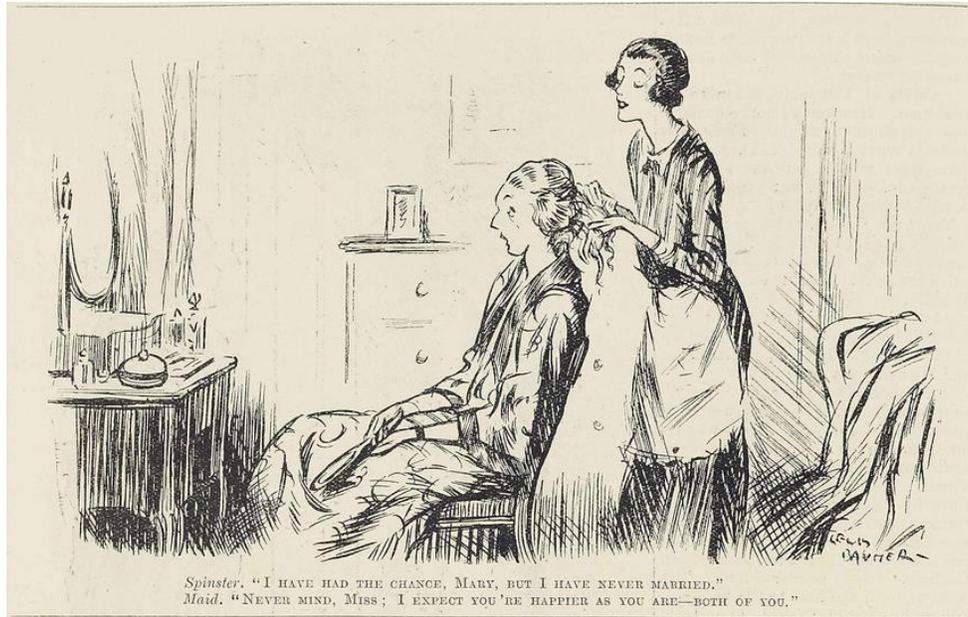


All the Single Ladies: Women at the Edge of Culture and History
Lauren Wilwerding
Tufts University Experimental College, Fall 2018
Mondays, 6-8:30PM



Baumer, "I Have Had the Chance, Mary, but I Have Never Married" *Punch* (1923)

In 2014, single Americans outnumbered those who were married (Bolick 6). How does this growing population impact our ideologies of gender, marriage, sexuality, work, education, lifecycle, and family? Are unmarried women "old maids" or bachelor girls, stodgy or on the vanguard? How has the rhetoric of singleness changed through history? And why does it matter? In this course, we will study the history of the seemingly "modern" fact of the perpetual bachelorette; single women have been challenging cultural norms for centuries. This course considers the unmarried woman at the intersections of class, sexuality, and culture from the early modern era to the present as a way of reflecting on pressing issues of the current moment including equal pay, the glass ceiling, workplace sexual misconduct, fertility, parental leave, and others.

Required Texts:

Ann Patchett, *State of Wonder*

William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*

Rebecca Traitser, *All the Single Ladies*

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

Assessment

Grading:

Studentship 30%

Assignment One 20%

Assignment Two 20%

Final Paper 30%

Studentship:

This class is participatory in nature; you are expected to participate during each session in order for you and your classmates to get the most out of the course. Participation is assessed as studentship. Your studentship grade will be a holistic assessment of your contribution to the class, an assessment of your professionalism as a student. This assessment will include:

- consistent and regular engagement with material and classmates
- consistent and thoughtful participation in class discussions and group work, including “current events” throughout the semester
- regular and punctual attendance
- arriving to class prepared (hard-copy of readings, annotated)

If participation makes you uncomfortable for any reason, I invite you to reach out to me for a conversation early in the semester and we will figure out a solution.

Current Events: Each student will be assigned to bring in a current consideration of our course themes (song, ad, television episode, newspaper article, blog post etc.) during one week of the semester and kickoff a discussion of that source.

Assignment One:

In this assignment, you will complete a short analysis of a pre-twentieth-century historical source selected from a list I provide. In this analysis, you will close read the work, thinking specifically about the way that it represents singleness. Use complete MLA formatting; no secondary sources required. Length: 3-4 pages.

Assignment Two:

Bring in a visual representation from the twentieth-century (advertisement, television episode, cartoon, material culture artifact) that deals with singleness or marital status at the intersection of class, race, or sexuality, and analyze it. How does this text represent singleness (in form and content, text and image)? What messages and values does it convey? How does this align with what we have seen so far in the course? ** It is highly recommended that you clear your chosen image with me first.** Length 3-4 pages

Final Paper:

Bring in a contemporary editorial that deals with an issue related to marital status or singleness and put it in conversation with **one** of our course texts. Does this text challenge or confirm ideas we have discussed? How? Length 7-8 pages.

Course Policies

Attendance:

Each of you will be expected to attend class regularly. **You will be allowed one absence for the semester.** More than one absence will result in failing grade for the course; remember, two absences in a class that meets once a week equates to six in a class that meets three times. You also are expected to arrive in class on time and to remain in the classroom for the entirety. If you are late, by any degree, for three classes, it will count as an absence. In case of family emergency or prolonged illness, please contact your dean.

Late work:

Meeting deadlines – and managing your time to ensure you do – are essential skills for college and the workplace. **Therefore, I do not grant extensions.** I expect all assignments to be brought to class completed on the day they are due. **Late work will result in your final grade being lowered 1/2 step (i.e. A to A-) for each day that assignment is late, beginning the day it is due.**

Electronics:

To avoid distractions and disruptions to class discussion, **all electronics, including laptops and phones, should be put away during class.** Phones should be set to silent.

Format for Written Work:

All written work should be submitted in MLA format. Purdue OWL offers a quick reference: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Plagiarism:

From the Tufts Policy on Academic Integrity (available at <https://students.tufts.edu/student-affairs/student-life-policies/academic-integrity-policy>): “Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else’s work. The word comes from a Latin word for “kidnapping,” and plagiarism is indeed the stealing of something engendered by someone else.”

—SYLVAN BARNET AND HUGO BEDAU, *Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing: A Brief Guide to Argument*, 2ND ED. BOSTON: BEDFORD, 1996.

Guidelines and resources on Academic Integrity are available at <https://students.tufts.edu/student-affairs/student-life-policies/academic-integrity-policy>. **If you have any questions about proper methods of paraphrasing and citation, please ask me at any point in the semester. Violations of academic integrity are taken very seriously at Tufts.** If you are found responsible for a violation of the policy, penalties may include “dismissal, lowered grades and/or a failure in the course.”

Reading Schedule

Week One: Who is single?

We begin the course by thinking about how the concept of singleness is defined today, looking at Kate Bolick's 2011 *Atlantic* article "All the Single Ladies" and select responses to Rebecca Traister's 2016 book of the same title, published in the Summer 2017 issue of *Signs*. Questions of definition and intersectionality will prime conversations for the rest of the semester.

Week Two: We have always been single ladies?

We turn to historical definitions and stereotypes of the unmarried woman, "shrew," or old maid, the anxieties she created, and feminist responses by reading Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and looking at Hogarth's "Married to an Old Maid" from *The Rake's Progress*.

Week Three: Why are women "redundant"?

This week, we look at responses to the 1851 British census that revealed a large population of single women, including W.R. Greg's essay "Why are Women Redundant?" and Frances Power Cobbe's response "What Shall we do with our Old Maids" as well as cartoons in *Punch* and versions of the card game "Old Maid" to consider demographic, economic, and cultural arguments about the role of single women in society.

Week Four: Working women, career girls

This week, we move across the Atlantic to consider the example of intrepid journalist Nellie Bly and her exposé "Ten Days in a Madhouse." Bly's reporting is paired with excerpts from Naan Enstaad's *Ladies of Labour, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* as we consider the social, cultural, class, and sexual representations of the emerging career woman. **Short Assignment One Due.**

Week Five: World War I, "Two Million who can Never Become Wives"

The years after World War I mark another dramatic moment in the population of single women. Excerpts from Nicholson's historical study *Singled Out*, are read alongside Kipling's short story "Mary Postgate" and Radclyffe Hall's "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself." This week provides an opportunity to compare the rhetoric used at this historical moment and the 1851 Census discussed in Week Four.

Week Six: How to be single, who can be single?

This week, we read Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own* alongside excerpts from Marjorie Hillis's conduct book for the "extra woman" *Live Alone and Like It*. What's the "right" way to be single? And is this brand of singleness available to women of all classes?

Week Seven: The Queerness of Singleness

Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* provides a venue for further thinking through the relationship between singleness and queerness. **Short Assignment Two Due.**

Week Eight: The Lifecycle of the Single Girl

We read the first half of Ann Patchett's novel *State of Wonder*, which provides a foundation for questioning how singleness has changed our concepts of fertility, lifecycle, and parenthood, both scientifically and culturally.

Week Nine: The Single Girl and Fertility

We finish *State of Wonder* and pair it with contemporary essays on fertility.

Week Ten: You're Gonna Make It After All

This week, we analyze the film *The Diary of Bridget Jones* and the pilot episodes of “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” and “Jane the Virgin” to understand the role of media in representations of the single woman as “career girl” and representations of sex and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Week Eleven: The Demographics and Economics of Dating

This week we consider the economic and demographic viewpoints with excerpts from *Date-onomics*, Barnes *Raising the Race*, Emily Witt’s recent essay on “Internet Dating” from *Future Sex*, and “Advice for the Young Women of Princeton – The Daughters I Never Had.”

Week Twelve: State of the Single Nation

Rebecca Traister’s study, *All the Single Ladies*, provides a foundation for further interrogating what it means to be single individually, professionally, politically, and relationally.

Week Thirteen: Modern Memoirs of Singleness

We conclude with selections from memoirs and stories of modern-day single women, Kate Bolick’s *Spinster*, Vivian Gornick’s *Odd Woman and the City*, and Roxanne Gay’s *Difficult Women* to reflect on how the history of singleness inflects modern ideas of gender, sexuality, and occupation, and debate the value of presentism in scholarship.

Final Paper Due at Exam Time.