COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course takes a critical, interdisciplinary approach to understanding women’s health. The course is organized into six modules with each module covering a topic that is relevant to women and health. The topics covered in the course are:

Module 1: The Medicalization of Women’s Health
Module 2: Representing Gender and Women’s Health
Module 3: The Politics of Reproduction
Module 4: Diversity and Women’s Experiences of Health Care
Module 5: The Social Determinants of Women’s Health
Module 6: Women, Work and Health

Western University is situated on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenaunaune, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples.
COURSE GOALS
Through the course readings, lectures and facilitated discussions, students will:

- Gain a critical awareness of the social and political forces that shape women’s health
- Articulate the links between constructions of gender and health, with a particular focus on women and women’s bodies
- Consider how medical and popular knowledge about health is implicated in the social reproduction of gender differences and gender roles
- Develop a deeper understanding of how women’s experiences of health and health care vary according to social position, including social class, “race”/ethnicity, sexual identification etc.
- Learn about the gendered dimensions of health inequities, both nationally and internationally
- Broaden understanding of women’s “choices” in relation to their health and reproduction

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Develop your ability to read and analyze scholarly and popular texts closely and rigorously
- Learn to question and analyze critically how women’s health issues are framed in the popular media
- Gain experience developing and applying a critical perspective to issues in women’s health
- Participate in informed discussions and critical dialogues about issues relevant to women’s health in an interdisciplinary group setting
- Develop greater reflexivity (self-awareness) of your own understandings of health, its determinants and its relationship to gender.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION
Anita Slominska
Virtual office hours: Tuesdays 3:00-4:00, or by appointment
aslimns@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistant: Emily Carrothers
Virtual Office hour: TBD
Email: ecarroth@uwo.ca

COURSE READINGS/REQUIRED TEXTS
Most course readings are available on OWL. In addition, the following books are required (information forthcoming about where to obtain them.)


TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR COURSE
You will need regular access to a computer and the Internet to access course materials. You will need to be able to download and upload documents and watch videos of pre-recorded lectures and other materials. Please spend some time familiarizing yourself with our course website on OWL. For technical assistance, contact 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.
INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Each week our class will meet virtually for a check-in and Q&A (30 minutes). The majority of our virtual classroom time will be devoted to small group discussions and conversations (students will be assigned to a discussion group for each module). Prior to our class meeting and groups discussion sessions, students are expected to do the weekly readings (and film screening when required), using the discussion questions (posted to OWL) as a guide. Weekly lectures will be pre-recorded and posted to OWL in each week’s resource folder. Students must listen to the pre-recorded lectures before our class meeting on Wednesday.

COURSE POLICIES

Our virtual classroom is an experimental space: we’re all learning, and this requires trying out new ideas and possibly abandoning strategies that aren’t working. You are encouraged to experiment with your ideas and with your writing, and also forms of participation in an online classroom community. You are also expected to offer attention, respect and openness to your classmates and to me, your instructor. My goal is to create a welcoming space built up from the contribution that each of us brings.

Attendance
You are expected to attend and participate in each weekly synchronous meeting of your discussion group (please note these are always scheduled during our class meeting times on Wednesdays). See the Evaluation section of the syllabus for more information on discussion group participation.

Academic Integrity
Scholastic offenses are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate Policy. Students should direct their attention specifically to the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offense at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between the University and Turnitin.com

Late Work
It is the expectation that students will submit assignments by the assigned dates. In the event that this expectation cannot be met, students are advised that the Department of Women’s Studies and Feminist Research follows the policies and practices of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Faculty of Social Science.

Late assignments will only be accepted without a penalty if a prior agreement with the Instructor has been made, or if a valid medical certificate is provided. The late penalty is 4% for every 24-hour period past the assignment deadline.

Students seeking academic accommodation must apply to the Academic Counselling Office of their home Faculty. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the Instructor or the Department.
“When everyone in the classroom, teacher and students, recognizes that they are responsible for creating a learning community together, learning is at its most meaningful and useful”

- bell hooks, Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom

**EVALUATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>% grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online group discussion participation and written summaries</td>
<td>30% (6 x 5%)</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short paper 1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>October 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short paper 2</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>February 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Take Home” Exam 1</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>TBD End of Fall Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Take Home” Exam 2</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>TBD End of Winter Term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion (30%)**

For each of the six modules every student will be assigned to one of 5 discussion groups that meets once a week for a 30 minute block of time during our allotted 3 hour classroom time. Our weekly schedule will look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:30-2:00</td>
<td>Whole group check-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 - 2:30</td>
<td>Group 1 meets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 - 3:00</td>
<td>Group 2 meets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00- 3:30</td>
<td>Group 3 meets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 - 4:00</td>
<td>Group 4 meets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00- 4:30</td>
<td>Group 5 meets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emily and I will be present in each group meeting as facilitators but your participation is essential and the success of each discussion depends on you coming to the meeting prepared to discuss each week’s course materials (lectures, readings, films). Above all you are there to express yourself, demonstrate engagement with course material and learn from each other. Participation could include asking questions, bringing up examples, offering critiques, sharing experiences, reading quotes or passages from the readings, raising issues for debates, respectful disagreements, and active listening etc.
Once per module (i.e. 3 times each semester), each student is required to post a summary to the Discussion Forums on OWL. This summary should be **250-300 words**. It could be a summary of key points from your group discussion, a description of any new insights you have come to either individually or collectively, or the identification, explanation and justification of what you think matters the most.

Each of these summaries is worth **5%** of your final grade. The more dynamic and robust your group discussions are, the easier it will be to produce high quality summaries that meet the following criteria: thorough understanding of core concepts and ideas, close and critical reading of texts, engagement with other students, evidence of reflection and original thinking, depth and complexity, and clear and persuasive writing.

**Short Papers (20%)**

Each semester, students will write a short paper (4-5 pages max, double-spaced) on an assigned topic (tentatively, pain in the Fall and COVID-19 in the Winter). Further details and instructions will be provided.

**Exams (50%)**

At the end of each semester each student will write a “take home” exam. Students will be given a choice of questions and prompts covering Modules 1-3 (in the Fall) and Modules 4-6 (in the Winter). For each exam, students will have to write two essay responses (1000-1200 words each).

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MODULE 1 - THE MEDICALIZATION OF WOMEN’S HEALTH</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>September 9</td>
<td>The politics of women’s health</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>September 16</td>
<td>The medicalization of female sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>September 23</td>
<td>Epistemic injustice and contested knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>September 30</td>
<td>From medicalization to healthism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>October 7</td>
<td>The corporatization of women’s health</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MODULE 2 - REPRESENTING GENDER AND WOMEN’S HEALTH</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>October 14</td>
<td>Anatomy and Gynecology</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>October 21</td>
<td>Body Image Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>October 28</td>
<td>Narrativizing Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FALL READING WEEK</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MODULE 3 - THE POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>November 11</td>
<td>Birth Control and Reproductive Rights</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Module 1: The Medicalization of Women’s Health

#### Week 1 - September 9  
**The politics of women’s health**


#### Week 2 - September 16  
**The medicalization of female sexuality**


Film: Orgasm, Inc., dir. Liz Canner

**Week 3 - September 23  Epistemic injustice and contested knowledge**


Podcast: Not Tested on Humans, Bodies (KCRW, Los Angeles)

**Week 4 - September 30  From medicalization to healthism**


**Week 5 - October 7  The corporatization of women’s health**


Film: Pink Ribbons, Inc. (dir. Léa Pool)

**MODULE 2: REPRESENTING GENDER AND WOMEN’S HEALTH**

**Week 6 - October 14  Anatomy and gynecology**


**Week 7 - October 21  Body Image Production**


**Week 8 - October 28  Narrativizing Illness**


**MODULE 3: THE POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION**

**Week 9 - November 11  Birth Control and Reproductive Rights**


**Week 10 - November 18  Reproductive Technologies**


**Week 11 - November 25  Teen Pregnancy**


Week 12 - December 2  Maternal Mortality


Podcast: Episode 1: Myeshia’s Story and Episode 2: Roots of the Black Birthing Crisis, Natal: A Docuseries about having a baby while black in the United States.

Guest Speaker: David Walugembe, Health Information Science, Western University

MODULE 4: DIVERSITY AND WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES OF HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE

Week 1 - January 6  Gender, race and class in medical research


Week 2 - January 13  Intersectional Approaches


Week 3 - January 20  Racism and discrimination in Aboriginal women’s experience of health care


Week 4 - January 27  Sexual Identification and experiences of health care


MODULE 5: THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN’S HEALTH

Week 5 - February 3  
Poverty and Food Insecurity


Week 6 - February 10  
Violence Against Women


Film: Finding Dawn (dir. Christine Welsh)

Week 7 - February 24  
Intergenerational Trauma


Week 8 - March 3  
Structural Violence and Social Suffering


MODULE 6: GENDER, WORK AND HEALTH

Week 9 - March 9  
The health hazards of low-wage labour


Avotri, J. & Walters, V. (1999). “You just look at our work and see if you have any freedom on earth”: Ghanaian women’s accounts of their work and their health. *Social Science and Medicine, 28*, pp. 1123-1133.

**Week 10 - March 16**  
**Domestic care work**


Film: *Roma* (dir. Alphonso Cuaron)

**Week 11 - March 23**  
**Globalization and Women’s Health**


**Week 12 - March 20**  
**Wrap up and review**