

WGS. 101 SESSION #8

1. Small Group Discussion: *The Yellow Wallpaper* - Charlotte Perkins Gilman – See Question Sheet
2. Meanings of this text in the contemporary period; relationship to other accounts of women and madness (e.g., Sylvia Plath – *The Bell Jar*, Susanna Kaysen- *Girl, Interrupted*). Is *The Yellow Wallpaper* a “feminist” text?
3. *The Yellow Wallpaper* as Bridging Text between First and Second Waves of American Women’s Rights Activism
4. The Conceptual Legacy of the “First Wave” of American Women’s Rights Activism (1848-1920) for Women’s and Gender Studies
 - a. Critiquing the “Lenses of Gender”—(Psychologist Sandra Bem, *The Lenses of Gender*)- (Grimke, Stanton, Truth, Anthony, Stone-Blackwell, Douglass)
 1. **Biological Essentialism**-views gendered roles/hierarchy and male domination as rooted intrinsically in biology, esp. reproductive 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, language, family roles, 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) not only work together to maintain a gendered hierarchy, but also can be targeted separately for change (“Dec. of Sentiments...”)
 - c. Identifying *contradictions* within the political, economic and familial system that promote conflict, questioning and change (Smith-Rosenberg); rejecting monolithic concepts of *culture*; affirming sense of *cultural conflict*
 - d. Establishing models of social change that include diverse strategies (Stanton, Anthony, Truth, Douglass, Stone-Blackwell, Wells-Barnett, Gilman)
 - e. Questioning the meaning of gender equality: sameness or difference?
 - f. Creating connections and affirming differences among various groups of women; theorizing *intersectionality* of race/gender/ethnicity/class (Davis, Truth, Boydston, Stanton, Cooper, Wells-Barnett)
 - g. Conceptualizing the role of men as allies in women’s rights movements and both conscience and beneficiary constituents of a social movement (Douglass, Blackwell)
5. The Years Between the Waves of U.S. Women’s Rights Activism: 1920-40- “Unobtrusive Mobilization” or “Lull Between the Waves”?
Mass Media in Defining Social Movements;
1940s: WWII and gender role change

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