Civil Rights and Civil Wrongs:  
The Fight for Equality in the United States 

FRSEM-UA 560.001  
Fall 2014

Time: Thursday 9:30am – 12noon  
Instructor: K. Kevyne Baar  
kevyne.baar@nyu.edu

“Historians strive constantly to improve our collective understanding of the past through a complex process of critical dialogue— with each other, with the wider public, and with the historical record—in which we explore former lives and worlds in search of answers to the most compelling questions of our own time and place.”  

AHA Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct

Shortly after graduating from Oberlin College in 1847, abolitionist and women’s rights advocate Lucy Stone remarked, “I expect to plead not for the slave only, but for suffering humanity everywhere. Especially do I mean to labor for the elevation of my sex.” Three years later, 1850 found her on a national stage at a conference on women’s rights that included noted abolitionists. Stone understood the necessity of a fight that brings rights to all peoples. There were those who felt she and some of the other women present were dupes of the abolitionists. History would unfortunately prove this correct, for when African-American men were given the vote through the 15th Amendment, the abolitionists felt their work was done. It would take another 50 years before women would be granted the right to vote.

Recognizing, as Lucy Stone did, that the fight for human rights does not exist in a vacuum, this course will look at the intersection of the three major American movements for African-American rights, women’s rights, and gay rights. Looking back over 160 years of history, we will compare and contrast the three movements. We will also examine how events in the United States and around the world informed and changed the dialogue on civil rights as so many fight even today to keep the conversation alive.
**Course Requirements:**

1. Students are expected to attend every class meeting, read all assignments before class, and come prepared to participate in the discussion. Students must bring two questions, talking points or responses to each class. These questions, talking points, and responses involve applying critical thinking to the reading and discussion. Class participation (attendance and responses) counts toward your final grade. (20%)

2. The First Paper (3-5 pages) is your reflection on and reaction to the ideas being discussed. What does “civil rights” mean to you? Have you personally ever felt and/or witnessed what you believe to be discrimination for any reason (i.e. race, religion, gender, sexual preference, appearance). Do you remember your reaction, how you felt? Reflect on how your biases affect what you are writing. This is not a research paper, but a continuation of our ongoing readings and discussions. (20%)

3. The Second Paper (2-4 pages) is the beginning of your research for your final paper. In consultation with the instructor, pick a theme, event or person that intrigues you from what we have been covering (and will be covering) in this course. The paper should include an abstract of and introduction to the subject of the final paper. It should also identify some of the sources you are planning to use. You are expected to use both primary and secondary sources. (20%)

4. The Final Paper (10-15 pages) will flesh out what was begun in the Second Paper. Your ongoing work and research will be presented and discussed in the final class sessions. The Final Paper is due one week after the completion of classes. (40%)

Please Note: All papers must be turned in on time. Late papers will receive a penalty. As for plagiarizing, my position is the same as that of a colleague, and I quote, “If I catch you plagiarizing, you will flunk. If I don’t catch you, you will have terrible dreams for the rest of your life.”

**Required Textbook:**

There will be no required textbook for this class. All readings will be posted on the Classes website. A detailed bibliography of the material we will be using, as well as other material of interest, is at the end of this syllabus.

**Schedule:**

**Week One, September 4: Introduction**

- Film: Barak Obama’s Second Inaugural Address
- Review syllabus and course requirements and goals
Week Two, September 11: 1848-1900 – Part I

- Film: *The Abolitionists* (Part III)
- Duberman, *The Northern Response to Slavery*
- Collins, *Women and Abolition*
- *Plessy v. Ferguson*

Week Three, September 18: 1848-1900 – Part II

- Film: *One Woman, One Vote*
- Evans, *Born for Liberty*, Chapters 5 & 6
- Casal, *The Stone Wall*

Week Four, September 25: 1900-1920

- Film: *One Woman, One Vote*
- Evans, *Born for Liberty*, Chapter 7
- Collins, *Reforming the World from America’s Women*
- Shneer/Aviv, *Alienist and Neurologist*

Week Five, October 2: 1920-1950

- FIRST PAPER DUE
- Film: *Before Stonewall; Eyes On the Prize*
- Lawson/Payne, *To secure these rights*
- Polenberg, *NAACP and Segregation*
  - *Women in Politics*
- Shneer/Aviv, *Radclyffe Hall*
  - *Lesbian Bar Culture in the 1930s-1940s*
  - *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Kinsey)

Week Six, October 9: 1950s

- Film: *Before Stonewall; Eyes on the Prize*
- Collins, *The Fifties from America’s Women*
- Brown v. Topeka Board of Education

Week Seven, October 16: 1960s

- Film: *Freedom Riders*
- Collins, *The Sixties from America’s Women*
- Collins, *Civil Rights from When Everything Changed*
- Houck/Dixon, *Anne Braden*
- Houck/Dixon, *Ella Baker*
Week Eight, October 23: 1969

Film: Stonewall Uprising
Hirshman, Chapter 4, Stonewall Uprising
Duberman, The Stonewall Riots

Week Nine, October 30: 1970s

Film: Eyes on the Prize
Hirshman, Chapter 5, The Good Gays Fight the Four Horseman
Marable, Anatomy of Black Politics from Beyond Boundaries
Roe v. Wade

Week Ten, November 6: 1980s

SECOND PAPER DUE
Trip to Tamiment
Collins, The Eighties from When Everything Changed
Marable, Reaganism, Racism and Reaction from Beyond Boundaries

Week Eleven, November 13: 1990s

Film: The Secret to Change: Millie Jeffrey
Collins, The Nineties from When Everything Changed
Brandt, Blacks and Gays by Barbara Smith
Brandt, Blacks and Gays in Conflict by Barney Frank
Romano/Raiford, Debating the Present through the Past

Week Twelve, November 20: The Epilogue…for now

Film: After Stonewall
Collins, Epilogue from America’s Women
Collins, The New Millennium from When Everything Changed
Marable, Chapter 10 from Race, Reform, and Rebellion

Week Thirteen, December 4: Presentations

Week Fourteen, December 11: Presentations

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18: FINAL PAPER DUE
BIBLIOGRAPHY


