Handout on *First Generations*, by Carol Berkin

The Basics

- On 3/5 we will be discussing *First Generations. Women in Colonial America*, by Carol Berkin. You should have read the entire book by that date and you should bring your copy of *First Generations* with you to class. To ensure that you have read the book by 3/5 there will be a short quiz on the book at the beginning of class. It is worth 10 points. The quiz will be open-note and open-book (but you may not use any electronic devices). If you have read the book and highlighted important parts or taken notes on it, the quiz will be easy.

- Your term paper on *First Generations* is due in Week 9, right before Spring Break. Your paper is worth 75 points and is due in my mailbox outside the division office by 4 PM on Friday 3/21. (You may turn in your paper in class on 3/19 if you want.) Late papers will not be accepted for credit.

- There are two extra credit assignments based on *First Generations*.

Reading the Book and Preparing for the Class Discussion

Use these questions to help you identify important arguments, trends, and topics as you read *First Generations*. The term paper prompts (see p. 3, below) are very broad, allowing you to focus on aspects of the book that interested you. In order to help you identify specific topics to focus on in your paper, and in order to help you organize your thoughts about women in early America, I highly recommend choosing a couple of these questions and writing outline-answers to them. After writing your outline answers, use what you have written to come up with a thesis statement for your paper.

Chapter 1: “Immigrants to Paradise: White Women in the Seventeenth-century Chesapeake”

1. How did conditions in the Chesapeake in the seventeenth century alter traditional English marriage and family structure?
2. How did the role or status of English women in the Chesapeake in the seventeenth century compare to their role or status in England at that time? What were the causes of the differences?
3. Compare the lives of English men and women in the Chesapeake in the seventeenth century.

Chapter 2: “Goodwives and Bad: New England Women in the Seventeenth Century”

4. How did Puritanism shape women’s lives in New England in the seventeenth century?
5. Why did some Puritans view Anne Hutchinson as a threat? Why were other Puritans attracted to her message?

Chapter 3: “The Sisters of Pocahontas: Native Women in the Centuries of Colonization”

6. What struck *colonial observers* as the major differences between the lives of Native American women and European women in the seventeenth century? What strike *you* as the major differences between the lives of Native American women and European women in the seventeenth century?
7. Define the terms matrilineal, matrilocal, and matriarchal. Explain how these terms reflect Native American society, as described by Berkin in Chapter 3.
Chapter 4: “In a 'Babel of Confusion': Women in the Middle Colonies”

9. What was life like in the Dutch New Netherlands? What were the consequences of the conquest of New Netherlands by the English in the later seventeenth century?

10. How did Quakerism shape women’s lives in the middle colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries?


11. How did the lives of African Americans, both free and enslaved, in the Chesapeake change over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries?

12. How did slavery differ by region in colonial America? What aspects of slave life were common to all regions of colonial America? Discuss at least two of the following regions: the Chesapeake, the Lower South, the North (= the middle colonies and New England).


13. How was colonial society transformed during the eighteenth century? How did these changes impact women’s lives?

14. How did the consumer revolution of the eighteenth century, specifically, change the lives of colonists? (For example, what new “stuff” did colonists own that they had not had before, and how did these possessions change colonists’ lives?)

15. How did the lives women of the “genteel class” differ from the lives of working-class women in the eighteenth century? In what ways were their lives similar?

Chapter 7: “Beat of Drum and Ringing of Bell’: Women in the American Revolution”

16. Describe the roles that women played in the protests and events that led up to the Revolutionary War.

17. Describe the experiences of women during the Revolutionary War.


18. According to Berkin, what conception of female citizenship arose in the early republic? Why did the Founding Fathers think it necessary to create different standards of male and female citizenship? (Make sure to explain how male and female citizenship differed.)

19. What was republican womanhood? Whom did it include? Whom did it exclude?

General

20. At the beginning of each chapter, Berkin focuses on a particular woman. Choose 2 or 3 of these women and compare their lives.

21. Drawing on First Generations, compare women’s lives in the Chesapeake and New England in the seventeenth centuries. (How were they similar? What factors account for those similarities? How did they differ? What factors account for those differences?)

22. The captivity narrative was a type of literary genre that developed in New England in the seventeenth century. Captivity narratives focused on the experiences of people (often women) who were captured by Native Americans and lived among them for a period of time. In Chapters 2 and 3 of First Generations, Berkin discusses a number of captivity narratives (those of Hannah Duston, Mary Rowlandson, and Mary Jemison). What do these narratives tell us about the relationship between colonists and Native
Americans in the seventeenth century? What do these narratives tell us about how life differed for colonial women, on the one hand, and Native American women, on the other hand?

23. Compare and contrast the lives of Puritan women and Quaker women in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

24. Discuss some of the most important ways that the lives of colonists in the eighteenth century differed from the lives of colonists in the seventeenth century.

25. How revolutionary was the American Revolution for women?

The Term Paper on *First Generations*

In a paper of 1,800–2,200 words, respond to one of the following prompts:

1. How did race/ethnicity, religion, geography, and/or social class shape women’s lives in early America?

2. How did the lives of men and women differ in early America?

3. What challenges do historians who are interested in women’s history face in trying to reconstruct the lives of early American women? How have historians dealt with these challenges?

Your paper should be based on *First Generations*. In addition, however, you must also use at least two of the sources from Weeks 2–6 to support your argument.¹

Your paper should be 1,800–2,200 words long, excluding references. Your paper should be typed in Times New Roman 12 pt font and be 1.5 or double-spaced. These parameters should yield a paper of around 6–7 pages.

Your paper must be in my hands or in my box outside the Social Sciences division office (in the 1000 building) by 4 PM on Friday 3/21. I will not accept electronically submitted papers or late papers.

Writing Your Term Paper

- **Your paper should have a thesis statement.** A thesis statement is a main argument. You should support that thesis in the body paragraphs of your paper by discussing specific arguments, people, events, and statistics in *First Generations* and your two sources.
  - A thesis statement is *not* merely a restatement of the writing prompt.
    - For example, this is not a thesis statement: Race, religion, and social class shaped women’s lives in many ways in early America.
    - Why not? It is vague and is a statement, rather than an argument.

¹ For example, if you were discussing Puritan women, you could use Cotton Mather’s *Wonders of the Invisible World*, on the Salem witch trials. If discussing marriage in the eighteenth century, you could use evidence from the memoir of Abigail Abbot Bailey to support your argument. If discussing gender-identity among Native Americans, you could tie in the article by Albert Hurtado on California’s missions. If discussing the challenges faced by non-white women in colonial America you could discuss the sources pertaining to freedwoman Phillis Wheatley. (These are just a few examples. You are free to choose whichever of the sources from Weeks 2–6 you think best help you to make your argument!)
Instead try this: The degree of control a woman in early America had over her own life was intricately linked both to her race and to where and when she lived. White women in the Chesapeake tended to have more independence, both within and outside of marriage, than women in New England in the seventeenth century, but this difference decreased in the eighteenth century. However, in early America all white women had much more freedom than enslaved African American women, who could not even legally marry, but they generally had much less freedom than Native American women, whose position within marriage was equal to that of Native American men.

In the above example the first sentence is the thesis statement. The subsequent sentences indicate what specific topics the student will be focusing on in the body paragraphs of the paper.

I strongly suggest you run your thesis statement by me before writing your paper.

How to go about constructing a thesis statement? I recommend answering a couple of the reading questions that most interested you and then seeing if you can construct a thesis statement based on your answers to those questions.

Your paper should demonstrate to me that you have read the entire book – you should choose your examples from First Generations accordingly.

Your paper must be stapled and the pages must be numbered.

With regard to writing style and providing page references, adhere to your Guidelines for Written Work. In addition:

Note that double quotes “” are used when quoting a source (like Berkin). If your quote contains both the words of Berkin and a source that she is quoting, use single quotes ‘’ inside the double quotes. For example:

Berkin argues that, during the early republic, women “molded a revolutionary role for themselves by placing ‘the mother, not the masses … as the custodian of civic morality’” (First Generations, p. 202).

If your quote is longer than three lines, you should set it off from the rest of your paragraph by indenting as, for example, Berkin does on p. 96 of First Generations.

But use long quotes sparingly! The bulk of the paper should be your ideas, not quotes.

Proper references help me to check the validity of your arguments and are therefore crucial. If you are using an e-version of First Generations, you need to make sure that the page numbers are the same as those in the actual book. I therefore recommend writing a draft of your paper and then going to the NVC library and comparing your page references to those in the copy of First Generations on reserve at the front desk, in order to ensure that the page numbers match up.

The term paper is worth 15% of your grade. I therefore expect you to produce a polished, error-free piece of writing. Poor grammar, spelling mistakes, and other errors will lower your grade. You should therefore do one or more of the following:

Print out a draft of your paper and go over it with a pen or pencil. (It is easier to catch mistakes on a paper copy than on a computer screen.)

Get a friend or relative who has good writing skills to read over your paper.

Meet with me to go over your paper.
Extra Credit Assignments

EC Assignment #1 on First Generations (worth up to 10 points; due 3/5): Choose up to two of the reading questions (on pp. 1–3) to answer. Each answer is worth 5 points. Each answer should be 1.5 pages typed (in 12 pt Times New Roman font and 1.5 spaced) or 3 pages handwritten (and double-spaced).

EC Assignment #2 on First Generations (5 points; good through 3/19): Bring a draft or outline of your paper to my office hour to discuss with me. We can discuss any difficulties you are having with the assignment and I can give you feedback on what you need to do to get the grade you want on the paper. *This is an EC assignment whose benefits are far greater than its point-value* – it is an opportunity to hear from me what works in your paper and what needs work. Depending on the completeness of your draft or outline you can earn up to 5 points of extra credit. If you cannot make my office hours, talk to me so that we can arrange another time to meet. For this extra credit assignment I highly recommend that you schedule a time to meet with me during my office hour (or at another time), rather than just showing up.

- Visit the NVC Writing Center ([http://www.napavalley.edu/Academics/WritingCenter/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.napavalley.edu/Academics/WritingCenter/Pages/default.aspx)). They offer free writing consultations.
  - Papers that are shorter than 1,800 words long will not earn passing grades.
  - Please do not waste my time and yours by plagiarizing any part of your term paper.