

Call for papers:

Separate spheres? Gender history in writings and records

Master class by Alison Twells (Sheffield Hallam University)

On April 25th 2013, the Netherlands Research School of Genderstudies (Utrecht University) and the N.W. Posthumus Institute are co-organizing a master class on gender history. The master class will be taught by Dr Alison Twells, principal lecturer in history at Sheffield Hallam University (UK) and member of the editorial board for *Women's History Review*. With her expertise on women's and gender history, the master class offers students in this field of research a unique opportunity to discuss their work with an international expert and broaden their knowledge of one of the key themes in gender history.

Separate spheres?

Since the concept of 'separate spheres' entered the debate on women's history in the 1970s, historians have argued that the scopes of action for men and women were strictly divided in the past. Research on the (early) modern period pays much attention to ideologies of patriarchy and male guardianship, and the way these influenced prescribed gender roles.

It has been repeatedly argued that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed a significant shift in attributed gender roles. This shift is ascribed to the emergence of an ideology of domesticity. Influenced by changing religious teachings and emerging middle-class awareness, distinct gender role prescriptions are said to have developed in which men were to occupy the public sphere as breadwinners while women were to live a dutiful life at home.

This public-private dichotomy has become one of the most influential themes in women's history. More recently however, an ever growing chorus of dissent raises questions about the suitability of 'separate spheres' as a structuring concept for historical research. The level of patriarchy is heavily debated and many historians argue that theory and practice highly differed in the (early) modern period. The impact of ideological prescriptions on shaping actual daily practices has been questioned by pointing out that women were in fact active in many aspects of public life. Moreover, research has shown that women's possibilities and their scope of action greatly varied throughout Europe. Class differences and a variety of time- and place-specific gender roles have been called into the viewpoint and it is argued that the nineteenth century gender ideas weren't so new at all.

For this master class we are especially looking for contributions that focus on the contrast between theory and practice. What was the actual impact of gendered behavioural ideals on women's lives? What factors contributed to their varying experiences in different times and places? How did women (and men) themselves experience, for example, the ideology of domesticity? What were their thoughts on appropriate behaviour, and how did they act on it? Did they abide by their gender role's prescriptions, or do their preserved writings and recorded behaviour indicate otherwise?



Dr. Alison Twells

Focusing particularly on women's lives from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, Alison Twells' research interests lie in religious belief and practice, changing ideas about cultural difference, and British philanthropic and missionary movements. Using women's writings (autobiographies, diaries, etc.) for much of her research, she found a 'lack of concern for the 'women question' among many evangelical women', that 'derived from an absence of any feelings of grievance concerning the limits of women's sphere.'

Her current research concentrates on gender, public history and heritage and on British women's life stories in the twentieth century. She found that examining pocket diaries raises important methodological questions. How should historians 'read' these sources?

Eager to participate?

Being a committed teacher, Alison Twells is particularly attentive to enabling students to think and work as historians. Our goal is to bring together a group of students with varying backgrounds, however united by a shared interest in gender history. Therefore, we welcome contributions from research master- and PhD students from gender studies, social economic history, cultural history and other related disciplines. Special interest is paid to contributions that deal with analysing women's manuscripts as sources for their research, as well as papers that focus on the role of religion in women's lives. Alison Twells' experience with women's writings and their religious beliefs will help you to extend your research skills. The organizers can take care of a Certificate of Attendance (1 ECTS) for the participants.

Deadline

To apply for this master class please send in an abstract of the work you would like to propose of ca. 300 words and a CV **before March 30th**. We welcome any type of work in progress (articles, working papers, chapters, research proposals, etc.). The deadline for full papers (maximum 10.000 words) will be **April 10th**.

Time, place, and programme

The master class will be held at Leiden University.

Time: 14.00 – 17.30

Room: To be announced

Programme: Introductory lecture by Alison Twells (a proposed reading for this will be distributed in advance)
Discussion
Presentations by students (10 minutes each)
Comments by Alison Twells

The day will be concluded with a dinner.

Abstracts can be send to:

j.m.kamp@hum.leidenuniv.nl, m.bekker@hum.leidenuniv.nl or nwp@hum.leidenuniv.nl.

If you have any questions, please contact:

j.m.kamp@hum.leidenuniv.nl or m.bekker@hum.leidenuniv.nl.