

features

Women's history month

The contributions women make to society, culture and history

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The month of March is known for various reasons: Saint Patrick's Day, the first day of spring and for college students, midterms. However, March is also Women's History Month and includes National Women's Day.

According to The History Channel, Women's history month originated out of a school program in California. The program recognized the contribution of women to society, culture and history. Women's History Month has been celebrated in the United States in March since 1987.

Women's History Month celebrates women and what they have done for their world. Over the years, as American history

women with gift and flowers.

While this may not be how everyone celebrates the day, March 8 is set aside to celebrate women and what they have done and will do in society. However, to some, recognition of women is something that occurs on a day to day basis.

"I don't look at those things as days on the calendar," Doctor Richard Gray, Associate Professor of Foreign Language and Chair of the Foreign Language Department, said.

Gray worked to put together the curriculum and course work for a French Women Writer's class that is available to Ashland University students both online and in the classroom. It is even offered in the Ashland University correctional program.

The class focuses on the work

Gray's daughter stood up and said that she wanted to play baseball. She was the only female player in the league that season.

"I saw in my nine-year-old daughter in that moment that she had the weight of gender discrimination on her shoulders," Gray said. "She stood up to it with bravery and courage. All I did that day was drive her there."

Women around the world are starting to do something similar, they are standing up and speaking out on their behalf. A more recent action is the Me Too movement.

According to metoomvmt.org, "The 'Me Too' movement was founded in 2006 to help survivors of sexual violence...find pathways to healing. Our vision from the beginning was to... build a community of advocates, driven by

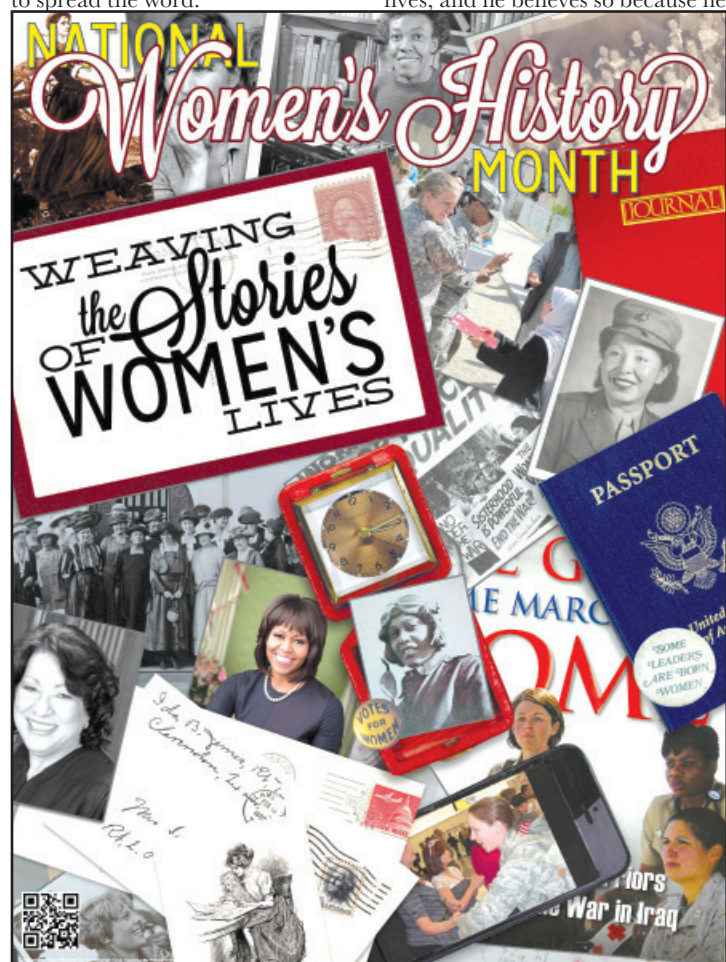
survivors."

The movement has led to the creation of the widely popular hashtag on social media, #metoo.

People in the world today are using this hashtag and other methods to spread the word.

changed the way they think. The course is also taught in prisons around the country.

Gray said inmates are talking to their daughters about it. He believes his class is truly changing lives, and he believes so because he



During the month of March, the United States pays tribute to the generations of women whose contributions to history and contemporary society have proven invaluable.

The Me Too movement has a global impact, it is part of a large network of survivors and supporters. While this movement may not directly affect the Ashland University campus, women's respect and appreciation is observed, particularly by Gray and his students.

Gray said that his students have written to him after they have completed his French Women Writers course and commending him on the class and that they learned many things about themselves and others.

"To me, it's part of who I am. Not just as a professor but as a human being," Gray said. "I have seen firsthand the obstacles against which [women] fight that come at them not just from men, but also from women who are part of the system."

Gray has received feedback from his course that says everyone should take the class and that it

is treating everyone with equality, something Gray doesn't believe is prevalent today.

"I'm not sure that everyone wants everyone to be treated equally," Gray said. "I know that they don't want you [women] to be hurt, but I don't know that everyone wants you to be treated exactly the same as a man. My goal in what I do is that we treat everyone with the same level of equality and equity... it's beyond a level of appreciation."

To Gray, the people at the forefront of the Me Too campaign, and others on campus who have taken the French Women Writers class, women's equality, history and respect matters.

Women's history month is celebrated every March, but in small ways on campus, women are celebrated each day.

"It's more than just a day for me," Gray said.



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Rosie the Riveter is a cultural icon of World War II, representing the women who worked in factories and shipyards during World War II, many of whom produced munitions and war supplies.

itself has shown, women are being included and making a more prominent mark in the world and in history.

"To coincide with Women's History Month 2011, the White House issued a 50-year progress report on the status of women in the United States. It found that younger women are now more likely to hold a college degree and that the number of men and women in the labor force has nearly equalized," the History Channel said.

Women in history and in recent years are celebrated for making their mark on the world, and so that is commemorated every March. However, March also takes a day to celebrate Women in the world today.

National Women's Day was celebrated for the first time on March 8, 1911, The History Channel said. Many countries around the world celebrate the holiday with demonstrations, educational initiatives and customs such as presenting

of French Women Writers and is rooted in the ideas of feminism, what it is, and what it means to be a woman. The class has received positive feedback from previous students in Gray's class, and the course is grown out of his own life experiences.

"When my eldest daughter was nine, we were living in Tennessee...I took her to the community building to register her to play baseball. Her and I went up to the registration table and there was a woman and a man sitting there. I said, 'I'm here to sign my daughter up to play baseball.'

The woman looked at the man, looked back at my daughter, and said, 'we don't usually do that around here,' Gray said.

Women are celebrated in today's world more and more for breaking the status quo. Gray noted that this experience is part of what encouraged him to teach a women focused class that highlights their role in the world. That same day



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Shanti Sethi answers questions from female students during an event to commemorate Women's History Month.