Scotia." In *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up': Essays in African Canadian Women's History*, edited by Peggy Bristow, 13-40.

Katherine McKenna, Class, Race and Gender Roles in Early British North America, in Janoviček, Nancy, and Carmen J. Nielson. *Reading Canadian Women's and Gender History*. University of Toronto Press, 2019.

Week Four—**October 2**: Women on the Early Frontier

Reflection paper 1 due

Readings

Trill, Catherine Parr Strickland. 2018. *The Backwoods of Canada : Being Letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer, Illustrative of the Domestic Economy of British America*. London: Nattali and Bond. (Students to choose two letters to review)

Jensen, Jody, and Rebecca Weaver-Hightower. 2021. "Botany and the Woman Colonizer in Catharine Parr Traill's *Backwoods of Canada* and Anna Brownell Jameson's *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*." *Settler Colonial Studies* 11 (2): 242–58.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2021.1881343>.

Week Five—**October 9**: Women in the Settlement of the West

Readings

McPherson, Kathryn. 2012. "Home Tales: Gender, Domesticity, and Colonialism in the Prairie West, 1870–1900". *Finding a Way to the Heart: Feminist Writings on Aboriginal and Women's History in Canada*. Edited by David Church. University of Manitoba Press. pp. 222-240. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780887554216-014>

Perry, Adele. 2016. "Whose Sisters and What Eyes? White Women, Race, and Immigration to British Columbia, 1849–1871." *Sisters or Strangers?: Immigrant, Ethnic, and Racialized Women in Canadian History, Second Edition*. Edited by Marlene Epp and Franca Iacovetta.

University of Toronto Press. pp.108-125. <https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.3138/9781442625938-008>

McDougall, Jade. 2024. "Caroline McNabb and Culturally Adaptive Practices of Métis Kinship." *Métis Matriarchs: Agents of Transition*. Edited by Cheryl Troupe and Doris Jeanne MacKinnon. University of Regina Press. pp. 101-126. <https://books-scholarsportal-info.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/uri/ebooks/ebooks9/degruyter9/2025-01-30/1/9781779400130>

NO CLASS OCT. 16. (READING WEEK)

Week Six—**October 23**: Victorian Middle-Class Women, Social Reform and Work Inside and Outside the Home

Readings

Bradbury, Bettina, and issuing body Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information. 1994. *Working Families : Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal*. 1st ed. University of Toronto Press. Chapters 5-6. pp. 152-213. <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442685475>.

Jabouin, Emilie-Andree. 2018. "Writing (Black) Citizenship: Mary Ann Shadd Cary, the Political Imaginary, and Experience in 19th Century Canada West." *Women in the "Promised Land" : Essays in African Canadian History*. Edited by Nina Reid-Maroney, Boulou Ébanda de B'béri, and Wanda Thomas Bernard. Women's Press. pp. 198-216.

Week Seven—**October 30**: Breaking Through Barriers? Women in the First Half of the Twentieth Century Chapt. 1: The Uneven Road to Votes and Self-Determination

Biographical assignment due

Readings

Forestell, Nancy and Moynagh, Maureen. 2013. "PART THREE. Suffrage." *Documenting First Wave Feminisms: Volume II Canada - National and Transnational Contexts*. University of Toronto Press. pp. 113-118; 125-128. <https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.3138/9781442666603-007>

Strong-Boag, Veronica. "Taking Stock of Suffragists: Personal Reflections on Feminist Appraisals." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 21, no. 2 (May 10, 2011): 76–89. doi:10.7202/1003089ar.

Mar, Lisa R. 2016. "The Tale of Lin Tee: Madness, Family Violence, and Lindsay's Anti-Chinese Riot of 1919," *Sisters or Strangers?: Immigrant, Ethnic, and Racialized Women in Canadian History, Second Edition*. Edited by Marlene Epp and Franca Iacovetta. <https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.3138/9781442625938>

Week Eight—**November 6**: Breaking Through Barriers? Women in the First Half of the Twentieth Century Chapt. 1 (Continued): Women Exploring, Working, and Negotiating War

Readings

Quiney, Linda J. 2012. "Gendering Patriotism: Canadian Volunteer Nurses as the Female 'Soldiers' of the Great War." *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service : Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland during the First World War*. Edited by Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw. UBC Press. pp. 103-125. <https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774822589>.

Sugiman, Pamela. 2006. "‘These Feelings That Fill My Heart’: Japanese Canadian Women’s Memories of Internment." *Oral History (Colchester)* 34 (2): 69–84.

Pacis, Trixie, and Meghan J. Ward, dirs. *Wildflowers*. 2024. <https://www.wildflowersfilm.ca/>.

Week Nine—**November 13**: Breaking Through Barriers? Chapt. 2: Women in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century (Second Wave, Rise of Feminism, Consumerism, Protest)

Readings

Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. 1970. Terms of Reference, Forward, Chapter 1. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2014/priv/CP32-96-1970-1-eng.pdf

Dyck, E., and Lux, M. 2020. *Challenging Choices: Canada’s Population Control in the 1970s* (1st ed., Vol. 55). McGill-Queen’s University Press. Introduction and Chapter 1. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780228004417>

Dean, Joanna. 2019. "A Gendered Sense of Nature." *The Nature of Canada*. Edited by Colin Coates and Graeme Wynn. On Point Press. <https://books-scholarsportal-info.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/uri/ebooks/ebooks4/upress4/2019-04-25/1/9780774890373>

Week Ten—**November 20**: Breaking Through Barriers? Chapt. 2 (Continued): Newcoming to Canada/Issues of Race and Ethnicity

Readings

Giles, Wenona Mary. 2003. *Portuguese Women in Toronto : Gender, Immigration, and Nationalism*. 1st ed. University of Toronto Press. Chapt. 1
<https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442678644>.

Johnson, Michele A. 2022. "'Not likely to do well or be an asset to this country': Canadian Restrictions of Black Caribbean Female Domestic Workers 1910-1955." *Unsettling the Great White North : Black Canadian History*. Edited by Michele A. Johnson and Funké Aladejebi. First edition. University of Toronto Press. pp. 318-349.
<https://doi.org/10.3138/9781487529185.318-349>.

Week Eleven—**November 27**: Breaking Through Barriers? Chapt. 2 (Continued): Queer and Trans Histories

Reflection paper 2 due

Readings

Marlene Epp, "Rethinking Class in Lesbian Bar Culture: living 'the gay life' in Toronto, 1955-1965," in Gleason, Mona and Adele Perry, editors. *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*. 5th edition. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Heather Stanley, "Primal Urge/National Force: Sex, Sexuality, and National History" in Janoviček, Nancy, and Carmen J. Nielson. *Reading Canadian Women's and Gender History*. University of Toronto Press, 2019. (Chapt. 11 pp 255-277)

Gary Kinsman, "Queer Resistance and Regulation in the 1970s," in Gentile, Patrizia, Gary William Kinsman, and L. Pauline Rankin. *We Still Demand!: Redefining Resistance in Sex and Gender Struggles*. UBC Press, 2016. (Chapt. 7 pp137-162).

Week Twelve—**December 4**: Breaking Through Barriers? Chapt. 3: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Wrap Up/Exam Review

Readings

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. 2019. Reclaiming Power and Place: Executive Summary. Privy Council Office. pp. 1–9. https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Executive_Summary.pdf

McKenzie, Holly A, Colleen Varcoe, Dory Nason, et al. 2022. “Indigenous Women’s Resistance of Colonial Policies, Practices, and Reproductive Coercion.” *Qualitative Health Research* (Los Angeles, CA) 32 (7): 1031–54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497323221087526>.

Luby, Brittany. 2020. Chapt. 6 "Mother Work and Managing Environmental Change." *Dammed : The Politics of Loss and Survival in Anishinaabe Territory*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press. pp. 141-162. <https://books-scholarsportal-info.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/uri/ebooks/ebooks6/upress6/2021-01-07/1/9780887558740>

Additional Information:

How to reach me: The best way to reach me if you have a question is via email at mbaxte32@uwo.ca or by visiting me during office hours—a regular time set aside every week to talk to students in my office. The time and location of my office hours will be posted on Brightspace. I am also available via Zoom by appointment.

Use of electronic devices: *No electronic devices will be allowed during tests and examinations.*

Please review the [Department of History’s shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses](#) for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.