

SP.401 – Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies
Essay Assignment #1

Date Due (First Draft): Thursday, February 24

Final Draft Due: Tuesday, March 8

Length: 5-7 pages, or approximately 1500-1800 words

Choose **ONE** of the following topics and write a **5-7page essay** in response to it. You will need to draw examples from the texts we have read to support your points; use parenthetical citations to document the sources you use. Be sure that you are introducing your quotes adequately, creating smooth transitions between your own writing and that of your sources. Your essay should include a clear **thesis statement** in which you make an argument in answer to the question you choose.

1. Thinking about the suffrage campaign in the first wave of the women’s movement, consider the analogy of sex and race in the argument for the right to vote. When does the analogy work? At what point does it break down? What happened in the women's suffrage movement that illustrates either of these outcomes? Using examples from the film *Not For Ourselves Alone* and the texts we have read, explain how women in the first wave campaigned for the vote. How did racial difference affect the movement?

2. Compare the rhetorical strategies used by Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frederick Douglass, and/or Sojourner Truth (choose at least two of these) to argue for change. What did they do in their writing or speeches to convince the people they were addressing? Who was their audience? Explain what each writer you critique was trying to achieve and how they arguments they presented helped them accomplish their goal.

3. Consider the historical diagnosis of “neurasthenia” and the “hysterical woman.” How did this “disease” (and its cure) reflect and reinforce cultural values surrounding women of the 19th century? What forms of resistance are exhibited by Gilman’s narrator in “The Yellow Wallpaper”? What message can we take from this short story? Does it still have relevance today? In thinking about contemporary implications, you may wish to make a comparison between the historical themes in Gilman’s story and Fausto-Sterling’s “Hormonal Hurricanes” article in *Feminist Frontiers*.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE REQUIRED TO SCHEDULE AT LEAST ONE CONFERENCE WITH BETSY IN ADVANCE OF THE FIRST PAPER DEADLINE!!