

WOMEN at the CENTER

Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture
David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University

Issue 38, Fall 2020

Beyond Supply and Demand: Duke Economics Students and Women's Suffrage in the U.S.

On August 18, 2020, we commemorated the centenary of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment and the nearly eight decades of activism that led to it by publishing an online exhibition "Beyond Supply & Demand: Duke Economics Students Present 100 Years of American Women's Suffrage." This was the culmination of a year of work with Professor Genna Miller and her 38 students in Duke's "Women in the Economy" course. Students selected and researched items from the Rubenstein Library that demonstrate how the Nineteenth Amendment was not simply the result of women "demanding" the right to vote followed by the



Votes for Women tin sign, Mass. Woman Suffrage Association, [1915]. Lisa Unger Baskin Collection

vote being "supplied."

How did thirty-eight economics students curate an exhibit on U.S. women's suffrage? While numbers and charts might be the first things to come to mind when thinking about economics, it is a social science that intersects with many other disciplines. The Duke class "Women in the Economy" explores the historical and present realities of the status of women as it relates to labor and the economy, the suffrage movement being one important milestone that radically altered women's economic realities.

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

- Beyond Supply and Demand 1-2
- Would You Buy a Comic Book From This Woman? 1-2
- Online Programs 2
- Creative Teaching with Primary Sources Online 3
- Recent Publications 3
- New Books From Sallie Bingham 4

Would You Buy a Comic Book From This Woman?

Contributed by Sagan Thacker, University of North Carolina at Asheville '20, as part of our "Profiles in Research" series.

In January 2020, I traveled from Western North Carolina to the Sallie Bingham Center to study feminist newspapers in two of the Bingham Center's incredible collections: the Women's and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Movements (LGBT) Periodicals and Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA) Periodicals collections. I was looking for material about feminist underground comics of the 1970s and '80s—books such as *Wimmen's Comix* and *Tits and Clits*. I wanted to deter-

mine what feminists of the time period thought about the comics, and whether they viewed them as serious literature or just mindless entertainment.

I soon found several articles that turned popular notions of comics on their heads. Most notable was a February 1976 article from the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, newspaper *Amazon: A Feminist Journal*. Written by Barb Behm about the now obscure Pricella Pumps/Star Buckwheat Comic Book by Barba Kutzner (1976), the article cogently praised the book's relatability and satire of American society and its

(Continued on page 2)

Online Programs

In Spring of 2020, we could hardly imagine that we would continue working from home through the summer and fall. We had already begun planning two events, which we were able to shift from in-person to an online format.

Looking Back, Moving Forward with Southerners on New Ground (SONG)

On September 16, we held a discussion grounded in the history of SONG exploring how activist archives inform intersectional struggles for social justice. Mandy Carter (SONG co-founder), Wesley Hogan (historian), Lisa Levenstein (historian), and Mab Segrest (SONG co-founder) reflected on the contemporary relevance of SONG's organizing in the 1990s and beyond. This conversation was not recorded. See details about Hogan's and Levenstein's new books on page 3.

Sallie Bingham Reads

Our second program this fall was a reading from two new books by Sallie Bingham. See back page for more details and a link to the recording.

Beyond Supply and Demand *continued from page 1*

To tackle such an expansive topic as American women's suffrage, the students used a framework of ten themes to explore the movement including: Abolition, Racism, and Resistance; The Value of Labor; The Politics of Family and Home; Men's Perspectives; The Bible as a Tool; Art and Culture; International Influences; Regional Realities; Local Lives and The Long Tale of Voting Rights.

Students researched a single archival item in depth and, working together, contextualized how that item tied in with their group theme and the larger story of suffrage. The students were committed to studying all ten theme areas through the lens of race and resistance because, though much of the current and historical narrative around the suffrage movement has focused

on its white leaders, every dimension of the fight for the vote involved people of color. Just one of many women we researched together is Frances Ellen Watkins Harper—abolitionist, writer, speaker, suffragist, and temperance leader. She was one of the first African American women to publish a novel in the U.S. and co-founded the National Association of Colored Women. Harper spoke at suffrage conventions in the nineteenth century, often conflicting with many of the white leaders. She believed adamantly in acknowledging the racism faced by Black people and how that could not be separated from the struggle for equality, including the suffrage movement.

We are looking forward to sharing the physical exhibit in 2021.

[View Online: exhibits.library.duke.edu/exhibits/show/suffrage](https://exhibits.library.duke.edu/exhibits/show/suffrage)

Would You Buy a Comic Book... *continued from page 1*



Amazon: A Feminist Journal (Milwaukee, WI), February '76, illustrated by Barbra Kutzner.

Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance
Periodicals Collection, Box 1.

metaphorical significance for all women. Behm touted Kutzner's protagonist as both a character with which women could heartily identify and a way to break free from the oppressive system and celebrate non-normativity.

This source was instrumental in showing that feminist underground comics, far from being tangential and lowbrow parts of the second-wave feminist movement, were instead an important part of the intellectual discourse within feminism. By finding a critic who enthusiastically engaged with the work on a level beyond its perceived lowbrow status, it became clear that some feminists viewed comics as a valid and direct medium to write and engage with feminism on a level that would not be widespread until the zine revolution of the late 1980s and early '90s. This reframing of comics' literary history deepens our understanding of second-wave feminism and gives a more nuanced portrait of its discursive diversity.

Creative Teaching with Primary Sources Online

This summer our librarians worked with colleagues across the country to develop remote teaching skills with rare materials and special collections. We have created a number of activities and teaching modules that Duke faculty and others may use or adapt for their courses. Here are a few examples:

Eugenics Movement in North Carolina: Students will engage with the history and the lasting legacy of the eugenics movement in N.C. in the 20th century.

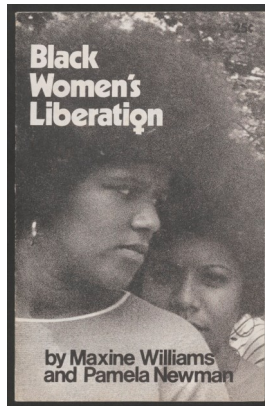


Gender & Anatomy: Students will explore visual representations of gender in the history of medicine. (Ivory manikin pictured above from the History of Medicine collections)

Gender, Culture & the Economy:



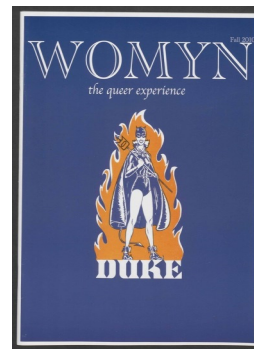
Students will analyze the intersection of gender and consumer culture during the postwar period in the U.S. using Ford Motor Co. print advertisements created from 1945-1955, like the one shown here.



Rubenstein Time Machine: Students will examine documents from 1970, such as the *Black Women's Liberation* pamphlet pictured here, representing a variety of viewpoints, issues, and historical events related to women's history.

Studying Duke and Durham's LGBTQIA+ History:

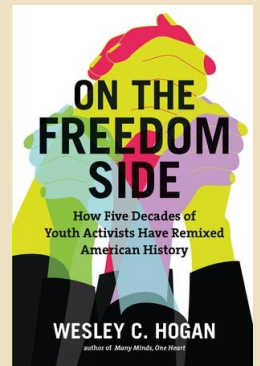
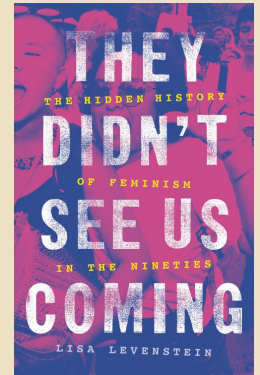
Students will use queer periodicals from the University Archives (like the issue of *Womyn: The Queer Experience* seen here) as well as Durham activists and organizations to learn more about the local queer community and its rich history.



Teaching Materiality Online with the Rubenstein Library: Recreating the sensory experiences that come from handling items in person is a challenge when teaching online. This guide offers creative ways to offer students embodied, physical experiences with the books, artifacts, papers, and objects in their own spaces while introducing them to the possibilities and limitations of the archives.

Women's Suffrage in the U.S.: Students will use textual and visual primary sources to understand the perspectives of activists, politicians, and others for and against suffrage.

Recent Publications



Lisa Levenstein's *They Didn't See Us Coming: The Hidden History of Feminism in the Nineties* (Basic Books, 2020) and Wesley Hogan's *On the Freedom Side: How Five Decades of Youth Activists Have Remixed American History* (UNC Press, 2019) both incorporate research based on the Southerners on New Ground (SONG) Records and the papers of two SONG co-founders, Mandy Carter and Mab Segrest, from the Bingham Center's collections.

Teaching Modules: library.duke.edu/rubenstein/instruction

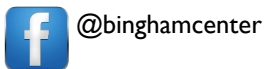
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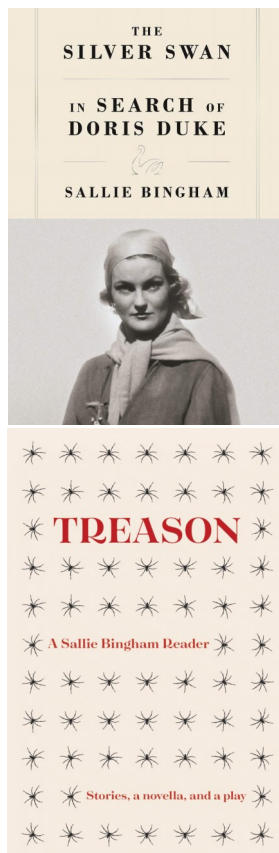
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New Books From Sallie Bingham

On October 6, 2020, we hosted an online reading and conversation with author Sallie Bingham to share her two new books published this year. Though we would have enjoyed seeing her and our Bingham Center community in person, it was remarkable to have so many attendees from beyond Durham.

Bingham read from and discussed *The Silver Swan: In Search of Doris Duke* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020) a literary biography of one of the most well-known woman philanthropists of the twentieth century. The work was created using Duke's extensive archives which are held at the Rubenstein Library.

Bingham also shared an excerpt from her new collection *Treason: A Sallie Bingham Reader* (Sarabande Books, 2020), which features highlights from her writing career including short stories, a novella, and a play.

Following the readings, Bingham offered reflections on her writing process and responded to questions from the audience.

This program is available with closed captioning through the Duke Libraries YouTube channel: <https://bit.ly/SallieReads>