

**WOMEN'S STUDIES 113**  
**WOMEN'S HEALTH**

**BULLETIN INFORMATION**

WGST 113 - Women's Health (3 credit hours)

**Course Description:**

Basic functioning of the female body; effects of society on processes of health and disease. Not for natural sciences credit.

**SAMPLE COURSE OVERVIEW**

Women's Health is one of three introductory courses in Women's and Gender Studies at the University of South Carolina. Women's and Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary program established at the University in 1974. The mission of Women's and Gender Studies is to promote an understanding of the experiences of women and other underrepresented groups so that students learn to think critically, to communicate effectively, to solve problems, and to interpret human experience. The range of courses offered allows students to explore questions beyond the scope of many traditional courses of study. Students may obtain a Bachelor of Arts in Women's and Gender Studies. Students can also minor in Women's and Gender Studies by completing 18 hours of specified courses.

The goal of this course, for female students, is to understand their bodies, their health, and how to take care of their health. For male students, this course will help them understand the health of women in their lives. A basic principle of the course is that the habits that young people develop related to eating, exercise, and self-care build the foundation for their health that will last the rest of their lives. Most young people who develop life-long healthy habits will continue to be healthy at age 30, 40, 50 and beyond. Unfortunately, people who develop unhealthy habits at a young age tend to continue with those habits as they get older, and their health suffers as a result.

This course will also help students to understand middle aged and older women's health. These are the health issues that students' mothers and grandmothers may be dealing with, and that students themselves will manage when they are older. Another goal of this course is for students to become equipped to make informed choices concerning health care issues. Individuals who take an active role in partnership with medical professionals can take responsibility for decisions that affect their health. People who are informed about their health also tend to receive better medical care, because they are able to advocate for their health needs.

This course will cover women's health throughout the lifecycle from a cross-cultural perspective using factors such as age, ethnicity, political influences, medical models, spirituality and social structure. There will be a comparison between U.S. and global models of health as they relate to women.

## ITEMIZED LEARNING OUTCOMES

### Upon successful completion of Women's Studies 113, students will be able to:

1. Evaluate current women's health issues such as: high rates of unwanted pregnancy in the US vs. other industrialized nations, who pays for healthcare in certain societies, gender differences in substance abuse. Construct and test hypotheses about these issues to generate new and better solutions.
2. Analyze how political, economic, legal, and social factors influence women's healthcare access on topics such as pregnancy, birth and family planning. Evaluate how competing interests affect the everyday decisions women have to make about their health and the health of their families.
3. Demonstrate critical thinking skills applied to global and local problems such as the spread of HIV/AIDS, women's mental health issues, and intimate partner violence.
4. Compare and contrast different cultural views on body image, ideals of beauty, infant feeding practices, issues of morbidity/mortality in the developing vs. developed world to understand how cultural diversity shapes social behavior.

## SAMPLE REQUIRED TEXTS/SUGGESTED READINGS/MATERIALS

1. New Dimensions in Women's Health. Alexander, Linda; LaRosa, Judith; Bader, Helaine; Garfield, Susan and Alexander, William (2010). 5th Edition. Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett Publishers, Inc.
2. Blackboard Course Website
3. Assignments, grades, lectures, and other course materials will be available on Blackboard.

## SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS AND/OR EXAMS

1. **Exams:** There will be three exams given throughout the semester, one scheduled during the final exam period. The exams will have multiple choice and true/false questions. Exams and quizzes will cover assigned reading and material presented in class.
2. **Presentation:** Students will give a brief (7 minute) class presentation and discussion using powerpoint. The topic could be on one of the "Remarkable Woman" who has contributed to women's health described in the textbook, or students can choose a particular women's health issue they would like to research. The presentation must also include one of the following facets: race, class, geographic, cultural, religious, or political differences in groups that are affected by the women's issue. Instructors will provide a list of ideas for topics. All topics must be approved in advance by the instructors. Powerpoint slides are due on Assignments (Blackboard) before the beginning of the class in which you give your presentation. Length requirements: Presentations should be 7 minutes – about 5 minutes for presenting your topic, and 2 minutes for class discussion.
3. **Quizzes:** There will be 13 quizzes throughout the semester, usually covering one chapter. The quizzes will be given outside of class through the Assignments link on Blackboard. You can take the quiz on your own time, but it must be completed by the

date and time listed in the course schedule. You can have your book and notes with you, but quizzes will be timed. Quizzes will typically have about 10 questions in multiple choice or true/false format. The three lowest quiz grades will be dropped.

4. **Responsive Essay** - Students will write a short (4-page double spaced minimum) paper based on one of the following topics. The paper will be due on the last day of class by 11 pm on Assignments (Blackboard).
  - a. Conduct an interview with an important woman in your life who is over the age of 40 (examples: your mom, grandma, great-grandma, aunt). Your job is to develop approximately 5-10 interview questions about a women's health issue that is interesting to you, and ask her your questions. Examples of possible topics: Pregnancy, childbirth, menopause, birth control, quitting smoking, or dealing with a particular health issue that your interviewee has experienced. The paper should be a summary of what you learned from the interview. Include your interview questions in the paper as an appendix (not part of the 4 pages). The paper must also include one of the following facets: race, class, geographic, cultural, religious, or political differences in groups that are affected by the issue you are focusing on in the paper.
  - b. Imagine that you have just learned that your newborn child is intersex (born with ambiguous genitalia). Write a reflective essay about how you will raise this child. How will you handle gender identity? How will your decision affect your child's life biologically, psychologically, and socially?
  - c. Teach an older woman about the facts you learned in class about cardiovascular health to pass on the knowledge that you have learned. This knowledge includes warning signs and symptoms of cardiovascular disease, treatment, co-morbidities, and prevention. Have the older woman in your life hand write or email me a summary of your discussion. The woman should be able to re-state facts about cardiovascular health that you have learned in class including gender differences, ethnic differences, and behaviors that affect the risk of CVD.
5. **Journal** - Keep a daily journal for one week regarding how easy (or difficult) it is to have a healthy lifestyle in your neighborhood. **PRETEND YOU DO NOT HAVE A CAR.** You must walk or take public transportation to access what you need to be healthy. This includes accessing fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods; being able to walk safely; exercising; medical care; etc. Reflect on race, class, gender, geography, and political environments that create barriers for certain groups to access a healthy lifestyle. How does the US compare to other cultures or communities that you have read about or seen in the media? Is it easier or more difficult to live a healthy lifestyle in certain parts of the US?

**SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE WITH TIMELINE OF TOPICS, READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS/PROJECTS**

- Class #1      Introduction to Women's Health  
 Women's Health Movement  
 Biomedical health research – quantitative methods and clinical trial discussion  
 (covered in Ch 1 of text)  
 Chap. 1: Introduction to Women's Health  
 US Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health (2002)  
 A Century of Women's Health: 1900-2000
- Class #2      What is the best way to pay for health care?  
 Qualitative methods discussion (examples from Dr. Gibson's interviews with  
 Latina women.)  
 Chap. 2: Economics of Women's Health
- Class #3      Individual and community choices for healthy lifestyles (p. 53-56)  
 Diversity of women in the US  
 Global health issues for women  
 Chap. 3: Health Promotion & Disease Prevention
- Class #4      Individual and community choices for healthy lifestyles  
 Leading cause of death among women by ethnicity in the US (p. 63-71)  
 Chap. 3: Health Promotion & Disease Prevention
- Class #5      Women's Sexuality  
 Cultural, religious, economic, political differences (p.84-87)  
 Chap. 4: Sexual Health  
 Steinem, Gloria (Oct. 78) "If Men Could Menstruate" MS. Magazine
- Class #6      Women's Sexuality  
 Discussion of female genital operations across cultures (Kenya, Indonesia)  
 Walley, Christine. (1997) Searching for Voices: Feminism, Anthropology and the  
 Global Debate on Female Genital Operations. Cultural Anthropology  
 12(3):405-438.
- Class #7      Sexual Health  
 Sex and gender differences (p.89-93)  
 Sexual orientation (p. 93-95)  
 Chap. 4: Sexual Health
- Class #8      Reproductive technologies  
 Perspectives on contraception (historical, economic and sociocultural overview  
 pp. 127-131)  
 Review of contraceptive methods  
 Chap. 5: Contraception and Abortion

- Class #9      Reproductive technologies  
 Discussion of abortion and the different cultural contexts for use of abortion (i.e. FSA in Asia vs. unwanted pregnancy in the US)  
 Miller, Barbara (2001) Female-Selective Abortion in Asia: Patterns Policies and Debates. American Anthropologist 103(4):1083-1095.
- Class #10     EXAM Exam 1Chap. 1-5
- Class #11     Getting Pregnant and Giving Birth  
 Biology of pregnancy and birth  
 Epidemiologic data on pregnancy and birth  
 Chap. 6: Pregnancy & Childbirth
- Class #12     Getting Pregnant and Giving Birth  
 Cultural contexts of birth in the US and other Western nations (midwife guest lecture)  
 Craven, Christa. (2007) A "Consumer's Right" to Choose a Midwife: Shifting Meanings for Reproductive Rights under Neoliberalism. American Anthropologist 109(4):701-712.
- Class #13     Living a Healthy Lifestyle  
 Nutrition, balanced diet, exercise  
 World hunger (p. 326-7)  
 Chap. 9: Nutrition, Exercise, & Weight Management
- Class #14     Living a Healthy Lifestyle  
 Comparison of anorexia treatment in Mexico and the US (individual vs. family treatment)  
 Chap. 9: Nutrition, Exercise, & Weight Management  
 Lester, Rebecca J. (2007) MAQ  
 Critical Therapeutics: Cultural Politics and Clinical Reality in Two Eating Disorder Treatment Centers
- Class #15     Menopause is okay!  
 Explanation of US medicalization and treatment of menopause as a disease  
 Comparison to other cultures (Greece, Japan, etc where menopause is treated as a natural part of life)  
 Chap. 8: Menopause and Hormone Replacement Therapy
- Class #16     Cardiovascular Disease  
 CVD incidence rates by ethnicity (p.338-341)  
 Different warning signs for women  
 Risk factors  
 Chap. 10: Understanding and Preventing Cardiovascular Disease & Cancer

- Class #17      Women and Cancer  
Economic discussion of mammography and breast cancer risk (article)  
Ethnic differences in different cancer types (p.364-369)  
Chap. 10: Understanding and Preventing Cardiovascular Disease & Cancer  
Kaufert, Patricia A. (1996) from Gender and Health an International Perspective  
Women and the Debate over Mammography: An Economic, Political, and Moral  
History.
- Class #18      Preventing STIs  
p. 174-178: Relative prevalence & infection rates of Sexually Transmitted  
Infections (STIs) in women, the US, and different ethnic groups, social &  
economic dimensions.  
Chap. 7: Reproductive Tract Infections
- Class #19      HIV/AIDS  
p. 192-195: HIV/AIDS: historical overview, global perspective, AIDS & women,  
racial/ethnic dimensions.  
World AIDS Day 2012: closing in on HIV targets.  
[http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2012/aids\\_20121129/en/](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2012/aids_20121129/en/)  
Video: Helping to get 15 million people into antiretroviral treatment by 2015.  
<http://www.who.int/hiv/en/>  
HIV/AIDS Global fact sheet.  
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs360/en/index.html>  
Chap. 7: Reproductive Tract Infections
- Class #20      EXAM Exam 2 Chapters 6-10
- Class #21      Women and osteoporosis, diabetes, Alzheimer's, arthritis, autoimmune diseases  
p. 310-312: Gender, racial/ethnic, and socioeconomic dimensions of chronic  
diseases.  
WHO diabetes programme. <http://www.who.int/diabetes/en/>  
Prevention & control of noncommunicable diseases: guidelines for primary  
healthcare in low income settings.  
<http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/phc2012/en/index.html>  
Chap. 11: Other Chronic Diseases & Conditions
- Class #22      Guest Lecture: Women's pathways to prison  
Race, class, mental health, and incarceration for women
- Class #23      Mental health problems that are more likely to affect women  
p. 335-340: how biological, social, & environmental factors contribute to & affect  
mental health. Epidemiological, economic, legal, & political dimensions of mental  
health.

p. 344-352: Gender differences in mental disorders.  
Chap. 12: Mental Health

Class #24     Mental health problems that are more likely to affect women  
Depression: A global mental health concern.  
[http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/management/depression/who\\_paper\\_depression\\_wfmh\\_2012.pdf](http://www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/who_paper_depression_wfmh_2012.pdf)  
Video: I had a black dog, his name was Depression.  
[http://video.who.int/streaming/NMH/MSD/COPR\\_depression\\_01OCT2012.wmv](http://video.who.int/streaming/NMH/MSD/COPR_depression_01OCT2012.wmv)  
Chap. 12: Mental Health

Class #25     Women, alcohol, and drugs  
p. 362-369: Substance use & abuse in women from sociocultural, legal, & economic perspectives. Smoking and women worldwide. Racial/ethnic differences in alcohol use.  
Chap. 13: Substance Abuse  
Knapp, Caroline (1997) Drinking: A Love Story.

Class #26     Women, alcohol, and drugs  
Chap. 13: Substance Abuse

Class #27     Domestic violence  
p. 398-402: violence from a sociocultural, historical, economic, & global perspective  
Chap. 14: Violence, Abuse, & Harassment

Class #28     Sexual Violence  
Preventing Violence  
Bring a friend to class  
Chap. 14: Violence, Abuse, & Harassment

**FINAL EXAM according to University exam schedule**