

Gender and Health/HSOC-2537
Spring 2023
M/W 10:15-11:45am EST
Cohen Hall 493

Professor Beth Linker

Office Hours: Wed 12:30-2pm EST; Schedule using <https://calendly.com/linkerbeth/linker-office-hours>

▷Zoom link for office hours: <https://upenn.zoom.us/j/98442709052>

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Description:

Women's health is a constant refrain of modern life, prompting impassioned debates that speak to the fundamental nature of our society. Women's bodies are the tableaux across which politicians, physicians, healthcare professional, activists, and women themselves dispute issues as wide-ranging as individual versus collective rights, the legitimacy of scientific and medical knowledge, the role of the government in healthcare, inequalities of care, and the value of experiential knowledge, among many others. Understanding the history of these questions is crucial for informed engagement with contemporary issues.

In this class, we will explore the history of women's health in America from the colonial era to the present day. We will ask how women and physicians derived meaning from and tried to regulate women's life cycle events, reproduction, sickness, and political activism. We will interrogate the relationship between race, gender, and understandings of illness. In addition, this class will refocus attention on social and racial disparities in health by privileging the voices of black, immigrant, and working-class women. Some of the central themes we will address include the ways in which power is inscribed on women's bodies, the extent to which women resist such inscriptions, and the role of women's health on society and culture. The course proceeds chronologically, drawing from primary and secondary sources to make sense of how people in the past understood, constructed, manipulated, and defined women's health.

Course Objectives:

- Articulate major themes, patterns, and trends in the history of women's health
- Contextualize the history of gender and health within broader social, political, and cultural changes in U.S. history
- Explore the interplay between race, gender, and medicine

In addition to learning new content, we will interrogate the disciplinary tools of history. These objectives are:

- Learn to navigate a diverse array of primary source materials, including, but not limited to, textual sources, film, and visual materials.
- Refine the ability to read actively and critically

- Improve speaking and discussion skills in a small seminar setting
- Gain a sense for how history is a form of interpretation

Key Texts:

(All books are electronically available through [Van Pelt library](#), or for purchase through several [online book vendors](#). All other readings will be posted on the course CANVAS site under modules.)

- Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Birthing A Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South* (2006)
- Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (2017)
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1893)
- Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls* (1997)
- Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (1997)
- Margaret Charles Smith and Linda Janet Holmes, *Listen to Me Good: The Life Story of an Alabama Midwife* (1996)
- Nancy Langston, *Toxic Bodies: Hormone Disruptors and the Legacy of DES* (2010)
- Wendy Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Women's Health in the Second Wave* (2010)
- Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals* (1980)

Accessibility: It is very important to me to create an environment that is inclusive and is attentive to different learning needs. Please contact me if you have specific needs that require accommodations. Online learning requires different strategies concerning preparation, planning, classroom interactions, and information retention. To assist with this new reality, I encourage every student to visit the Weingarten Learning Resource Center <https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/>

Plagiarism: Research is a collaborative activity to advance knowledge. The university is a community dedicated to contributing to this project. To do so, everyone including students must correctly attribute the ideas, words, and data generated by others through proper citation. All course work submitted in this class must be authentically your own. I and the University hold a zero-tolerance policy for cheating and plagiarism. You will receive a failing grade on a plagiarized assignment and the offense will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. Such offenses permanently mark your academic record. Please consult Penn's Code of Academic Integrity: <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>

Other resources: Here are some important resources that, as Penn students, you should know about, use, and have at the ready:

PENN STUDENT RESOURCES

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
SERVICES (CAPS)
215-898-7021
(24/7)

OFFICE OF THE
CHAPLAIN
215-898-8456

WEINGARTEN LEARNING
RESOURCES CENTER
215-573-9235

HELP LINE
215-898-HELP
(215-898-4357)

RAP LINE
(REACH A PEER, 9PM - 1AM)
215-573-2RAP
(215-573-2727)

SPECIAL
SERVICES
215-898-6600

STUDENT INTERVENTION
SERVICES (SIS)
215-898-6081

STUDENT HEALTH
SERVICE (SHS)
215-746-3535
(including
nights/weekends)

Grading and Assignments:

▷ **Participation (20%):** Since this is a small seminar, attendance and participation are crucial. Please come to our sessions prepared and ready to engage with the assigned reading materials. Students will be expected to engage with select readings over the course of the semester. Full credit will go to those students who engage with the reading, offering comments and questions that demonstrate familiarity with class discussion and other assigned readings. In addition to weekly class participation, students may be asked to lead class discussion throughout the semester.

More than one absence may result in a lower grade for participation. If you need to miss class for any reason, please be in touch with me as soon as possible.

▷ **Quizzes (20%):** Short, unannounced multiple choice quizzes will be assigned throughout the semester at the beginning of class, either via canvas or on hard copy paper.

▷ **Domestic Health Advice Paper (20%):** Using popular domestic health guides from the late 18th and early 19th century as well as scholarly secondary sources, students will prepare a research proposal of **1500-2000 words**. Topics will range from menstruation, hysteria, childbirth, and menopause.

▷ **Interview Paper Assignment (20%):** For this assignment, you will interview two women about their experiences with menstruation/puberty, breastfeeding, childbirth, or feminism, among others. To give this assignment some historical traction the two women should be born 20 years apart from each other (so, for example, one woman interviewee could be born in 1955 and another in 1975). You must interview each woman on the same topic. With the help of secondary sources, your job will be to construct a narrative of change or continuity over time in which you compare the experiences of each woman and contextualize them within major course themes. The final paper will be approximately **1500-2000 words**.

For a good resource on how to approach your interviews, see Judith Moyer's "Step-By-Step Guide to

Oral History," available here: http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html

▷ **Contemporary Issues Paper Assignment (20%):** Over the course of the term, look for contemporary articles, advertisements, TikToks, or other social media outlets that speak to a women's health concern. You can choose an issue related to those we discuss in class or it can be an outside topic. Once you have a contemporary artifact, write a paper that contextualizes it in the historical trajectory of the topic, using at least two readings from the course as well as outside readings. Your paper must have an argument about how the history of your chosen topic informs its present-day iteration.

Alternatively, a student could choose to write an epilogue to Joan Brumberg's book *The Body Project*, focusing on one theme from the several chapters we will read in class.

This is an opportunity for you to explore an aspect of women's health that excites you or that you deem particularly important. Some issues you might consider are: Screening (prenatal, cancer, etc.), HPV and vaccinations; Sexual violence and health; body size and expectations; women as medical practitioners; Immigrant women's health; Sex education; Reproductive justice, fertility, and infertility; Breastfeeding / breast milk substitutes; Sexual dysfunction; LGBTQ+ and health care. The final paper will be approximately **1500-2000 words**.

▷ **All submitted papers should be in microsoft word, 12-point font, double-spaced, 1 inch margins. Each paper should follow the Chicago Manual of Style, following the notes and bibliography style (NOT author-date). See <https://bit.ly/3bCOres> (you need to be signed into the Van Pelt webpage with your Penn ID for this link to work). Failure to follow these formatting instructions will result in a lowered final grade.**

Important Dates:

- ★ **Wednesday February 22nd: Domestic Health Advice Project IN CLASS**
- ★ **W March 29: Interview Paper Assignment due by 11:45am EST**
- ★ **W April 26: Contemporary Issues Paper due by 10:15am EST**

Grading Policy:

Extensions

* If you anticipate a busy period with multiple due dates/requirements, please contact me and ask to make arrangements for an alternative due date at least 1 week in advance. Extensions requested during the week leading up to the deadline will not be granted.

*Emergency situations: If you have emergent circumstances that prevent you from submitting, please let me know as soon as you can.

*Late papers will be deducted by 1/3 of a letter grade for every 24 hours that it is late.

Part I: Introduction and Grounding

W January 11: Introduction & Scope of the Course

WEEK 2

M January 16: No Class/MLK Day

W January 18 : Theoretical Orientations (Class will run from 10- 11am**)**

- Emily Martin, "Medical Metaphors of Women's Bodies: Menstruation and Menopause," *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction* (2001), 27 – 53 (26 pages)
- Londa Schiebinger, "Theories of Race and Gender," in *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Beacon Press, 1993), 143 – 183 (40 pages)

Part II: Gender and Health in the Colonial Era and Early Republic

WEEK 3

M January 23 : Bodies, Reproduction, and Sexuality in the New World

- Adrien Van der Donck, *A Description of the New Netherlands*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam, 1656), trans. Jeremiah Johnson, excerpted in *Collections of the New York Historical Society*, 2nd ser., I (1941), p. 200. (1 page)
- Jennifer Morgan, "'Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770," *William & Mary Quarterly* 54 (Jan. 1997), 167-92. (26 pages)
- Cornelia Hughes Dayton, "Taking the Trade: Abortion and Gender Relations in an Eighteenth-Century New England Village" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (Jan. 1991): 19 – 49 (30 pages)

W January 25: Visit to Van Pelt Rare Books (meet in the Lea Library, 6th floor Van Pelt)

WEEK 4

M January 30: The Work of Nursing, Respectability, and the Colonial Family

- William Cadogan, "An Essay upon Nursing and the Management of Children, From Their Birth to Three Years of Age," 10th ed. (Boston: Cox and Berry, 1772)
- Janet Golden, "Public discourse and private relations: Wet nursing in colonial America" in *From Breast to Bottle: A Social History of Wet Nursing in America* (1996), 11 – 37 (26 pages)

Part III: Race, Sex, and Science: Women's Health in the Nineteenth Century

W February 1: Enfeebled bodies, enfeebled minds

- Catherine Beecher, "On Female Health in America," from *Letters to the People on Health and Happiness* (1855)
- Edward Clarke, "Sex in Education, or a Fair Chance for the Girls" (1873).
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll and Charles Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and Her Role in Nineteenth-Century America," *The Journal of American History* 60, no. 2 (Sep., 1973), pp. 332 – 356 (24 pages)

WEEK 5

M February 6: Deviant Women

- "Testimony as to the Insanity of Elizabeth Packard" (1864) excerpt in *Root of Bitterness: Documents in the Social History of American Women*, 309 – 314 (5 pages)
- Mary Gove Nichols, "The Murders of Marriage," (1842) excerpt in *Root of Bitterness: Documents in the Social History of American Women*, 303 – 308 (5 pages)
- Marylynne Diggs, "Romantic Friends or a 'Different Race of Creatures'? The Representation of Lesbian Pathology in Nineteenth-Century America" *Feminist Studies* 21, no. 2 (1995): 317 – 340. (23 pages).

W February 8: Fertility, Pregnancy, Childbirth

- Sasha Turner, "'The Best Ones Who Are Fit to Breed': The Quest for Biological Reproduction," from *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017)
- Sasha Turner, "When Workers Become Mothers, Who Works? Motherhood, Labor, and Punishment," from *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017)

WEEK 6

M February 13: Individual Meetings day

- **Class time will be dedicated to individual, 10 min. meetings** to discuss progress on the Domestic Health Project AND early plans for the interview assignment. Come to the meeting prepared to discuss both.

W February 15: Gynecology Emergent

- Deirdre Cooper Owens, "Perfecting the Degraded Body: Slavery, Irish-Immigrations and American Gynaecology," *Power in History: From Medieval Ireland to the Post-Modern World*, ed. Anthony McElligot *et al.* Historical Studies 27 (Dublin, Portland 2011), pp. 167-84 (17 pages)

- Marie Jenkins Schwartz, “Gynecological Surgery” from *Birth of a Slave*, pp. 227 – 256 (29 pages)

L.L. Wall, “The Medical Ethics of Dr. J. Marion Sims: a Fresh Look at the Historical Record,” *Journal of Medical Ethics*, August 2006, pp. 346-350 (4 pages)

WEEK 7

Part IV: Citizenship, Activism, and Agency, 1880 – 1970

M February 20: Immigrant and Scientific Mothers

- Margaret M. Roche, “A Little Mothers' League,” *Mother and Child* 2, no. 10 (October 1921): 455
- Sarah Comstock, “Mothercraft: A New Profession for Women,” *Good Housekeeping* (1914), 672 – 678 (7 pages)
- Rima Apple, “Mamma's scientific—she knows all the laws': Motherhood in the Early Twentieth Century,” in *Perfect Motherhood: Science and Childrearing in America* (2006), 34 – 55. (21 pages)

W February 22: Bluebook exam/IN-class paper writing response/ Domestic Health Advice Project

WEEK 8

M February 27: Asian Immigration and Sex Work; Mental Health in the Progressive Era

- Amy Sueyoshi, “Prostitution Proliferates,” in *Discriminating Sex* (University of Ill. Press, 2018)
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1893).
- Gilman, “Why I Wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*”(1913) (about half a page)
- Elizabeth Lunbeck, “Psychiatrists, the 'Hypersexual Female,' and a New Medical Management of Morality in the Progressive Era,” in *Major Problems in the History of Medicine*, 339 – 347 (9 pages)

W March 1: ASYNCHRONOUS –NO IN-CLASS MEETING/ Prep work for interviews over spring break

March 6 & 8--NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

WEEK 9

M March 13: The “Modern” Body on Display: Fitness, Beauty, and American Culture (Leader: Julia Davies)

- Brumberg, Ch. 3 “Perfect Skin” and Ch. 4 “Body Projects,” in *The Body Project*, pp. 57 – 138 (81 pages)
- Kathy Peiss, “Beauty Culture and Women's Commerce,” in *Hope in a Jar*, 61 – 96 (35 pages)

W March 15: Menstruation and Adolescent Sexuality

- Brumberg, Ch. 2 “Sanitizing Puberty: The American Way to Menstruate” and Ch. 5 “The Disappearance of Virginity,” pp. 27 – 56 and 139 – 192 (82 pages)

- “A Fox Woman Comes of Age,” from *The Autobiography of a Fox Indian Woman*, ed. and trans. Truman Michelson, *40th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1918-19* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1925), pp. 303 – 309

WEEK 10

M March 20: Anxiety and the Diagnosis of Discontent

- Donald Cooley, “The New Nerve Pills and Your Health,” *Cosmopolitan* (January 1956), 68 – 75 (handout, 7 pages)
- Betty Friedan, “The Sexual Solipsism of Sigmund Freud,” *The Feminine Mystique*, (1964), 103 – 125 (22 pages)
- Tone, Andrea, *The Age of Anxiety: A History of America's Turbulent Affair with Tranquilizers*. New York: Basic Books, 2009. Chapter 8: “Mother’s Little Helpers”
- Images of medical advertisements for tranquilizers, see Canvas site

W March 22: Individual meetings day

- **Class time will be dedicated to holding individual, 10 min. meetings** to discuss progress on the Interview Paper Assignment as well as your initial thoughts on the final paper. Come to the meeting prepared to discuss both.

WEEK 11

M March 27:

Reproductive Health and Black Women

- Smith, *Listen To Me Good*, Introduction, Chpt. 3 “Official Midwife,” and Ch. 4 “Birth Practices” (77 pages)

★W March 29: Interview Paper Assignment due in class

WEEK 12

M April 3: Abortion

- Wendy Kline, “Learning from the Uterus Out: Abortion and Women's Health Activism in Chicago,” *Bodies of Knowledge*, pp. 65 – 96 (31 pages)
- Leslie Reagan, “Specter of Tragedy,” in *Dangerous Pregnancies: Mothers, Disabilities, and Abortion in Modern America* (2010), pp. 55 – 104 (49 pages)

W April 5: Birth Control

- Dubois, Johnson, and Schuyler, “A Negro Number,” *Birth Control Review* 16 (1932): 163-167 (4 pages)
- Dorothy Roberts, Chapter 2, “The Dark Side of Birth Control,” in *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (1997), pp. 56 – 89. (33 pages)

Part V: Empowerment? 1970 – Present

WEEK 13

M April 10: Healthier, with Hormones

- Robert A. Wilson, "A Key to Staying Young" *Look* (January 11, 1966)
- Langston, Ch. 3 "Help for Women Over Forty"

W April 12: Policing and Pathologizing the Womb

- Rebecca Kluchin, "Sterilizing Unfit Women," in *Fit to be Tied* (2009), chapter 3, p. 90-113 (section "Early Sterilization Abuse" to End of Chapter)
- Roberts, excerpts from Chapters 3, "From Norplant to the Contraceptive Vaccine"

WEEK 14

M April 17: Birthing and Birth Practices

- Smith, "Last Days" *Listen to me Good*, 134-156
- Jacqueline Wolf, "Epidural Anesthesia and Cesarean Section: The Question of Choice, 1970s to the present," in *Deliver Me From Pain: Anesthesia and Birth in America* (2009), 168 – 196 (28 pages)

W April 19: Individual Meeting day

- **Class time will be dedicated to individual, 10 min. meetings** to discuss progress on the Contemporary Issues Paper Assignment.

WEEK 15

M April 24: research day–NO CLASS MEETING

W April 26: MEET IN CLASS for sum up and review of the semester

- ★ **Contemporary Issues Paper DUE by 10:15 EST**

*Please note that this syllabus is an evolving document. Changes may be made throughout the semester to accommodate student and professor needs. If concerns arise, please make an appointment to speak to me directly through zoom or on the phone.