A Workshop for Educators

Restoring Women to World Studies

A Document-Based Question Curriculum Unit for Grades 9–12

Hemispheres
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Welcome!

In much of the social studies—especially courses focused on world history, geography, and culture—there has been a long-standing awareness that the experience of women has been left out of the narrative. Recent changes in state, national, and Advanced Placement educational standards have sought to remedy this omission by calling for the inclusion of women's studies in the social studies curriculum. However, the most widely available resources tend to focus on the experience of women in Western Europe and North America. Restoring Women to World Studies: A Document-Based Question Curriculum Unit for Grades 9–12 seeks to address these new requirements and the current regional bias in available resources. The unit is based on the 2007 Hemispheres Summer Teachers’ Institute Restoring Women to World Studies. That four-day workshop explored the situation of women—historical and contemporary—in Latin America, the Middle East, Russia, East Europe and Eurasia, and South Asia. The training sessions discussed the contributions of notable women to historical and artistic movements, talked about concepts of gender roles and gendered spaces, looked at issues that are driving women's movements today, and examined the greater context in which all of these take place.

In this unit, we have sought to address the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and National Geography Standards that explicitly deal with gender roles and social structures but also standards that address citizenship, processes of historical change, social movements and cultural differences. In addition, this unit draws on primary source readings and images to strengthen students' skills in working with primary source materials. Each case study is laid out in a Document-Based Question (DBQ) format so that students can cite, interpret, and evaluate sources; consider point of view; and use historical evidence to develop and support a thesis.

The unit begins with a PowerPoint that introduces the notion of gender as a key social category and patriarchy as an important organizing structure in many societies and cultures. The unit then examines these concepts within case studies from the four regions. Each case study is meant to encourage students to address questions about gender roles in the different societies, either in a particular historical moment or how they evolve over time. In addition to responding to each case study, students can analyze and compare the different primary source documents within the case studies by considering the following questions and their answers:

• How do women in patriarchal societies experience gender norms and ideals?
• How do women in patriarchal societies create change within the established order of society?

It is our hope that, with Restoring Women to World Studies, students will be able to better appreciate how gender functions within different societies at different times; understand how it both shapes individual lives and offers individuals opportunities to shape society; see similarities in women's experiences as well as differences; and appreciate that experiences of gender are influenced by other categories of identity (class, race, ethnicity, etc.) and are not frozen or merely restrictive but changing and challenged by women who respond to traditional understandings of gender roles and hierarchies.

We welcome feedback and comments on the unit and your experience using it in the classroom. Please do not hesitate to contact us at hemispheres@austin.utexas.edu.
This Curriculum Unit Address The Following Standards in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS):

113.22 (Social Studies Grade 6)

(1) History. The student understands that historical events influence contemporary events. The student is expected to: (B) analyze the historical background of selected contemporary societies to evaluate relationships between past conflicts and current conditions.

(2) History. The student understands the contributions of individuals and groups from various cultures to selected historical and contemporary societies. The student is expected to: (A) explain the significance of individuals or groups from selected societies, past and present.

(13) Citizenship. The student understands that the nature of citizenship varies among societies. The student is expected to: (A) describe roles and responsibilities of citizens in selected contemporary societies including the United States; (B) explain how opportunities for citizens to participate in and influence the political process vary among selected contemporary societies; and (C) compare the role of citizens in the United States with the role of citizens from selected democratic and nondemocratic contemporary societies.

(15) Culture. The student understands the similarities and differences within and among cultures in different societies. The student is expected to: (C) analyze the similarities and differences among selected world societies.

(18) Culture. The student understands the relationship that exists between artistic, creative, and literary expressions and the societies that produce them. The student is expected to: (A) explain the relationships that exist between societies and their architecture, art, music, and literature; (C) describe ways in which societal issues influence creative expressions.

113.33 (World History Studies)

(1) History. The student understands traditional historical points of reference in world history. The student is expected to: (A) identify the major eras in world history and describe their defining characteristics; (C) apply absolute and relative chronology through the sequencing of significant individuals, events, and time periods.

(17) Citizenship. The student understands the significance of political choices and decisions made by individuals, groups, and nations throughout history. The student is expected to: (A) evaluate political choices and decisions that individuals, groups, and nations have made in the past, taking into account historical context, and apply this knowledge to the analysis of choices and decisions faced by contemporary societies; and (B) describe the different roles of citizens and noncitizens in historical cultures, especially as the roles pertain to civic participation.

(18) Citizenship. The student understands the historical development of significant legal and political concepts, including ideas about rights, republicanism, constitutionalism, and democracy. The student is expected to: (C) identify examples of political, economic, and social oppression and violations of human rights throughout history, including slavery, the Holocaust, other examples of genocide, and politically-motivated mass murders in Cambodia, China, and the Soviet Union; (D) assess the degree to which human rights and democratic ideals and practices have been advanced throughout the world during the 20th century.

(20) Culture. The student understands the relationship between the arts and the times during which they were created. The student is expected to: (B) analyze examples of how art, architecture, literature, music, and drama reflect the history of cultures in which they are produced.
Standards Alignment

(21) Culture. The student understands the roles of women, children, and families in different historical cultures. The student is expected to: (A) analyze the specific roles of women, children, and families in different historical cultures; and (B) describe the political, economic, and cultural influence of women in different historical cultures.

This Curriculum Unit Addresses the Following Theme
in the Course Description for Advanced Placement World History

4. Systems of social structure and gender structure (comparing major features within and among societies, and assessing change and continuity)

What students are expected to know:
• **Foundations, 8000 BCE–600 CE:** Classical civilizations: social and gender structures
• **1450-1750:** Gender and empire (including the role of women in households and in politics)
• **1750-1914:** Changes in social and gender structure (tension between work patterns and ideas about gender). Major comparisons: Compare the roles and conditions of women in the upper/middle classes with peasantry/working class in western Europe.
• **1914-present:** Social reform and social revolution (changing gender roles; family structures; rise of feminism)
Brazil

Black Women’s Work and Social Progress in Brazil
Sugar plantations, which require tremendous amounts of labor, arose early in the Portuguese colony of Brazil. With the plantation system came the labor force upon which Brazil’s economy was based: slavery. From 1530–1850, approximately 4,000,000 slaves were brought from Africa to work in Brazil. With the slave system, Brazil’s social classes were established: masses of black slaves and, eventually, poor free workers were ruled by a few elite, white families who controlled the economy, politics, and culture of the country.

Throughout the slave trade years, Brazilian colonists were able to count on a constant and ample supply of fresh labor from Africa, and so were not focused on increasing the slave population through reproduction. Also, since the men were stronger and able to serve in more jobs than women, little effort was made to balance the sexes among the slaves: 3–5 times more men were imported than women. The female slaves who did arrive in Brazil were given very different duties than were the men. Women cooked in plantation kitchens, served as wet-nurses and babysitters for the masters’ children, worked as domestic servants in city homes, and sold food on the streets to earn extra money. Female slaves, who tended to live in greater intimacy with the master and his family, were granted freedom twice as often as were men. Once freed, these women continued to work in the public sphere as laundresses, maids, cooks, or street vendors.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the majority of working women were employed as domestic servants, seamstresses, and street vendors—the types of jobs held by lower class, black women. At the dawn of the twentieth century, when elite women were advocating for women’s education, lower class women began to fight to get their needs met by taking an active role in workers’ strikes for fair wages and safe working conditions. While suffrage, granted to women in 1932, did not change much for working class women (who still could not vote because they were not literate), their struggles for social and political rights offered them an avenue for organization and leadership. During the 1940s, poor women began to form women's unions to elevate their educational, professional, and economic status; unions offered literacy courses for low-income women. Women also took leadership roles in the fight for housing. In Brazil, people in the lowest classes had been squatting on unused land for decades; after seizing land in “invasions,” they built their modest houses with scrap materials. In the late 1940s, police were entering squatter districts and destroying people’s homes; women confronted the police to save their homes. As a result, women moved into powerful roles in the land-squatters' unions.

Black women also gained important leadership positions in social and religious circles. Candomblé, a religion centered in the northeastern city of Salvador da Bahia, is a syncretic religion, which means that it combines elements from two religious traditions—in this case, Yoruba traditions from West Africa and Catholicism. In Salvador, women are in the most powerful roles in Candomblé: they serve as the mãe-de-santo (“mother of the saint,” or high priestess) of their communities. Candomblé does not have a leadership structure higher than the individual community/church (no bishops or popes), so each mãe-de-santo oversees her own community and has complete authority within the community. Women's leadership in Candomblé goes back to slave times, when slave women had considerably more freedom of movement than did the men. This allowed them to carry on religious traditions that they had brought with them from Africa, and also to pay for religious ceremonies with money earned from outside work. Even after abolition, many households were headed by women who supported their families with their own wages. Black Brazilian women have always been self-reliant economically and this self-reliance, in combination with women’s position in Candomblé, has given black women a great amount of religious and social authority.

Currently, more than 70 percent of women in the labor force are employed by the services sector; of these, most are employed as domestic servants and many are employed outside of the formal economy (they are paid under the table, usually with substandard wages). These jobs are still done, overwhelmingly, by black women. As middle-class and elite women have entered the work force on a more regular basis, they continue to rely on poor women to cook for them, clean their homes, and care for their children. In many ways, the work of black Brazilian women has changed very little since slavery. Despite their meager incomes, however, black women have achieved leadership roles in their families, churches, and communities. The work may be humble, but black women’s achievements in Brazil are noteworthy.
Source 1: French painter Jean-Baptiste Debret’s “Between them, sellers and buyers constituted their own clientele,” early 19th century

Comprehension Exercises:
1. Describe what is happening in each image. What are the differences? What are the similarities?
2. Based on these images, how do you think black women’s lives in Brazil have changed over time? Explain your answer citing evidence from the images and from background information that has been presented.
**Source 3: Firsthand account of laundress work in the 1950s, recounted in 1988**

Since Brazil's early colonial days, black women—first as slaves and then as free workers—hand-washed the clothes of the rich using rivers and lakes to complete their task. Because of technological advancements, the profession declined, but washerwomen performed an essential role in Brazilian society until late into the twentieth century.

[Auntie] washed clothes and ironed them for a living, and we helped her with that work, and that's how we got by. She used a heavy old iron with a lid that opened and that you filled up with burning charcoal. It was hard work, and your arms would ache dragging that iron across men's shirts and pants and women's dresses. You had to be very careful not to burn a hole or to rip anything, or the patroa would really give it to [Auntie]. Sometimes Tonieta and I would dry the clothes by hanging them on barbed wire, and it would leave a tiny hole in a shirt, or some rust would come off onto a white blouse. We would get walloped by Auntie whenever that happened! We had to starch and iron little girls' underpants with lace trim and crochet on them, while we were often naked under our skirts! Tonieta would sometimes try the little lace clothes on herself, but I would laugh at the children who had to be dressed like that—God deliver me!


**Source 4: Excerpt from popular musician Lenine's song, “Lavadeira do Rio” (Washerwoman of the River), 2001**

Ah! Lavadeira do rio  
Muito lençol pra lavar  
Fica faltando uma saia  
Quando o sabão se acabar  
Mas corra pra beira da praia  
Veja a espuma brilhar  
Ouça o barulho bravio  
Das ondas que batem na beira do mar  
Ê, ô, o vento soprou  
Ê, ô, a folha caiu

Ah! Washerwoman of the river  
Many sheets to wash  
One more skirt to go  
When the soap runs out  
But she runs to the water's edge  
And sees the surf shine  
She hears the wild racket  
Of the waves that beat the shore  
Ah, oh, the wind blew  
Ah, oh, the leaf fell

Source 5: Contemporary photos of lavadeiras (laundresses) at work


Comprehension Exercises:
3. Compare the song lyrics to the firsthand account and images. Does the reality fit the description conveyed by the songwriter?
4. How much do you think the life of a washerwoman has changed over the centuries? Explain your answer using the documents and background information provided.
They had kept going all night and, at dawn, women in white lace and cotton were still chanting and moving in a slow dance. The men, crouched on the temple floor, tapped a soft and sad rhythm on hollow gourds. But the drums remained silent.

In the temple of Alto do Gantois and throughout this most African of Brazilian cities, mourning has continued for weeks over the death of a 92-year-old priestess, by some accounts the most revered woman in Brazil. The secret death rites, offerings and nightly gatherings are for “Mother Menininha,” the leading figure of this country’s version of African spiritism, known as Candomblé.

Such was the prestige and following of Maria Escolástica da Conceição Nazaré—her official name—that when she died on Aug. 13, the Mayor of Salvador declared three days of mourning. Two Cabinet ministers, the state governor and city officials attended the wake and tens of thousands watched as her coffin rode on a fire engine through the streets.

“She was the last of the old, very respected priestesses,” said Pierre Verger, a specialist in West African and Afro-Brazilian culture. “With her, a whole generation has gone.” …

Brazil’s own version of the faith of the Yoruba people, like Haiti’s voodoo, arrived on the slave ships from the region that is now Nigeria and Benin. Its rites and liturgy changed here, but survived, particularly along the coast of Bahia State, where tens of thousands of slaves were put to work on enormous sugar and tobacco fields.

Feared and branded as devil worship, the ceremonies, dances, possessions and animal sacrifices were outlawed and their practitioners persecuted for almost four centuries. Police harassment of cults continued until two decades ago.

Some older residents who remember those harsh times said Mother Menininha played a key role in persuading authorities to stop the police raids and the smashing of ritual objects. “Menininha always said the police are welcome, but only as our guests,” said Camafeu do Oxossi, a 71-year-old musician and lifelong friend. “So she invited the authorities for meals and began to cure their sicknesses.” Now, he added, “like everyone else, many politicians and police ask for advice when they have troubles or look for success.”

To many people here, the presence of senior Government officials at the priestess’s funeral epitomized the dramatic change of attitude toward the cults and a recognition of their growing following. Candomblé and Umbanda, an offshoot, have grown quickly in recent years among black and white, poor and rich....
For women, there is an additional appeal. In contrast to mainstream Roman Catholicism, where the priestly role is reserved for men, either sex can “summon the spirits” and conduct cult ceremonies. “Women founded the oldest and most important cult houses,” Mr. Verger said.


**Comprehension Exercises:**

5. Which details in the article show that Mother Menininha was an important figure? Which details explain why she was important?

6. How does this article contrast with the image of black Brazilian women that was presented in the other documents? Does this contrast surprise you? Explain your answer using the documents and background information provided.
Additional Resources (all available from the LLILAS Outreach Lending Library):


About Hemispheres

Created in 1996, Hemispheres is the international outreach consortium at the University of Texas at Austin. Hemispheres utilizes University resources to promote and assist with world studies education for K–12 and postsecondary schools, businesses, civic and non-profit organizations, the media, governmental agencies, and the general public.

Comprised of UT’s four federally funded National Resource Centers (NRCs) dedicated to the study and teaching of Latin America; the Middle East; Russia, East Europe & Eurasia; and South Asia, Hemispheres offers a variety of free and low-cost services to these groups and more. Each center coordinates its own outreach programming, including management of its lending library, speakers bureau, public lectures, and conferences, all of which are reinforced by collaborative promotion of our resources to an ever-widening audience in the educational community and beyond.

Hemispheres fulfills its mission through: coordination of pre-service and in-service training and resource workshops for educators; promotion of outreach resources and activities via exhibits at appropriate state- and nation-wide educator conferences; participation in public outreach events as organized by the consortium as well as by other organizations; and consultation on appropriate methods for implementing world studies content in school, business, and community initiatives.

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