

Women in Art and Music at the Intersections of Science and Technology



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Janet Bloch

<http://www.janetbloch.womanmade.net/gallery.html>

Class: Thursday, 5:00-8:00 (Pretend Room), Imaginary Building
Instructor: Heidi Rademacher, email: heradema@brandeis.edu
Office Hours: Thursdays 3:00-5:00 and by appointment

Course Description:

In ancient times, scientific and technological knowledge was carried and transmitted through artistic means. Poets, musicians and artists often doubled as architects, engineers, naturalists and anatomists, and many of these dual creators were women. However, following the Industrial Revolution the arts and sciences have been separated and polarized, leaving many people believing that each agenda has no impact on the other. In this course, we will seek to deconstruct that myth. We will examine not only the diversity of ways science and technology have impacted the arts, but specifically, the ways they have intersected with art, music and gender. We seek to find what roles science and technology have played in the lives of women who create art and women who are represented through art. We will ask what biases in knowledge and technologies, that claimed to represent progress, actually promoted male artists and musicians over women in these fields. Specific topics to be considered include women's roles in functional art; art as documentation; technology and artistic resistance; reproduction and images of the body; medicalization and representation of mental illness; instrumental construction and gendered technology; and the role of the mass media in a global society. As we work together through this semester, we will become the investigators of the hidden achievements of the many women who contributed to the arts through science and the sciences through art. We will examine their impact on society and move beyond gendered resources gain a greater understanding of art and music history.

Required Readings:

The book required for this course can be purchased at the campus bookstore. To help students with the costs of textbooks, the majority of readings for this course will be available online. Additionally, copies of the texts will also be on reserve in the library. Readings for this course will amount to approximately 25-50 pages per week. Please complete the readings *on or prior to* the date listed on the syllabus.

Required Book

- Carol Neuls-Bates, Eds., Women in Music (Northeastern University Press, 1996)

Course Requirements:

4 one-page reaction papers @ 5% each =20%
 Midterm Project =20%
 Final Project =30%
 Class participation =30%

One-Page Reaction Papers:

You are required to write four one-page reaction papers throughout this term. Each essay will be a response to material presented for sections II-IX of the course. Responses are due the week immediately following the end of a section. For example, if you wish to respond to Riane Eisler's "Messages from the Past: The World of the Goddess," your essay is due no later than the beginning of class on week three. No late responses will be accepted. Your first response is due no later than week seven. However, if you like, you could be finished with all your responses by then.

Topics: You may respond to any aspect of the unit. Although you have freedom to voice your personal opinion, critique and/or relate to any part of the course materials and discussions, you must create a well-constructed response with both a thesis and contextual evidence (data, quotes, examples, descriptions, ect.)

Format: The object of these exercises is for you to create a concise response to the material presented in class. Therefore, responses must fit onto one 8.5 x 11 piece of paper. You may use any legible 11-point font, but your text must be double spaced.

Grading and Revision: If you wish, you may revise any of the one-page responses for a higher grade. You have two weeks from the date the response is returned to submit a revision.

Midterm and Final Projects: Midterm and Final projects, based on course material and/or discussions, will be described in detail several weeks before the projects are due. These projects are designed to give you a creative license to take material presented in the course and explore it in a way that is meaningful to you. Projects that have been successfully executed in the past include: artistic representations of the themes in Bessie Smith's "A Good Man is Hard to Find" (with an accompanying guide), poster presentations of how technology impacts female classical musicians, text analysis of reproduction and gendered themes in Frida Kahlo's "Henry Ford Hospital," and a power point presentation (and accompanying guide) of sex-stereotyping in jazz instruments. You will have a great deal of freedom to find a venue that best suits your interests. However, I must approve all projects one week prior to the due date.

Class Participation:

Collaborative work is an important element of this course. Therefore, participation is a significant portion (30%) of your grade. Class participation includes: 1) attendance, 2) timely completion of reading assignments, 3) thoughtful contribution to class discussions, and 4) participation in several in-class exercises.

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at the university and wish to have reasonable accommodations made for you in this class, please see me at the beginning of the term.

Week 1.

I. Introduction. As we begin this course, we first must ask, 'is there a reciprocal relationship between the arts and sciences?' If so, how do the interwoven aspects of the arts and sciences impact women's experiences as artists and musicians? How have women in the arts been challenged by science and technology and how has science and technology been used by women to their artistic advantage? At times the answer to these questions will be clear. At other times we will need to deeply examine the arts as a political tool, a social sounding board, a representation of scientific progress and a model of technology.¹

¹ The questions presented prior to each unit are designed to stimulate you and initiate reflection on the topic. While we might be able to answer some of these questions through the week's readings,

Class Exercise 1. Creation of a situational map. "The Intersections of Art, Literature, Music, Science and Technology."

Week 2.

II. Entering the Male Sphere: Comparing the Experiences of Women in the Arts and Sciences

How did women enter the male dominated realms of the arts and sciences? How were the experiences of female scientists and female artists similar? How were they different? How can women's experiences in the scientific sphere be examined as art and culture? How can women's experiences in the artistic sphere be examined as science?

- Rossiter, Margaret, "A Manly Profession" in Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies (1984): pp. 73-99. **ONLINE**
- Neuls-Bates, Carol, "Should Women Perform in the Same Orchestra with Men" in (Carol Neuls-Bates, ed.) Women in Music (1996): pp. 202-205.
- Gaze, Delia, "Guilds and the Open Market" in (Delia Gaze, ed.) Dictionary of Women Artists (1997): pp. 28-37.

Week 3.

III. The World of Antiquity: Perspectives on Representation and Production in Functional Art.

How are women represented in ancient art and music? What is the function of Neolithic art? What roles did women play in production? Explore the roles of "interpretation" and "point of view" in understanding art and music of the past.

Sappho (Ancient Greek Poet and Musician; ca. 625-570 BC)

- Eisler, Riane, "Messages from the Past: The World of the Goddess" in The Chalice & The Blade: Our History, Our Future (1987): pp. 16-28. **ONLINE**
- Rayor, Diane, "Introduction" from Sappho's Lyre: Archaic Lyric and Women Poets of Ancient Greece (1991): **ONLINE**

Week 4.

IV. The Challenges of Women at the Onset European "Fine Art." In what ways did society, anatomy, family, technology, tradition and culture limit the opportunities of women? What was considered "respectable" art and music for women to create/observe? How does this relate to scientific understandings of the time?

Sofonisba Anguissola (Italian Painter; 1532-1625)

Artemisia Gentileschi (Italian Painter; 1593-1652)

- Pendle, Karin, "Musical Women in Early Modern Europe" in Women and Music (2001): pp. 57-96. **ONLINE**
- Castiglione, Baldesar, "The Renaissance Lady" in (Carol Neuls-Bates, ed.) Women in Music (1996): pp. 37-39.

Class Exercise 2. Exploring themes of sex, gender and power through portraits and biblical illustrations.

Week 5.

V. Sexuality, Race and Gender: How Science and Technology Helped Disguise Resistance as Compliance How were women of color exploited in the name of "art" and "science?" How did women use the arts and sciences to resist inequalities? How did technology impact the Blues?... Native art?... the experiences of women of color both inside and outside artistic communities?

Saartjie "Sarah" Baartman (African slave, who's body was exploited as art, science and a sideshow attraction; 1789-1815)

Edmonia Lewis (African American Sculptor; 1845-1911)

Gertrude "Ma" Rainey (African American Blues Singer; 1886-1939)

Bessie Smith (African American Blues Singer; 1894-1937)

Marian Anderson (Opera Singer; 1908-

Betye Saar (African American Assemblage Artist; 1926-)

Faith Ringgold (African American Artist/Writer; 1930-)

Jaune Quick to See Smith (Native American painter; 1940-)

discussions and activities, the majority of these questions require extensive thought and research. We will examine all of these questions again on the final class of the semester.

- Buick, Kristen P. (1995) "The Ideal Works of Edmonia Lewis: Invoking and Inverting Autobiography". *American Art*, 9(2), pp. 5-19. **[JSTOR ARTICLE]**
- Saar, Betye & Withers, Josephine (1980) "Betye Saar: Art". *Feminist Studies*, 6(2), pp. 336-341. **[JSTOR ARTICLE]**

Week 6.

- (2002) "The Hottentot Venus is Going Home". *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 35, p. 63. **[JSTOR ARTICLE]**

Class Exercise 3. Documentary: "The Life and Times of Sara Baartman: The Hottentot Venus."
Return to the questions proposed at the beginning of the semester as you watch this film.

Week 7.

- Pendle, Karin, "American Women in Blues and Jazz" in *Women and Music* (2001): pp. 463-467. **ONLINE**
- Anderson, Marian, "An American Pioneer for Minorities" in (Carol Neuls-Bates, ed.) *Women in Music* (1996): pp. 273-277.

Class Exercise 4. Composition of 12-Bar Blues.

Week 8.**MINI PRESENTATIONS OF MIDTERM PROJECTS****Week 9.**

VI. The Body, the Spirit, the Mind How did medicalization and psychology impact women in the arts? What opportunities were available? What new challenges did women in the arts face? How did new understandings about the body impact science?...art?...music? How did biases in medical and technical knowledge impact women's artistic experiences?

Elizabeth "Tex" Williams (African American Women's Army Corp photographer; 1924-)

Frida Kahlo (Mexican painter; 1907-1954)

Cindy Sherman (American photographer; 1954-)

- Udall, Sharyn. (2003). Frida Kahlo's Mexican Body. *Women's Art Journal*, 24(2), pp. 10-14. **[JSTOR ARTICLE]**
- Skim the WAS museum website, "WWar Two"
<http://userpages.aug.com/captbarb/femvets5.html>

Week 10.

- Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange, "Body Maps: Women Navigating the Positive Experience in Africa and Canada." Retrieved from
<http://www.catie.ca/bodymaps/index.shtml>

Class Exercise 5. Body Mapping

Sign up for groups for collaborative research exercise

Week 11.

VII. Sex in the Symphony Do artistic/musical artifacts embody social values and biases in their own right? How are artifacts gendered? What challenges do gendered artifacts create for women in the arts? How can science and technology be used to create more egalitarian artistic communities?

Class Exercise 6. Collaborative Research

- Please skim the readings for your assigned group. Readings and detailed instructions on how to prepare for this exercise can be found at <http://sicw.wikispaces.com/GRSTRademacher09>
- Note: You **DO NOT** need to read all the articles.

Week 12.

VIII. The Global Media Age Today we live in a global mass media society. How is gender represented in contemporary art and music? How does advertising use art and technology? Is this harmful to women?

- Kathy Bruin, "Please Don't Feed the Models" in Bitchfest (2006). **ONLINE**
- Kimberle Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny" (1993). Retrieved from <http://www.bostonreview.net/BR16.6/crenshaw.html>

Class Exercise 7. Art, Advertising, Technology and Misogyny
Documentary: "Killing Us Softly 3: Advertising's Image of Women"

Week 13.- Break No Classes

Week 14.

IX. The New Resistance How do women continue to resist a sexist and misogynistic society through art, literature and music? How are art, literature and music used to create a more harmonious society? What roles do science and technology play in this new resistance?

Shahzia Sikander (Pakistani/American painter; 1969-)

Sandy Skoglund (American photographer, installation artist; 1946-)

Agnes Denes (American Environmental Artist;1931-)

- Green Museum, "What Is Environmental Art?" (2009). Retrieved from http://www.greenmuseum.org/what_is_ea.php
- Skim the guerillagirls' website, <http://www.guerillagirls.com/index.shtml>
- Jennifer Pozner, "How to Reclaim, Reframe and Reform the Media: A Feminist Advocacy Guide" in Bitchfest (2006). **ONLINE**

Week 15.

MINI PRESENTATIONS OF FINAL PROJECTS

Week 16.

Final Class. Concluding discussion. What have we learned? Where do we go from here?