

**HIS 350R/WGS 345: Women in Sickness and Health:
Women, Health, and Medicine in American History
Dr. Megan Seaholm, Spring 2013
Garrison Hall, 4.124, MW 3-5 pm, and by appointment
seaholm@mail.utexas.edu**

In this reading-intensive, "writing flag" seminar, students will explore the experience of American women, in sickness and in health. Students will learn about medical and biological views of woman and women's health and the social context of those views. For the majority of humankind, health and illness exist in a social (and historical context). We will strive to understand how the views of medical science and social science intersected with women's experience. And, of course, there was no such thing as a universal "woman's experience." Class, race, and ethnicity influenced women's circumstances and the ways women's health and ill-health was experienced and understood.

We will consider these occurrences or issues in women's lives and how these events affected women's health (or illness) or affected particular understandings of women's health:

- Menarche and Menstruation
- Sexuality
- Fertility and Birth Control
- Childbirth
- Mental Illness
- Disease, specifically Breast Cancer

Assigned Reading:

- **Judith Walzer Leavitt**, ed. *Women and Health in America*, 2nd ed. (1999).
- **Barbara Seaman**, ed., *Voices of the Women's Health Movement*, vol. 1, 2012.
- **Barron Lerner, MD**, ed. *The Breast Cancer Wars*, 2001.
- A few articles will be posted on Blackboard or available through JSTOR

Grading:

- 70% of course grade will be based on writing assignments. Your writing assignments will be graded according to this criteria:
 - 1) clarity of expression,
 - 2) ability to articulate a point a view,
 - 3) organization, and
 - 4) adherence to generally accepted canons of grammar and punctuation (which have to do with clarity of expression).*
- 30% of the course grade will be based on classroom participation. You are expected to have read and considered the assigned readings before class. You are expected to share your thoughts and questions about the readings in class. The classroom participation grade will be based upon
 - 1) participation in large group (whole class of 20) discussions
 - 2) participation in small group discussions
 - 3) performance on weekly, short, in-class quizzes about the reading assignments.

I will NOT be using the +/- grading system in reporting your course grades.

Rather, your grade in this class will be A, Excellent; B, Very Good; C, Average; D, Poor; F, Failing. I will use plusses and minuses in grading your essays.

Writing Assignments:

- **Double-spaced; single spaced for bibliography**
- **Indent for new paragraph. Double-space (not triple) between paragraphs.**
- **Sent to me via email**
- **Sent to me as a WORD document.**

1st Essay: 3-5 pages, First Draft due in class, Thursday, 2/14; Final Draft due Sunday, 2/17; 17.5% of course grade.

2nd Essay: 3-5 pages, due Monday, 3/18, 17.5% of course grade.

Final Essay: 10-12 pages, due Monday, 35% of course grade.

*If you are insecure about your writing abilities, I hope that this class will help you to become a better writer. I will be "generous" with my comments on your writing assignments: what worked and what did not work or was not clear. If you want to "brush up" on your writing skills, here are some resources that you will find helpful:

- William Strunk and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*.
- Jan Venolia, *Write Right: A Desktop Digest of Punctuation, Grammar, and Style*
- The UT Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>
The UWC offers free, individualized, help with writing for any UT undergraduate, by appointment of on a drop-in basis.
M-Th 9 am-7 pm; F 9 am-3pm
- The UWC has online handouts that discuss many writing issues: sentence structure, subject and verb agreement, passive voice, punctuation, and more. Go to: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/handouts>.

FINAL ESSAY: 10-12 pages, Research and Analysis

Your final essay should combine research and analysis found in literature of popular culture regarding one or two topics related to women's health. Your assignment is to compare and contrast the discussion you find in one historical era with that of a later historical era.

For example:

1. Compare articles about menstruation or premenstrual tension found in women's magazines from the 1950s with articles found in women's magazines from the 1970s or later.
2. Compare articles about childbirth found in women's magazines of the 1960s with articles found in women's magazines of the 21st century.
3. Compare articles about female sexuality, or about sexual dysfunction (eg. "frigidity") found in women's magazines of the 1950s and 1960s with articles about female sexuality written in the late 20th century or early 21st century.
4. Other topics could include: breast cancer, sexually transmitted diseases, birth control, abortion, breastfeeding, mental illness, etc.

You should try to find at least two articles from an earlier period to compare to at least two articles found in a later period.

Possible sources include, but are not limited to, the following:

Woman's Day
Family Circle
Redbook
Ladies' Home Journal
Good Housekeeping
Women's Home Companion
Harper's Bazaar
McCall's
Seventeen
Mademoiselle
Cosmopolitan
Vogue

The New York Times
Ms. Magazine
Time Magazine
Newsweek
US News and World Report
Saturday Evening Post
Esquire
Us
People
Women's Health

You may also consult sources that are listed in the footnotes of articles that you have read, but the point of this assignment is that you should analyze and interpret at least 4 historical sources whether from the 1920s, the 1960s, or the early 2000s.

CLASS SCHEDULE: Reading Assignments and Essay Assignments

Th, 1/17 **Class Introduction**
Illness as a Physical Experience; Illness as a Social Construct

Sex and Gender; Biology and Culture

Th, 1/24 Anne Fausto-Sterling, "Society Write Biology/Biology Constructs Gender," *Daedalus*, Vol. 116, No. 4, Fall 1987. Available on JSTOR [UT Libraries; Articles, author and title → online text of article]

"Discovery of the Sexes," Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, Chapter Five, pp. 149-192, on Bb.

Menarche and Menstruation

Th, 1/31 **How has the human female's experience and understanding of menstruation changed over time and how is it different in different cultures?**

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Women and Her Role in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Women and Health in America*, 2nd edition, ed. by Judith Walzer Leavitt (hereafter referred to as "Leavitt").

Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "Something Happens to Girls': Menarche and the Emergence of the Modern American Hygienic Imperative," in Leavitt.

Marla Powers, "Wikoskalaka: Adolescence," from *Oglala Women: Myth, Ritual and Reality*, University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 66-74, on Bb.

Andrea Eagan, "The Selling of Premenstrual Syndrome," in *Voices of the Women's Health Movement*, 1983, vol. 1, ed. by Barbara Seaman, p. 181 (hereafter referred to as *Voices*).

Gloria Steinem, "If Men Could Menstruate," 1978, in *Voices*.

Germaine Greer, "The Wicked Womb," from *The Female Eunuch*, 1972, in *Voices*, p. 100-102.

Sexuality

Th, 2/7

Do Women Experience Their Sexuality Differently at Different (Historical) Times? Is Female Sexuality Viewed Differently at Different Times?

Carl Degler, "What Ought to Be and What Was: Women's Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century," in Leavitt.

Marylynne Diggs, "Romantic Friends or a 'Different Race of Creatures'? The Representation of Lesbian Pathology in Nineteenth-Century America," in Leavitt.

"A New Generation of Women': Progressive Psychiatrists and the Hypersexual Female," in Leavitt.

Shere Hite, "The Hite Report on Shere Hite: Voice of a Daughter in Exile," excerpt from *The Hite Report on Shere Hite*, 2003, in *Voices*, pp.103-106.

Sarah J. Shey, "In Defense of Shere Hite," 1999, in *Voices*, p. 106-111.

Herbert Gutman, "Marital and Sexual Norms Among Slave Women," from *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of Women*, eds. Elizabeth Pleck and Nancy Cott, 1979, on Bb.

First Essay: 1st draft due 2/14; final draft due 2/17.

3-5 page essay, using what you have learned from discussion and assigned readings on one of the following topics:

1. How did 19th century views about menarche and menstruation reflect contemporary ideas about womanhood?
2. What explains the 19th century view of female sexuality? What was "passionlessness?" What is Degler's argument about female sexuality in the 19th century? Is it possible that a "pose" of passionlessness could coexist with women's experience of sexual passion?
3. Compare and contrast ideas 19th century, early 20th century, late-20th century, and present-day attitudes in the U.S. about female sexuality.

Th, 2/14

Marylynne Diggs, "Romantic Friends or a 'Different Race of Creatures'? The Representation of Lesbian Pathology in Nineteenth-Century America," in Leavitt.

Sidney Abbott and Barbara Love, "Sappho Was a Right-On Woman", 1972, pp. 381-386, in *Voices*.

Jennifer Baumgardner, "Look Both Ways, 2008, pp.389-391, in *Voices*.

Peer Review of First Essay: Bring a print copy of your first essay. The class will divide into groups of two so that everyone can receive comments from a classmate about their essay.

Fertility and Birth Control

Th, 2/21

Fertility and Birth Control in Human History

Seaholm: A Brief History of Efforts to Limit Reproduction

Linda Gordon, "Voluntary Motherhood: The Beginnings of Feminist Birth Control Ideas in the United States," in Leavitt.

Jessie M. Rodrique, "The Black Community and the Birth Control Movement," in Leavitt.

Andrew Tone, "Contraceptive Consumers: Gender and the Political Economy of Birth Control in the 1930s," in Leavitt.

Angela Y. Davis, "Racism, Birth Control, and Reproductive Rights," 1981, pp 134-142, in *Voices*.

Video: "Margaret Sanger"

Th, 2/28

Fertility and Birth Control in the Twentieth Century

Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, "Informed Consent," 1998, pp. 142-155, in *Voices*.

Barbara Seaman, "Norplant: The Contraception You're Stuck with," 1995, pp.169-174, in *Voices*.

Katie Snger, "Cycles of Hot and Cold: Trying to Learn Fertility Awareness in North America," 1999, in *Voices*.

VIDEO, "The Pill"

Th, 3/7

Abortion

Seaholm: A Brief History of Abortion

Leslie J. Reagan, "About to Meet Her Maker': Women, Doctors, Dying Declarations, and the State's Investigation of Abortion," Chicago, 1867-1940," in Leavitt.

Cornelia Dayton, "Taking the Trade: Abortion and Gender Relations in an 18th-Century New England Village," in Leavitt.

Rickie Solinger, "A Complete Disaster: Abortion and the Politics of Hospital Abortion Committees, 1950-1970," in Leavitt.

Norma McCorvey, "I Am Roe," 1994, pp. 370 in *Voices*.

Pauline Bart, "The Jane Collective," 1987, pp. 371-374, in *Voices*.

Th, 3/14 NO CLASS: Spring Break

Second Essay: Due Monday, 3/18

3-5 page essay on some aspect of the history of birth control or other efforts to control fertility.

- 1) You may write a review of how cultural attitudes and the technology of birth control changed between the last decades of the 19th century and the 1970s.
- 2) You may write a critical review of the "birth control movement." What problems did the early birth control movement seek to address; what problems, or issues, did this movement ignore. Considering the interest in birth control since the 1960s, how do you evaluate the progress of the movement?

You should send your essay to me in a WORD document via email.

Pregnancy and Childbirth

Th, 3/21 Childbirth Through the Ages and in America

Seaholm: A Short History of Human Childbirth

Ann Marie Plane, "Childbirth Practices Among Native American Women of New England and Canada, 1600-1800," in Leavitt.

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "The Living Mother of a Living Child': Midwifery and Mortality in Postrevolutionary New England," in Leavitt.

Marie Schwartz, (slave women and childbirth)

Judith Walzer Leavitt, "Under the Shadow of Maternity: American Women's Responses to Death and Debility Fears in 19th Century Childbirth," in Leavitt.

Th, 3/28 Childbirth in Modern America

Seaholm: The Introduction of Anesthesia and the Discovery of Antisepsis

Judith Walzer Leavitt, "The Growth of Medical Authority: Technology and Morals in Turn-of-the-Century Obstetrics," in Leavitt.

Carolyn Leonard Carson, "And the Results Showed Promise...Physicians, Childbirth, and South Black Migrant Women, 1916-1930: Pittsburgh as a Case Study," in Leavitt.

Rickie Solinger, "Race and 'Value': Black and White Illegitimate Babies, in the U.S.A., 1945-1965," in Leavitt.

VIDEO, "A Baby is Born"

Th, 4/4 Childbirth, Midwifery, Breastfeeding, None of it?: Old-fashioned or Modern?

Charlotte G. Borst, "The Training and Practice of Midwives: A Wisconsin Study," in Leavitt.

Susan L. Smith, "White Nurses, Black Midwives, and Public Health in Mississippi, 1920-1950," in Leavitt.

Molly Haskell, "Yes, We Have No Bambinos," 1975, pp. 278-281, in *Voices*.

Margot Slade, "Breastfeeding Revisited," 1998, pp. 298-301, in *Voices*.

Video: "The Business of Being Born"

Guest Speaker: midwifery and breastfeeding

Women and Mental Illness

Th, 4/11 Hysteria, Neurasthenia, and other "Disorders"

Seaholm: Hysteria: "the wandering womb," "pelvic congestion," or neurosis?

Elaine Abelson, "The Invention of Kleptomania," in Leavitt

Nancy Theriot, "'Diagnosing Unnatural Motherhood: 19th Century Physicians and 'Puerperal Insanity,'" in Leavitt

Menopause and Aging

Th, 4/18 What is normal as women grow older? Can women age gracefully? What would that look like?

Eldrige, Gray, Seaman, Tannebaum, Tudiver, the National Women's Health Network, and Joan Ditzion, "Menopause and Aging," in *Voices*, pp.323-350.

Meeting in PCL with Research Librarians: How to find sources for your final essay. Location TBA

Discussion of possible topics for final essay.

The Dreaded Disease of the 20th Century: CANCER

Th, 4/25 The Reproductive Cancers

Seaholm: Disease, Mortality, Morbidity in Human History

Nancy Tomes, "Spreading the Germ Theory, Sanitary Science and Home Economics, 1880-1930," in Leavitt

Susan Garfinkel, "'This Trial Was Sent in Love and Mercy for My Refinement': A Quaker Woman's Experience of Breast Cancer Surgery in 1814," in Leavitt

Barron Lerner, MD, ed., *The Breast Cancer Wars*, 2001.

Th, 5/2 Breast Cancer, Controversies re Treatment, the Women's Health Care Movement

Barron Lerner, *The Breast Cancer Wars*

FINAL ESSAY DUE Friday, May 10, 2013