

## HC 251 GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES OF WOMEN'S HEALTH: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Winter 2007 – O'Hare Campus Wednesday 6:30-9:30 PM

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### Competencies

- H-I-1: Can understand change methodology, plan change within a community, and assess its likely impact
- H-I-B: Can explain how two or more of the factors of race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, age, gender, sexual orientation or religion interact to shape communities
- S-2-A: Can describe, differentiate, and explain form, function and variation within biological systems
- H -5: Can analyze issues and problems from a global perspective

### Introduction

Few of us are aware that black women in the United States are less likely to get breast cancer than white women, but are more likely to die if it occurs, and that Asian women in the U.S. are less likely to get breast cancer than other women. Can these differences be explained simply by genetics? What factors lead to the extraordinarily high maternal and infant mortality rates in poor countries, and is it true that infant mortality in a number of Chicago communities is comparable to infant mortality in some poor countries? Do issues of nutrition differ for women and men in Africa? In Asia? How do these compare to issues of nutrition for women and men in the United States? Are there differences in the ways violence against women is experienced in the United States and in other countries? Is there a relationship between women's status and their level of health and well-being? These kinds of questions have complex, and not always complete, answers. However, they represent the nature of inquiry undertaken in this course. We will share our own experiences of health and well-being, and will compare these to health issues for women in various locations around the globe. We will also look closely at the anatomy and physiology of the female reproductive system, and identify their connections to behavioral, social, and environmental factors, thereby expanding our understanding of how biological factors interact with multiple additional factors to shape our experience of health. This broad understanding of women's experience of health will form the framework for our additional exploration of participatory learning and social action as fundamental concepts for mobilizing community action aimed at enhancing women's health and well-being.

### Learning Activities

Learning activities include readings in social sciences, behavioral sciences, health sciences, and women's studies, and participation in lectures/discussions, small group cooperative work, and exercises designed to create an environment for sharing information and analyzing a particular topic. Specific assignments include a media presentation for which students will identify explicit and implicit messages communicated in advertisements or other media piece relevant to women's health, and a small group project and presentation for which students will cooperatively analyze the multiple factors impacting a women's health issue in a country outside the United States. In addition, students will complete an academic paper, approximately five pages, which communicates their analysis of the complex web of factors that influence women's health status in the United States.

### Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, class participants will:

- \*be able to describe the nature of health, including the ways in which biological, social, political and physical environment factors interact to shape women's experience of health.
- \*be able to make connections between the nature of health and the principles of social action methods that can effectively address women's health issues.
- \*have an increased awareness of their own state of health and well-being, and how it is influenced by numerous factors of their life situation.

In addition:

H-1-I students will be able to:

- \*explain the principles of participatory learning and action
- \*evaluate the extent to which the principles of participatory learning and action are applied in a women's health promotion program.

H-1-B students will be able to:

- \*explain how social categories, including race, ethnicity, nationality, social class, or other social

category, interact with biology to shape women's experience of health and well-being.

\*explain in detail how the experience of a specific health area varies for women from different social categories, and discuss the influence of factors contributing to the disparity.

S-2-A students will be able to:

\*describe the anatomy and physiology of the female reproductive system

\*discuss the impact of breastfeeding on health, and breast cancer pathology and prevention

\*relate the above, particularly connections between breastfeeding and breast cancer, to dynamics of human health

H-5 students will be able to:

\*discuss variations in health status for women in various locations of the world, and discuss possible explanations for the above variations

### **Course Materials**

Smyke, Patricia (preparer). (1991). *Women and Health*. London: Zed Books. Prepared for the United Nations/Non-Governmental Organizations Group on Women and Development. (This book will be hard to locate.

Copies will be made available through library reserve for students who are unable to obtain a copy)

Worcester, Nancy and Whatley, Marianne H., editors. (2004). *Women's Health: Readings on Social, Economic and Political Issues*, 4th edition. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt. (Make sure to obtain the 4<sup>th</sup> edition)

Additional articles TBA

### **Competence Development Documentation**

You will demonstrate your competence(s):

\*by participating in class sessions, including questioning, analyzing and discussing the content of presentations and discussions, and contributing to small group activities.

\*by documenting themes that emerge from weekly reading assignments.

\*by completing a media project that includes identifying an advertisement or other item from the media, presenting a description of its contents and your analysis of underlying messages, and facilitating a discussion of its significance to women. Guidelines will be provided.

\*by completing and presenting a small group cooperative project for which participants identify a women's health issue for women outside the United States, and analyze the multiple factors which influence the health of the women involved. Guidelines will be provided.

\*by completing a final academic paper, approximately five pages in length, which analyzes the multiple factors that influence women's experience of health in the United States. Guidelines will be provided.

### **CALENDAR**

*Readings are to be completed prior to the class sessions for which they are assigned.*

#### **Week 1: January 3**

##### ***Introduction to course***

Introductions

What is health? What is there about women's health that makes it a significant topic for study?

"A Health Story" – an exercise to explore the nature of health

Overview of course content and activities

#### **Week 2: January 10**

##### ***Women's Health: Poor, Labor-intensive Countries***

Media presentations

*Relevant Readings*

Smyke: Chapters 1 through 4

#### **Week 3: January 17**

##### ***Women's Health: Wealthy, Industrialized Nations***

Media presentations

*Relevant Readings*

Worcester: Chapter 1 and Chapter 3

**Week 4: January 24**

***Women's Health - Inequalities in Health Status***

Media presentations

*Relevant Readings*

Worcester: Chapter 2 and Chapter 12

**Week 5: January 31**

***Reproductive Anatomy and Physiology***

Media presentations

*Relevant Readings*

Worcester: Chapter 4 and Chapter 10

**Week 6: February 7**

***Reproductive Anatomy and Physiology; Breastfeeding***

Media presentations

Group Project Presentations

*Relevant Readings*

Worcester: Chapter 11 and Chapter 5

**Week 7: February 14**

***Reproductive Anatomy and Physiology; Breast Cancer***

Media presentations

Group Project Presentations

*Relevant Readings*

Worcester: Chapter 9 and Chapter 13

**Week 8: February 21**

***Social Change Methodology***

Group Project Presentations

*Relevant Readings*

Smyke: Chapter 6 and Chapter 7

**Week 9: February 28**

***Social Change Methodology***

Group Project Presentations

*Relevant Readings*

Worcester: Chapter 8

Video: *Exposure: Environmental Links to Breast Cancer*

**Week 10: March 7**

Group Project Presentations

***Bringing It All Together***

**Week 11: March 14**

Final academic paper due