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 consider the relationship between individual activism and social movements.

A final version of this syllabus will be distributed in the first class.

**Class Schedule**

**Sept 11th**  
*Introduction*

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


**Sept 18th**  
*Feminine Mystique I*


**Sept 25th**  
*Context I: From Depression to War*


Oct 2nd  

**Context II: The Gender & Sexual Politics of Wars, Hot & Cold**

Horowitz, Betty Friedan, Chapters 5-7.


Oct 9th  

**Feminine Mystique II**


Oct 16th  

**Context III: Writing: Power, Voice, and Experience**

Horowitz, Betty Friedan, Chapters 8-10.

Jessamyn Nehaus, “‘Is It Ridiculous for me to Say I Want To Write?’: Domestic Humor and Redefining the 1950s Housewife Writer in Fan Mail to Shirley Jackson,” *Journal of Women’s History* 21:2 (Summer 2009), 115-137.

Oct 23rd  

**Feminine Mystique III**


Oct 30th  

**Context IV: The Commodification of Heterosexual Hetersociality**


Nov 6th  

**Feminine Mystique IV**


Nov 13th  
Radical Feminism I


Nov 20th  
Radical Feminism II

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

Nov 27th  
Radical Feminism III

Horowitz, Betty Friedan, Chapter 11.

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


Also, you may want to peruse some of the FBI’s files on the National Organization of Women; partially redacted versions of some files are online at the FBI’s virtual reading room: http://vault.fbi.gov/National%20Organization%20for%20Women%20%28NOW%29/National%20Organization%20for%20Women%20%28NOW%29%20Part%201%20of%203/view.

Marking Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Nov 15th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Nov 15th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Dec 16th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Texts

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


The remainder are available via the course OWL site.
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.

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

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 315, January 1958, Understanding Alcoholism
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 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. Essays submitted on Nov 18th will lose a letter grade; essays submitted after that date will lose an additional letter grade. No essays will be accepted after 3 pm, Nov 22nd.

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, i.e., 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 are expected to conform to the policies set out in the History Style Guide, found online at http://history.dal.ca

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