History 79-234
Body Politics: Women and Health in America

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Office Hours:
  my office—MW 10:30-11:30, or by appt.
  skibo coffee—M 3:00-5:00p.m.

Course Description
This course is an introduction to the history of women’s health.
Women’s bodies have been the site of long-standing (and sometimes deadly) political battles. This course investigates both the biology and politics of women’s health, seeing the two as inextricably related. By the end of this course, you should have a firm understanding of how current debates are shaped by history. You should begin to see that history does not always march forward with inevitable progress and that biology and science are not simply objective, but often subjective, being deeply implicated in the politics and history of inequality. Throughout this course, you should formulate your own ideas about why women’s bodies are such heated sites of struggle and, ideally, to develop resistance strategies to the politics that compromise women’s health, freedom, and happiness.

Course Objectives
At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Identify the components of female reproductive anatomy, describe the ovulatory and endometrial cycles,
  discuss their relationship, predict when ovulation will occur, and describe how various other biological actions work, including sexual differentiation.
- Identify and describe the major historical shifts in thinking about women and health.
- Explain how and why socio-cultural factors influence our understanding and experience of health, biology, sex, and science.
- To identify the major arguments of readings and to analyze those arguments (in written work and in discussion). More specifically...
  --summarize the theses of readings.
  --identify underlying premises—particularly whether an argument is rooted in essentialist, preventative, pathological, systemic/institutional, or individualistic thinking.
  --identify the silences and absences of an argument.
  --examine how the author is defining women and health.
  --evaluate evidence.
  --connect individual readings to information presented in other readings, lecture, and discussion.
  --Having done the above, you should be able to comfortably assess the merits and/or demerits of a particular argument.
- List current debates about women’s health and connect them to their historical roots.
- Locate information about women’s health and, equally important, distinguish the veracity, political inflection, and reliability of different resources.
- Create your own definition of (and strategies for) women’s health and well being.
Readings and Texts

The following three required books are available for purchase at the CMU bookstore (and online). In addition to these, there will be additional primary documents and secondary articles. These will be made available in class and on Blackboard (BB). All readings should be completed by the date listed on the syllabus.

2) Boston Women’s Health Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves: For a New Century* (OBOS)—recommended
3) Nancy Worcester and Marianne Whatley, *Women’s Health: Readings on Social, Economic, and Political Issues* (WW)
4) Course Reader (BB)

Written Work, Attendance, and Grading

There will be no major exams or papers in this class. Rather, we will work on skills and proficiency in smaller, more continuous increments. We will do this in a variety of ways, each counting toward your final grade in the percentage outlined below. There will be four short, in-class quizzes (roughly 15 minutes each), five short, take-home papers (2-4 pages each, the lowest grade being dropped), a journal assignment, a media watch assignment, and several other smaller assignments. These will all fit seamlessly into the material, helping you understand, process, and own it. Participation and preparedness will also count toward your final grade. Attendance is mandatory. More than two absences will severely affect your final grade.

Grading
Quizzes 20%
Short Papers 40%
Participation, Preparedness, and Attendance 15%
Journal 10%
Media Watch Assignment 5%
Other Assignments 10%

The value and success of this class depends upon the willingness of its members to read, to listen, to share ideas, to challenge themselves as well as each other, and to ask questions. What you gain from this course will reflect the time and effort you put into it.

Office Hours

So that we might continue our conversations in a comfortable location, and so that we might get to know each other a bit better, I will be in the student union coffee shop for two hours every week. Everyone is free to drop in for chatting, with or without agenda, about everything and anything. In addition to this more informal time, I will also have regular office hours, in my office. I am also available by appointment.

If you have concerns or comments over the semester, please feel free to share them with me. I want you to enjoy and benefit from this course, so I welcome your thoughts, in any form.

Plagiarism

Your work must be your own. Be advised that any student plagiarizing will automatically fail the course and will be brought before the university disciplinary board.
Class Schedule

M 1/23 ★ The Politics of the Health Care System

OBOS: Chapter 31, “The Politics of Women’s Health,” 719
WW: Mary Halas, “Sexism in Women’s Medical Care,” 4
Adriane Fugh-Berman, “Tales Out of Medical School,” 56
Vanessa Gamble, “Under the Shadow of Tuskegee,” 108
“Health Disparities in the United States,” 92
Gloria Steinem, “If Men Could Menstruate—A Political Fantasy,” 195

reading/writing skill exercise due in class—finding theses

W 1/25 ★ The Women’s Health Movement in Historical Perspective

OBOS: Ch 30, “Navigating the Health Care System,” 701
Morton Hunt, “How to Tell Your Doctor a Thing or Two,” 24
Gloria Steinem, “If Men Could Menstruate—A Political Fantasy,” 195
Karen Johnson, “Pro: Women’s Health, Developing a New Interdisciplinary Specialty,” 8
Michelle Harrison, “CON: Women’s Health as a Specialty,” 12
“Women’s Health Events of the 20th Century,” 41
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Our Girls” lecture (1870)

reading/writing skill exercise due in class—using and citing evidence

M 1/30 ★ Uterus on the Loose! 19th Century Attitudes About Women’s Reproductive Anatomy

Barbara Ehrenreich and Dierdre English, “The Sexual Politics of Sickness,” in For Her Own Good: 150 Years of Experts’ Advice to Women (1978)
Dr. Edward Clarke, Sex in Education (1875), excerpt, in Root of Bitterness, 2nd ed., 330-333.

reading/writing skill exercise due in class—making connections

W 2/1 ★ 21st Century Anatomy Lessons

OBOS: Ch 13, “Sexual Anatomy,” partial, 228-242
WW: Jennifer Johnson, “Exposed at Last, The Truth About Your Clitoris,” 387

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M 2/6 ★ Sex Differentiation and Intersexuality

WW: "Exploring the Biological Contributions to Human Health, Does Sex Matter?"
Kathal Pollitt, "Are Women Morally Superior to Men?" Nation, 28 December 1992, 799-807
John Cloud, "His Name is Aurora," Time, 25 September 2000, 90-91

Recommended: Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female are Not Enough," The Sciences (March/April 1993), 20-20, & "Letters from Readers," The Sciences (July/Aug 1993), 3-4
Angela Moreno, "Am I a Woman or a Man?" Mademoiselle, March 1998, 178ff

reading/writing/skill exercise due in class—identifying underlying premises

W 2/8 ★ The Biology of Menstruation

WW: Mariamme Whatley, "Male and Female Hormones Revisited," 153

Paper 1 due Friday in my office

M 2/13 ★ The History, Culture, and Politics of Menstruation

WW: Steinem, "If Men Could Menstruate," 195, review
Janet Lee, "Menarche and the (Hetro)Sexualization of the Female Body," 196
Teen Voices, "Don't Just Go with the Flow," 212
Andrea Eagan, "The Selling of Premenstrual Syndrome," 217
BB: Peter Kramer, "Female Troubles"

first journal entry due in class

W 2/15 ★ Reproductive Rights in the 19th Century

Feminists for Life Ad, 1990s

M 2/20 ★ Margaret Sanger’s Crusade to Legalize Contraception quiz in class

BB: Margaret Sanger, "My Fight for Birth Control" (1931), and Intro to the Document, from Alice Rossi, ed., The Feminist Papers (1973)
Letters to Women to Margaret Sanger’s Birth Control Review (1917-1918)
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Eliza Mosher, “A Protest Against Teaching Birth Control,” *Medical Woman’s Journal* 32 (1925), 36

**W 2/22 ★ Contraception Wars**

OBOS: Ch 18, “Birth Control,” 322 (read only your assigned portion, TBA in class)

WW: Lissner, “Eight New Non-hormonal Contraceptive Methods for Men”

BB: Readings TBA

**journal entries due in class**

**M 2/27 ★ A Revolution in Birth Control: The History of the Pill**

BB: Patricia Robinson and Black Sisters, “Poor Black Women,” 1968 and

WW: Willis, “The Pill May Not Mix Well with Other Drugs.” 452

**W 3/1 ★ Roe v. Wade: Origins and Outcomes**


Other readings TBA...

Recommended: OBOS, Ch 20 “Abortion,” 415

**journal entries due in class**

**M 3/6 ★ Reproductive Activism Since Roe: the 1980s & the 1990s**


**W 3/8 ★ The State of Reproductive Rights at the Turn of the Century ★ quiz 2 in class**

**Media Watch Assignment Begun**
You will find your own readings from the popular media for this session.

**Paper 2 due Friday in my office**

★ ★ ★ Spring Break ★ ★ ★
M 3/20 ★ Sexuality in Historical Context

TBP: Ch 5, “The Disappearance of Virginity,” 139

W 3/22 ★ Issues in the History of Contemporary Sexuality

WW: Tolman and Higgins, “How Being a Good Girl Can Be Bad for Girls,” 389
Marcia and Lisa Douglass, “The Orgasm Gap,” 399
Jennifer Potter, “Do Ask, Do Tell,” 416
Charles Moser, “Health Care Without Shame,” 420
Leslie Feinberg, “Trans Health Crisis,” 423
Anne Finger, “Forbidden Fruit,” 426
Jane Porcino, “Need for Intimacy,” 428

“Questions for the Heterosexual”

Recommended: Audio: “81 Words,” This American Life radio segment on removing homosexuality from the DSM (1 hr.)
Movie: “Kinsey,” available at a video store or library near you
OBOS: Section 2, Relationships and Sexuality, pp. 139-224

Journal entries due in class

M 3/27 ★ Oppression as a Health Issue

WW: Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,” 79
Audre Lorde, “There is No Hierarchy of Oppression,” 83
Sherover-Marcuse, “Unlearning Racism,” 84
Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” 85
“Health Disparities in the United States,” 92
Withrow, “Strained Class Windows,” 125


W 3/29 ★ Advertising and the Appearance of Health

WW: Whatley, “The Picture of Health,” 169
Kuczynski, “Treating Disease with a Famous Face,” 178
NWHN, “‘Manufacturing Need, Manufacturing ‘Knowledge,’” 180
Healthfacts, “Those Omnipresent Prescription Drug Ads,” 184
Healthfacts, “How to Read a Drug Ad,” 185

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M 4/3 ★ Body Projects: Image as Identity

TBP: Ch 4 “Body Projects,” 95
WW: Zuckerman, “Regarding the FDA’s Approval of Saline Breast Implants”
   Worcester, “Nourishing Ourselves,” 326
   Worcester, “Fatphobia,” 336
   Sternhall, “We’ll Always Be Fat But We Can Be Fit,” 341
   Mc Affee and Lyons, “Weight and Health: Analyzing the Surgeon General’s ‘Call to Action,’” 345

Recommended: OBOS, Ch 1 “Body Image,” 3
               OBOS, Ch 2 “Eating Well,” 19
               OBOS, Ch 4, “Our Bodies in Motion,” 57

Journal entries due in class

W 4/5 ★ Mental Health, Drugs, and Gender Roles

WW: Lesley Doyal, “Hazards of Health and Home,” 137
    Greaves, “What is a Theory of Women’s Smoking?” 303
    Weissman, “Women and Tobacco,” 305
    Sandmairer, “Alcoholics Invisible,” 308
    Brower, “Are College Students Alcoholics?” 314
    Kasl, “The 12 Step Controversy,” 321
    NWHN, “Manufacturing Need, Manufacturing ‘Knowledge,’” 180
    AMSA, “PharmFree Campaign,” 182

BB: Excerpts from a 1941 Home Economics Textbook

Recommended: OBOS, Ch 3 “Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Mood-Altering Drugs,” 45
               OBOS, Ch 6, “Emotional Well-Being,” 82
               OBOS, Ch 7, “Environmental and Occupational Health,” 96

M 4/10 ★ Breast Cancer: A Gendered Case Study of Disease ★ quiz 3 in class ★

    Arditti and Schreiber, “Breast Cancer: The Environmental Connection,” 571
    NWHN, “Breast Cancer and Women of Color,” 557
    Healthfacts, “It’s Breast Cancer Awareness Month,” 580
    Healthfacts, “Surgeon Mammography Critic,” 581
    Arditti, “Tamoxifen: Breast Cancer Prevention That’s Hard to Swallow,” 583

               Susan Love, Dr. Susan Love’s Breast Book (2005)

W 4/12 ★ Sexually Transmitted Infections, and HIV/AIDS

WW: Lissner, “Eight New Non-hormonal Contraceptive Methods for Men”
    Suiter, “Waging War on STDs and Drugmaker Apathy,” 603
    Camlin, “With of Without the Damn Thing,” 605
    Piot, “A Gendered Epidemic,” 609

Journal entries due in class

Paper 4 due Friday in my office
M 4/17 ★ Violence Against Women & Women Organizing in Self-Defense

WW: Chapter 6 (entire): Intimate Partner Violence and Health, 255-299
BB: Readings TBA

Recommended: OBOS, Ch 8 "Violence and Abuse," 118

W 4/19 ★ Surviving Violence in a Sexist System: Guest to Visit Class (no assigned readings)

journal entries due in class

M 4/24 ★ History and Politics of Pregnancy and Childbirth

BB: Judith Leavitt, On the History of Childbirth
Mumford, "Childless by Choice," Isthmus (Madison, WI), 19 July 1996

Recommended: OBOS, Childbirth, Ch 21-25
Ann Pappert, "What Price Pregnancy?" Ms. (June/July 2000), 43-49
Gaskin, "Induced and Seduced: The Dangers of Cytotec," Mothering (July/Aug 2001)
Lerner, "Striking a Balance as AIDS Enters the Formula Fray," Ms. (March/April 1998)

W 4/26 ★ Midwife and/or Doula to Visit Class (no assigned readings)

Paper 5 due Friday in my office

M 5/1 ★ Aging and Menopause [quiz 4 in class]

WW: Macdonald, "An Open Letter to the Women’s Movement,” 530
Allina and Pearson, “Now the Truth is Known,” 550
Fugh-Berman, “Phytoestrogens: A New Alternative?” 554
Groopman, “Hormones for Men: Is Male Menopause a Question of Medicine or Marketing?” 557

Maryann Napoli, “Bone Scam,” Ms. (March/April 1997), 28-30

Recommended: OBOS, Growing Older, Ch 26 & 27, 525

final journal due in class, or Tuesday in my office

W 5/3 ★ Reflections and Wrap Up—OR, Where to go from Here? (no assigned reading)

★★★ Congratulations!!! — and Good Health!!! ★★★

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