Description

Canadian women have a complex, fascinating and little understood history. Female experience is not an unchanging monolith but one which may vary tremendously over time, between classes and cultures and from region to region. This variety will be explored through an intensive analysis of primary materials such as census data, autobiographies, royal commissions and literature. 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, R. Cook, J. Saywell and J. Ricker, Canada. A Modern Study and P. Cornell, J. Hamelin, F. Ouellet and M. Trudel, Canada. Unity in Diversity provide useful introductions to the twentieth century in particular.

Format and Grading

Lecturers 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 from a historical perspective. To this end a xeroxed set of primary sources will be available for purchase by each student. This provides one study document relating to the history of Canadian women—i.e. excerpts from a diary, poetry or demographic material—per seminar class. Each student will hand in at the beginning of each class a 1-2 page typed 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 (poor evaluation may be included if the class decides). Finally a book review of Maria Tippett’s Emily Carr is due the last week of classes making up the last 30% of the grade. The importance of this provocative and unusual biography of a 20th century Canadian woman 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:

M. Tippett, Emily Carr