

# Women's Lives in Letters 1830-1880

\* HIS/WST 258/458 \* Fall 2016 \* M/W \* 9-10:15 \*



## Course Description:

Using manuscript correspondence of women from upstate New York in the mid-19th century, students will explore the historical themes contained in the letters--literature and reading, the creation of epistolary selves, readership and authorship, friendship, marriage, motherhood, illness and death, child-rearing, education, spirituality and religion, medical practice, and reform, including abolitionism and women's rights, among other public and domestic themes. Reading in secondary sources will historicize the letters' content; research projects will draw on other primary sources in UR's collections. Students will each transcribe and annotate about ten letters, identifying people and places named in them, and learn text encoding in order to tag the letters for the Seward Family Archive website. We will teach and use GIS technology to map the social network that the letters illuminate.

## **The Team:**

Professor Thomas P. Slaughter, 369B Rush Rhee Library and Digital Humanities Center, office hours in DHC Thursday 11:00-noon and by appointment. <mailto:thomas.slaughter@rochester.edu>

Camden Burd, co-TEI lab instructor, TEI and Technology Manager, Seward Family Archives Digital Humanities Project.  
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Nora Dimmock, Assistant Dean for IT, Research and Digital Scholarship, River Campus Libraries, Technical Director, Seward Family Archives Project.  
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## **Evaluation:**

- 10% attendance, preparation, and participation in discussions of reading assignments. [2% of course grade deducted for each unexcused absence. 3 absences will result in a failing grade for the course]
- 10% attendance, preparation, and participation in computer labs. [2% of course grade deducted for each absence.] 3 absences will result in a failing grade for the course.
- 25% productivity and accuracy in transcriptions of manuscripts. (base = 40-50 pages transcribed and annotated; 40-50 pages markup).
- 25% completeness and accuracy in annotation of manuscripts. (base = 40-50 pages transcribed and annotated; 40-50 pages markup).
- 30% capstone project

The capstone paper will be a project within the Seward Papers that the student and Professor Slaughter will agree upon during the first month of the semester. Each student must have a one-page project proposal emailed to Professor Slaughter as a Word (doc or docx) attachment before class on October 3, which we (Professor Slaughter or Michelle Ridout) are glad to help you with; examples of proposals include: a transcription and annotation project in addition to what you are assigned for the class; four trips to the Highlands at Pittsford to assist in training volunteer transcribers (Lauren Davis will be your contact if you choose this project); a finding aid for one part of the collection; or a research paper on the relationship between two or more women or some other topic.

We strongly encourage graduate students in the course to consider using the Seward manuscripts to complete the required yearly research paper for the graduate program in history, this semester as part of the course, or next semester as an independent study.

Undergraduate students taking the "W" version of the course will write a research paper of 15-20 pages in length through at least two drafts.

A first draft of the capstone paper or written report on your project is due before class on November 30; the final draft is due on December 14.

Students are also responsible for transcribing and annotating approximately 40-50 pages of manuscript letters on the schedule included in the syllabus, and for the markup (TEI) of 40-50 pages.

The final revisions of all transcriptions, annotations, and marked-up letters must be submitted not later than before class on December 12.

**Books:** The required reading for the course includes:  
[\*available for purchase in bookstore]

Isabella L. Bird, *The Englishwoman in America*. (London, 1856)  
Chapter 1 and Chapters 5-9.

Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (NY, 1989) Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

Erika Janik, *Marketplace of the Marvelous: The Strange Origins of Modern Medicine*. (Boston, 2013) Chapter 2 and Chapter 4: [http://seward.lib.rochester.edu/sites/default/files/Marketplace\\_ch\\_4.pdf](http://seward.lib.rochester.edu/sites/default/files/Marketplace_ch_4.pdf)

John S. C. Abbot, *The Mother at Home; Or, The Principles of Maternal Duty*. (London, 1834). All

\*Platt R. Spencer, *Theory of the Spencerian System of Practical Penmanship in Nine Easy Lessons*. (1874; 1985).

Emily Dickinson, *Open me Carefully: Emily Dickinson's Intimate Letters to Susan Huntington Dickinson* Ed by Louise Hart and Martha Neil Smith. (Ashfield, 1998) Introduction and Section 1.

Ruth Goodman, *How to be a Victorian: A Dawn-to-Dusk Guide to Victorian Life*. (NY, 2014), Chapters 1 and 2: [http://seward.lib.rochester.edu/sites/default/files/how\\_to\\_be\\_victorian\\_reading.pdf](http://seward.lib.rochester.edu/sites/default/files/how_to_be_victorian_reading.pdf)

Jane Hunter, "Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late-Victorian America" *American Quarterly* 44 No. 1 (1992): 51-81

Anthony Rotundo. *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*. (NY, 1993) Chapter 5.

Rebecca Earle, ed. *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*. (Ashgate, 1999). Essays 7 and 8:

Carolyn Steedman "A Woman Writing a Letter" 111-133

Daria Donnelly "The Power to Die: Emily Dickinson's Letters of Consolation" 134-151

\*Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835*. (New Haven, 1977).

## **Syllabus:**

### **Week 1-Introduction**

August 31: Introduction; discussion of transcription and annotation. The women we will be studying; what we are doing; why we are doing it; penmanship practice. Discuss *Theory of Spencerian System...*, 1-28.

### **Week 2-Writing**

September 5: Labor Day, no class.

September 7: \*Letters 1-2 due (in Box). Meet in Seward Room, RBSC; registration and introduction to use of manuscripts. Introduction to website, tools, transcription; small groups work on one paper letter. Discuss *Theory of Spencerian System...*, 28-42, and Hunter, "Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late-Victorian America."

### **Week 3-Epistolary Selves**

September 12: Discuss Dickinson, Introduction and Section 1: Letters 1-10.

September 14: \*Letters 1-2 returned (in Box). Discuss *Epistolary Selves...*, essays 7 and 8.

### **Week 4-An Outsiders Perspective**

September 19: \*Revised Letters 1-2 due (in Box). Discuss Bird, chapter 1, chapters 5-6.

September 21: \*Letters 3-4 due (in Box). Discuss Bird, chapters 7-9. Discuss Capstone Projects.

### **Week 5-Women and Work**

Friday September 30: \*Letters 3-4 returned (in Box). Field trip to Seward House.

### **Week 6- Education**

October 3: \*One-page capstone project proposal due to Professor Slaughter before class as attachment to email.\*Revised Letters 3-4 due (in Box). Discuss Cott, chapters 1-3.

Look at letters from Sarah Hance (Frances' tutor.)

October 5: \*Letters 5-6 due (in Box). Discuss Abbot, Preface and chapters 1-3.

### **Week 7- Religion**

October 10: Discuss Abbott, chapters 4-5; Cott, chapter 4.

October 12: \*Letters 5-6 returned (in Box). Discuss Abbott, chapters 6-7.

### **Week 8-Religion cont.**

#### **October 17: Fall Break No Class**

October 19: \*Revised Letters 5-6 due (in Box). \*Letters 7-8 due (in Box). Discuss Abbot, chapter 8; Cott chapter 5 and Conclusions.

### **Week 9- Health**

October 24: Discuss Janik, chapter 2. Visit RBSC to view phrenology chart of William Henry Seward. Compare with Elizabeth B. Stanton's phrenological report.

October 26: \*Letters 7-8 returned (in Box). Discuss Janik, chapter 4. Look at letter from Sarah B. Hills to Frances discussing homeopathy.

### **Week 10- Romance and Gender**

October 31: Bagel or Donut Palooza ["an all out crazy party; partying at one place with a ton of people, like there is no tomorrow." urbandictionary.com]

\*Revised Letters 7-8 due (in Box). Discuss Lystra, Introduction and chapters 1- 2.

November 2: \*Letters 9-10 due (in Box). Discuss Lystra, chapter 5; Rotunda, chapter 5.

### **Week 11- Text Encoding**

November 7: Introduction to text encoding in oXygen.

November 9: \*Letters 9-10 returned (in Box).Text encoding in oxYgen.

### **Week 12-Text Encoding cont.**

November 14: \*Revised Letters 9-10 due (in Box). Text encoding in oXygen.

November 16: \*Letters 1-2 due in XML. Opportunity to work on text encoding and capstone project.

### **Week 14-Text Encoding cont.**

November 21: \*Letters 3-5 due in XML. Text encoding in oXygen.

November 23: Classes are still held before noon. Option of coming in to work on encoding/discuss capstone project.

### **Week 15-GIS (Geographic Information System)**

November 28- First draft of capstone project due. Learn GIS (Geographic Information System).

November 30-\*Letters 6-8 due in XML. Work on capstone revisions.

### **Week 11- Dress**

December 5: Discuss Goodman, chapter 1. Look at letter written by Julia Blatchford (Frances' dressmaker).

December 7: Discuss Goodman, chapter 2.

### **Week 16-Conclusion**

December 12: Last day of class. \*Letters 9-10 due in XML.

\*December 19: Final draft of capstone project and all work for the semester due by 9:00 A.M.

