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:**
- M.C. Smith and L.J. Holmes, *Listen to Me Good: The Life of an Alabama Midwife*
- A few articles will be posted on Blackboard.

**Grading:**
- 60% 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 or a critique,
  3) organization, and
  4) adherence to generally accepted canons of grammar and punctuation (which have to do with clarity of expression).*
- 40% 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.* Rather, your grade in this class will be
- A, Excellent; B, Very Good; C, Average; D, Poor; F, Failing
Writing Assignments:  All writing assignments should be sent to me by email.

1st Essay:  3 pages, due Monday, 9/12, 15% of writing grade (9% total)
2nd Essay:  4 pages, due Monday, 10/7, 20% of writing grade (12% total)
3rd Essay:  4 pages, due Monday, 10/24, 25% of writing grade (15% total)
4th Essay:  6-8 pages, due Monday, 12/5, 40% of writing grade (24% of total)

In the first three essays, you are asked to provide analysis or observations about certain topics based on the assigned reading.  The 4th Essay will require that you do some research in the library.

The 4th essay should be a 6-8 page analysis of how a single women’s health issue was portrayed in popular culture in a particular decade of the 20th century.  Your source for insight into popular culture will be women’s magazines (e.g., Ladies Home Journal) or magazines published for the general reading public (e.g., The Saturday Evening Post).  This analysis should be a cultural and historical analysis and not a medical or scientific analysis.  You should consult at least 4 different articles in at least two different publications.

*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.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Th, 8/25  Class Introduction
Illness as a Physical Experience; Illness as a Social Construct

Menarche and Menstruation

Th, 9/1  The Curious Case of Women’s Bodies in 19th Century America
--Joan Jacobs Brumberg, “Something Happens to Girls: Menarche and the Emergence of the Modern American Hygienic Imperative,” in Leavitt
--Carol Tavris, “Misdiagnosing the Body: Premenstrual syndrome, post-Menstrual syndrome, and other normal ‘diseases,’” posted on Blackboard.

Sexuality

Th, 9/8  Do Women Experience Their Sexuality Differently at Different (Historical) Times? Is Female Sexuality Viewed Differently at Different Times?
Seaholm: on Thomas Laqueur
--Nancy Cott, “‘Passionlessness:’ An Interpretation of Victorian Ideology, 1790-1850,” on Bb.
--“‘A New Generation of Women’: Progressive Psychiatrists nd the Hypersexual Female,” in Leavitt.

M, 9/12 First Essay Due
3 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 was the ideology of “passionlessness,” and why was it considered, by middle- and upper-class white Americans, to represent the paragon of femininity? Do you think women became “passionless,” or do you think “passionlessness” was a pose?

Fertility and Birth Control

Th, 9/15 Fertility and Birth Control in Human History
Seaholm: A Brief History of Efforts to Limit Reproduction
--Andrea Tone, Devices and Desires, parts One and Two
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<td>Th, 9/22</td>
<td><strong>Fertility and Birth Control in the Twentieth Century</strong>&lt;br&gt;Andrea Tone, <em>Devices and Desires</em>, Part Three&lt;br&gt;VIDEO, “Margaret Sanger”</td>
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<td>Th, 10/6</td>
<td><strong>Second Essay Due in class</strong>&lt;br&gt;4 page essay, using what you have learned from discussion and assigned readings, on a topic related to the history of women’s efforts to control fertility.&lt;br&gt;Bring a printed copy of essay to class.</td>
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**Childbirth**

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<td>Th, 10/6</td>
<td><strong>Childbirth through the Ages and in America</strong>&lt;br&gt;Seaholm: A Short History of Human Childbirth&lt;br&gt;--Wertz and Wertz, <em>Lying In: A History of Childbirth in America</em>, Introduction through Chapter 3&lt;br&gt;--Peer review of second essay</td>
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<td>F, 10/7</td>
<td><strong>Second Essay Due to Seaholm</strong></td>
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<td>Th, 10/13</td>
<td><strong>Childbirth in the US: Procedures, Problems, Pathology, and Improvements in Infant/Maternal Outcome</strong>&lt;br&gt;-Wertz &amp; Wertz, chapters 4-Epilogue&lt;br&gt;VIDEO, “A Baby is Born”</td>
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<td>Th, 10/20</td>
<td><strong>Childbirth and Midwifery: Then and Now</strong>&lt;br&gt;Seaholm: Childbirth and Slave Women&lt;br&gt;--Smith and Holmes, <em>Listen to Me Good</em>, Introduction through Epilogue&lt;br&gt;VIDEO: “The Business of Being Born”</td>
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<td>M, 10/24</td>
<td><strong>Third Essay Due</strong>&lt;br&gt;4 page essay on an aspect of the history of childbirth in America.</td>
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**Women and Mental Illness**

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<td>Th, 10/27</td>
<td><strong>Hysteria, Neurasthenia, and other “Disorders”</strong>&lt;br&gt;Seaholm: Hysteria: “the wandering womb,” “pelvic congestion,” or neurosis?</td>
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Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*
Elaine Abelson, “The Invention of Kleptomania,” in Leavitt
Nancy Theriot, “‘Diagnosing Unnatural Motherhood: 19th Century Physicians and ‘Puerperal Insanity,’” in Leavitt

Th, 11/3  Meeting in PCL with Research Librarians: How to find sources for your final essay.
--Discussion of possible topics for final essay.

The Dreaded Disease of the 20th Century: CANCER

Th, 11/10  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
--James Olson, *Bathsheba’s Breast*, Prologue through chapter 2

Th, 11/17  Breast Cancer and Surgery
--James Olson, *Bathsheba’s Breast*, chapters 3-7

Th, 11/24  Breast Cancer and the Breast Cancer Wars
--James Olson, Bathsheba’s Breast, chapters 8- Epilogue

Th, 12/1  Student Presentations
--Each student will present to the class her or his plans, and progress, with the final essay. Each student should explain
  1) the subject of research
  2) sources consulted
  3) preliminary research findings, i.e. what have you learned about the popular presentation or discussion of, for example, premenstrual syndrome in the 1950s (or xxxx)?
  What conclusions can you make about these representations?

FINAL ESSAY DUE Monday, 12/5