This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of The Feminine Mystique, Betty Friedan’s now infamous account of the “progressive dehumanization” that awaited the postwar suburban housewife in America. Many consider Friedan’s withering criticisms of Sigmund Freud and Margaret Mead, of “the sexual sell” and “sex seekers,” and of the “comfortable concentration camp” of the suburban home, to have launched the second-wave of feminist movement.

This seminar focuses on the 1945-75 period, and uses Friedan’s work to reconsider the history of Cold War conformity. In this class, students will develop their knowledge of this period of North American history. Students will also develop skills pertaining to the evaluation of texts in their historical context. Finally, students will examine the relationship between individual activism and social movements.

Class Schedule

Sept 11th  Introduction

For the first class, we’ll discuss recent criticisms of The Feminine Mystique. We’ll also examine the history of something dear to the hearts of most students, the coffee maker.


Sept 18th  Feminine Mystique I


Sept 25th  Context I


Robert B. Westbrook, “‘I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl that Married Harry James’: American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II,” American Quarterly 42:4 (December 1990), 587-614. (OWL)

Maria Elena Buszek, Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism Sexuality, Popular Culture (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 224-231 (TMc)

Oct 2nd  Context II

Horowitz, Betty Friedan, Chapters 5-7.

David Harley Serlin, “Christine Jorgensen and the Cold War Closet,” Radical History Review 62 (Spring 1995), 137-165. (OWL)

Kate A. Baldwin, “The Radical Imaginary of ‘The Bell Jar’,” NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction 38:1 (Fall 2004), 21-40. (OWL)

Oct 9th  Feminine Mystique II

Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, Chapters 5-7.


Oct 16th  Context III

Horowitz, Betty Friedan, Chapters 8-10.


Oct 23rd  Feminine Mystique III

Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, Chapters 8-11.

Oct 30th    Context IV


Nov 6th    Feminine Mystique IV

Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, Chapters 12-14.

Kirsten Lise Fermaglich, “‘The Comfortable Concentration Camp’: The Significance of Nazi Imagery in Betty Friedan’s The Feminine Mystique (1963),” American Jewish History 91:2 (June 2003), 205-232. (OWL)

Rachel Bowlby, “‘The Problem With No Name’: Rereading Friedan’s ‘The Feminine Mystique’,” Feminist Review 27 (Autumn 1987), 61-75. (OWL)

Nov 13th    Radical Feminisms I


Nov 20th    Radical Feminisms II

Echols, Daring To Be Bad, Chapters 3-5.

Nov 27th    Radical Feminisms III

Horowitz, Betty Friedan, Chapter 11.

Echols, Daring To Be Bad, Chapter 6 and Epilogue.

**Texts and Other Resources**

The following have been ordered by the King’s Bookstore:


The remainder are available via the course OWL site.

Given the importance Friedan and others attributed to popular culture in mediating sexual and gender relations in North America, and the plethora of government and other archival documents released to the public, there now exists a seemingly inexhaustible amount of relevant content on the internet. With the assistance of three recent graduates – I think of them as “retired students/underpaid minions” – links to relevant content have been posted at [www.twitter.com/thebeforetime](http://www.twitter.com/thebeforetime) & [http://thebeforetime.tumblr.com/](http://thebeforetime.tumblr.com/). Jasmine Hare, Mary Cameron and Rebecca Riordan have graciously agreed to act as informal out-of-town consultants concerning the present-day scene, since my contemporary pop culture knowledge stops with Dawson’s Creek and The O.C. They’ve arranged the twitter and tumblr sites to link to commentary about gender and sexual politics. Obviously, this being the internet, some of the material may be considered objectionable, and the nature of hashtags allow for anyone to join any conversation. We have posted trigger warnings for sensitive material, and I encourage students to speak to me about any material they find questionable.

My weekly regular office hours in the Fall term will be on Mondays from 12:00-1:00 pm, and Wednesdays, 1:30-3:00 pm. In November, I will add extra hours.

Due to my obligations with administrative committees, I may have to cancel regular office hours from time to time. In order to guarantee my accessibility, I will hold weekly virtual office hours Sundays from 10:00 am-12:00 pm, and Wednesdays from 7:00-9:00 pm. During these times, I will be available for video chatting via thedamagedlife@gmail.com and on twitter, @thebeforetime.

**Marking Breakdown**

| Assignment 1 | 30% | Nov 15th |
| Assignment 2 | 30% | Nov 15th |
| Assignment 3 | 25% | Dec 16th |
| Participation | 15% |  |
Assignment One

The Feminine Mystique owed much of its content to the social science knowledge-production machines we call universities. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science is one of the most useful academic journals. Each issue (or volume in this case) contains a dozen or so articles on a single subject written by experts in their fields. Some volumes contain many articles that discuss research about and by women, while other volumes barely acknowledge their existence.

Students are to select three articles from a single volume published between 1945 and 1965, and write an 8 page essay that accomplishes the following:

1. Choose an article that qualifies as an example of one of the types of postwar American social science that Friedan found faulty. Explain the article's general argument, and the evidence and ideas therein that the Friedan of fifty years ago would have labelled as contributing to the feminine mystique.

2. Choose an article that qualifies as an example of social science that supports one or more of the key claims in Friedan’s book. This article need not espouse feminist politics in order to be said to support her arguments pertaining to the business world, technology, morality, etc. As before, explain the general argument, and how the evidence and ideas therein would have contributed to her analysis of the feminine mystique.

3. Choose an article that qualifies as an example of social science that indicates that one or more of Friedan’s key arguments are flawed. This new argument can be conceptual – a different way of seeing the issue that uses same evidence – or empirical – the use of new evidence, which may or may not lead to a new way of seeing the issue. Again, explain the general argument, and how the evidence and ideas therein suggest that we can improve upon Friedan’s account.

My own sampling suggests that the following volumes are the ones most likely to contain adequate material. Should students want to write about articles in a volume not listed, consult with me first, to ensure that there’s sufficient evidence for a viable essay.

Volume 238, March 1945, Postwar Jobs for Veterans
Volume 244, March 1946, Controlling Group Prejudice
Volume 251, May 1947, Women’s Opportunities and Responsibilities
Volume 301, September 1955, Higher Education under Stress
Volume 304, March 1956, Racial Desegregation and Integration
Volume 313, September 1957, Leisure in the Age of Automation
Volume 314, November 1957, Metropolis in Ferment
Volume 316, March 1958, A Crowding Hemisphere: Population Change in the Americas
Volume 322, March 1959, Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency
Volume 338, November 1961, Teen-Age Culture
Volume 334, November 1962, Conservatism, Liberalism, and National Issues
Volume 346, March 1963, Medicine and Society
Volume 357, January 1965, The Negro Protest
Assignment Two

Phyllis Brett Young’s 1960 novel *The Torontonians* is often discussed as the Canadian equivalent of the postwar American women’s fiction that anticipated the feminist movement. Students are to write an 8 page essay that addresses the following questions:

To what degree can Young’s novel serve as evidence that supports Friedan’s arguments in *The Feminine Mystique*? To what degree does it clash with those arguments?

Assignments One and Two both involve the evaluation of *The Feminine Mystique*; we will discuss these assignments in the seminar. Two copies of each essay are due by 3 pm, Nov 15th. No electronic copies will be accepted. Students are encouraged to submit one or both essays before the due date, so as to allow me to identify any significant problems and you to revise accordingly.

Assignment Three

In lieu of an exam, students will produce a short (8-10 pages) research essay. Research essays are built with the following components:

1. An introduction that conveys the significance of the subject as well as your research questions and answers.
2. A clear and concise thesis statement, ie an argument that can be proven by marshalling evidence.
3. A historiographical section that describes and evaluates the major schools of thought about your subject.
4. The so-called ‘body’ of the paper, which combines narrative and analysis in order to demonstrate the validity of the thesis statement.
5. A conclusion that restates the arguments.

All essays should follow the standards in the History Style Guide, online at http://history.dal.ca

Two copies of this essay are due by 3 pm, Dec 16th. No late essays will be accepted.

Participation

*Before and After The Feminine Mystique* is a seminar course with an above-average amount of reading. You are expected to evaluate the arguments in the readings before coming to class, and to have your own ideas and questions about the material for others to consider – discussion is the heart of any seminar course. No marks are earned for attendance. Instead, your participation grade will be earned based on the quantity and quality of your contributions to class discussions. A portion of this mark will be earned by providing written answers to questions in class.
Accommodation Statement:

Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. Students who require academic accommodation for either classroom participation or the writing of tests and exams should make their request to the Advising and Access Services Center (AASC) prior to or at the outset of the regular academic year. Please visit www.dal.ca/access for more information and to obtain the Request for Accommodation – Form A.

A note taker may be required as part of a student’s accommodation. There is an honorarium of $75/course/term (with some exceptions). If you are interested, please contact AASC at 494-2836 for more information.

Please note that your classroom may contain specialized accessible furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in the classroom, untouched, so that students who require their usage will be able to participate in the class.

Academic Integrity Statement:

All students in this class are to read and understand the policies on academic integrity and plagiarism referenced in the Policies and Student Resources sections of the academicintegrity.dal.ca website. Ignorance of such policies is no excuse for violations.

Any paper submitted by a student at Dalhousie University may be checked for originality to confirm that the student has not plagiarized from other sources. Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offence which may lead to loss of credit, suspension or expulsion from the University, or even to the revocation of a degree. It is essential that there be correct attribution of authorities from which facts and opinions have been derived. At Dalhousie there are University Regulations which deal with plagiarism and, prior to submitting any paper in a course, students should read the Policy on Intellectual Honesty contained in the Calendar or on the Online Dalhousie website. The Senate has affirmed the right of any instructor to require that student papers be submitted in both written and computer-readable format, and to submit any paper to be checked electronically for originality. As a student in this class, you are to keep an electronic copy of any paper you submit, and the course instructor may require you to submit that electronic copy on demand.