Women’s Studies/History of Medicine 431
Childbirth in the United States
Spring Semester, 2001-2002

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1419 MSC
263-4560
Office Hours: 11:00 am – noon and 2:15-3:15 pm TR
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Course meets: TR 1:00-2:15 pm, 5295 MSC

Course Description:

The course examines women’s childbirth experiences in the United States from the colonial period to today. It addresses throughout questions of authority and decision-making issues that remain central in women’s health policy debates today. Basic physiology of childbirth, interactions between birthing women and their attendants, changes in experiences over time, and evolving ideas about “choices” in childbirth are major themes addressed during the semester.

Course Requirements:

Enrollment for the course is kept as low as possible so that the class can be run as a seminar-discussion. Everyone is expected to complete the assigned readings before coming to class and to take responsibility as an active participant in class discussions. The success of the class depends on the time, energy, and commitment you are willing to invest. You should come to class prepared to engage in thoughtful and constructive conversation that is respectful of others in the classroom and takes seriously the issues and themes presented in the readings.

The class is conducted as a seminar-discussion, an approach that grows directly out of an appreciation of the benefits of active learning, in which the professor is a facilitator of learning rather than a dispenser of information and students actively pursue their own education rather than passively receive knowledge. The general goals of a university education focus on critical thinking being willing to explore ideas contrary to one's own beliefs, knowing when information or data are relevant to an issue and how to seek and find that information and apply it methodologically to the problem at hand. Class time will be a time to present new material, but even more, it will be used to provide experiences in learning what to do with new material and to clear up problems so that students can take responsibility for learning and solving problems rather than waiting for them to be solved by the instructor. Cooperative and group learning exercises will be encouraged, with the assumption that everyone brings something valuable and unique to the class. Active discussion, expressing one’s
ideas and getting reactions from other students and the instructor, has been demonstrated to make a big difference in learning, retention, and use of knowledge. Articulating an idea can be one way of getting checks and extensions of it. Thus students are required to talk about their ideas openly, listen and respond to others’ ideas, remain sensitive to the feelings of other class members, and take responsibility for moving class discussions forward.

If any problems arise, either academic or personal, that might jeopardize your performance in the course, please try to inform me of the problem before class or at the next available office hour, or by leaving a message or an email for me.

Any student who has a disability that may prevent her or him from fully demonstrating her or his abilities should contact me personally as soon as possible so that we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities.

Graduate students must attend an additional seminar, the time of which will be arranged on the first day of class.

Students are required to familiarize themselves with the UW policies on plagiarism and to assume responsibility for honest in all course work.

Grading:

**Undergraduates**  
Class participation 20%  
OBOS paper 15% due 2/21  
Oral History paper 15% due 4/9  
Midterm exam 15%  
One step further project 15% due 5/7  
Final Exam 20%

**Graduate Students**  
Class participation 20%  
Research paper 60%  
Seminar leadership 20%

Required Reading:

- 431 Reader, available from Ag Journalism Copy Shop (referred to in syllabus by *)

GRADUATE STUDENTS PLEASE MEET AFTER THE FIRST CLASS TO PLAN
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<td>April 2</td>
<td>20th Century: Hospital Experiences and Procedures</td>
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<td>April 4</td>
<td>20th Century: De-Medicalization: Natural Childbirth Movement</td>
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<td>April 23</td>
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<td>April 25</td>
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<td>April 30</td>
<td>Childbirth Today: How Dangerous was/is Childbirth?</td>
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<td>May 2</td>
<td>Childbirth Today: Hospital v. Home</td>
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<td>May 7</td>
<td>21st Century Childbirth: Where are we headed?</td>
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<td>May 9</td>
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<td>FINAL EXAM WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 12:25pm</td>
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Women’s Studies/ History of Medicine 431  
Required Readings

January 24-29  
Basic Anatomy and Physiology of labor and delivery

Students are expected to learn the basic anatomy and physiology of pregnancy, labor, and delivery. In class we will review this, view childbirth videos, and use a plastic pelvis and rag doll to deliver in various presentations.


January 31  
OBOS and Childbirth


February 5  
Meanings and Experiences of Childbirth & Motherhood


February 7  
Meanings and experiences of Childbirth & Motherhood


February 12 18th Century Childbirth: Midwives

*Martha Ballard, Excerpts from her Diary.


A Midwife’s Tale website is www.dohistory.org

February 14 18th – 19th Century Childbirth: Under the Shadow of Maternity

*Letters from Jane to Elizabeth Gordon, 1846.

*Letters from Bessie Huntting Rudd to Edward Payson Rudd, 1860.

Leavitt, Brought to Bed, pp. 1-35.

February 19 19th Century Childbirth: Midwives and Medicalization at Home


Leavitt, Brought to Bed, pp. 36-63.


A Midwife’s Tale website is www.dohistory.org
February 21 19th Century Childbirth: Differences in Experience

*Nettie Fowler McCormick - Anita McCormick Blaine Letters, 1890 excerpts.


Leavitt, Brought to Bed, pp. 64-115.

February 26 19th Century Childbirth: Anesthesia

*Fanny Longfellow, Diary and Letters, 1844-1856, excerpts.


Leavitt, Brought to Bed, pp. 116-141.

February 28 19th – 20th Century Childbirth: Meddlesome Midwifery


Leavitt, Brought to Bed, pp. 142-170.

March 5 19th – 20th Century Childbirth: the Move to the Hospital

Leavitt, Brought to Bed, pp. 171-218.


March 7 Doing Oral History


March 12    Exam review

March 14    In Class Midterm Examination
March 19    20th Century Childbirth: Medicalization

*Letter in Response to Author’s Query, 1983.


*Julie Harris, as told to Betty Friedan, “I was Afraid to Have a Baby,” McCall’s, Dec 1956, pp. 68-74.


March 21    20th Century Childbirth: MDs and OB Nurses


April 2    20th Century Childbirth: Hospital Experiences and Procedures


**April 4 20th Century Demedicalization: Natural Childbirth Movement**


**April 9 20th Century Childbirth: Nurse Midwives & Birthing Rooms**


A Midwife’s Tale website is [www.dohistory.org](http://www.dohistory.org)

**April 11 20th Century Childbirth: Traditional and Spiritual Midwives**


A Midwife’s Tale website is [www.dohistory.org](http://www.dohistory.org)
April 16 20th Century Childbirth: Traditional and Spiritual Midwives


*Ina Mae Gaskin video

April 18 20th Century Childbirth: Direct Entry Midwives


A Midwife’s Tale website is www.dohistory.org

April 23 20th Century Childbirth: Doulas and Dads


*JWL, “All Alone in the Stork Club” Fathers and the Mid-20th Century Childbirth Experience.”


April 25  
NO CLASS

April 30  

20th Century Childbirth: How Dangerous was/is Childbirth?


May 2  

Childbirth Today: Hospital v. Home


*Nina Shapiro, “Give me Drugs!” (1999), and Jean Hanff Korelitz, “Cut Me Open!” (1999), and Susan Gerhard, “Take me to a hospital!” (1999) “Salon Mothers Who Think” (Salon.com).

May 7  

21st Century Childbirth: Where are we headed?


Attendance/class participation (20%)

Students’ attendance and participation in class discussions and in the business of the class (for example, on email and on any relevant out-of-class activity) will be graded, qualitatively, and will count as 20% of the course grade. This is important because the seminar active-learning process does not work without student active involvement in class activity.

Our Bodies Ourselves Paper (15%)

A short paper (no longer than 5 typed double-spaced pages) analyzing one aspect of childbirth over at least four editions of Our Bodies Ourselves is required. Students will select the subject they want to look at; the papers should identify and analyze changes over time. The paper must be submitted on or before February 21. We will discuss this paper in detail in class on January 31.

Oral History Paper (15%)

A short paper (no longer than 5 typed double-spaced pages) conducting, describing, and analyzing one oral history interview, preferably a family member of your grandmother’s generation (but others acceptable too), is required. Students can submit the tapes or transcript as an appendix. The paper must be submitted on or before April 9. We will discuss this paper in detail in class on March 7.

Mid-term Examination (15%)

There will be an in-class blue book examination on March 14, covering all the material to that date in the syllabus and in class. There will be an in-class review for this Exam on March 12. Students can expect one part of the exam to be short answer and one part to be a longer essay.

One-Step Further Paper (15%)

A short (c. 5 typed double-spaced pages) paper, taking either your OBOS or your oral history paper one step further is required. This paper should be based on additional research, aiming to provide a deeper context in which to understand your first paper. For example, you might want to compare your findings from OBOS with a standard medical text or medical writings from the
same period. Or you may want to do oral histories on additional people AND read some of the popular literature of the period that addresses some of the themes you found. Remember that this should represent ONE step further and need not be a major research paper. In fact, you may want to include in the paper a discussion of what else would be needed to make this a full-scale term paper. This paper is due on **May 7**.

**Final Examination (20%)**

There will be blue book final examination during the Exam Period, at 12:25 pm on Wednesday, **May 15, 2002**. Students can expect one part of the exam to be short answer and one part to be a longer essay. The exam will be similar in form to the mid-term and will cover all of the course subjects and material.

If you have questions about a grade, please speak first to your instructor. If the question is not resolved, speak with the Chair, Mariamne Whatley, or Associate Chair, Helen Klebesadel. They will attempt to resolve the issue informally and inform you of the Appeals Procedures if no resolution is reached informally.

I wish to include fully any students with special needs in this course. Please let me know if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or evaluation procedures in order to enable you to participate fully. The McBurney Center will provide useful assistance and documentation.