

SP. 401 Fall 2010
Lecture #9 Outline

The Legacy of the “First Wave” of American Women’s Rights Activism (1848-1920) for Women’s and Gender Studies

The Yellow Wallpaper as a “bridging text” between 1st and 2nd Waves of American women’s rights activism

- a. Critiquing the “Lenses of Gender”—(Sandra Bem)
 1. Biological Essentialism-The notion of gendered roles/hierarchy and male domination as rooted intrinsically in biology
 2. Androcentrism (male-centeredness)- defines males and male experience as the norm and females and female experience as a deviation from that norm.
 - 3 Gender polarization- assumes male and females are opposite in nature; This lens may be superimposed on many aspects of dress, behavior, work and sexuality.
- b. Articulating a critique of the gender system as one of performance and power; Describing a model of a system in which the parts (social/cultural, legal/economic) work together to maintain a gendered hierarchy
- c. Identifying contradictions within the political, economic and familial system to promote change
- d. Establishing a model of social change that involved diverse methods, participants and goals: prefigurative and pragmatic approaches
- e. Questions of the meaning of equality: sameness or difference?
- f. Creating connections and affirming differences among various subgroups of women; questions of theorizing race/gender/ethnicity

Background to the Emergence of the Second Wave of American Women’s Rights Activism: 1940s-1960s

1. The Years Between the Waves of Women’s Rights Activism: 1920-40- “Unobtrusive Mobilization” or “Lull Between the Waves”? Role of Mass Media in Defining Social Movements
2. Gender Role Change and the Complex Legacy of World War II-*The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (Connie Field, 1981) – documentary film

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