



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, Haudenosaune, 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

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION



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

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.

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.)

Lorde, Audre. [The Cancer Journals](#). Penguin Classics (October 13, 2020)

Skloot, Rebecca. [The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks](#). Broadway Books (2011).

Mailhot, Terese Marie. [Heart Berries: A Memoir](#). Counterpoint (2018).

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

| Assignment | % grade | Due Date |
|---|----------------|------------------------|
| Online group discussion participation and written summaries | 30% (6 x 5%) | ongoing |
| Short paper 1 | 10% | October 27 |
| Short paper 2 | 10% | February 9 |
| “Take Home” Exam 1 | 25% | TBD End of Fall Term |
| “Take Home” Exam 2 | 25% | TBD End of Winter Term |

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:

| | |
|-------------|----------------------|
| 1:30-2:00 | Whole group check-in |
| 2:00 - 2:30 | Group 1 meets |
| 2:30 - 3:00 | Group 2 meets |
| 3:00- 3:30 | Group 3 meets |
| 3:30 - 4:00 | Group 4 meets |
| 4:00- 4:30 | Group 5 meets |

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

| Week | Date | Topic |
|--|--------------|---|
| MODULE 1 - THE MEDICALIZATION OF WOMEN'S HEALTH | | |
| 1 | September 9 | The politics of women's health |
| 2 | September 16 | The medicalization of female sexuality |
| 3 | September 23 | Epistemic injustice and contested knowledge |
| 4 | September 30 | From medicalization to healthism |
| 5 | October 7 | The corporatization of women's health |
| MODULE 2 - REPRESENTING GENDER AND WOMEN'S HEALTH | | |
| 6 | October 14 | Anatomy and Gynecology |
| 7 | October 21 | Body Image Production |
| 8 | October 28 | Narrativizing Illness |
| FALL READING WEEK | | |
| MODULE 3 - THE POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION | | |
| 9 | November 11 | Birth Control and Reproductive Rights |

| | | |
|--|-------------|---|
| 10 | November 18 | Reproductive Technologies |
| 11 | November 25 | Teen Pregnancy |
| 12 | December 2 | Maternal Mortality |
| MODULE 4 - DIVERSITY AND WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE | | |
| 1 | January 6 | Gender, race and class in medical research |
| 2 | January 13 | Intersectional Approaches |
| 3 | January 20 | Racism and discrimination in Aboriginal women's experience of health care |
| 4 | January 27 | Sexual identification and experiences of health care |
| MODULE 5 - THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN'S HEALTH | | |
| 5 | February 3 | Poverty and food insecurity |
| 6 | February 10 | Violence against women |
| SPRING READING WEEK | | |
| 7 | February 24 | Intergenerational trauma |
| 8 | March 3 | Structural violence and social suffering |
| MODULE 6 - GENDER, WORK AND HEALTH | | |
| 9 | March 10 | The health hazards of low wage labour |
| 10 | March 17 | Domestic care work |
| 11 | March 24 | Globalization and women's health |
| 12 | March 31 | Wrap up and review |

MODULE 1: THE MEDICALIZATION OF WOMEN'S HEALTH

Week 1 - September 9 The politics of women's health

Boscoe, M., Basen, G. Alleyne, G., Bourrier-Lacroix, B. & White, S. (2004). The Women's health movement in Canada: Looking back and moving forward. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 24(1), 7-13.

Preface to the 25th Anniversary of Our Bodies, Ourselves. (1996) The Boston Women's Health Collective. Simon & Schuster, 8-10.

Week 2 - September 16 The medicalization of female sexuality

Ehrenreich, B & English, D. (1990). The sexual politics of sickness. In Conrad, P. & Kern, R (Eds), The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives (3rd edition). St. Martin's Press: New York, pp. 270-284.

Hartley, Heather & Tiefer, Leonore (2003). Taking a Biological Turn: The Push for a "Female Viagra" and the Medicalization of Women's Sexual Problems. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 31(1/2), 42-54

Film: Orgasm, Inc., dir. Liz Canner

Week 3 - September 23 Epistemic injustice and contested knowledge

Kidd, Ian James & Carel, Havi (2017). Epistemic Injustice and Illness. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 34(2), 172-190.

Morgan, K. (1998). Contested Bodies, Contested Knowledges. In S. Sherwin et al. (Eds.), *The Politics of Women's Health: Exploring Agency and Autonomy*. Temple University Press: Indiana. pp. 83-109.

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

Week 4 - September 30 From medicalization to healthism

Crawford, R. (1980). Healthism and the medicalization of everyday life. *International Journal of Health Services*, 10(30), 365-388.

Roy, S. (2007). 'Taking Charge of Your Health': Discourses of Responsibility in English-Canadian Women's Magazines. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 30(3), 463-477.

Week 5 - October 7 The corporatization of women's health

Batt, S. & Lippman, A. (2010). Preventing disease: Are pills the answer? In Anne Rochon Ford & Diane Sabil (Eds.). *The Push to Prescribe: Women and Canadian Drug Policy*. Toronto: Women's Press, pp. 47-66.

Ehrenreich, B. (2001, November). Welcome to Cancerland: A mammogram leads to a cult of pink kitsch. *Harper's*, 45-53.

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

MODULE 2: REPRESENTING GENDER AND WOMEN'S HEALTH

Week 6 - October 14 Anatomy and gynecology

Martin, Emily (1999). The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles. In Hess-Biber, S. Gilmartin, C. & Lydenberg, R. (Eds.) Feminist Approaches to Theory and Methodology: An Interdisciplinary Reader. Oxford University Press. pp. 15-28.

Martin, Emily (1992). Medical Metaphors of Women's Bodies: Menstruation and Menopause. In The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction. Beacon Press. Pp. 27-53.

Week 7 - October 21 Body Image Production

Bordo, Susan (1993). Whose Body Is This?: Feminism, Medicine and the Conceptualization of Eating Disorders. In Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body. University of California Press. Pp. 45-70

Kendall, Mikki (2020). Black Girls Don't Have Eating Disorders. In Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women White Feminists Left Behind. Penguin Random House. pp. 113-126

Week 8 - October 28 Narrativizing Illness

Lorde, Audre (1980) The Cancer Journals. Penguin Classics. Reprint October 13, 2020. pp. 1-77

MODULE 3: THE POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION

Week 9 - November 11 Birth Control and Reproductive Rights

Roberts, Dorothy (1998). The Dark Side of Birth Control. In Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty. Vintage Books. pp. 56-103

Roberts, Dorothy (2003). The Future of Reproductive Choice for Poor Women and Women of Color. In Rose Weitz (Ed.), The Politics of Women's Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance & Behaviour. Oxford University Press. Pp. 282-289.

(recommended) Lopez, I. (1998). An ethnography of the medicalization of Puerto Rican Women's Reproduction. In Lock, M. & Kaufert, PA (Eds.) Pragmatic Women and Body Politics. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 240-259.

Week 10 - November 18 Reproductive Technologies

Majouri, Nadia (2004). Techno-Maternity: Rethinking the Possibilities of Reproductive Technologies. *Third space: a journal of feminist theory and culture* 4(1).

Week 11 - November 25 Teen Pregnancy

Ward, Martha C. (1995). Early Childbearing: What Is the Problem and Who Owns It? In Ginsburg, Faye D. and Rapp, Rayna (Eds.) Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction. University of California Press. Pp. 140-158.

Brubaker, S. (2007). Denied, embracing and resisting medicalization: African American teen mothers' perceptions of formal pregnancy and childbirth care. *Gender and Society*, 24(1), 528-552.

Week 12 - December 2 Maternal Mortality

Morsy, Soheir A. (1995). Deadly Reproduction Among Egyptian Women: Maternal Mortality and the Medicalization of Population Control. In Ginsburg, Faye D. and Rapp, Rayna (Eds.) Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction. University of California Press. Pp. 162-176.

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

Skloot, Rebecca (2011). The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks. Broadway Books. Pages TBD

Week 2 - January 13 Intersectional Approaches

Sherwin, S. (1992). Gender, race and class in the delivery of health care. In No Longer Patient: Feminist Ethics and Health Care. Temple University Press. pp. 223-240.

Bowleg, L. (2012). The problem with the phrase 'women and minorities': Intersectionality - an important theoretical framework for public health. *American Journal of Public Health* 102(7), 1267-73.

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

Browne, Annette J. & Fiske, Jo-Anne (2001). First Nations Women's Encounters with Mainstream Health Care Services. *Western Journal of Nursing Research* 23(2), 126-147.

Benoit, C. Carroll, D. Chaudhry, M. (2003). In search of a healing place: Aboriginal Women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. *Social Science and Medicine*, 56, 821-833.

Wakewich, P. et al. (2016). Colonial legacy and the experience of First Nations women in cervical cancer screening: a Canadian multi-community study. *Critical Public Health* 26(4), 368-380.

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

Stevens, P. (1994). Lesbians' health-related experiences of care and noncare. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 16(6), 639-359.

Bauer, GR, Hammond, R., Travers R., Kaay M., Hohenadel KM, Boyce M. (2009) "I don't think this is theoretical; this is our lives" How erasure impacts health care for transgender people. *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care* 20(5), 348-361.

Guest speaker: Jane Shulman, journalist/activist/scholar, University of Winnipeg

MODULE 5: THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN'S HEALTH

Week 5 - February 3 Poverty and Food Insecurity

Reid, C. (2007). Women's health and the politics of poverty and exclusion. In Morrow, M. Hankivsky, O. & Varcoe, C. (Eds.) Women and Health in Canada: Critical Perspectives on Theory and Policy. University of Toronto Press, pp. 199-220.

Kendall, Mikki (2020). Hunger. In Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women White Feminists Left Behind. Penguin Random House. pp. 31-46

Week 6 - February 10 Violence Against Women

Varcoe, C. & Dick, S. (2008). The intersecting risks of violence and HIV for rural Aboriginal women in a neo-colonial Canadian context. *Journal of Aboriginal Health*, 42-52.

Bourrassa, C. McKay-McNabb, K & Hampton, M. (2004). Racism, sexism and colonialism: The impact on the health of Aboriginal women in Canada. *Canadian Women's Studies*. 24(1), 23-29.

Film: Finding Dawn (dir. Christine Welsh)

Week 7 - February 24 Intergenerational Trauma

Mailhot, Terese Marie (2018). Heart Berries: A Memoir. Counterpoint. pp. 1-160.

Week 8 - March 3 Structural Violence and Social Suffering

Farmer, P. (2001). Invisible Women. In Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues. University of California Press. pp. 59-93.

Garwood, S. (2002). Working to death: Gender, labour and violence in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. *Peace, Conflict and Development: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. pp. 1-24

Shannon, K, Kerr, T., Allinott, S., Chettiar, J., Shoveller, J. Tyndall, M.W. (2008). Social and structural violence and power relations in mitigating HIV risk of drug-using women in survival sex work. *Social Science and Medicine*, 66. 911-921.

MODULE 6: GENDER, WORK AND HEALTH

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

Ehrenreich, B. (2001). Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America. Henry Holt & Co. pp. 11-49.

Messing, K. (1998). One-Eyed Science: Occupational Health and Women Workers. Temple University Press, pp.1-22.

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**

Poo, Ai-jen (2020). Who Cares? Now, All of Us Must. *The New York Review of Books*, May 27, 2020.

Thomhave, Kalena (2018). Who Cares for the Care Workers? *The American Prospect*, December 21, 2018.

Parrenas, R. (2002). The care crisis in the Philippines: Children and transnational families in the new global economy. In Global Woman: Nannies, maids and sex workers in the new economy. Owl Books, pp. 39-54.

Film: Roma (dir. Alphonso Cuaron)

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

Jaggar, A. (2002). Vulnerable women and neo-liberal globalization: Debt burdens undermine women's health in the global south. *Theoretical Medicine* 23, 435-440.

Mohindra, Katia S. (2016). Promoting women's health in an era of globalization: a South Asian Perspective. *Global Health Promotion* 25(2). pp. 90-94

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