

WOMEN AND HEALTH

Women's Studies / Psychology 275

Spring 2006

Thursdays 5:10 – 7 p.m.

GG 402 (Psychology Department, 2125 G St NW)

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How is women's health constructed by medical, psychological, and critical theorists? How do sexism, racism, and classism contribute to women's health problems and inform the way we think about health and illness? What are the conditions that lead to optimal health and well-being? We will address these questions by reading theoretical and empirical analyses of current topics in women's health, such as: hormones/PMS/menopause, reproduction, sexuality, body image and eating disorders, exercise and sports, disability, HIV/AIDS, cancer, smoking, mental health, and alternative healing.

Course Policies:

- Academic integrity: I expect all students to know and work in compliance with the GW Code of Academic Integrity. See <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html> for more information.
- Late work: You are expected to complete all work by the assigned due date. Late papers may be marked down.
- Incompletes: I will only grant incompletes under extraordinary circumstances that occur in the second part of the semester.
- Religious observances: If you will miss class because of a religious observance, please let me know in advance to make alternate arrangements.
- Accommodations for students with disabilities: I will provide any reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities that will assist in making this course accessible and will provide an optimal educational experience for everyone. I will expect to receive documentation from DSS about the kinds of accommodations that you require. Please speak to me at the beginning of the semester so that we can make an effective plan.
- Blackboard usage: All students will be required to use Blackboard as part of the course. It can be accessed at <http://gwu.blackboard.com/>

Assignments:

- Class participation: This class is small and discussion-based, so your active participation is necessary to make things go well. In order to participate you must be in regular attendance and contribute thoughtfully to class discussion and activities.
- Discussion questions: Students will be responsible for submitting discussion questions each week. These should be 2-4 questions, based on the week's readings, that you would be

interested in discussing. **These questions must be posted on Blackboard by 9 a.m. on the day of class**, so that your classmates and I have a chance to see your thinking before we meet that evening. If for some reason you are unable post on Blackboard, send them to me via e-mail and I will post them.

- **Short paper:** A short paper (4-5 pages) will be due at the beginning of class on March 9th. Please write on one of the two topics below.
 1. Take a topic from the first section of the course (through 3/2) and examine the issues in a more in-depth manner. You may rely heavily on the assigned reading for that week; additionally, you should incorporate at least two, but no more than five, external academic sources. You have several choices for the format of the assignment:
 - letter to an editor
 - policy position paper
 - mini funding proposal
 - persuasive letter to a friend/family member
 2. Write a reaction to the portrayal of women's bodies, fitness and health in the 2006 Winter Olympics (February 10 – 26). For this assignment you will need to briefly describe and then analyze either a television or print media representation of female Olympians. Your analysis should be based on your own thinking, as informed by the class readings and discussions. The class on "Exercise, Sports & Athleticism" (March 2nd) may be particularly helpful. Additionally, you should incorporate at least two, but no more than five, external academic sources.
- **Final Paper:** Your final project will be a 12 - 16 page research paper on a topic in "Women and Health" that is of interest to you. You may choose something that we will be covering together in class or an entirely different topic (if you have concerns about whether your topic is appropriate, please see me). I expect that you will bring your particular interests and training to this project; any topic can be approached from a variety of disciplines and perspectives. It is my hope that in writing this paper you will clarify your thinking/knowledge about women and health in a way that helps integrate this course with the rest of your studies.

Some specific expectations

- Include both theoretical and empirical work in your references
- Incorporate some of the core theory/concepts from class readings and discussions into your analysis
- Include attention to the intersectionality of identity statuses (e.g., gender, race, class, etc.)
- Consider what forms of activism might be useful to improve women's health in the domain you are studying

Timeline

The paper is due in parts (see chart on p. 3). The purpose of this is to have multiple chances to get feedback on your project, and to be able to create an improved end-product through revisions of earlier drafts. **Each time you turn in a part of your paper, please include all previous versions that have my comments on them!**

Final Paper Timeline

Assignment	Due
Paper Proposal -general statement of topic -preliminary reference list -more detailed outline (optional)	beginning of class on February 9 th
Rough Draft -complete draft of your paper	beginning of class on April 6 th (earlier is welcome)
Final Draft -final version of your paper, incorporating earlier comments	5 p.m. on May 8 th

Notes on grading:

- Discussion questions and the proposal and rough draft of your final paper will be evaluated on a three point basis: excellent (check-plus), satisfactory (check), and unsatisfactory (check-minus). These grades will convert to A, B+, and C-, respectively, at the end of the semester.
- Class participation, the short paper, and final draft of your final paper will be evaluated using traditional letter grades.
- All grades will be posted on Blackboard.

Summary of grading percentage points:

Class participation	15%	Final paper proposal	5%
Discussion questions	15% (total)	Final paper rough draft	10%
Short paper	20%	Final paper final draft	35%

Required Readings:

Books: The Boston Women's Health Book Collective (2005). *Our bodies, ourselves: A new edition for a new era*. New York: Simon & Schuster. [Referred to below as "OBOS."].

Thompson, B. W. (1994). *A hunger so wide and so deep: A multiracial view of women's eating problems*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Coursepack: articles are available on Blackboard.

Angier, N. (1999). Cheap meat: Learning to make a muscle. In *Woman: An intimate geography* (pp. 311-327). New York: Anchor Books.

Ashing-Giwa, K. T., Padilla, G., Tejero, J., Kraemer, J., Wright, K., Coscarelli, A., Clayton, S., Williams, I., & Hills, D. (2004). Understanding the breast cancer experience of women: A qualitative study of African American, Asian American, Latina and Caucasian cancer survivors. *Psycho-Oncology*, *13*, 408-428.

Avery, B. Y. (1990). Breathing life into ourselves: The evolution of the National Black Women's Health Project. In E. C. White (Ed.), *The Black women's health book* (pp. 4-10). Seattle: Seal Press.

Blankenship, K. M. (1998). A race, class and gender analysis of thriving. *Journal of Social Issues*, *54*, 393-404.

Caplan, P. J. (1992). Driving us crazy: How oppression damages women's mental health and what we can do about it. *Women & Therapy*, *12*, 5-28.

Chesney, M. A., & Nealy, J. B. (1996). Smoking and cardiovascular disease risk in women: Issues for prevention and women's health. In P. M. Kato & T. Mann (Eds.), *Handbook of diversity issues in health psychology* (pp. 199-218). New York: Plenum Press.

Chrisler, J. C., & Caplan, P. (2002). The strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Hyde: How PMS became a cultural phenomenon and psychiatric disorder. *Annual Review of Sex Research*, *13*, 274-306.

Finfgeld, D. L. (2001). New directions for feminist therapy based on social constructionism. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, *15*, 148-154.

Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T. (1997). Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *21*, 173-206.

Gaylord, S. (1999). Alternative therapies and empowerment of older women. *Journal of Women & Aging*, *11*, 29-47.

- Goldman, M. B., & Hatch, M. C. (2000). An overview of women and health. In M. B. Goldman & M. C. Hatch (Eds.), *Women and health* (pp. 5-14). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Gomez, J. L., & Smith, B. (1990). Taking the home out of homophobia: Black lesbian health. In E. C. White (Ed.), *The Black women's health book* (pp. 198-213). Seattle: Seal Press.
- Grayson, D. R. (1996-1997). The racial model for genetic illness identity: Breast cancer research and Black women. *Michigan Feminist Studies*, 11, 1-24.
- Guthrie, S. R., & Castelnuovo, S. (1992). Elite women bodybuilders: Models of resistance or compliance? *Play & Culture*, 5, 401-408.
- Guyll, M., Matthews, K. A., & Bromberger, J. T. (2001). Discrimination and unfair treatment: Relationship to cardiovascular reactivity among African American and European American women. *Health Psychology*, 20, 315-325.
- Hardisty, J. V., & Leopold, E. (1996). Cancer and poverty: Double jeopardy for women. In M. B. Lykes, A. Banuazizi, R. Liem, & M. Morris (Eds.), *Myths about the powerless: Contesting social inequalities* (pp. 219-236). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Krieger, N. (1999). Embodying inequality: A review of concepts, measures, and methods for studying health consequences of discrimination. *International Journal of Health Services*, 29, 295-352.
- Landrine, H., & Klonoff, E. A. (1996). The schedule of racist events: A measure of racial discrimination and a study of its negative physical and mental health consequences. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 22, 144-168.
- Mairs, N. (1986). On being a cripple. In *Plaintext* (pp. 9-20). Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.
- Murphy, E. M. (2003). Being born female is dangerous for your health. *American Psychologist*, 58, 205-210.
- Mutrie, N. & Choi, P. Y. L. (2000). Is 'fit' a feminist issue? Dilemmas for exercise psychology. *Feminism & Psychology*, 10, 544-551.
- Neath, J. (1997). Social causes of impairment, disability, and abuse: A feminist perspective. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 8, 195-230.
- Norsigian, J., Diskin, V., Doress-Worters, P., Pincus, J., Sanford, W., & Swenson, N. (1999). The Boston women's health book collective and *Our Bodies, Ourselves*: A brief history and reflection. *Journal of the American Medical Women's Association*, 54, 35-39.
- O'Grady, K. (2003). New evidence about hormone replacement therapy: Turning the tide in the menopause wars. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 31, 137-144.

- Ortiz-Torres, B., Williams, S. P., & Ehrhardt, A. A. (2003). Urban women's gender scripts: Implications for HIV prevention. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 5, 1-17.
- Rothblum, E. D. (2000). Sexual orientation and sex in women's lives: Conceptual and methodological issues. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56, 193-204.
- Rothblum, E. D. (2003). "Somewhere in Des Moines or San Antonio" Historical perspectives on lesbian, gay, and bisexual mental health. In L. D. Garnets, & D. C. Kimmel (Eds.), *Psychological perspectives on lesbian, gay and bisexual experiences*, 2nd edition (pp. 655-680). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Samuels, E. (2003). Excerpts from: Body of mine: A mother-daughter love story. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 31, 190-193.
- Specter, M. (2001, December 17). India's plague. *The New Yorker*, 74-85.
- Steingraber, S. (1997). Space. In *Living downstream: An ecologist looks at cancer and the environment* (pp. 57-86). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.
- Surgeon General (2001). Health Consequence of Tobacco Use Among Women — Fact Sheet. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr/sgr_forwomen/factsheet_consequences.htm
- Tolman, D. L., Striepe, M. I., & Harmon, T. (2003). Gender matters: Constructing a model of adolescent sexual health. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 40, 4-12.
- Wendell, S. (1996). Disability and feminist ethics. In *The rejected body: Feminist philosophical reflections on disability* (pp. 139-163). New York: Routledge.
- Whittle, K. L., & Inhorn, M. C. (2001). Rethinking difference: A feminist reframing of gender/race/class for the improvement of women's health research. *International Journal of Health Services*, 31, 147-165.
- Wise, L. A., Zierler, S., Krieger, N., & Harlow, B. L. (2001). Adult onset of major depressive disorder in relation to early life violent victimisation: a case-control study. *The Lancet*, 358, 881-887.

SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
1/19	Course introduction		
1/26	Overview of women's health and the women's health movement	Goldman & Hatch Whittle & Inhorn Avery Norsigian et al. OBOS, ch. 31 (pp. 719-729)	Discussion questions*
2/2	Systems of oppression and women's health	Krieger Landrine & Klonoff Gomez & Smith OBOS, ch. 31 (pp. 733-744)	Discussion questions*
2/9	Reproductive system, part 1 Hormones, menstrual cycle	Chrisler & Caplan O'Grady OBOS, ch. 13	Discussion questions* Final paper proposal
2/16	Reproductive system, part 2 Sexuality, Fertility, Abortion	Murphy Tolman et al. Rothblum OBOS, ch. 20 (pp. 406-414)	Discussion questions*
2/23	Sexism, bodies, and eating	Fredrickson & Roberts Thompson book (skip ch 5)	Discussion questions*
3/2	Exercise, sports, and athleticism Film: A Hero for Daisy	Guthrie & Castelnuovo Mutrie & Choi Angier OBOS, ch. 4	Discussion questions*
3/9	Disability	Wendell Neath Mairs	Discussion questions* Short Paper
3/16	No Class – Spring Break		
3/23	HIV & AIDS	Ortiz-Torres et al. Specter OBOS, ch. 16	Discussion questions*

3/30	Cancer	Hardisty & Leopold Steingraber Ashing-Giwa et al. Samuels	Discussion questions*
4/6	Cardiovascular system and smoking	Surgeon General Chesney & Nealy Guyll et al.	Discussion questions* Final paper rough draft
4/13	No Class – Passover		
4/20	Mental health	Wise et al. Rothblum Finfgeld Caplan	Discussion questions*
4/27	Alternative healing, and activism; Course wrap-up	Gaylord OBOS, ch. 32 Blankenship	Discussion questions*
5/8			Final paper by 5 p.m.

***Note, discussion questions are due 9 a.m. the day of class**