



Spring 2020 Honors Seminar

Gender and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century America

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THEA-UT 801—002 ~ 4 Credits

Men and women in the United States began the nineteenth century abiding by strict gender roles and norms. Throughout the next hundred years, successive political and social upheavals like women's suffrage and the industrial revolution brought their worlds crashing together. As *the* popular culture of the period, theatre reached into lives of millions of Americans. This class will track how theatre engaged debates and controversies that arose as stable institutions like marriage, courtship, and activism were turned on their head.

We will look at how plays and practitioners constructed new models of masculinity and femininity that advocated for autonomy and choice, as well as how disenfranchised groups of women, African-Americans, and gay New Yorkers carved out their own cultural spaces in theatre, bars, and fairs. We will examine how gender expectations shaped actors' careers and look at how theatre was entangled in a broader world of garish entertainment and sensual pleasure, such as dime museums, sex work, and saloon shows.