

**Fall 2016**  
**Women and Health**  
**Women's Studies 305/Sociology 305**  
**TR 10:30-11:45 Saunders 541**

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**Course description**

This course deals with a variety of topics related to women's health, from body image to violence against women. Its major objective is to acquaint student with sociological aspects of women's health issues in the U.S. and to enable a critical analysis on them. The course is guided by feminist theories, and emphasizes power relations in society that influence health status, access to health care, and the structuring of care itself. Students will always be urged to think about women's health issues at the intersection of race, ethnicity, class, and gender.

This course's principal aim is NOT to provide students with the latest biomedical information on causes, treatments, and consequences of diseases and health. Rather, it aims to unpack social, economic, cultural, and political factors that influence health status of women. It will also critically examine the notions of "health" and "unhealth" themselves.

The course is lecture-based, and not a seminar with small number of students. But discussion in class on readings and discussion questions is critically important. Often times, there will be no "right" answer to themes raised in the discussion. Students will be encouraged to develop their own sociological arguments, but willingness to listen to other opinion is also critical to this process.

**Student learning objectives**

- To be able to sociologically analyze contemporary biomedical issues
- To understand feminist debates on major health-related issues for women
- To understand important concepts in feminist studies and to apply them to biomedical-health issues

**Grading will be based on the following assignments.**

- (1) **Mid- term exam: 35 %** More instructions to follow.
- (2) **Final exam: 35%** More instructions to follow.
- (3) **In-class quizzes: 10%** Pop-up quizzes are given to test your comprehension of the assigned readings.
- (4) **Research paper: 15%** Detailed instructions to follow.  
Post your reflection on Lulima (go to "Discussion and Private Messages") by December 5, 5 pm HST.
- (5) **Participation in class:5%**  
Participation in class discussion is an important component of the course.

**Do I need to come to class? Yes!**

- Students are expected to attend all class sessions and participate in discussions and other activities.

- Each student is entitled to 4 absences throughout the semester. Each absence beyond this will result in lowering your overall grade significantly. Since I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences, I suggest you keep at least two of your absences on hold for illness or other unanticipated events.

#### **Readings:**

- Readings are posted online on the Laulima course link. Please make sure to have finished reading all the assigned readings before coming to class. Pop-up quizzes are intended to make sure that you have done that.

#### **Other rules**

- Each student should check his or her email frequently for messages about the class. I will assume you check your email at least once a day. It is strongly recommended that you use your UH email address—I do not take responsibility for email messages that fail to arrive if you are using a non-UH email address
- Make-up exam/exams on different dates will not be given unless under extreme circumstances.
- If you have a physical/mental disability and you have disability access concerns, please contact the KOKUA Program.
- Please refer to the UHM website on academic dishonesty and related issues.  
[http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/students/conduct/impermissible\\_behavior.html](http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/students/conduct/impermissible_behavior.html).
- Plagiarism and any kind of cheating will result in F.
- Please turn off your cell phone in class.

#### **Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) of the Women's Studies Department**

1. Analyze notions of women and femininity, as well as men and masculinity, taking into account race, sexuality, class, and nation.
2. Apply key concepts in Women's Studies, including the social construction of gender; sexuality/gender connections; intersections among gender, race, class, colonialism, and other vectors of power; identity; and social stratification.
3. Explore "real world" feminist issues.
4. Understand the nexus of gender, ethnicity, and colonialism in the Pacific-Asia context.
5. Apply critical thinking skills through oral and written assignments so that you learn to think analytically and to build increasingly sophisticated arguments.
6. Write well.
7. Communicate well orally.
8. Use interdisciplinary skills and perspectives.

#### **In this class,**

- 1 and 2. These are important concepts that will be discussed in the readings as well as in lecture. Writing assignments will also encourage you to apply these concepts and critically examine policies, cultures, and ideologies. In fact, you will be surprised how health issues serve as an excellent lens through which we can examine how social, cultural, economic, and political powers in the contemporary society.
3. The course encourages you to use theoretical and conceptual tools learned in class to apply to the real world situation.
4. In the writing assignments, you are highly encouraged to examine issues in Asia-Pacific, and how these power relations operate in its specific context.
- 5 and 6. Significant proportion of the grade is based on the reading reflections as well as essay questions in the exams.

7. Each class will have discussion sections and your participation is very important. Cheat sheets should also help you organize your thoughts about the materials before coming to class so that you can fully participate in class discussion.
8. This course is inherently interdisciplinary. Readings are chosen from a variety of disciplines, from sociology, anthropology, history, law, to popular readings. We will examine medical sciences and so-called “hard” sciences with the tools from these diverse disciplines.

## Course schedule and required readings

### Introduction (August 23)

Introduction to the course (no readings)

### Topic 1 Power relations in medicine (August 25 and August 30)

Required readings:

Aulette et al. 2009. "Women's health movements" in *Gendered Worlds*.

Ratcliff, K.S. 2002. "Introduction". *Women and Health: Power, Technology, Inequality, and Conflict in a Gendered World*.

Carey, Benedict. 18, December 2008. "Psychiatrist revise the book of human troubles" *New York Times*.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/18/health/18psych.html>

### Topic 2 Intersectional approach to health (September 1 and 6)

Roberts, Dorothy. (2011). *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and the Big Business Recreate Race in the Twenty-first Century*. New York: The New Press (Chapter 4 "Medical stereotyping" and chapter 5 "The allure of race in biomedical research")

### Topic 3 Violence against women (September 8 and 13)

Required readings:

The Boston Women's Health Book Collective. 2005. "Chapter 8: Violence and abuse" in *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.

Dasgupta, Shamita Das. 2005. "Women's realities: defining violence against women by immigration, race, and class"

Smith, Andrea. 2005. "Looking to the future: domestic violence, women of color, the state, and social change" both in *Domestic violence at the margins: readings on race, class, gender, and culture*. Eds. N. J. Sokoloff and C. Pratt. Rutgers University Press.

### Topic 4 Breast cancer (September 15 and 20)

Required readings:

Klawiter, Maren. 2008. "Early detection and screening activism" in *The biopolitics of breast cancer changing cultures of disease and activism*. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press.

Beam, Cris. 2007. "The Breast Cancer Club: When a Woman Receives That Dreaded Diagnosis, What Happens If She Doesn't Fit With the Pink-Ribbon Gang?" *Marie Claire* 152-153.

Ehrenreich, Barbara, 2001. "Welcome to Cancerland." *Harper's Magazine*.

### Topic 5 Body Image and politics of obesity (September 22 and 27)

Required readings:

Hesse-Biber, S. N. *Cult of Thinness*. Chapter 3 and 4.

Johnston, Josee and Juidith Taylor. 2008. "Feminist consumerism and fat activists: a comparative study of grassroots activism and the Dove Real Beauty Campaign." *Sings*. 33 (4) 941-966.

### Topic 6 Codes of beauty (September 29 and October 4)

Required readings:

Patton, Tracey Owen. 2006. "Hey girl, am I more than my hair? African American women and their struggles with beauty, body image and hair. *National Women's Studies Association Journal* 18 (2) 24-51.

Glenn, Evelyn N. 2008. "Yearning for Lightness: Transnational Circuits in the Marketing and Consumption of Skin

Lighteners." *Gender and Society* 22(3):281-302.

Kaw, Eugenia. 2003. "Medicalization of racial features: Asian-American women and cosmetic surgery." In *The Politics of Women's Bodies: Sexuality, appearance, and behavior*. Ed. Rose Weitz.

### **Topic 7 Sex education (October 6 and 11)**

Required readings:

Fields, Jessica. 2008. "Introduction: Asking More of Sex Education"

"Chapter 4: Natural and ideological: depicting bodies in sex education" from *Risky Lessons; Sex Education and Social Inequality*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

### **Topic 8 Abortion (October 13 and 18)**

Required readings:

Soinger, Rickie. 2013. *Reproductive Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know* Oxford: Oxford University Press. P.66-87

Hyde, Cheryl A. 2008. Feminist Health Care in a Hostile Environment: A Case Study of the Womancare Health Center. *Social Work in Public Health* 23 (4) 107-125.

Smith, Andrea. "Beyond pro-choice versus pro-life: Women of color and reproductive justice." *NWSA journal* 17.1 (2005): 119-140.

Also go to Guttmacher Institute website (<http://www.guttmacher.org/>) and look for information about the status quo of abortion and contraceptives in the US and in Hawai'i.

### **Oct 20 Study session for the mid-term exam**

### **Oct 25 mid-term exam**

### **Topic 9 "Hormonal being" (Oct 27 and Nov 1)**

Required readings:

Taylor, Diana. 2006. "From 'it's all in your head' to 'taking back the month': premenstrual syndrome (PMS) research and the contributions of the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research." *Sex Roles* 54: 377-391.

Chrysler, J.C. and P. Caplan. 2002. "The strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Hyde: how PMS become a cultural phenomenon and a psychiatric disorder." *Annual Review of Sex Research* 13:274-306. (Don't need to read after page 382 of Taylor. )

The Boston Women's Health Book Collective. 2005. "What do we do with our menstrual flow?" P248-260 in *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.

Dillaway, Heather E. 2005. "Menopause Is the "Good Old": Women's Thoughts About Reproductive Aging." *Gender and Society* 19(3):398-417.

### **Topic 10 Making babies (Nov 3, 10, and 15)**

Required readings:

Inhorn, M. and Birenbaum-Crmeli- D. 2008. "Assisted reproductive technologies and culture change." *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 37:177-196.

Rodrigues, A. and Meyersohn J. 2010. "Military wives turn to surrogacy: labor of love or financial boost?" ABC news.

Brakman, Sarah-Vaughan; Scholz, Sally J. 2006. "Adoption, ART, and a Re-Conception of the Maternal Body: Toward Embodied Maternity" *Hypatia*, 21(2): 54-73.

Warner, Judith. 3 Jan 2008. "Outsourced Wombs." *New York Times*.

**Topic 11 Pregnancy and childbirth (Nov 17 and 22)**

Required readings:

Seelhoff, Cheryl Lindsey 2006. "Radical feminism and the politics of pregnancy and birth" *Off Our Backs*. 36 (1): 42-45.

Beckett, Katherine. 2005. "Choosing caesarean: feminism and the politics of childbirth in the United States." *Feminist Theory* 6 (3): 251-275.

Young, D. 2008. "Home Birth in the United States: Action and Reaction" *Birth* 35:4 pp. 263-265

**Topic 12 Fetal quality control (Nov 29 and Dec 8)**

Required readings:

McLaughlin, Janice. 2003. "Screening Networks: shared agendas in feminist and disability movement challenges to antenatal screening and abortion." *Disability & Society* 18 (3): 297-210

Asch, Adrienne. 2003. "Disability equality and prenatal testing: contradictory or compatible?" *Florida State Law Review* 30 (2): 315-42.

Harmon, Amy. 9 May 2007. "Prenatal Test Puts Down Syndrome in Hard Focus." *New York Times*.

Hoffman, Jan. 18, September, 2007. "Where Risk and Choice and Hope Converge, a Guiding Voice" *New York Times*

**Final exam: December 13 (T) 9:45-11:45**