Description

Canadian women have a complex, fascinating and revealing history. That history shapes our present. This course examines how Canadian women lived, how they felt about their lives and how others saw them in the period from the 17th century to 1920. 'Great women' such as Nellie McClung and Marie de l'Incarnation will be of concern but the less well-known experiences of more ordinary figures constitute a major interest. It will be helpful if students have a basic understanding of Canadian history since women will be discussed in the context of their society as a whole. Although no single text adequately integrates the female into the national experience, A.R.M. Lower's Colony to Nation and W.L. Morton's The Kingdom of Canada provide useful introductions to the essential chronology.

Format and Grading

Lectures and seminars are complementary elements in this course and attendance at both is expected. The lectures will set forth the basic themes and problems in the history of Canadian women. Related readings will be suggested and discussion is welcomed.

The seminars will focus on the problems of compiling and interpreting data on the female experience in the past. To this end a xeroxed set of primary sources will be available for purchase by each student. This provides one study document, ranging from a diary to poetry to statistics, per seminar class. Each student will hand in at the beginning of each class a 1-2 page typed (maximum) assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of using a particular kind of data for studying women and indicate what the document suggests about the female experience in Canada. The lecture material will be expected to inform each analysis but no further reading is required. No paper will be graded unless submitted at the onset of the relevant seminar. The best 8 seminar papers from each student constitute 50% of the course grade. Seminar participation makes up 20% of the final mark (peer evaluation may be included if the class decides). Finally a book review of Naomi Griffiths' Penelope's Web is due the last week of classes making up the last 30% of the grade in this course. The importance of this critical assessment of the one significant overview of the history of Canadian women should be kept in mind throughout the course. It is expected that students will apply the interpretative and documentary insights they have developed during the seminars and lectures to this review.

Books

Relevant books for this course include:

L. Kealey, ed., A Not Unreasonable Claim.
N. Griffiths, Penelope's Web.
B. Light, V. Strong-Boag, eds., True Daughters of the North. (bibliography).