ARTstor Interdisciplinary

ARTstor Resources in Women’s Studies

The ARTstor Digital Library is a visual resource of value to scholars, teachers, and students across the arts, humanities, social sciences, and beyond. This handout is part of a growing series designed to highlight ARTstor’s relevance to a variety of fields of study.

ARTstor Collections Relevant to Women’s Studies

Several ARTstor collections will be of interest to scholars, teachers, and students in Women’s Studies. Most noteworthy is the Schlesinger History of Women in America collection from the Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Studies at Harvard University. It is an extensive archive of over 36,000 historical photographs of American women, as well as photographs produced by female photographers in the U.S. and abroad. The collection documents the history of women in the United States with images related to suffrage and women’s rights, women in advertising and popular culture, women in a variety of professional roles (doctors, teachers, writers, etc.), as well as scenes of everyday life and commerce. The ARTstor Digital Library also contains collections devoted to the work of individual female artists and photographers, whether Elizabeth Peyton’s painted portraits, or Sarah Quill’s photographs of Venetian architecture.

The encyclopedic Image Gallery offers innumerable examples of female artists throughout history, ranging from Sofonisba Anguissola to Georgia O’Keeffe, from Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Le Brun to Faith Ringgold, and from Mary Cassatt to Judy Chicago. There are thousands of images that reflect the diverse roles of women in human history, across all world cultures, whether portraits of European queens and duchesses, or ethnographic photographs of Native American women. Also richly represented are examples of women’s costume and jewelry from a range of cultures and periods, female characters as depicted in world literature, representations of women in popular culture and advertising, and historical figures and authors involved in political movements such as women’s suffrage, women’s rights, and more generally, feminism.
HELPFUL SEARCH TIPS

Keyword searches are likely to be most successful. Truncating your search term (e.g. wom* or femini*) in order to retrieve terms with variant endings will enlarge your search results. For more precise searches, you can search for phrases within quotation marks (“...”), or use the Advanced Search feature to limit your searches by date or geographic region.

- A search for “feminism” yields over 800 images
- Searching for “veil” produces more than 350 results
- “marriage” will return more than 1000 images

HELPFUL BROWSING CATEGORIES

ARTstor’s collections may be browsed in a number of ways. For instance, the Schlesinger History of Women in America collection may be browsed thematically, by subject, organization, or individual, such as “Woman’s Rights Collection,” “League of Women Voters of Massachusetts,” or “Anthony, Susan B., 1820-1906.” You may also browse across all of ARTstor’s collections by geography or object classification, so that those specializing in specific areas of Women’s Studies may access images relevant to their primary interests. For example, one can browse ARTstor for “Sculpture and Installations” and then expand that browsing category to narrow the set down to “Italy.” Once you have expanded a browsing category, you may also search within the displayed thumbnails to further refine your search set — e.g. searching for “woman or lady” within “Sculpture and Installations - Italy” yields 290 images out of a much larger set. Alternatively, you can start by browsing geographically first, such as selecting “Japan” from a controlled list of countries, and then choosing the category for “Fashion, Costume and Jewelry” to find examples of kimonos and robes worn by Japanese women.

Image Credits:
1) Portrait of Madame Du Barry (oil on panel) | Louise-Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755 – 1842) | Philadelphia Museum of Art
2) Red Cross nurse seeing vision of wounded soldiers across stormy sea (drawing) | W. A. Rogers (1854 – 1931) | The Library of Congress
3) Judith and Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes (oil on canvas) | Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1653) | The Detroit Institute of Arts
4) Woman and Child (daguerreotype) | Jeremiah Garney (1812 - after 1886) | Smithsonian American Art Museum
5) Susan Brownell Anthony (daguerreotype) | Albert Sands Southworth (1811 - 1894); Josiah Johnson Hawes (1808 - 1901) | The Metropolitan Museum of Art