

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Women's Studies

WS325 WOMEN'S HEALTH ISSUES

Autumn 2004

5 credits

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is an interdisciplinary inquiry into the issues of women's health and the politics of gender in health care. A major emphasis is educating and empowering women with regard to their own health.

This course is an interdisciplinary inquiry into the issues of women's health and the politics of gender in health care. We will examine how women's health is represented in the media, as well as in the health care delivery system. A major emphasis is educating and empowering women with regard to their own health.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Apply the terms and concepts of feminist analysis to issues of women's health.
2. Discuss the relationship between the female reproductive capacity and gender defined roles in reference to women's health issues.
3. Analyze the effectiveness of personal and political strategies used by feminists to change practices of overt and covert discrimination against women's health.
4. Share information and resources that can be useful in understanding and enhancing one's own health.
5. Demonstrate critical thinking in writing, and in speaking and listening actively in the classroom.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Worcester, N. & Whatley, M.H. (2004). *Women's health: Readings on social, economic, and political issues* (4th ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

*Brief packet available at CopEz at Tuttle Park Place, 2055 Millikin Way.

**Additional readings (available online) as noted in Course Outline.

COURSE POLICIES:

1. Attendance. The professor realizes that some students are obliged to miss class occasionally as a result of religious observance, health problems, and personal emergencies. However, prompt and regular class attendance is expected. Attendance will be taken. Students are responsible for any work missed during class.
2. Class participation. Lively and informed class participation is expected; this means that you must have read the assignments before class. You should ask questions, debate the issues, share personal experiences, and encourage other students to contribute to class discussion throughout the quarter. If you are a person who finds it difficult to talk in class, please come see the professor early in the quarter.

At the beginning of every class, students will have the opportunity, and are encouraged, to bring to the class and share any current news stories or information related to women's health.

3. Late assignments. Any assignment that is late will be marked down.
4. Academic conduct. Students are held responsible for the statement on PLAGIARISM distributed in all Women's Studies classes. Students will not provide or receive any information during exams. All testing materials will be kept in the classroom and returned to the faculty. Faculty are obligated by university rule (3335-5-487) to report to the Committee on Academic Misconduct "all instances of alleged academic misconduct."
5. Accommodation of Students with Disabilities. Students who wish an accommodation for disability for health reasons are responsible for requesting accommodation from the professor. This self-identification is the only way to assure that the faculty member can provide the appropriate accommodation. Anyone who feels the need for an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. At the appointment we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs, and explore potential accommodations. I rely on the Office for Disability Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. If you have not previously contacted the Office for Disability Services, I encourage you to do so at: (614) 292-3307 (V) or (614) 292-0901 (TDD).

GRADING:

Final course grades will be computed, based on the following components:

Attendance and participation	10%
Media paper	15%
Health concern paper	20%
Issue paper	25%
Final examination	<u>30%</u>
TOTAL	100%

Media paper: Please select an article related to women's health. You may use (1) a newspaper, popular

magazine, or other print medium article, (2) internet article, or (3) radio or television media story. In each case you must submit a copy (i.e., photocopy, internet printout, audiotape or videotape), including a complete source citation, with your paper. Using information gained in class and/or from pp. 72-73 in the text, write a 2-3 page, typed, double-spaced paper in which you carefully analyze the article for what it says, and does not say, about women's health. Is the information correct? (You may have to determine the correctness/incorrectness by referring to other sources.) Which women's health does the article discuss? Why? How will the public be helped/not helped by this information? The grade will be based on your (1) critical analysis and (2) writing and grammar.

This assignment is **due** in class on October 7, 2004.

Health concern paper: In this paper you will write a detailed description of a women's health concern that occurs primarily (or exclusively) in a population other than your own, e.g., different age group, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation etc. To enhance your research on the topic, you may interview a woman (different from yourself, as above) who has (or had) the problem and give a critical account of her experiences. One or two references are required, at least one of which cannot be the textbook. The Additional Reading list may be helpful. The paper should be approximately 4 pages, typed and double-spaced. The grade will be based on (1) your ability to place yourself in comparison to that of the "woman" you present, (2) clear description of the health problem or concern, (3) feminist analysis of the concern, and (4) writing and grammar.

This paper is **due** in class on November 4, 2004.

Issue paper: This paper is a detailed study (research paper) of a women's health issue of your individual interest. You may want to review the Additional Readings for possible topics and sources. You are encouraged to discuss your idea with the professor or TA who may offer suggestions or other resources. If you have any questions about how to proceed, please talk to one of us as soon as possible. The paper should be approximately 5-7 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, excluding title page and references. Consistent and accurate use of a style sheet is expected (APA preferred). The grade will be based on (1) presentation and development of the issue, (2) critical/feminist analysis of the issue, (3) creativity, and (4) writing and grammar.

This paper is **due** in class on November 23, 2004.

Final exam: The final examination will be comprehensive and consist entirely of essay questions. The regularly scheduled final exam is: **Tuesday, December 7, 2004, 5:30-7:18 PM.**

COURSE SCHEDULE

*Instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule if necessary.

September 23

Introduction
What is Women's Health?

September 28

Women as Consumers of Health Care
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 1-8, 18-28, 41-56, 65-73, 184-187

September 30

Women as Health Care Providers
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 8-18, 28-40, 56-65

October 5

Health Disparities
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 77-131

October 7

Breast Cancer
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 565-584

In addition, read the following article, available online.
Blackstone, A. (2004). "It's just about being fair": Activism and the politics of volunteering in the breast cancer movement. *Gender & Society*, 18(3), 350-368.

October 12

Menstruation
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 193-220

In addition, read ONE of these articles (both are available online).
Hoerster, K. D., Chrisler, J. C., & Rose, J. G. (2003). Attitudes toward and experience with menstruation in the US and India. *Women & Health*, 38(3), 77-95.

Hartman, T. & Marmon, N. (2004). Lived regulations, systemic attributions: menstrual separation and ritual immersion in the experience of Orthodox Jewish women. *Gender & Society*, 18(3), 389-408.

Assignment: Before class: complete activity #2, p. 223 in the text. Come to class prepared with your calculations.

October 14

Fertility & Infertility
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 433-474

October 19

Childbirth
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 477-516

Assignment: Before class: complete activity #2, p. 518 in the text.

October 21

Mental Health in Women

Worcester & Whatley, pp. 225-250

Packet: Krajac, S. (1997). A sense of well-being (pp. 252-264). In J. White & M.C. Martinez (Eds.), *The lesbian health book: Caring for ourselves*. Seattle: Seal Press.

October 26 Violence as a Women's Health Issue
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 255-296

October 28 Alcohol, Tobacco, & Other Drugs
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 301-322

Assignment: Before class: complete activity #2, p. 323 in the text.

November 2 Occupational Health
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 135-152

Packet: Ratcliff, KS (2002). Occupational health (pp. 90-97). In *Women and health: Power, technology, inequality and conflict in a gendered world*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Packet: *Before the Robots* (poem)

November 4 Midlife & Older Women's Health
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 521-562

November 9 Sexual Health Issues
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 385-429

November 11 *Veteran's Day – No Class*

November 16 Sexual Health Issues (cont.)
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 153-168

In addition, read the following article, available online.

Berman, L., Berman, J., Felder, S. et al. (2003). Seeking help for sexual function complaints: What gynecologists need to know about the female patient's experience. *Fertility and Sterility*, 79(3), 572-576.

November 18 Eating Disorders
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 325-360, 383-384
handout

November 23 Picturing Beauty
Worcester & Whatley, pp. 169-182, 361-380

November 25 *Thanksgiving – No Class*

- November 30 Miscellaneous Women's Health Problems
 Worcester & Whatley, pp. 585-611
- December 2 Course Summary: Women's Health for the Future
 COURSE EVALUATION

ADDITIONAL READINGS:

- Boston Women's Health Book Collective. (1998). *Our bodies, ourselves for the new century*. New York, Simon & Schuster.
- Delgado, J. L. (1997). *Salud! A Latina's guide to total health—Body, mind, and spirit*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Ehrenreich, B. & English, D. (1973). *Witches, midwives, and nurses: A history of women healers*. Old Westbury, NY, Feminist Press.
- Gay, K. (Ed). (2002). *Encyclopedia of women's health issues*. Westport, CT: Oryx.
- Landrine, H., & Klonoff, E. A. (Eds.) (1997). *Black women's health*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Lorber, J., & Moore, L. J. (2002). *Gender and the social construction of illness* (2nd ed.). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Petchesky, R. P. (2003). *Global prescriptions: Gendering health and human rights*. New York: Zed Books.
- Thompson, L. (1999). *The wandering womb: A cultural history of outrageous beliefs about women*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- White, J. C. & Martinez, M. C. (Eds.) (1997). *Caring for ourselves: The lesbian health book*. Seattle: Seal Press.

Most journals related to women's health, including the following, are now online:

Health Care for Women International
Journal of Women and Aging
Journal of Women's Health and Gender-Based Medicine
Women's Health Issues
Women's Health Journal
Women and Health
Women and Therapy