

## History 325: American Women's History

Prof. Wu  
Discussion Section Leader: Jane Berger  
Spring 2003

## Why Women's History?

- Traditional narratives of history
  - What events are considered historically important?
  - Who are historical actors?
  - Patterns of exclusion and privilege

## Is history different by focusing on women?

- An Add-on approach
  - The great women of history
  - The public vs. the private
    - politics and economics versus family and home

## A Transformative Approach

- Social history
  - history from the bottom-up
  - History of everyday people

## A Transformative Approach

- Social history or history from the bottom-up
- Gender as an important category of analysis
  - Gender = cultural meaning given to anatomical characteristics (manhood; womanhood; masculinity; femininity; third sex)

## Gender as an Important Category of Analysis

- Gender = cultural meaning given to anatomical characteristics (manhood; womanhood; masculinity; femininity; third sex)
- Do men and women understand and experience life/historical events differently?

### More of a Transformative Approach

- Social history or history from the bottom-up
- Gender as an important category of analysis
- Gender as a social and historical construction
  - A woman is not born, she is made
    - Paraphrased from Simone de Beauvoir

### Gender as a social and historical construction

- How is gender constructed, negotiated, and contested?
- Does gender difference necessarily entail gender hierarchy?

### Transforming history by focusing on women

- Social history or history from the bottom-up
- Gender as an important category of analysis
- Gender as a social and historical construction
- Gender as just one axis of identity and social hierarchy
  - The importance of considering race, class, region, sexuality, historical time period, etc.

### How does one learn about the past?

- Historians as interpreters of the past
  - Not merely collectors of data
- What are possible sources for learning about the past?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each source?

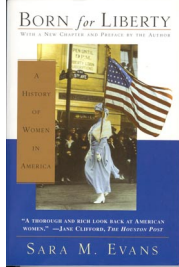
### Sources for learning about the past

- Primary sources – from that time period or first person accounts
- Secondary sources – scholarly analyses based on primary sources
- Tertiary sources – synthetic accounts based on primary and secondary sources

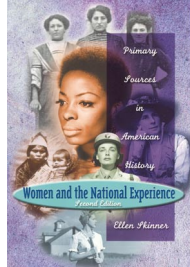
### Why do interpretations change over time?

- Historiography = the story of history, i.e. how historical interpretations change over time

## Sources for our class

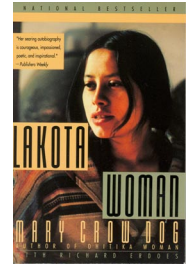
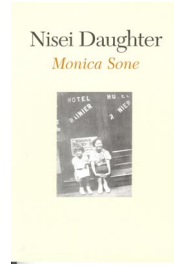
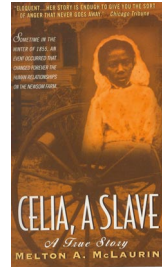


lectures



discussions

## Life Narratives and History



## Class Assignments

- Class Participation
  - Lectures and discussion sections
- In-lecture quizzes
- Midterm and final
  - Identifications and essay questions
- 3 critical essays
  - Biography and history
- Group visual exhibit and presentations
  - Based on a primary source or set of sources of your choice

## Other useful information

- Office hours and contact info
- Lectures available online
  - [www.history.ohio-state.edu/people/wu.287/325lectures2003/325lectures2003.htm](http://www.history.ohio-state.edu/people/wu.287/325lectures2003/325lectures2003.htm)
  - Username: Hist325
  - Password (rotating): liberty
- Books available at SBX and on reserve at the Main Library