

HIS 100.2: Feminist Killjoys of American History  
MWF 10:00-10:50

Professor Carolyn Herbst Lewis  
Office: HSSC 3144N  
[Lewiscar@grinnell.edu](mailto:Lewiscar@grinnell.edu)

"Killjoys, misfits, trouble-makers; willful wanderers and woeful warriors: we fight for room to be as we wish; we wish for room in which we did not have to fight to be." -- Sara Ahmed.

**Official Course Description:**

Feminist Killjoys of American History surveys this nation's past through the archetype of the Feminist Killjoy, as described above by theorist Sara Ahmed. By centering the experiences of women who fought for the space to be and live as they wished, this course introduces students to the long history of women's activism, dissent, and rebellion in the United States. As an introduction to historical inquiry, this course prioritizes the methods, theories, and scholarship of the discipline of history. Even so, by looking at the lives of individual women, representations of fictional women, and the gendered constructs that shaped the past, this course also encourages students to see the links between history, the humanities, and their own lived experiences.

There will be a rhythm to this course. On Mondays, I will deliver a short lecture that introduces the historical period and broader context and themes for the week. You will have a reading or other material that will contribute to your understanding of the lecture content. On Wednesdays, we will dive into the practice of reading and thinking critically about primary sources. On Fridays, we will look at an example of a feminist killjoy – our archetype of the week -- to consider how she navigated the broader context of her experience in order to live and be as she wished.

## COURSE POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

**Community and Accountability:** This classroom is a community of individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences coming together to learn. In order for this course to be a productive learning environment, it is imperative that we all treat one another with respect and courtesy. Please receive all comments in a spirit of generosity, imagining that they were spoken with the best possible intentions before reacting or responding. Likewise, be aware that your word choice or tone might convey meaning that you do not intend. Let yourself be open to correction with grace and gratitude. That said, I will not tolerate harmful, aggressive, disrespectful, or discriminatory language of any sort. **Students who regularly disrupt the class in any way will have their course grade penalized at the discretion of the instructor.** If you are asked to modify your behavior, please do so. As members of this community, you all are responsible for informing me if at any point a classmate's behavior is impairing your ability to concentrate and learn in this class. This is not asking you to police one another, but to take responsibility for defending your right to a productive learning environment. Bottom line: let's all treat each other with the same respect and courtesy we would like to receive.

**Accommodations:** I encourage students with documented accommodations, including invisible disabilities such as chronic illness, learning difficulties, and emotional or mental health conditions, to discuss appropriate accommodations with me during the first few days of the semester. You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator for Disability Resources, located on the ground level floor of Steiner Hall (641-269-3124).

Grinnell College offers reasonable accommodations for students who observe religious holy days. Please contact me as early as possible in the semester if you would like to discuss a specific instance that applies to you. <https://www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/crssj/resources>

**My Pedagogy:** As an instructor, I am endeavoring to use the philosophies of **Universal Design** and **Culturally Responsive Teaching** in framing my courses. I welcome all constructive feedback in this process. I cannot guarantee that I will adopt any or all suggestions that come my way, but I most certainly want to hear them for consideration not only for this course, but also for future courses. If you'd like to know more about the influences on my pedagogy, you could read the following:

- Amielle Major, "How to Develop Culturally Responsive Teaching for Distance Learning," *Mind/Shift* May 20, 2020 <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/55941/how-to-develop-culturally-responsive-teaching-for-distance-learning>
- Cathy Davidson, "The Single Most Essential Requirement in Designing a Fall Online Course," *hastac* May 11, 2020 <https://www.hastac.org/blogs/cathy-davidson/2020/05/11/single-most-essential-requirement-designing-fall-online-course>
- Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Duke University Press, 2017) and Feminist Killjoy Blog [www.feministkilljoys.com](http://www.feministkilljoys.com)
- The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, "What is Universal Design?" <http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/>

**VERY IMPORTANT:** We will be discussing topics related to colonialism, racism, sexism, and violence. Due to the nature of the course themes, materials, and format we will not be issuing specific **trigger warnings**. All course materials are listed on the syllabus. You should use the syllabus to get a sense of the types of topics we will be discussing. Just because something is not listed on the syllabus for a given day, however, does not mean that it might not come up in lecture or discussion as we draw connections between different readings and discussions. If you find yourself having a personal or emotional response to the readings, subject matter, or discussions, I suggest you let me know so that we can ensure that you have the resources and support that you need.

**Academic Integrity:** It is the responsibility of all students to familiarize themselves with the section on "Honesty in Academic Work" in the Grinnell Student Handbook. These are the standards that you are held to, these are the standards that you have agreed to adhere to by enrolling in the college, and these are the standards that you claim you have met once you submit your written work for grading.

**Late Papers and Extensions:** Assignments submitted late without an instructor-approved extension or documentation of an emergency will be accepted solely at the instructor's discretion and with a grade penalty. I reserve the right to refuse to accept a late assignment. In-class presentations cannot be rescheduled. Each student in the class can have **one 48-hour extension** on a writing assignment. To claim this extension, send me a brief email asking for extra time BEFORE the assignment's deadline. I will grant the extension automatically, so there is no need for you to explain why you need more time. This extension may not be used for the final project or the presentation.

## HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

**Participation:** I expect that students will come to class having completed the assigned readings, thought about their content, and formulated ideas and questions for class discussion. Participation is not the same as attendance, and it is not assessed according to a strict formula. By the end of the semester, I will know whether or not you are someone who has made regular and thoughtful contributions to the classroom discussion of readings and other material. How do you as a student ensure that you get a high mark for this portion of your grade? First, you attend class regularly. You cannot participate if you are not here. Second, you complete the assigned readings and spend time thinking about them before class. Finally, you answer the questions I pose to the class, ask questions of me and your classmates based on the readings and lecture content, share your thoughts about the material, and respond to your classmates' comments about the material.

**Writing:** Please note that I expect your writing to improve in terms of style, structure, and content based on my comments on your graded work. You take time to write papers; I take time to think about how you might improve them. The expectation is that you will take my comments and edits into consideration so that you can, in fact, improve. No one in this classroom is such a good writer that they have no room for improvement. This includes me. You are responsible for checking your grades in Blackboard and reading any comments in a timely manner.

**Grades:** Students' grades will be based on the following assignments

- Topic Proposal: one paragraph identifying your chosen archetype and your reasons for selecting that person within the framework of the feminist killjoy. 2%
- Preliminary Bibliography with Revised Proposal: an expansion on your explanation for your chosen archetype (based on what you've learned while compiling the bibliography) into 2-3 paragraphs with an UNANNOTATED bibliography of 2 primary and 5 secondary sources. 3%
- Participation in class discussions (see description above). 10%
- Weekly reflection essays, 7 in total. Each reflection essay should be 500-1000 words and posted in the Blackboard discussion board for the week. There are 10 opportunities to submit a reflection essay; students are only required to submit 7. The purpose of the reflection essay is to REFLECT – to think about what we have read, discussed, shared, and learned in a given week, applying the lens of the feminist killjoy to the woman/women we highlighted. You might, for example, reflect on whether Sojourner Truth was a woeful warrior or a misfit, or you might consider how Sylvia Rivera embodied the feminist killjoy in her daily life, or... who knows. There are many directions you can take this. The point is to offer a meaningful, informed reflection about the week's content through the life or lessons of the week's archetype, drawing upon both the primary and secondary sources assigned. Students will have an opportunity to read and respond to each other's reflections. Doing so in a meaningful way will be factored into the participation grade. Only the professor will grade the reflection essays, and grades will remain confidential. Please note that reflection does not mean informal. You should have a structured format with a clear analysis supported by evidence. Each essay is 5% of the course grade. 35%.
- Presentation. Each student will offer an 8-10 minute prerecorded or live presentation on their chosen archetype based on their research. 30%.
- Annotated Bibliography with Short Introduction. Each student will compile an annotated bibliography of 2 primary and 5 secondary sources related to their chosen research topic. We will discuss in class what makes an effective annotation entry (each entry will be approximately 300 words). The annotated bibliography will be accompanied by a short

introduction of 600-800 words. A draft is due in the week when the student does not present. The final version is due at the assigned time of the final exam. 20%

**Required Course Material:**

- All students are required to read John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* as well as Sharon Rudahl, *A Dangerous Woman: The Graphic Biography of Emma Goldman*. All other articles and book chapters are available via the Burling Library databases. Links are provided for most items. If the link does not work, use the provided bibliographic information to locate the article in the library catalog.
- All students are required to watch the documentary PBS film *A Midwife's Tale*. This film is available to screen online via the Burling Library database, Films on Demand.
- Blog posts, videos, and podcasts available via various websites may also be assigned readings and listed on the syllabus. Hyperlinks are provided in the Word document version. Please note that any blog posts I assign are written by scholars and vetted through a peer review process. The podcasts will feature well-respected historical scholars. Do not dismiss them as mere opinion pieces or entertainment. They are scholarship.

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Week and dates		
Friday 8/27	Introduction: Who and What is a Feminist Killjoy?	
Monday 8/30	Lecture: "A good wife earned the dignity of anonymity": Women's Roles in the Colonial Mindset	Prepare: read Arnold 1-79 (worksheet to submit)
Wednesday 9/1	Discussion of <i>A Midwife's Tale</i> and analysis of excerpts of Martha Ballard's diary	Prepare: Watch <i>A Midwife's Tale</i> documentary. Stream via Burling Library Databases.
Friday 9/3	Discussion of Hall	Prepare: Read Kathryn Wichelns, "From 'The Scarlet Letter' to Stonewall: Reading the 1629 Thomas(ine) Hall Case, 1978–2009." <i>Early American Studies</i> 12, no. 3 (2014): 500-23.
Monday 9/6	Lecture: Romantic Friendships and the Meaning of Marriage in the 19 <sup>th</sup> Century	Prepare: Arnold 80-123 (worksheet to submit)
Wednesday 9/8	Reading a Primary Source: letters between women	
Friday 9/10	Discussion of Charity and Sylvia	Prepare: read Rachel Hope Cleves, "Miss Bryant Was the Man, 1820," pp 131-141, and "Dear Aunts, 1823," pp 142-154, in <i>Charity &amp; Sylvia: A Same-Sex Marriage in Early America</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

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Week 3	SOJOURNER TRUTH	
Monday 9/13	Lecture: "Women Occupied the Floor": Antebellum Women's Activism	Prepare: read <del>Nancy Isenberg, "Citizenship Understood (and Misunderstood)," pp 15-39 in <i>Sex &amp; Citizenship in Antebellum America</i> (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).</del> Sally G. McMillen, "Chapter 4: The Women's Movement Begins, 1850-1860," in <i>Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement</i> (Oxford University Press, 2008).
Wednesday 9/15	Reading a Primary Source: "Ain't I a Woman?"	
Friday 9/17	Discussion of Truth	Prepare: read Nell Irvin Painter, "Representing Truth: Sojourner Truth's Knowing and Becoming Known." <i>The Journal of American History</i> 81, no. 2 (1994): 461-92.
Week 4	SARAH WINNEMUCCA & LOZEN	
Monday 9/20	Lecture: Strategies of Survivance	Prepare: Read Rose Strelau, "Rape Narratives on the Northern Paiute Frontier: Sarah Winnemucca, Sexual Sovereignty, and Economic Autonomy, 1844-1891," pp 37-60, in <i>Portraits of Women in the American West</i> , ed by Dee Garceau-Hagen (New York: Routledge, 2005).



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Wednesday 9/22	Reading a Primary Source: <i>Life Among the Piutes</i> (excerpts)	Prepare: read Sarah Winnemucca, "From <i>Life Among the Piutes</i> (1883)," in <i>Available Means: An Anthology Of Women'S Rhetoric(s)</i> , edited by Ritchie Joy and Ronald Kate, 158-62. (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001).
Friday 9/24	Discussion of Winnemucca & Lozen	Prepare: read Laura Jane Moore, "Lozen: An Apache Woman Warrior," pp 92-107, in <i>Sifters: Native American Women's Lives</i> , ed by Theda Perdue (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
Week 5	EMMA GOLDMAN	
Monday 9/27	Lecture: Women in the Labor Movement	Prepare: read Nan Enstand, "Fashioning Political Identities: Cultural Studies and the Historical Construction of Political Subjects." <i>American Quarterly</i> 50, no. 4 (1998): 745–782.
Wednesday 9/29	Reading a Primary Source: Photos of women participating in the labor movement	<b>Topic Proposal Due 11:50 PM 9/29</b>
Friday 10/1	Discussion of Goldman	Prepare: Read <i>A Dangerous Woman: The Graphic Biography of Emma Goldman</i>
Week 6	ANNA MAY WONG	
Monday 10/4	Lecture: Excluding Chinese Women	Prepare: Shauna Lo, "Chinese Women Entering New England: Chinese Exclusion Act Case Files, Boston, 1911-

Week and dates	Details	Instruction
		1925." <i>The New England Quarterly</i> 81, no. 3 (2008): 383-409.
Wednesday 10/6	Reading a Primary Source: clips from Wong's films	
Friday 10/8	Discussion of Wong	Prepare: read Kristine Somerville, "The Many Lives of Anna May Wong." <i>The Missouri Review</i> 42, no. 4 (2019): 51-61.
Week 7	ELLA BAKER & DOLORES HUERTA	
Monday 10/11	Lecture: Women in the Civil Rights Movements	Prepare: read Barbara Ransby, "Behind-the-Scenes View of a Behind-the-Scenes Organizer: The Roots of Ella Baker's Political Passions," in <i>Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement</i> , edited by Collier-Thomas Bettye and Franklin V. P., 42-58. (New York, London: NYU press, 2001).
Wednesday 10/13	Reading a Primary Source: "A Kind of Memo"	
Friday 10/15	Discussion of Baker and Huerta	Prepare: watch <i>Dolores</i> . Directed by Peter Bratt. Ro*Co Films, 2017. <a href="https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/Dolores">https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/Dolores</a> .
FALL BREAK 10-16-10/24		
Week 8		
Monday 10/25	Research and Writing Time	
Wednesday 10/27	Research and Writing Time	

Week and dates	Details	Instruction
Friday 10/29	Research and Writing Time	<b>Bibliography and Revised Topic Proposal Due 11:50 PM 10/29</b>
Week 9	PATSY TAKEMOTO MINK	
Monday 11/1	Lecture: Changing Laws, Changing Worlds	Prepare: Alyssa A. Samek, "Mobility, Citizenship, and 'American Women on the Move' in the 1977 International Women's Year Torch Relay." <i>The Quarterly journal of speech</i> 103, no. 3 (2017): 207–229.
Wednesday 11/3	Reading a Primary Source: NOW Statement of Purpose, 1966	Prepare: Read NOW Statement of Purpose, 1966 <a href="https://now.org/about/history/statement-of-purpose/">https://now.org/about/history/statement-of-purpose/</a>
Friday 11/5	Discussion of Mink	Prepare: read Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, "The Dead, the Living, and the Sacred: Patsy Mink, Antimilitarism, and Reimagining the Pacific World." <i>Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism</i> 18, no. 2 (2019): 304-331.
Week 10	SYLVIA RIVERA & MARSHA P. JOHNSON	
Monday 11/8	Lecture: Women's Liberation	Prepare: read Daina Ramey Berry and Kali Nicole Gross, "Chapter Ten: Shirley's Run, Black Power, Politics, and Black Feminism, 1970-2000," pp 185-207, in <i>A Black Women's History of the United States</i> (Boston: Beacon Press, 2020).
Wednesday 11/10	Reading Primary Sources: The Combahee River Collective Statement	Prepare: read The Combahee River Collective Statement (1977) <a href="https://www.blackpast.org/a">https://www.blackpast.org/a</a>

Week and dates	Details	Instruction
		frican-american-history/combahee-river-collective-statement-1977/
Friday 11/12	Discussion of Rivera and Johnson	Prepare: read Jessi Gan, "Still at the Back of the Bus': Sylvia Rivera's Struggle," pp 291-301, in <i>The Transgender Studies Reader 2</i> , ed by Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013); AND Abram J. Lewis, "Free Our Siblings, Free Ourselves': Historicizing Trans Activism in the United States, 1952-1992," <i>The American Historian</i> (2019)
Week 11	ANITA HILL	
Monday 11/15	Lecture: Speaking Truth to Power	Prepare: read "Real Women of North Country" <a href="https://www.womenshistory.org/articles/real-women-north-country">https://www.womenshistory.org/articles/real-women-north-country</a> ; and Venus Green, "Flawed Remedies: EEOC, ATT, and Sears Outcomes Reconsidered." <i>Black Women, Gender Families</i> 6, no. 1 (2012): 43-70.
Wednesday 11/17	Reading a Primary Source: Anita Hill Opening Statement October 11, 1991 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QbVKSvm274">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QbVKSvm274</a>	
Friday 11/19	Discussion of Hill	Prepare: watch "From Anita Hill To Christine Blasey Ford: Looking Back and Looking Forward" New York

Week and dates	Details	Instruction
		University Law School <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RU09vvzrrps">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RU09vvzrrps</a>
<b>Week 12</b>		
Monday 11/22	CLOSING DISCUSSION ON FEMINIST KILLJOYS	
Wednesday 11/24	Extra Office Hours dedicated to this class	
Friday 11/26 NO CLASS		
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>GROUP A PRESENTATIONS</b>	<b>GROUP B DRAFTS DUE</b>
Monday 11/29	4 students present (10 minutes each)	
Wednesday 12/1	4 students present (10 minutes each)	
Friday 12/3	4 students present (10 minutes each)	
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>GROUP B PRESENTATIONS</b>	<b>GROUP A DRAFTS DUE</b>
Monday 12/6	4 students present (10 minutes each)	
Wednesday 12/8	4 students present (10 minutes each)	
Friday 12/10	4 students present (10 minutes each)	