This course traces the emergence of women’s higher education, focusing primarily on the United States. We consider, first, how writers advanced new arguments for women’s education, inspired by the Enlightenment, the American Revolution, and evangelical religion. We explore domesticity, the role of literacy in bourgeois and working-class female identities, women’s participation in reform and politics, and radical arguments for women’s rights. We study the creation of Vassar College and explore early students’ experiences. We also draw comparisons with male and female students in other educational settings. The course ends by assessing the dilemmas and achievements of early women college graduates and the place of the liberal arts college in twentieth-century America.

Skill Building
You will gain experience in reading, interpreting historical sources, conducting independent research, making persuasive arguments, using evidence, speaking publicly, and listening and participating in discussion. You will gain skill in all aspects of analytical writing, from generating ideas to polishing a final draft and developing your own prose style.

Course Materials
The following are available in the bookstore and on Main Reserve in the Library:

Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (Vintage)

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* (Dover Thrift; alternative editions of this text are fine, so long as they are not abridged)

Horowitz, Helen Lefkowitz, ed. *Attitudes toward Sex in Antebellum America: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin’s)

Kornfield, Eve, ed. *Margaret Fuller: A Brief Biography with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin’s)

Alcott, Louisa May. *Work: A Story of Experience.* (Penguin; alternative editions of this text are fine, so long as they are not abridged)


Additional readings are available on Reserve or as indicated in the schedule below.

Disability Support: Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities who are registered with the Office of Disability and Support Services. Students in need of disability accommodations should schedule an appointment with the instructor early in the semester to discuss any accommodations which have been approved by the Office of Disability and Support Services, as indicated in a DSS accommodation letter. (Stopping by during office hours is fine for this purpose.)
Course Requirements

1. Class participation (20%). This includes attendance; evidence of attention and careful preparation; careful listening and attention to your classmates' arguments, as well as contributions of your own thoughts; a "discussion question" assignment (TBA); participation in a small-group meeting before the Nov. 7 class session; and five think pieces submitted by Moodle on the night before class, for five of the days marked by asterisks (*) on the schedule.

If absence from class is unavoidable, please send the instructor a note by the start of class time, explaining the cause. More than three unexcused absences may be grounds for failure in the course. If speaking in class is challenging for you, please drop by the instructor's office hours right away for a friendly chat about how we might work on this together.

2. Two drafts of a four-page analysis of writings by Wollstonecraft or Murray (5% of course grade for first draft, 5% for final draft), due Sept. 19 or 26 (first draft) and Oct. 6 (second draft). See separate assignment sheet.

3. Midterm exam, in class on Oct. 13 (15%)

4. Brief summary and assessment of a historical source, due Oct. 31 (5%)

5. Ten- to twelve-page research paper (25%), including a prospectus due Oct. 27 and a final paper due Friday, Dec. 9 by 5 p.m. The prospectus and list of sources must be submitted as a graded part of this assignment. The instructor will gladly comment on a rough draft if it is submitted by Tuesday, Nov. 29 at 5 p.m.; this is optional and ungraded.

6. Selection and brief written analysis of a historical source related to the research paper, with oral presentation of an excerpt on Dec. 5 or 8 (5%)

7. Regularly scheduled final exam (20%). Vassar requires approval of the Dean of Studies office for a make-up final exam. If you believe you cannot take the final as scheduled, you should seek guidance from the Dean's office.

Paper policies: Please double space, provide margins of 1" or greater, and use fonts no smaller than 12 points. Be green! Double-sided papers, and those printed on scrap, are fine.

Requests for extensions, based on illness or other urgent circumstances, must be made no later than when the paper is due. The instructor may consult with the Dean of Studies in making a decision. If no extension is granted, the paper may be submitted late as follows: the paper receives one-third letter grade off for each late day (an A paper becomes an A- in the first 48 hours after it was due, a B+ in the next 48 hours, and so on). After ten days, the paper will automatically fail. Saturdays and Sundays count; if you plan to submit a paper during a weekend, please make arrangements with the instructor in advance.

Course Schedule

Thurs. Sept. 1  Lecture: Renaissance Men (And Women)
Nancy, Bisaha, Professor of History
Read (E-Reserve): John of Garland, "How Students Should Behave"
Mon. Sept. 5  No class--LABOR DAY

Thurs. Sept. 8  Lecture: Constructions of Femininity and the Enlightenment Debate over Women's Education  
Sumita Choudhury, Associate Professor of History

*Mon. Sept. 12  Discussion: A Woman's Life and Work, 1785-1812  
Read: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, A Midwife's Tale, ch. 1-7 (pp. 3-261)

Thurs. Sept. 15:  "'A New Era in Female History'?: Women During the Revolutionary Era"  
James H. Merrell, Lucy Maynard Salmon Professor of History

Mon. Sept. 19:  Revolutionary Ideas?  
FIRST PAPER DUE TODAY OR SEPT. 26  
Read: Wollstonecraft, Vindication of the Rights of Woman (U.S. publication date, 1794) ch. 2, 4, 12  

Thurs. Sept. 22:  Ladies' and Gentlemen's Proper Behavior in the Age of Domesticity  
with special guest Ronald D. Patkus, Head of Special Collections and Adjunct Associate Professor of History

*Mon. Sept. 26:  Discussion: Gender, Home, and the Work of Industrialization  
FIRST PAPER DUE TODAY IF NOT SUBMITTED ON SEPT. 19  
Read (on Moodle):  
Excerpts from Lydia Maria Child, The American Frugal Housewife  
(citation information in the excerpt; text drawn from Project Gutenberg, http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/13493)  

Thurs. Sept. 29:  Lecture: Goodness! Gender and Religious Faith

Mon. Oct. 3:  Discussion: Love, Sex, and the Victorians  
Read (on Moodle):  


**Thurs. Oct. 6**  
**Lecture: Reform and Women's Rights**  
**REVISED FIRST PAPER DUE TODAY**

Read (on Moodle):  

*Mon. Oct. 10  
**Discussion: Women's Emancipation in International Context**

Read: Kornfeld, ed, *Margaret Fuller*, 3-75, 156-191  
(on Moodle):  

**Thurs. Oct. 13**  
**MIDTERM EXAM**

[FALL BREAK]

*Mon. Oct. 24  
**Discussion: The Vassar Idea**

Read Matthew Vassar, "Founding Statement to the Board of Trustees, 26 February 1861," courtesy Special Collections, Vassar College Library: specialcollections.vassar.edu/exhibit-highlights/sesquicentennial/mv_address.html  
(on Moodle): Excerpts from *Vassar College Catalogue, 1876-1877* and *Vassar College Catalogue, 1921-1922*

**Thurs. Oct. 27**  
**Lecture: Inventing Women's Education**  
**RESEARCH PROSPECTUS DUE TODAY**

Friday, Oct. 28, 11 am to noon (Special Event):  
Tour of the original Magoon Collection, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, led by curator Diane S. Butler. Students who cannot attend at this time should arrange to view the collection at another time, no later than Nov. 3.

* Mon. Oct. 31  
**Discussion: Early Vassar Experiences**  
**SHORT ANALYSIS DUE TODAY--see end of syllabus for assignment and selection of readings**

**Thurs. Nov. 3**  
**Lecture: "The Wants, Not of America Only, but of the Whole World": Liberalism, Nationalism, and Education**

**Mon. Nov. 7**

**Discussion: Race, Religion, Class, Gender, and the Expansion of Secondary Education**

Read: working in small groups, students choose one of the following sets of readings and discuss them before class (TBA); books are on 4-day loan through Main Reserve:

**SET 1:** Fitzhugh Brundage, "Introduction," to Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (E-Reserve)

James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*


Joe Martin Richardson and Maxine Deloris Jones, *Education for Liberation: The American Missionary Association and African Americans, 1890 to the Civil Rights Movement*


David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience*

Amanda J. Cobb, *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, 1852-1949*

K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*

**SET 3:** Jane Hunter, "High School Culture: Gender and Generations," from *How Young Ladies Became Girls* (E-Reserve)

Eileen Mary Brewer, *Nuns and the Education of American Catholic Women, 1860-1920*

Carol K. Coburn and Martha Smith, *Spirited Lives: How Nuns Shaped Catholic Culture and American Life, 1836-1920*

Melissa R. Klapper, *Jewish Girls Coming of Age in America, 1860-1920*

**Thurs. Nov. 10**

**Lecture: "Not the Boys Less, But the Girls More": Black Women and Higher Education after Reconstruction**

Quincy T. Mills, Assistant Professor of History

**Mon. Nov. 14**

**Discussion: Co-Educations**

Read (on Moodle; Radhe-Moss is also on Main Reserve):

Mary Church Terrell, excerpt from *A Colored Woman in a White World*

Andrea Radhe-Moss, *Bright Epoch: Women and Coeducation in the American West*, chapters 6 and 7
Thurs. Nov. 17  *Special Vassar Sesquicentennial Panel*
Vassar Graduates and Progressive Reform: Julia Lathrop, Josephine Roche, Julia Stimson
Miriam Cohen, Professor of History on the Evalyn Clark Chair
Robyn Muncy, Department of History, University of Maryland
William Elfant, Vassar Class of 1979
Chair, Elisabeth Israels Perry, St. Louis University

Mon. Nov. 21  Discussion: Declarations of Independence
Reading: Louisa May Alcott, *Work*

[THANKSGIVING]

Mon. Nov. 28  Discussion: Manhood and Elite Education
Reading: Townshend, *Manhood at Harvard*, chapters 2 and 4

Thurs. Dec. 1  Lecture: The College and the Cold War
Robert K. Brigham, Professor of History on the Shirley Ecker Boskey Chair of International Relations

Mon. Dec. 5  Discussion: conclusions (and some presentations if needed)

Thurs. Dec. 8  The Many Meanings of Education in Nineteenth-Century America
Presented by the Students of HIST/WMST 285 (that's you!)

Friday, Dec. 9 by 5 pm: submit final research paper

TBA: regularly scheduled final exam
Readings and Assignment for Monday, October 31: Glimpses of Early Vassar

Your goal is to read a primary source on early Vassar history and, in roughly one to two double-space pages, provide a brief assessment of the source. We will discuss reading strategies in class: your assignment is not to read every word on every page, but to gain a broader understanding of the source and its contents.

In your assessment, address the following questions: When was the source written? Who was or were the author(s) and what was their point of view? What is the usefulness of this source for understanding early Vassar history? What are its limitations? What other sources might you search for, that would complement this one and enlarge our view?

You may wish to quote from the document in your assessment. If so, then you may--just this once!--use parenthetical page citations. (For this assignment you are, in effect, "practice note taking," creating an informal document of a kind you would use for your own research.)

Reading choices:

Christine Ladd-Franklin diary, 1866-1873, online link from Special Collections, Vassar College Library:  
http://specialcollections.vassar.edu/digital-collections/index.html

On Main Reserve:


Anon, *Letters from Old-Time Vassar, Written by a Student in 1869-1870* (Poughkeepsie: Vassar College, 1915)

Cornelia M. Raymond, *Memories of a Child of Vassar* (Poughkeepsie: Vassar College, 1940)

Diary and "Memoryabil" of Cora Keck, student at Vassar's School of Music, 1884-1886 (available courtesy of independent scholar Greta Nettleton, who is writing about Keck)


**NOTE:** The Special Collections Library has additional rich archival sources of early Vassar history. If you wish to explore those, especially in connection with a possible research paper topic, the instructor will be delighted to discuss that option with you.