**WOMEN'S STUDIES 1220**  
______WOMEN AND HEALTH______  
FALL 2008

Instructor: Nancy Pollak  
Room: A118g  
Phone: 604-323-5370  
Office hours: Thurs. 1:00 - 2:00 pm – plus other times announced in class

Required text: *Women’s Studies 1220 Course Reader*, available from Langara Bookstore

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**Weekly Topics, Readings and Assignment Due Dates**

• Week #1 Sept. 6  
  **Introduction to the Course**
  Topics:
  • Overview of course content and assignments
  • Methods of learning and teaching
  • Women’s Studies: Some core concepts & concerns

• Week #2 Sept. 13  
  **What the Health Are We Talking About?**
  Topics:
  • What is “health” – and what makes people healthy?
  • The body (both real and imagined): The social construction of women’s bodies
  • Gender-based analysis: Bringing women and their diverse experiences into focus
  • Refusing to be erased: The lenses of race and class

Readings:


• Week 3: Sept. 20  The Amazing Invisible Woman

Topics:
• Ideologies and institutions: The vehicles of sexism and other oppressions
• Traditional paradigms of health: What you believe is what you see
• Medicalizing the female body: Whatever happened to “normal”?  
• Dismissing the female healer: The rise of the medical model
• Feminist responses: The women’s health movement

Readings:
CR. 8 “Body commodification” by Karen Darricades. In: This Magazine vol. 39, #5 March/April 2006

Assignment: Article Comment Sheet due

• Week 4: Sept. 27  Breasts (Part I): The Power, the Glory, the Meddling

Topics:
• Medicalized and monitored: Public discourses on private parts
• The multiple politics of breastfeeding
• Activism: Reclaiming the power of women’s knowledge

Readings:

Assignment: Article Comment Sheet due
• Week 5: Oct. 4  Breasts (Part 2): The Politics of Cancer

Topics:
• Feminist science studies: Reconceptualizing questions about cancer
• In whose interests? Challenging the cancer establishment
• The epidemic, the environment: Women make the links

Readings:


• Week 6: Oct. 11  Stressed-out Women: Society Constructs a Personal Problem

Topics:
• Blaming the victim: How women are stressed about being stressed
• Medicalizing inequality: The sex, race, and class dimensions of stress
• Self-care: Necessary but not necessarily enough

Readings:


⇒ Assignment: Journal on Women & Health due

• Week 7 (Oct. 18) and Week 8 (Oct. 25)
⇒ Group Projects: Presenting groups will submit 1) Attendance Sheets and 2) Bibliography

• Week 9: Nov. 1  Extreme Make-overs: Technology, Theft, and Engineering Life in the 21st Century

Topics:
• Pathological and flawed: The ideological shadow over women’s bodies
• Beauty as idea, beauty as product: Consuming the message, buying the parts
• Bio-piracy: Mining other people’s genetic wealth
• Genome research: The powers behind the discourse
• Ecofeminism: A vision of interdependency, a critique of exploitation

... week 9, cont’d
Readings:


Assignment: Article Comment Sheet due

• Week 10: Nov. 8 Technological Birth

Topics:
• Egging us on: The colonization of the womb
• The normalization of intervention
• Old imperialism, new imperialism: The racist underpinnings

Readings:


Assignment: Article Comment Sheet due

• Week 11: Nov. 15 Caregiving: For Love, Money and Justice

Topics:
• Canada’s health care system: Women’s position as care providers
• Shifting sands: Privatizing care, risking women’s health

Readings:


cont’d . . .

... week 11 cont’d


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**Week 12: Nov. 22**

**Healing and Social Justice**

**Topics:**
- The global health movement: Globalization as though people mattered
- Healing locally: Holistic approaches to women’s health

**Readings:**


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**Week 13: Nov. 29**

**Course Review**

**Topics:**
- Wrap-up of course concepts and themes
- Envisioning health: A re-consideration of the determinants

**Readings:**

** ASSIGNMENTS **

WOMEN & HEALTH WMST 1220

FALL 2007 – THURSDAY AFTERNOON

Instructor: Nancy Pollak  Rm.: A – 118G  Phone: 604-323-5370

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Article Comment Sheets (16%)</td>
<td>Sept. 20</td>
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<td>Brief statements about assigned articles from the Course Reader.</td>
<td>Sept. 27</td>
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<td>• This is an open-book, take-home assignment that you will submit 4 times, each worth 4 points.</td>
<td>Nov. 1</td>
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<td>• Nov. 8</td>
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<td>2. A Journal on Women &amp; Health (20%)</td>
<td>Oct. 11</td>
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<td>Choose a specific topic relating to women’s health. In a journal-like presentation, explore your growing understanding of the issue by making use of course readings, course concepts, outside research, and your own insights.</td>
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<td>• The journal format invites written and graphic forms of expression – creativity is welcome.</td>
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<td>3. Group Project:</td>
<td>Presentations:</td>
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<td>A Community Approach to Women’s Health: (25%)</td>
<td>Week 7 (Oct. 18) and Week 8 (Oct. 25)</td>
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<td>Participate in a group research project and class presentation. The group will make contact with a community organization that deals with women and health.</td>
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<td>4. Class participation (14%)</td>
<td>Each class</td>
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<td>Attend each class and participate in classroom learning activities.</td>
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<td>5. Final Exam (Take-home) (25%)</td>
<td>Finals</td>
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<td>To receive course credit, you must write and submit this take-home exam.</td>
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Grading

A+ To receive an A grade, complete all the required assignments with consistently excellent standard.
A- B+ To receive a B grade, complete the required assignments with a consistently high standard.
B- C+ To receive a C grade, complete the required assignments with a satisfactory standard.
C- D Insufficient completion of assignments and/or unsatisfactory standards.

Letter Grade Equivalency

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*** GUIDELINES for ASSIGNMENTS ***

1. Article Comment Sheets

Purpose:
You are expected to do the Course Readings every week. The Article Comment Sheets are intended:

• to get you in the habit of identifying the key themes (ideas) in an article, which will help you to grasp the author’s intention and perspective;

• to give you opportunities to articulate your own responses to articles;

• to enhance your ability to participate in class discussions;

• to sharpen your understanding of the readings, which will make them more useful for other assignments and for your overall engagement with the course;

• to make sure you do the readings!

Guidelines:
1) This is an open-book assignment that you do before class.

2) At the beginning of 4 classes, you will turn in the completed Article Comment Sheet (ACS). See Course Outline for due dates. (The blank sheet will be handed out the previous week; if you are absent that week, be sure to get a blank sheet from the instructor before the next class.)

3) The ACS asks questions about a Course Reading assigned for that week. You are asked:
   • to identify a major theme(s) or idea(s) in the article
   • to present evidence that the author uses to explain or illustrate this idea(s)
   • to describe your own reaction to the article and to reflect on your relationship to the issue.

4) Your answers can be in point form (not essay-style) – brief but clear answers are required.

5) Each ACS is worth 4 points (the total assignment is worth 16 points). Marks will be assigned on the basis of completion, accuracy, and depth.

Note:
• Not everyone will be assigned the same article.
• We may hold small group discussions about the assigned articles. You will use your ACS in this discussion – so be prepared to talk about the article too.
2. A Journal on Women & Health

You will choose a specific women and health topic, research it and present your findings within the pages of a notebook. The Journal can be done in a creative, visual style, or with text alone.

**Purpose:** The Journal will allow you to demonstrate:
- your understanding of the themes, ideas, and readings in this course;
- your ability to do basic research, analysis, and writing on an issue; and
- your own process of learning about your issue and about Women’s Studies.

**Guidelines:**
1) Choose an issue that relates to women/girls and health. **Remember:** This course looks at “health” in the broadest sense – we examine the social, economic, cultural, and political factors that influence female well being. You can focus on one of our subjects (e.g., breasts, reproductive technology) or pick a topic not covered in the syllabus.
   - **Choose a specific topic.** Avoid anything too big (“pregnancy”) or too vague (“sexism in health care”). The more focused your subject, the better.

2) Use the Course Reader and library to research and deepen your understanding of the issue. Your Journal must refer to these readings and sources – include a bibliography at the end.
   - Use published books and journal articles: **a minimum of 5 readings**, at least 3 of which are from outside the Course Reader.
   - You may use Internet sources, but use them sparingly. **Internet sources will not count as part of your 5 readings.** In other words, most of your sources must be published articles, books, and journals.

3) Bring a **critical eye** to your reading, research and writing. **Use course concepts** and explore these kinds of questions:
   - What are the roots of this health issue: How have things become what they are today?
   - What are the cultural messages – myths, ideologies, beliefs – at play in this health issue?
   - Are women’s voices being heard in the discourse?
   - How do different women experience this issue differently?
   - What are women doing to take control of their experiences or to challenge oppression?
   - What is my relationship to the issue? Are my opinions or beliefs changing?

4) **Format:** Please buy or make a notebook with 6–8 pages (submit a minimum of 6 pages). The entries in your Journal can be colourful and creative. For example, entries can take the form of:
   - personal reflections on readings, class discussions and course concepts
   - a picture/photo that illustrates the issue, with handwritten annotations
   - a mind map or web drawing to show the connections between people and issues
   - a story or observation that helps you to unpack the issue
   - drawings with pencil, pen, crayons . . .
   - poetry, lyrics (your own or someone else’s) that relate to the subject

**Remember:** Your Journal must include reflections on your learning experience.
3. Group Project: A Community Approach to Women’s Health

You and about 4 other students will form a group that explores a women’s health issue, including a visit to and interview with a local community organization. Through group discussions, research, and connection with the organization, you will create a classroom presentation that illuminates what you have learned together.

Presentations should be approximately 20-25 minutes, followed by a 10-minute class discussion (based on questions you have proposed for discussion).

The instructor will suggest the issues and community organizations.

**Purpose:** The Group Project will give you the opportunity:
- to collaborate with a small group of students on a Women’s Studies issue
- to explore, in depth, a particular issue relating to women and health
- to gain exposure to a community organization and community activism
- to practice doing a gender-based analysis of an issue
- to work collectively in conceiving and delivering a creative class presentation

**Guidelines:**
1) **How to work together as a group:**
   - You must schedule and participate in at least three substantial meetings together.
   - Be practical: Make an early appointment to visit and interview your community organization – don’t leave it too late.
   - Before and after the visit, give yourselves time to uncover the questions that come up regarding your issue. Try to explore your assumptions, your fears (if any), your relevant life experiences . . .
   - Pay attention to each person’s ideas, show respect for each other, and create room for each person to contribute. Agreement is not required. Different perspectives are welcome.
   - Aim to deliver a lively presentation. You can use any format but avoid a panel presentation.

2) You will be evaluated on the basis of:
   - the presentation’s clarity and depth;
   - your analysis of the overall context of the issue (e.g., the social, cultural, economic, and political factors at play);
   - your ability to apply course concepts to the subject matter;
   - your reflections on what you learned about yourselves in relationship to the issue;
   - your ability to stimulate and involve your classmates (i.e., encourage their participation).

3) The group will submit an Attendance Record of your joint meetings and a Bibliography of your research sources (a minimum of 3 book/journal sources).

4) The group will receive one mark. Points will be deducted from an individual’s mark if she or he did not attend all the group meetings or did not contribute fully to the group’s efforts.