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**HISTORY 47005/WGSS 39000:
WOMEN AND HEALTH IN AMERICA**

FALL 2023
UNIVERSITY HALL 219
T/TH 10:30-11:45 A.M.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course examines the historical relationship between women and health by exploring a number of critical themes that have affected women's health in the United States. Particular emphasis will be on reproductive health care, mental health, and women's bodies.



COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course encourages students to recognize, most fundamentally, that women's health has a history, and that its history is embedded in culture. We will analyze the ways in which societal assumptions about gender, health and sickness—along with race and class-- help to determine the course of treatment. We will also analyze the role of primary sources in contributing to our understanding of women's health.

*This course meets requirements for Purdue's Medical Humanities Certificate. Students interested in the Medical Humanities certificate should review the [website](#) and contact their academic advisor for more information.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Students will develop an understanding of the connections between contemporary issues, such as the #metoo movement, and historical precedents.
2. Students will evaluate the meanings and understandings of gender; changing meanings and significance of family, motherhood and personal relationships; expressions and regulations of female sexuality; and women and popular culture.
3. They will understand the importance and power not only of gender but also of race, ethnicity, class, and sex in women's private and public lives.
4. Students will evaluate the often competing and conflicting nature of historical interpretation and assess various forms of primary source evidence (including memoirs and diaries) to form conclusions about the meaning and significance of the history of women and womanhood in modern America.
5. Through in-depth reading assignments, students will develop an understanding of how expectations about women's bodies and behaviors have created unique challenges for women.

This syllabus is subject to change, and will be updated on Brightspace as needed.

REQUIRED BOOKS (AVAILABLE AT THE BOOKSTORE OR AT AMAZON.COM):

1. Ina May Gaskin, *Birth Matters: A Midwife's Manifesta*
2. Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*
3. Kate Moore, *The Woman They Could not Silence: The Shocking Story of a Woman who Dared to Fight Back*
4. Susanna Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted*
5. Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*
6. Roxane Gay, *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body*

2 additional readings will be posted on Brightspace: Knott, "This Giving Birth;" Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

<i>REQUIREMENTS</i>	<i>DATE</i>	<i>% of final grade</i>
2 short papers (5 pp; double-spaced)	By 9 a.m. on 9/14, 11/14	40 (20 points each)
FINAL PAPER	Wed Dec 13 by 5 p.m. via Brightspace	30
ATTENDANCE/ PARTICIPATION	Regular attendance and informed participation required/ reading quizzes	30

94-100%	= A	73-77	= C
91-93	= A-	71-73	= C-
88-90	= B+	68-70	= D+
83-87	= B	63-67	= D
81-83	= B-	60-62	= D-
78-80	= C+	< 60%	= F

Important Notes:

* **Cheating / Plagiarism:** Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing integrity@purdue.edu or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information is submitted the greater the opportunity for the university to investigate the concern. More details are available on our course Brightspace table of contents, under University Policies.

* **Email etiquette:** Outside of class or office hours, communicate with your professor by email. State the reason for your email in the subject line (ex: “question about essay”). Include a full salutation (ex: “Dear Professor”), and closing with your full name (ex: “Sincerely, Robert Owen”). Please use full sentences, correct grammar, and punctuation.

* **Electronic Devices in the Classroom:** Please do not use electronic devices during class. No iPhones, iPads, or laptops. Srsly. Otherwise your casual meanderings around the World Wide Web will distract everyone around you. If you want to take notes (which I highly recommend), use pen/pencil and paper. If we are discussing the reading and you only have access to it on a laptop or iPad, let me know in advance.

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Please note: Reading assignment in parentheses should be completed before the designated class. Be prepared to answer questions in response to that day’s reading assignment.

Week One: Introductions: Health as history

Tues Aug 22 Introduction

Thurs Aug 24 A Midwife’s Tale

PART I: CHILDBIRTH/REPRODUCTION

Week Two

Tues Aug 29 Childbirth in early America
 (read Knott, "This Giving Birth," available on Brightspace)

Thurs Aug 31 Countercultural Birth
 (read *Birth Matters* chapters 1-3)

Week Three

Tues Sept 5 Business of Being Born
 (read *Birth Matters* chapters 4-5)

Thurs Sept 7 The Business of Birth
 (read *Birth Matters* chapters 6-7)

Week Four

Tues Sept 12 Spiritual Midwifery
 (read *Birth Matters* chapters 8-9)

Thurs Sept 14 Discussion of Birth Matters
 Reading quiz
 Presentation of birth story interviews
 *paper 1 due by 9 a.m. on Brightspace: Birth interview and analysis

Week Five

Tues Sept 19 From Midwifery to Gynecology
 (read *Medical Bondage* intro, ch. 1)

Thurs Sept 21 19th c. medical education and obstetric anesthesia
 (read *Medical Bondage* ch. 2)

Week Six

Tues Sept 26 Sims and Medical Ethics
 (read *Medical Bondage* ch. 3-4)

Thurs Sept 28 Discussion and reading quiz
 (read *Medical Bondage* ch. 5-end)

Part II: Mental Health

Week Seven

Tues Oct 3 A history of the asylum
 (read *The Woman They Could not Silence* prologue and part 1)

Thurs Oct 5 The “cult of true womanhood”
 (read *The Woman They Could not Silence* part 2)

Week Eight
 Tues Oct 10 FALL BREAK

Thurs Oct 12 Gaslight
 (read *The Woman They Could not Silence* part 3)

Week Nine
 Tues Oct 17 Origins of psychiatry
 (read *The Woman They Could not Silence* part 4)

Thurs Oct 19 Postpartum depression and other “nervous disorders”
 (read *The Woman They Could not Silence* part 5)

Week Ten
 Tues Oct 24 Discussion and reading quiz
 (read *The Woman They Could not Silence* part 6)

Thurs Oct 26 Discussion and quiz of Yellow Wallpaper
 (read *Yellow Wallpaper*, available on Brightspace)

Week Eleven
 Tues Oct 31 The Snake Pit
 (read *Girl, interrupted* pp 1-42)

Thurs Nov 2 Female Sexuality in the 20th c.
 (read *Girl, interrupted* pp 43-82)

Week Twelve
 Tues Nov 7 Somatic Treatments
 (read *Girl, interrupted* pp 83-122)

Part III: Bodies

Thurs Nov 9 Discussion and quiz

(read *Girl, interrupted* to end)

Week Thirteen

Tues Nov 14 Body Knowledge
 (Read *The Body Project* ch 1)
 *paper 2 due by 9 a.m. on Brightspace

Thurs Nov 16 Menstruation
 (Read *The Body Project* ch 2)

Week Fourteen

Tues Nov 21 Sexuality and Birth Control
 (Read *The Body Project* ch 3-4)

Thurs Nov 23 THANKSGIVING

Week Fifteen

Tues Nov 28 Discussion and quiz
 (Read *The Body Project* ch 5-6)

Thurs Nov 30 When the body doesn't fit the norm
 (read *Hunger* parts 1&2)

Week Sixteen

Tues Dec 5 History of #MeToo
 (read *Hunger* part 3)

Thurs Dec 7 Discussion and quiz
 (read *Hunger* parts 4&5)

Final paper due: Wednesday Dec 13 by 5 p.m. via Brightspace. Details will be provided by the last week of the semester.

SHORT PAPER ASSIGNMENTS:

[each paper should be five pages 12-point font, double spaced]

- 1. Childbirth interview and analysis (20%)
 Due: 9/14, 9 a.m. on Brightspace**

This first paper asks you to collect a birth-giver's story from the last two or three decades: to create a recent primary source of your own. You might choose to interview your parent, a friend, a neighbor, or a colleague: any person who has given birth, and with whom you have sufficient trust to ask intimate questions.

Gain as much detail as you can, beginning with the ABCs of any primary source: Who was birthing? When, and where? Then ask, what was their experience of birthing? Let the person direct their own account, and then follow up with questions based on what you already know may be of relevance. (Why did the person choose their particular venue for birthing? What education about birthing had they received? Did they receive pain relief? What emotions were attached to birth? etc etc).

After the interview, write up your notes into a series of paragraphs. In the opening paragraph, be sure to include basic information such as the time and place of the birth, and some biographical details (age, ethnicity or race, family, etc) about your interviewee. Give them a pseudonym (a false or pretend name) if you wish to protect their identity.

2. Women in the asylum (20%)

Due: 11/14 by 9 a.m. on Brightspace

The second paper asks you to compare the institutional experiences of Elizabeth Packard and Suzanna Kaysen. Drawing on *The Woman They Could not Silence* and *Girl, Interrupted*, what changed in the hundred years between Packard's institutionalization and Kaysen's? How were their experiences similar, and how did they differ? Use the two experiences to reflect more generally on the attitudes about women who resisted the norms of their day. Would you say that mental health treatment got better, worse, or stayed the same?

This rubric may help you succeed on these assignments:

20 (A+): Very strong response. Well written. Lively. Well informed and draws on readings. Historically correct.

19 (A): Strong. Clearly written. Draws effectively on readings. Correct throughout.

18 (B+): Strong response. Draws evenly on the readings. No errors.

17 (B): Solid, but may have one weaker element. Clearly written, no errors.

16 (B-): Solid but may include some errors.

14 (C): Hard to read. Includes errors.

IMPORTANT NOTES AND PROCEDURES:**Attendance Policy:**

Regular attendance is expected. Quizzes will take place at the beginning of the class and are part of your attendance grade (which counts for 30% of your total grade). You will not be allowed to make up the quiz unless you have a written excuse for your absence. If there is an occasion where you must leave early, notify me before class starts and sit near an exit. We will also be having regular class discussions and your input is valued!

University policy:

“The University expects that students will attend classes for which they are registered. At times, however, either anticipated or unanticipated absences can occur. The student bears the responsibility of informing the instructor in a timely fashion, when possible. The instructor bears the responsibility of trying to accommodate the student either by excusing the student or allowing the student to make up work, when possible. The University expects both students and their instructors to approach problems with class attendance in a manner that is reasonable.”