Syllabus for Woman Suffrage and the Meaning of Citizenship


We may watch parts of several documentary films. On your own, you might want to watch Iron Jawed Angels which is a dramatization of the militant wing of suffrage movement of the early 20th century.

Week 1: Please read the Introduction and Chapter One BEFORE coming to our first meeting. The Introduction provides a chronological overview of the woman suffrage movement. We will look at that and then examine early ideas about gender and women’s status in the 18th century with a particular emphasis on the meaning of coverture.

Week 2: Read chapters 2 and 3. We will be looking at early women’s rights advocacy and its relationship to other 19th century reform movements. We will also consider why throughout the 19th century we refer to a women’s rights movement rather than a “feminist” movement.

Week 3: Read chapters 4 and 5. We will look at the impact of the Civil War and its immediate aftermath on woman suffrage.

Week 4: Read chapters 6 and 7. We will consider several examples of the intersection of women’s rights with other reforms and begin to look at resistance to any changes in women’s status.

Week 5: Read chapters 9-11. We will be looking at major changes in the women’s rights movement at the turn of the 20th century, along with conflicts within the movement over strategy and tactics.

Week 6: Read chapters 8, 12, and 14. These chapters deal with the influence of race and class on the suffrage movement.

Week 7: Read chapters 15, 16 and 19. The two opposing sides of the suffrage movement manage to work together to achieve suffrage in 1920. Tennessee as the ultimate battleground.

Week 8: Read chapter 20. We will think about the meaning of the women’s rights/feminist movements post-suffrage and the greater implications for female citizenship.