

Report, Provost's Faculty Diversity Curriculum Development Grant May 20, 2019

I am grateful for the Provost's Faculty Diversity Curriculum Development Grant I received for creation of the new course "Women at Work in U.S. History." During 2018–2019, I developed the plan for this course and proposed it for addition to the curriculum. It was accepted for inclusion in the course catalog as of 2019–2020 as HIST 319. This course will serve as an elective for the history major and for the minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. The course is also designed for enrollment by students from all majors. I will teach the course for the first time in Fall 2019, and I plan to teach the course every two years.

This course examines the experiences of women employed in a variety of industries and workplaces in twentieth-century U.S. history. Topics include women's employment opportunities, experiences of sexism and other biases, collective action to change working conditions, innovation and entrepreneurship of women, and popular culture portrayals of gender in workplaces.

As education at James Madison University prepares students for future careers and civic contributions, JMU students from a variety of disciplines will benefit from analyzing the histories of women's employment in the U.S. Women workers have played vital roles in U.S. political, economic, social, and cultural history. A scholarly assessment of women's workplace experiences and of the social biases that have shaped U.S. employment will require students to apply critical thinking skills. Comparison of different historical contexts will allow students to identify patterns that persist or are echoed in twenty-first-century discussions of gender and work.

After reviewing scholarship in history and related disciplines, I have selected readings and planned assignments for the course. These assignments will support the following course learning objectives and course outline that I have developed.

HIST 319: "Women at Work in U.S. History" Course Learning Objectives

- Students will gain an in-depth knowledge of the roles of women in a variety of industries and workplaces in U.S. history. Following an overview of early U.S. history and nineteenth-century industrialization, the course will focus on the twentieth century.
- Students will analyze the combination of factors that have shaped individuals' experiences in U.S. workplaces. Throughout the semester, this will include intersectional analysis of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, nationality, religion, geographic region, age, disability, parental status, marital status, sexuality, and gender identity.
- Students will develop an awareness of continuities and changes in the following areas: women's access to paid employment; barriers to equal opportunity in employment; cultural depictions of women's abilities; and the connections between women's paid work and women's families, household labor, education, politics, activism, and economic status.
- Students will collect and analyze primary sources, using this evidence to analyze historians' arguments and to develop original hypotheses.
- Discussions and written assignments will require methods of historical analysis and synthesis, including:
 - 1) Identifying a historian's or a primary source's argument
 - 2) Identifying how evidence has been used in an argument

- 3) Identifying the conclusions of an argument
- 4) Determining the perspective, bias, and reliability of primary sources and historiographic arguments

HIST 319: “Women at Work in U.S. History” Course Outline

1. Overview of the types of labor performed by women in early U.S. history, including paid labor, reproductive labor, household labor, and the labor of enslaved women
2. Industrialization and its effects on employment for women
3. Racial bias and women’s labor in the early twentieth century; activism and entrepreneurship of African-American women workers in the early twentieth century
4. Experiences and depictions of immigrant women workers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries
5. The relationships between women’s employment and women’s activism during the twentieth century
6. Continuity and change in women’s employment during the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War
7. Feminist activism, governmental reform, and changes in women’s education and employment during the 1960s and 1970s
8. Continuity and change in the 1980s and 1990s, with attention to the types of occupations pursued by women, rates of employment, availability of parental leave and child care, and popular culture depictions of women’s employment
9. Women’s employment in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, with particular attention to occupations related to computing, the Internet, digital technologies, and social media
10. Popular culture depictions of women workers, including depictions of women in magazines, film, and television
11. Women’s use of the mass media to support activism to change working conditions, promote businesses, and attain professional status
12. Historical patterns shaping women’s access to full time employment with benefits, part-time work, and contingent work