Women and Health: Course Perspective & Organization
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 area that is relevant to women and health. The topics covered in this 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 Experiences of Health and Health Care |
| Module 5: | The Social Determinants of Women’s Health |
| Module 6: | Gender, Work, and Health |

Course Objectives
Through engagement with course materials and facilitated in-class 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 difference 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, age, Indigeneity, and sexual identity;
- learn about the gendered dimensions of intersecting social and health inequities, nationally and internationally;
- broaden their understanding of women’s “choices” in relation to their health and reproduction.
Through class discussion and completion of written assignments and papers students will also gain a number of practical skills. Specifically, students will:

(i) develop their ability to read and analyze scholarly and popular texts closely and rigorously;
(ii) learn to question and analyze critically how women’s health issues are framed in the popular media;
(iii) gain experience developing and applying a critical perspective to issues in women’s health;
(iv) participate in informed discussions and critical dialogues about issues relevant to women’s health in an interdisciplinary group setting; and
(v) develop greater reflexivity (self-awareness) of their own understandings of health, its determinants and its relationship to gendered constructions and experiences.

Required Texts and Course Packages
There is no required text book for this course. All readings will be put on OWL. Students will be required to read and write a critical book review of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, which will be made available at the campus bookstore.

Prerequisites
The prerequisite for this course is registration in second year or higher. Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all prerequisites. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as the basis for appeal. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Philosophy: Engaged Pedagogy

“Engaged pedagogy begins with the assumption that we learn best when there is an interactive relationship between student and teacher. As leaders and facilitators, teachers must discover what the students know and what they need to know. This discovery happens only if teachers are willing to engage students beyond a surface level. [...] When we see the classroom as a place where teacher and students can share their ‘inner light’ then we have a way to glimpse who we are and how we might learn together” (hooks, 2010, pp. 19-20)

In keeping with this teaching philosophy, the Instructor will strive to cultivate an inclusive learning environment so that every student has an opportunity to bring something to the class discussion.

The success of this class is dependent on the Instructor and the students coming to class prepared to discuss assigned readings. The Instructor will come to each class prepared to give a lecture and an overview of the key themes and background that are relevant to the week’s topic and to facilitate group discussions. Students are expected to have completed the readings prior to class each week, to bring notes they have made on the readings to class, and to contribute to class discussion on a regular basis. Making notes on readings will assist the student in their written assignments and in preparing for exams.
In this sense, learning is a *co-responsibility* that requires the active participation of all those involved – teachers, teaching assistants and students.

- It is the responsibility of the professor to come to class prepared to lecture on course material, to facilitate student discussion and their engagement with course material, and to address and respond to students’ questions about course material in class and during specified office hours.
- It is the responsibility of the teaching assistants to attend class, assist the professor in the preparation and grading of exams and papers and to address students’ questions about course material during the year and before exams.
- It is the responsibility of students to prepare for class by completing required course readings before class, to attend class regularly and listen to the lectures, take notes in class, and to ask questions about course material in class and on OWL.

Recognition of First Nations Territory
Western University is situated on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaune, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. In close proximity to Western, there are three local First Nations communities: the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region of southwestern Ontario, there are 9 First Nations and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western recognizes the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America) to the development of Canada.

Creating and maintaining a respectful learning environment

**Etiquette in the Classroom**
In order to maintain a respectful and productive learning environment, it is essential that students arrive at class ready to listen and attend to lectures and films. Disrespectful and disruptive behaviour during class will not be tolerated and will affect one’s participation grade. Disrespectful and disruptive behaviour includes the following: texting or talking on mobile phones, chatting on or browsing Facebook or other social media sites, persistent talking during lectures or films, wearing headphones, emailing, and/or surfing the Internet for non-class purposes. Students observed to be engaging in this behaviour during class will be asked to stop. If disruptive behaviour persists, the professor will use her discretion and judgment in deciding how best to deal with the situation. On the first day of class, all students in the class will be invited to share their views on this policy. Student viewpoints will be considered in deciding upon appropriate consequences for disruptive behaviour in the classroom.

**Etiquette for Online Communication**
Students should direct questions concerning the course to their assigned TA *using OWL message*. The TA will field questions and will forward those questions or concerns to the Instructor as they see fit. Responses to students’ emails will be made as promptly as possible. If a student does not receive a response from the TA within 48 hours, a second email is acceptable as a polite reminder of the student’s question or concern. If you need to contact the course instructor, please do so by *sending an OWL message*. Please do NOT email the Instructor except for in cases of emergency when it is not possible to access OWL.
Support Services
Registrar’s Office: http://www.registrar.uwo.ca
Student Development Centre -- http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/
Student Support Services: https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login
Services provided by the USC: http://westernusc.ca/services/
Academic Support and Engagement: http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/
Student Health -- https://www.uwo.ca/health/
Ombudsperson Office -- http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness at:
http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

For immediate help in the event of a crisis, phone 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.

University Policies

COVID-Related Policies

It is our collective responsibility to manage COVID-related risks in the classroom and to ensure that the classroom is comfortable for everyone. To the best of your ability, please practice physical distancing. Currently, masking is not required. Please note that policies on masking may change.

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence when we are mandated to deliver courses online, the course will proceed either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable), asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience), or using a combination of the two. The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Use of Electronic Devices

During Exams: Unless you have medical accommodations that require you to do so, or explicit permission from the instructor of the course, you may not use any electronic devices during ANY tests, quizzes, midterms, examinations, or other in-class evaluations.

During Lectures and Tutorials: Although you are welcome to use a computer during lecture and tutorial periods, you are expected to use the computer for scholastic purposes only, and refrain from engaging in any activities that may distract other students from learning. From time to time, your professor may ask the class to turn off all computers, to facilitate learning or discussion of the material presented in a particular class. Unless explicitly noted otherwise, you may not make audio or video recordings of lectures – nor may you edit, re-use, distribute, or re-broadcast any of the material posted to the course website.
Accommodation Policies

Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

Accommodation for Late/Missed Assignments and Tests

It is the expectation that students will submit assignments by, and write tests and/or examinations on, the assigned dates. Students may proactively request permission from the Instructor (via OWL message) to submit assignments up to two days past the assigned date so that they can manage times of intense workload. Students who submit assignments late without obtaining academic consideration or making a prior agreement with the Instructor will be penalized 3% for every 24-hour period past the assignment deadline.

The University recognizes that a student’s ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by extenuating circumstances, including short-term illness or injury. Reasonable academic consideration is a cooperative process between the University, the student, and academic staff. All participants in the process must act in good faith, and fulfil their respective obligations, if it is to succeed.

Students who experience an extenuating circumstance (illness, injury, or other extenuating circumstance) sufficiently significant as to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements, may submit a request for academic consideration through the following routes:

i. For medical absences, submitting a Student Medical Certificate (SMC) signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner in order to be eligible for Academic Consideration; or

ii. For non-medical absences, submitting appropriate documentation (e.g., obituary, police report, accident report, court order, etc.) to Academic Counselling in their Faculty of registration in order to be eligible for academic consideration. Students are encouraged to contact their Academic Counselling unit to clarify what documentation is appropriate.

Students seeking academic consideration:

• are advised to consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying handing in work;
• are encouraged to make appropriate decisions, based on their specific circumstances, recognizing that minor ailments (e.g., upset stomach) or upsets (e.g., argument with a friend) are not normally an appropriate basis for a self-reported absence;
• must communicate with their instructors no later than 24 hours after the end of the period covered by the SMC or immediately upon their return following a documented absence;
• are advised that all necessary documentation, forms, etc. are to be submitted to academic counselling within two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities.

For the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

For Western University’s Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences, see: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf
**Religious Accommodation**
Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is provided here: https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo

**Attendance**
Attendance will be recorded. Persistent absenteeism (3 weeks or more/term) may be rendered grounds for failure in the course in accordance with the policies of the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies and the School of Health Studies. Persistent absenteeism will result in being contacted by the instructor, who may request a meeting. Continued absence after this point will be reported to the Undergraduate Chair.

**Turnitin**
All required papers will 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 for such checking 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 of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com http://www.turnitin.com.

**Scholastic Offences**
Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

**Health and Wellness**
As part of a successful undergraduate experience at Western, we encourage you to make your health and wellness a priority. To support physical activity, all students receive membership in Western’s Campus Recreation Centre as part of their registration fees. Further information regarding health and wellness-related services available to students may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/.

If you are in emotional or mental distress, refer to Mental Health@Western http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. As well, Thames Valley Family Services (https://www.familyservicethamesvalley.com/) is a trusted provider within the community. If you don’t want to reach out to formal services, you may want to have a wellness safety plan in place with a few trusted individuals.

Getting involved in community events can be beneficial to your health. There are numerous cultural events offered at Western throughout the year. Please check out the Faculty of Music web page (http://www.music.uwo.ca/) and the McIntosh Gallery (http://mcintoshgallery.ca/). As well, the local London community offers many cultural events that may be of interest.
Grade Descriptions
The university-wide descriptor of the meaning of letter grades, as approved by Senate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>Superior work that is clearly above average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>Good work, meeting all requirements and eminently satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Competent work, meeting requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>Fair work, minimally acceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 50</td>
<td>Fail</td>
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It is expected that the grades for this course will fall between 72-76. In the event that the course average falls outside this range, the grades will be reviewed by the instructor, in consultation with the Undergraduate Chair, to see if an adjustment is necessary to bring the average in line with this expectation.

Evaluation

Engagement (2 X 10% = 20%)
Engagement includes regular attendance and thoughtful contributions during class and online. Guidance for what constitutes thoughtful contribution will be provided in class. Each term, the following will be considered in evaluating engagement:

- **Attendance**: Up to 5 points for consistent attendance. Attendance will be recorded each week. A rubric for attendance points will be posted on OWL.
- **Contributions**: This will be graded primarily on the basis of participation in in-class and on-line discussions. Other opportunities to contribute will also be provided and may include: responses to prompts or questions posed during lecture; brief reports of attendance at seminars related to course themes; completion of critical thinking practice drills. Guidance will be posted on OWL.

Papers: (2 X 15% = 30%)

**Term 1: Critical Media Analysis** (due November 16, in class)
The objective of this paper is to test students’ understandings of key course concepts and cultivate students’ close reading and critical analysis skills. Students will be asked to compose a critical analysis of a news media article or other media piece that focuses on gendered constructions of health. Students are required to select their own media piece. Detailed instructions and guidance will be provided in class and on OWL.

**Term 2: Critical Book Review** (due April 5, in class)
For this assignment, students will read and review the book *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot. Students will critically reflect on the themes of the book and relate them to relevant course concepts. Detailed instructions and guidance will be provided in class and on OWL.

Exams: (50% total: 2 X 25%)
The December exam will cover material from September to December. The April exam will cover material from January to April. Dates and locations of exams are set by the Registrar’s Office. All material covered in class (including regular and guest lectures, films and other learning materials) is testable.
Assignments must be submitted in class and on OWL. Assignments will NOT be accepted by email.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MODULE 1 – THE MEDICALIZATION OF WOMEN’S HEALTH</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sept 14</td>
<td>The politics of “women’s health”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sept 21</td>
<td>The medicalization of female sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sept 28</td>
<td>Women and medicalization</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Oct 5</td>
<td>From medicalization to healthism and risk</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oct 12</td>
<td>The corporatization of women’s health</td>
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<tr>
<td>MODULE 2 – REPRESENTING GENDER AND WOMEN’S HEALTH</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Oct 19</td>
<td>Representations of gender and health in the biomedical sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 26</td>
<td>Representations of gender and health in popular culture</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>fall reading week (oct 31-nov 6)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nov 9</td>
<td>Appearance-related health issues in the media: Cosmetic surgery</td>
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<tr>
<td>MODULE 3 – THE POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nov 16</td>
<td>The politics of birth                                  <strong>Critical Media Analysis due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nov 23</td>
<td>Reproductive “choice”</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nov 30</td>
<td>Race and reproductive “choice”</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Dec 7</td>
<td>Reproductive technologies</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>Study Day: Dec 9; Exams: Dec 10-22</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>MODULE 4 – DIVERSITY AND EXPERIENCES OF HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jan 11</td>
<td>Critical book review – part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jan 18</td>
<td>Intersectional approaches to health and health care</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jan 25</td>
<td>Indigenous women</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Feb 1</td>
<td>Black Canadian women</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Feb 8</td>
<td>Sexually diverse and gender nonconforming identities</td>
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<tr>
<td>MODULE 5 – THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN’S HEALTH</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Feb 15</td>
<td>Violence against women</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>spring reading week (feb 18-26)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>March 1</td>
<td>Critical book review – part 2</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Mar 8</td>
<td>Structural violence and social suffering</td>
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<tr>
<td>MODULE 6 – GENDER, WORK, AND HEALTH</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>Challenging gendered constructions of work and work safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>March 22</td>
<td>Domestic labour in the global economy</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mar 29</td>
<td>Globalization, gender, and health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Apr 5</td>
<td>Exam Review                                             <strong>Critical Book Review due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Study days: April 11, 12; Exams: Apr 13-30</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Please note that required readings may change slightly! All readings will be put on OWL.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All required readings are posted on OWL.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**TERM 1: SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER, 2021**

**MODULE 1: THE MEDICALIZATION OF WOMEN’S HEALTH**

**Week 1 – September 14**

*Introduction: The politics of “women’s health”*


**Week 2 – September 21**

*The medicalization of female sexuality*


*Film: Orgasm, Inc.*

**Week 3 – September 28**

*Women and medicalization*


*Film: The Pill*
Week 4 – October 5

From medicalization to healthism and risk


Week 5 – October 12

The corporatization of women’s health


Film: Pink Ribbons, Inc.

Module 2: Representing Gender and Women’s Health

Week 6 – October 19

Representations of gender and health in the biomedical sciences


### Week 7 – October 26

**Representations of gender and health in popular culture**


### October 31 - November 6 – fall reading week

### Week 8 – November 9

**Appearance-related health issues in the media: Cosmetic surgery**


*Film:* The Perfect Vagina - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nw9qKI4D3o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nw9qKI4D3o)

### MODULE 3: THE POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION

### Week 9 – November 16

**The politics of birth**

*Critical Media Analysis paper due in class and on OWL*


### Week 10 – November 23

**Reproductive “choice”**


*Film:* The Business of Being Born

### Week 11 – November 30

**Race and reproductive “choice”**


*Film:* The Last Abortion Clinic

### Week 12 – December 7

**Reproductive technologies**


*Film:* Making Babies
## TERM 2: JANUARY – APRIL, 2022

### MODULE 4: DIVERSITY AND EXPERIENCES OF HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE

#### Week 1 – January 11

**Critical book review – part 1**


#### Week 2 – January 18

**Intersectional approaches to health and health care**


#### Week 3 – January 25

**Indigenous women**


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#### Week 4 – February 1

**Black Canadian women**


Week 5 – February 8

Sexually diverse and gender nonconforming identities


Film: On Hold: Canadian Transgender Health Access, https://video.vice.com/en_ca/video/on-hold-canadian-transgender-health-access/55d64adb1956df9a33a757fe

MODULE 5: THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN’S HEALTH

Week 6 – February 15

Violence against women


February 18-26 – spring reading week

Week 7– March 1

Critical Book Review – part 2

## Week 8 – March 8

**Structural violence and social suffering**


## MODULE 6: GENDER, WORK, AND HEALTH

### Week 9 – March 15

**Challenging gendered constructions of work and work safety**


### Week 10 – March 22

**Domestic labour in the global economy**


Week 11 – March 29

Globalization, gender, and health


Film: Maquilapolis, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3EGupx8u18

Week 12 – April 5

Exam Review

Critical Book Review paper due in class and on OWL