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
      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