

## *Second Wave Feminism: Expanding Freedom in America*

### Unit Rationale:

The Second Wave of Feminism in America has profoundly changed the social landscape of the last 40 years. The women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s gives rise to key questions regarding the nature of discrimination, gender equity, and the definition of freedom. Recent political, social, and demographic changes cast Second Wave Feminism in an intriguing light that will open up significant debate topics concerning what causes social change in America and the effectiveness of a group movement.

I teach the history component of a sophomore-level American Studies course (a group of diverse learners, including special needs and ELL students) at Wausau East High School, where a unit based on Second Wave Feminism will dovetail well with the theme of the course: The American Dream. Throughout the course we examine ways the American Dream has been redefined and expanded throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century—so gains made by Feminists from the 1960s-on will fit in well with other topics studied.

This topic presents a great opportunity to use the *Thinking Like a Historian* model of unit and lesson development. **Cause and effect** can be analyzed through assessing why women felt the need for more freedom during the 1960s and the long-term results of feminism. Activities that allow students to use their prior knowledge of and experience with gender discrimination and equality will naturally lead to opportunities to **study change and continuity** and to **use the past**. In addition, the degree to which consumer culture becomes pervasive in the postwar era means this is a significant **turning point** to study in history—drastically different attitudes and “spheres” for women are established in the 1970s that are drastically different from earlier eras. By using primary documents and accounts of feminist (and anti-feminist) actions, students will hopefully understand history **through the eyes** of those who experienced it.

This unit will be organized around meaningful, interactive activities that challenge students to connect the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s with their prior historical knowledge (about the suffrage movement, other women's movements, and earlier Civil Rights movements). Since a major district initiative for this coming school year is enhancing reading instruction, I will also plan on including several reading activities and assignments that ask students to develop critical reading skills. Specific feminist groups and activities will also be examined and assessed in light of their effectiveness and long-term legacy. A culminating activity for this unit will ask students to gather data concerning the level of freedom and equality by gender today...and to consider this data in light of the influence of Second Wave Feminism. Students will have a chance to compare and contrast freedom and gender equity between the past and present, and to assess how concepts of gender have changed.

**Driving Unit Questions:**

**Why did women become mobilized to form a renewed feminist movement in the 1960s?**

**What strategies and specific actions did feminists take at this time?**

**What victories and failures came out of this movement?**

**Are the increases in freedom and equality for women over the last 40 years been a result of the feminist movement, or other social and demographic changes?**

**Unit Materials, Documents, and Resources:**

-Advertisements from 1950s magazines, including Time, Look, Newsweek, and Household.

-Advertisements from 1970s magazines.

-Wausau High School yearbooks from 1940s-50s-60s-70s-today.

-Friedan, Betty. The Feminine Mystique (excerpt)

-Documents concerning the legal struggle to pass the ERA, from the Women and Social Movements database:

<http://www.alexanderstreet6.com/wasm/wasm.results.doclists.asp?altsource=DP76>

-Documents addressing the Guerrilla Girls' art movement:

<http://www.alexanderstreet6.com/wasm/wasmopen/ggirls/intro.htm>

-“No More Miss America” document

-“What is Women’s Liberation” document (from the CWLU)

-Film clip from *The Thrill of it All* (1964)

-Film clip from *Working Girl* (1988)

-*Born For Liberty: A History of Women in America* by Sara Evans

### **Lesson Ideas:**

- Gender in advertising analysis—“stations” of ads around the room for analysis and discussion of how men and women have been and are portrayed in the mass media.
- Critiquing changing gender roles through high school yearbooks.
- Document analysis of second wave feminism actions.
- A look at the data—how have women advanced over the last 40 years? What opportunities exist today? What roadblocks?
- Were changes wrought by feminists or by demographic changes—a student debate.
- Oral history projects—class compilation and comparisons.
- Title IX—an examination of how athletics have changed at Wausau High School.
- Women’s freedom and equality from the 1980s-present: reproductive rights, political power, primacy in higher education, Guerrilla Girls, grassroots action.

### **Collaboration and networking:**

Since the American Studies course is taught by several “teams” of teachers, I will share unit and lesson ideas with this group through informal lunch meetings and district inservice time. In addition, I plan on using inservice time to share this unit as an example of the *Thinking Like a Historian* model, which I believe our entire department should become familiar with. Although we planned to set aside a whole inservice day to work on the *Thinking Like a Historian* material last year, we never did get around to it, so I’m hoping we will this year!

Several of the lessons that are part of this unit will also include the development of critical reading skills, which has been a major concern of our district at the high school level over the last year. We have been using inservice time to share “lesson ideas that work” in our subject area with other teachers from the district, so I hope to use one of these activities during this time.

### **Unit alignment to Wisconsin Model Academic Standards in Social Studies:**

#### **History:**

B.12.1 Explain different points of view on the same historical event, using data gathered from various sources, such as letters, journals, diaries, newspapers, government documents, and speeches

B.12.2 Analyze primary and secondary sources related to a historical question to evaluate their relevance, make comparisons, integrate new information with prior knowledge, and come to a reasoned conclusion

B.12.4 Assess the validity of different interpretations of significant historical events

B.12.5 Gather various types of historical evidence . . . form a reasoned conclusion in the light of other possible conclusions; and develop a coherent argument in the light of other possible arguments

B.12.9 Select significant changes caused by technology, industrialization, urbanization, and population growth, and analyze the effects of these changes in the United States and the world

B.12.13 Analyze examples of ongoing change within and across cultures . . .

B.12.18 Explain the history of slavery, racial and ethnic discrimination, and efforts to eliminate discrimination in the United States and elsewhere in the world

**Economics:**

D.12.12 Compare and contrast how values and beliefs, such as economic freedom, economic efficiency, equity, full employment, price stability, security, and growth, influence decisions in different economic systems

**Political Science and Citizenship:**

C.12.3 Trace how legal interpretations of liberty, equality, justice, and power, as identified in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and other Constitutional Amendments, have changed and evolved over time

C.12.4 Explain the multiple purposes of democratic government . . . and illustrate how governmental powers can be acquired, used, abused, or legitimized

C.12.9 Identify and evaluate the means through which advocates influence public policy

C.12.14 Explain and analyze how different political and social movements have sought to mobilize public opinion and obtain governmental support in order to achieve their goals

C.12.16 Describe the evolution of movements to assert rights by people with disabilities, ethnic and racial groups, minorities, and women

**Behavioral Sciences:**

E.12.3 Compare and describe similarities and differences in the ways various cultures define individual rights and responsibilities, including the use of rules, folkways, mores, and taboos

E.12.4 Analyze the role of economic, political, educational, familial, and religious institutions as agents of both continuity and change, citing current and past examples

E.12.7 Use scientific methods to assess the influence of media on people's behavior and decisions

E.12.12 Explain current and past efforts of groups and institutions to eliminate prejudice and discrimination against racial, ethnic, religious, and social groups such as women, children, the elderly, and individuals who are disabled