In Their Own Words: Women Making History
Research Project Topics

You will work in groups of five; one group will have six members. Each group will choose from among the following topics to research and present for the final oral interpretation project and essay 3. Topics are large enough and include enough different figures, aspects, and moments that groups can divide the topic they choose into pieces. Each individual will be responsible for choosing a part of the topic (this might be a specific event, issue or debate, figure, or set of documents) to write their essay on. Groups will work together to determine how to present the research and the primary documents related to the topic in a 25-30 minute presentation for the class. The Essay Assignment and Oral Interpretation Presentation portions of this project are described on attached handouts.

1. **The Settlement House Movement**—Look into what this movement was about and what was accomplished. What is Hull House? How did the ideal of *New Womanhood* play a role in this movement? Key figures: Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr.

2. **Women in the Labor Movement**—Research the role of women in labor from the mid 19th century through the turn of the 20th century (until the 1920’s). What was significant about the Lowell Mills and the first “turn-outs” or strikes? What was the Women’s Trade Union League? What was the Uprising of the 20,000? What did women accomplish? Who were the key organizers—Clara Lemlich and Mother Jones for instance? What were women’s roles and challenges in labor unions?

3. **Women’s Suffrage Movement post Stanton and Anthony**—What happened in the Women’s Suffrage Movement after Stanton and Anthony both died. Who were the women who continued the cause and finally brought forth the 19th amendment? What tactics did they use? What debates and conflicts within the movement emerged? Who wrote the Equal Rights Amendment and why? What finally led to the passage of the 19th amendment? Key Figures: Alice Paul, Lucy Burns, Julia Ward Howe, Carrie Chapman Catt.

4. **Female Moral Reform Movements/19th and early 20th Century Activism**—This is an opportunity to research the Temperance Movement and the varieties of activism pursued by Social Purity Feminists—women who followed the cult of true womanhood and took the role of “moral guardian” to heart by organizing against prostitution, alcohol, and child labor, and for protective labor legislation for women in the workplace. Who were these women of the Progressive Era and what were their causes? What was their relation to the suffrage movement? What about women who were pacifists/anti-war activists during WWI?—who were they and how were they received for protesting the “Great War”?
5. **Women and Sexuality**—On the other side were women of the same era—19th and early 20th century—who were active in the cause for women to have more sexual freedom? Victoria Woodhull was the first woman to run for President and she and her sister were activists who embraced women’s sexual freedom. Emma Goldman, an anarchist feminist also wrote on behalf of the rights of prostitutes and Margaret Sanger who worked to provide access to contraception so that women could enjoy increased sexual freedom are key figures. What did the medical establishment advise about sexual behavior? You might also explore relations between women of this era? Carol Smith Rosenberg writes of the intimate relations between women of the mid 19th century (“Female World of Love and Ritual”). See what else you can find about intimate relations between women of the late 19th and early 20th century. The article “Seeking Ecstasy on the Battlefield: Danger and Pleasure in 29th Century Feminist Sexual Thought” by Ellen Carol DuBois and Linda Gordon would be a useful resource.

6. **Chicanas/Mexican American women and the Borderland Experience**—What were the conditions and set of experiences of women whose land was annexed as a result of the Mexican American War? These Californianas and other Mexican American women have described living in the borderlands. What does this mean? What is the Treaty of Hidalgo and how is it significant for Mexican American women? What were the roles of Mexican American women in their own communities? Many were widows and property owners. How did the westward migration of Anglos and the building of the transcontinental railroad affect Mexican American women? The play *Remember the Alamo* by Laura Esparza might be a useful resource.

7. **Women of the Harlem Renaissance**—What is the Harlem Renaissance and who were the women artists—painters, musicians, dancers, writers—who played a key role in this movement. What kinds of art did they produce and what was their subject matter? How were they funded and received? The Harlem Renaissance also involved scholars, researchers, and cultural critics. For instance, Zora Neale Hurston was both a writer of fiction and a collector of African American folklore. What were gender and race politics like in the movement and how did these politics impact people like Ms. Hurston?

8. **Women in Decades of Crisis: Depression and WWII**—Explore how the Great Depression and WWII affected the lives of women in the United States. How were women affected as workers first by the depression where the high unemployment rate increased hostility toward married women workers in particular and during WWII where there was a call for more women to enter the labor force? What was the Women’s Bureau? How did the New Deal affect women and what role did they play in the passage of this legislation? Did women participate in the military? How were they treated? What did women do “on the home front” to support the war and to protest the war? What is WILPF? How was
propaganda used to increase women’s participation in the labor force during the war and to
decrease it after the war ended? Key figures: Eleanor Roosevelt, Mary Mcleod Bethune,
Frances Perkins, Dorothy Day.

9. **Women in the Civil Rights Movement**—We all know the names and work of important
Black male leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. Who were the African American women
that played a key role in the movement-- Daisy Bates, Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ann
Moody? Who were the white women who were active in this movement—Casey Hayden,
Mary King, Rita Schwerner? What were the relations between Black and white women in
the movement? What roles did they play in the bus boycott in the voting rights movement
and Freedom Summer? What was the Mississippi Freedom Democrat Party? What was the
NAACP and SNCC, CORE, and other key Civil Rights organizations and what roles did
women play in these? How was the Civil Rights Movement a catalyst for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Wave of
the Women’s Movement? What were some key issues and moments that caused one
movement to pave the way for the other? Look into The Civil Rights Act, Title VII and other
key pieces of legislation. The book *Personal Politics* by Sara Evans would be a key resource.

10. **The Second Wave of the Women’s Movement/Women’s Liberation**—What brought about
the second wave of feminism? Find out more about *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan
and the role it played as a catalyst of this movement. What about *Sisterhood is Powerful*
edited by Robin Morgan? Who were the key Liberal feminists and the Radical feminists?
What were the differences—philosophical and strategic—between them? What were their
causes and organizations—N.O.W. and Redstockings? Was this women’s movement white?
What role did women of color play? What is the National Black Feminist Organization?
The Combahee River Collective? Key Figures: Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Robin
Morgan, Shulamith Firestone, Ti Grace Atkinson, Barbara Smith, Toni Cade Bambara,
Michele Wallace, Adrienne Rich, Gloria Anzaldua. *The Feminist Memoir Project* and *In Our
Time* by Susan Brownmiller would both be good resources as well as the primary texts
mentioned above.

11. **Gay and Lesbian Rights Movement**—Explore this movement and the roles of women in the
movement. What was Stonewall and why is it significant? Were women involved? When did the
term lesbian emerge and why? What laws have affected the rights of gay men, lesbians, and
transgendered people throughout U.S. history? What role did lesbians play in the second wave of
the feminist movement? You might research the homophobia in the women’s movement and
responses to it. What was the response by lesbian activists to the AIDS crisis and how did this affect
the Gay and Lesbian Rights/Queer Rights movement? What is ACT UP and what role did women
play in this organization? What other key moments, debates, and figures might you uncover in
researching this more recent civil rights movement? Look into Joan Nestle’s lesbian archives as a
resource.