HIUS/WGS 3612: Gender and Sexuality in the US, 1865-Present

Course Description:

This course will explore the significance of gender and sexuality in United States from the Civil War to the present. We will ask, on the one hand, how people’s ideas about manhood, womanhood, and sexuality structured society and, on the other, how social relations defined what it meant to be a man or a woman. Readings and discussion will focus on three particular areas of inquiry: the rights and obligations of citizenship; the value and division of labor; and sexual beliefs, practices, and identities. Resisting any transhistorical definitions, we will investigate how understandings of gender and sexuality developed in relation to racial, ethnic, class, and regional differences.

The goal of this course is to become adept at generating your own historical analysis through the study of primary documents. The majority of the readings consist of primary sources—letters, diaries, legal documents, memoirs, and fiction. In addition, you will read a few secondary sources in order to assess how professional historians analyze and employ evidence. Through short weekly writing assignments and class discussion, you will use these readings to develop your own analytical skills. Lectures will introduce topics not covered in the readings. Two papers and a take-home exam (five to seven pages each) will require you to synthesize the readings, lectures, and discussion in order to generate your own arguments about the significance of gender and sexuality in the American past.

This course fulfills the second writing requirement.