Restoring Women to World Studies

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

Natalie Arsenault, Outreach Director
Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies

Christopher Rose, Assistant Director
Center for Middle Eastern Studies

Allegra Azulay, Outreach Coordinator
Center for Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies

Rachel Meyer, Outreach Coordinator
South Asia Institute

Hemispheres
The International Outreach Consortium at the University of Texas at Austin

http://www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/hemispheres/
hemispheres@austin.utexas.edu
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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.
Standards Alignment

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)
Yugoslavia

Women in Black—Belgrade: Making Their Silence Heard
Dressed in black and holding signs, the Women in Black call attention to their causes: the end of injustice, war, and violence. What is different about this protest is that there is no chanting of slogans, no shouting to make themselves heard. The women stand in silence, and yet their message is clear. Women in Black is an international movement which began in 1988 in Israel to protest the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. A group of women chose a busy traffic intersection and arrived at the same time every day, wearing black and holding signs saying “Stop the Occupation.” Their silent persistence caught the attention of the media and, as word spread, other women took up the cause. Since that time, groups have sprung up around the world, some in support of the original protest and many to confront their own regional conflicts.

The Women in Black movement in Yugoslavia began in Belgrade in 1991 under the rule of Slobodan Milošević. Milošević’s attempts to strengthen Serbian majority rule of the multi-ethnic Yugoslavia led instead to its breakup along ethnic lines. As Croatians vied for independence from Yugoslavia, Serbs within Croatia struggled to keep their territory part of Serbia and a bitter civil war began, spreading throughout the Balkans as Macedonia and then Bosnia and Herzegovina declared their own independence. It was at this time that Serbian women in the capital city of Belgrade began to gather in silent vigil. Every Wednesday women would assemble on Republic Square to protest for demilitarization and an end to the conflict. They supported the cause of conscientious objectors who did not want to fight in a war in which they did not believe, and they organized humanitarian aid for refugees.

In 1995, a massacre provoked even more protests. In the town of Srebrenica, considered a “safe haven” for Bosnian refugees, thousands of Bosniak men and boys were killed by the Serbian military. News of that event was suppressed and denied by the Serbian government. But Women in Black–Belgrade took to the streets regularly to bring attention to the atrocity and to protest the action as “Not in Our Name.” A decade later, in 2005, a videotape exposed the truth and challenged the government’s denials.

Although Women in Black always plan peaceful and silent protests, they still create controversy and arouse anger in their opponents. Serb nationalists consider that Serbians should not promote the independence or rights of any other nationality. Members of Women in Black are often harassed by observers in the street, and their organization has repeatedly been investigated by the police on trumped up charges. The founder of Women in Black–Belgrade was accused of running a prostitution ring, which prompted further police investigations. When Women in Black–Belgrade took a stand to support Kosovo’s bid for independence, the Belgrade daily newspaper Kurir declared that they faced jail time for treason against the constitution.

Despite the difficulties that members face at home, international organizations recognize and praise the consistent efforts of these protesters. In 2000, the global organization of Women in Black was among the recipients of the UN’s Millennium Peace Prize for Women, and the founder of the Belgrade chapter, Staša Zajović, accepted on their behalf. Staša Zajović herself has been nominated for many awards for her untiring work. In 2005, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize as part of the 1,000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize campaign. She has twice been nominated for “Person of the Year” by Danas Newspaper in Belgrade, and she is a member of the Advisory Group of UNIFEM, the United Nations agency for women.

Women in Black–Belgrade, along with Women in Black chapters around the world, continue to provide a forum where women can bring their message to the public through non-violent means, and to confront injustice wherever they find it.
Women in Black—Belgrade

Source 1: Photographs of Women in Black protests in Belgrade


Source 2: Excerpts from a Declaration by Women in Black–Belgrade, on the fifth anniversary of their weekly gatherings to protest the war, October 1996

We know that despair and pain need to be changed into political action. With our bodies, we declare our bitterness and hostility against all those who want and wage war. During the gatherings, we remain silent, sometimes whispering encouragement and support to each other when passers by insult us or anger us. We have continued in this way every Wednesday, carrying placards and distributing tracts. Our numbers at these gatherings have varied from few to many, with different women coming to them. Each woman, alone, individually, would not have been able to last it out. Together we have persevered.

We have not stopped the war, but neither have we given in to powerlessness and resignation.


Source 3: Lepa Mladjenovic, 50, a counselor for female victims of male violence and a member of Women in Black–Belgrade, explains the “infuriating silent technique” of the vigils, 2005.

It is a very loud silence...It mocks the silence that is imposed on women. And because our silence is so loud, it is a rebellion against the way that women are politically and socially silenced.

**Comprehension Exercises:**

1. Describe the appearance of the women in Source 1. Can you tell anything about their social status or occupations?
2. In your own words, restate why the Women in Black protest the way that they do (Sources 2 and 3). Does their approach seem reasonable to you? Why or why not?
3. How do you think that silent protests are received by the general public? In your opinion, is this method effective? Explain your answer citing the sources.
4. Why would opponents to Women in Black accuse them of running a prostitution ring? How do the accusations against Women in Black conflict with the way they present themselves in these documents?
Source 4: Newspaper article describing the vigil to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, 2005

The Women in Black protest “Lest We Forget” in Belgrade’s Republic square last night, commemorating the 10th anniversary of the crime against the Srebrenica Bosniaks, was disrupted briefly when a tear-gas canister was tossed into a group of non-governmental organization activists. The tear-gas was thrown by extremists who had first been chanting “Knife, wire, Srebrenica” [the words rhyming in Serbian] and “Nataša Kandić is a whore”. The police, who had three cordons protecting the rally, took into custody nine youths with shaved heads. The rally was attended by NGO activists from Italy, Israel, the United States, Germany and Serbia, including Nataša Kandić of the Humanitarian Law Centre, Sonja Biserko of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Biljana Kovačević-Vuco of the Yugoslav Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, and Borka Pavičević of the Centre for Cultural Decontamination.

“Suzavab na Srebrenicu (Tear-gas against Srebrenica),” Danas, July 11, 2005, 1.

Source 5: Personal report by members of Women in Black–Denmark, who took part in the vigil commemorating the Srebrenica massacre, 2005

Belgrade: SREBRENICA 1995–2005 “Never Again” in seven different languages. We just came back from the great vigil for the 10th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica organized by Women in Black. About 200 activists were standing in silence from across Serbia, Italy, Germany, USA, as well as supporters from various other countries. We formed a semi-circle on the main square in Belgrade with messages “Let us not forget”, “Ten years since the genocide in Srebrenica”, “Women in Black for Peace and Human Rights” and made a peace sign on the ground with candles, and “Never Again” in seven different languages. After around 20 minutes, about 25 nationalist neo-Nazi counter-protesters began shouting “Knife, Wire, Srebrenica”, “Serbia for Serbs”, with gestures ‘Hail Hitler’, insulting us. At one moment someone threw a tear gas bomb into the center of our circle, which exploded and the gas blew towards one side of the circle of demonstrators. While the activists on the other side continued standing, those toward which smoke blew were forced to move back and ran towards the theater, followed by the counter-protestors. Within 10 minutes, special police forces arrived in order to protect us. As our activists who had to run came back and reformed the semi-circle, the whole time counter-protestors continued to provoke. The vigil ended by laying down the white roses on the square’s monument by the side of the banner “Let us not forget—Srebrenica—1995–2005—Women in Black”. As we prepared to leave, the counter-protestors were shouting, “There will be a reprise”, “No one can save you”, and “We know where you live”. One group of the activists were accompanied by police back to the Women in Black office, guarded by the police all night.

In Solidarity, Tamara Belenzada and Dana Johnson, Women in Black

Source 6: Description of the 2005 rally from the Web site of “Blood and Honor Serbia,” a militant Serbian nationalist organization

The 10th anniversary of the alleged massacre in Srebrenica has been marked by the lesbo-pacifist organization “Zene u Crnom” (or, “Women in Black” in Serbian) that organized a demonstration at Belgrade’s Square of the Republic. This shameful spectacle honored the Muslim “victims” who died during battles for the liberation of that Serbian city. In addition to its exaggeration of the number of Muslim victims, the mentioned pro-Zionist organization directly participates in this organized anti-Serb campaign. Around 50 Serbian patriots gathered to protest this shameful demonstration. Aside from yelling patriotic slogans and general disagreement, Combat 18 [a paramilitary group] “greeted” this gathering by throwing tear gas at degenerates. Although the demonstration was stopped, the members of the ZOG [Zionist Occupied Government] police who had a significant presence made sure that the demonstration would last until its end, and arrested several patriots for no reason.


Source 7: Mahatma Gandhi, famed Indian civil rights leader, on non-violent protest, 1936

Non-violent resistance implies the very opposite of weakness. Defiance combined with non-retaliatory acceptance of repression from one’s opponents is active, not passive. It requires strength, and there is nothing automatic or intuitive about the resoluteness required for using non-violent methods in political struggle and the quest for Truth.

Comprehension Exercises:
5. How do the reports of the Srebrenica commemoration (Sources 4, 5, 6) differ? Which report do you think is the most accurate? Most neutral? Or do you think that each report reflects an aspect of the rally? Explain your answer citing the documents.
6. Review the photos in Source 1. How do statements from Source 6 compare and/or contrast with these images? Explain your answer citing the sources.
7. To what extent do the different groups at the Srebrenica commemoration reflect Gandhi’s approach to protest? According to Gandhi, which group has the harder task: the Women in Black or Blood and Honor Serbia? Explain your answer citing the documents.
Source 8: Description of the relationship between Serbian members of Women in Black and Bosnian widows, 2008

Belgrade, Serbia: More than 30 people from the Women in Black Network from Serbia traveled to Srebrenica last week to mark the 13th anniversary of the brutal 1995 massacre committed by their countrymen.

Holding signs which said “Solidarity” and “Never Forget Srebrenica,” Women in Black joined the Women of Srebrenica Civic Association of Tuzla and more than 40,000 others to mourn the 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys killed and to rebury 307 recently-identified victims.

Janet Rabin, an Advocacy Project Peace Fellow volunteering with Women in Black this summer, traveled with the group to Potočari, Bosnia, for the ceremony and was struck by the warm relationship between the Serbian and Bosnian women. These friendships, and Women in Black's efforts, are building blocks of trust and bold first steps toward reconciliation in a region deeply scarred by ethnic conflict.

“These two groups have been working together, and mourning together, for years,” Ms Rabin said. “In the midst of so much tragedy I could not comprehend, the small gestures of kindness and friendship between these women was a glimpse of something familiar, and more importantly, something hopeful.”


One of Women in Black’s main philosophies and practices is “Confronting the Past—A Feminist Approach.” I got another first-hand lesson about what this means a few weeks ago. A day after the world learned that Radovan Karadžić had been apprehended, I got on a bus with the Women in Black to go to Prijedor, a region in the northwestern part of Bosnia, in Republika Srpska. We were going to a memorial service for the victims of an “unrecognized genocide.”

While we were there, we stayed with a Bosnian Women's association. They had first come together as a mutual assistance organization when they were living as refugees in Croatia. When the women returned home, they continued their service to the community. After the memorial service, when we returned soaking wet, our hosts gave us warm, dry sweaters and stockings to change into. As we drank some of the most delicious Turkish-style coffee I've ever had, the women talked. As usual, I understood only a tiny percentage of what was being said; but I could tell that the Bosnian women were talking, and the Serbian women were listening. As our hosts’ eyes filled with tears, I knew that they were talking about their lost friends and relatives, whose pictures adorned the walls of the dining room across the hall. I was witnessing the feminist approach to confronting the past in action.

To me this is the most important aspect of Women in Black’s activism. They condemn all war crimes committed by everyone. And they do it not only through political actions and publications, but also on a personal, relational level. It is no longer a division between nations or ethnicities, but a division between people who desire peace, and those who have sought to destroy it. A division between civilians, women, children, elderly people—and those who persecuted them. I see this as a much more reasonable way of categorizing people. This is not the sort of relativization that leads to saying “Well, all sides committed atrocities, so what can be done about it?” And it is equally not the sort of logic of victimization that ascribes all the guilt to the others. A civilian is a civilian, not a Serb, Croat, or Bosniak. People are made innocent or guilty by their actions, not their ethnicity. Embodying this and living it on a personal level, as the Women in Black and their partners in the Balkans do, is one of the hardest and also one of the most critical steps toward reconciliation and peace.

Bosnian and Serbian Friendship
After all that Massacre in Srebrenica, the Mothers of Srebrenica have no hate for Serbian Women, they are still FRIENDS and they support each other in this Tragedy! Biliana


Source 11: American Civil Rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr. on non-violent protest, 1964

Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon which cuts without wounding and ennobles the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals.

Comprehension Exercises:
8. What do you think Martin Luther King, Jr. is trying to say about non-violent protest? How is it both a weapon and also a source of healing? How does his statement relate to Source 10?
9. How are the actions of members of Women in Black affecting the relationship between Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia? Explain your answer citing the documents.
10. Discuss the statement “People are made innocent or guilty by their actions, not their ethnicity” in Source 9. Use the documents from this case study to support your response.
Additional Resources


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.

For more information, visit the Hemispheres Web site at: http://www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/hemispheres/ or e-mail: hemispheres@austin.utexas.edu