

## Course Syllabus Spring 2011

### **CWS 412: Gender and Health in Cross-Cultural Perspective**

**Cosby Center, Room 103**

**Class Time: Wednesday 1:00p – 1:50p**

**Professor:** Dr. M. Melton – Assistant Professor of Women’s Studies

**Office:** Cosby Center, Room 213 **Phone:** 404-270-5667

**Office Hours:** Room 213 - Mon. 2:00p – 5:00p, Friday 3:00 - 4:00p (or by appt.)

**Email:** monicamelton2@gmail.com *GOOGLE DOCS is used for this course*

***This course uses GoogleDocs - grades and projects will be posted on GoogleDocs for your convenience. Please log onto our class website daily for course announcements and information.***

ALL PAPERS MUST BE SUBMITTED ON *GoogleDocs* (In class papers not included)

### **Course Texts – MANDATORY**

Worcester, Nancy and Mariamne H. Whatley (eds.) 2004. Women’s Health: Readings on Social, Economics, and Political Issues (Fifth Edition ONLY). Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company. (WH) **ISBN: 978-0-7575-5969-3**

Jael Silliman et al. Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice. Cambridge: South End Press. (WOC) **ISBN: 0-89608-729-8**

White, Evelyn C. (ed.) 1994. The Black Women’s Health Book: Speaking for Ourselves (New Expanded Edition) Seattle: Seal. (BWHB) **ISBN: 1-878067-40-0**

Additional readings and handouts will be assigned and made available periodically throughout the course.

**CWS 412** is a Core Course for Comparative Women’s Studies Health majors and minors. The course is open to students beginning at the sophomore level.

### **Course Overview**

Gender & Health in Cross-Cultural Perspectives (CWS 412) is a four credit hour course that explores current thinking about the politics of women’s health and well-being by exploring the major issues and topical areas in the field of gender and health. Theoretically, the course is grounded in multi-racial feminism, black women’s activist strategies, and health narratives. The course is geared to jointly facilitate and nurture the theory and praxis of women’s health. The particular condition of women needs greater visibility on the national policy agenda. In recent years, we’ve witnessed greater efforts, and deservedly so, to cast public attention to the plight of African American males—from racial profiling, disproportionate rates of incarceration, and the profound decline in college classrooms. While these conditions are critical and need a mandatory agenda, so too should certain conditions be politicized for women of color. HIV/AIDS prevention and intervention, for instance, which disproportionately impacts Black women, is an example of a critical women’s health situation. Since gender, ethnicity, race, culture, and class underlie the patterning of

disease and illness for women. The course also examines the long-term effects of racism, poverty and sexism because women's health requires a framework beyond prevention measures that focus singularly on curing supposed individual pathologies. The course emphasizes the linkages between the body, health, and women's power in society and explores the ways structured patterns of inequality and privilege affect women's health as well as their access and experience of health practices and products. We explore women and the healthcare system, sexually transmitted infections, sex, gender roles and health, menstruation, transgender health, size discrimination, food, and body modification, sexuality, childbirth and lactation. This is an interdisciplinary class, and texts and materials include feminist theory and analysis, oral narratives, film, and popular culture items. The class format blends lectures and focused discussions with a wide range of interactive forms such as rotating facilitation of the reading material, group exercises, projects, and writing assignments.

### **Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to analyze the health situation and related social problems of women from an interdisciplinary perspective. You will demonstrate understanding of the interactive nature of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, class, and sexuality as they pertain to outcomes for women's health. We will identify and deconstruct patriarchal as well as other biases in the historical and contemporary construction of medical knowledge and disciplinary areas of inquiry in connection with gender and health. Students will be familiar with feminist approaches to understanding women's health. Students will be familiar with how to question and challenge some of the basic assumptions and values surrounding women's health and gender roles and structures of the culture in which they are socialized. For instance, the impact of the socially constructed role of women as primary care-takers and its intersections with well-being as related to employment, child care, the gender wage gap, and elderly care. Finally, students will demonstrate their enhanced critical thinking in all of the above areas through the organization, production, and implementation of a 30-second public service announcement (PSA) on prevention. You will take the concepts learned and create public service announcements (PSAs) that speak to women's. Additionally, each student will orchestrate an activism project that enhances women's health, social justice, and equity on campus or in the community. Both projects will implement the use of digital media and all final products will be uploaded to *GoogleDocs*. As a "community of learners" we will engage with the visual and digital productions to develop critical thinking and nurture civic engagement around issues that enhance women's lived experiences and their communities.

### **Course Evaluation and Assessment**

Evaluation of class performance will be based on performance in the following areas: attendance, class engagement and participation, written assignment, projects, pop quizzes, group assignments/writing seminars, and exams. An "A" or evaluation of excellence in the course will be based on exemplary performance in the aforementioned areas. My overriding interest is to challenge you to keep an open mind and to think critically about the diverse viewpoints, ideas, and concepts discussed throughout the class.

Some of your assignments will be evaluated through letter grade, while others will be credited on the basis of submission by the due date to receive full credit. Assignments that are not specified in the course outline will be announced as the course unfolds (another good reason for consistent

class attendance). No Extra Credit – Meeting course expectations satisfactorily will afford you all the credit you need for the course.

### **Participation, Reading & Attendance (15% of Final Grade)**

***Participation and Class Engagement*** - Consists of regular class attendance a premium is placed on participation, as members of a “community of learners,” class participants should take the initiative to prepare questions and discussion points. Participation may include but is not limited to answering questions, bringing to class printed information relevant to class topics, announcing in class events of value to the class. The sharing component of this course means that students are engaged in discussions using relevant examples and analyses of assigned readings examining the social, historical, economic, gendered, and racial components of women’s issues. The instructor maintains class participation records, and believes conspicuous silences reflect a lack of concern and responsibility on the part of the student. **In a seminar class, such as this one, participation is required of everyone. Therefore, points for the class grade come from exceptional participation.**

***Reading*** - Consists of regular class attendance. The quantity of reading and scholarly work required for this course is commensurate with the four-hour course classification at Spelman College. The course readings cover two components: Readings that emphasize the social, economic, and political aspects of women’s health as well as personal accounts of women’s lived experience in the form of oral narratives. Women of African descent will be focused on in particular. Discussions, films, and group projects will revolve around assigned readings. This course seeks to stretch disciplinary boundaries by looking beyond lifestyle choices (individual behavior); most often deemed as the sole culprit of disease. Causal factors associated with health, especially for women of color, are often rooted in a complex set of political, social, individual, and environmental factors. Rather than construct this course as only about health, *the discursive framework for this course is enlarged and viewed as central to, not separate from, the larger dialogue about women’s struggle for civil rights, equity and parity.* In this vein, the course offerings are also informed by the grassroots strategies of women in their ongoing struggle for civil rights and social justice that take the form of activism and advocacy. Women’s experiences are molded by more than just oppression and the perspectives of women of color living with and struggling to find solutions to restore communities are incorporated into course offerings. Naturally, students will attend every class, complete all assigned readings prior to class, bring the corresponding book and/or article to class to discuss, and take class notes. Remember, course lectures and discussions are intended to supplement, not replace the readings.

***Attendance/Promptness*** Consists of regular and prompt class attendance. In order for students to get the most out of their Women’s Studies experience, classes start promptly and end on time. Excessive lateness may result in a reduction in participation points. Attendance is taken as a matter of justice, and participation points are reduced for absences for **EVERY** class missed, due to having done comparatively less of the objective work of the course than your sisters that attended class, read the assignment, and participate in any ensuing discussions. The instructor maintains attendance and believes absences reflect a lack of concern and responsibility on the part of the student. The instructor reserves the right to DROP from the roll any student with the equivalent of three weeks of absences.

Please note students are responsible for obtaining all revised assignments and due dates if they are absent or come late to class (remember class disruptions are unacceptable and students will have to obtain this information after class). According to Spelman College Bulletin, students must attend every class, participate in class discussion, and fulfill course requirements by established deadlines.

**Absences** – Absences of more than 2 consecutive class days may be officially excused only through the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. If you are going to be absent please inform the instructor prior to class. If you have an emergency absence(s) please inform the instructor as soon as possible via email. If you don't have access to a computer than contact the instructor via telephone as soon as possible. If you have an emergency absence when an assignment is due you are expected to provide in writing or via the telephone: 1) expected day(s) of absence and 2) expected date of return, and 3) anticipated date to turn in assignment. Of course you are responsible for all of the material covered in class, regardless of format. However, given the hands on in class nature of the course even excused absences can result in a marked decrease in your overall points for the course because there are no make ups for in class groups, assignments, and writing seminars.

**Group Assignments/Journal (25% of Final Grade)** involves the facilitation of readings, presentation of class topics by small groups. They will be evaluated on the quality and accuracy of their substantive content based on overall organization, gender knowledge base, creativity, and ability to engage fellow students. Some writing assignments will be receive no points but will receive credit based upon submission. Note: If you are absent on the day of a group assignment you will receive zero points or no credit. There are **NO** make-up group presentations.

### **Activism Component of Course**

In keeping with the model of service to community that has long defined the HBCU mission and in particular, Spelman College's motto: "A choice to change the world." This course will facilitate student ingenuity and creativity for student development of alternative interventions to prevent disparities among women of color (and possibly disadvantaged communities). Students are often taught to take scholarship at face value without questioning its motivations, theoretical underpinnings, and/or cultural nuances. Working with students as a "community of learners" where class time is set aside specifically for visual and digital media workshops, brainstorming sessions, instruction, planning, and revision of both the PSA and activism project. All of which assist students to critically analyze the multifaceted social aspects of the health, as well as to understand the nuances of various connections to other disciplines by facilitating and nurturing the practical application of health prevention and activists projects is crucial to developing fresh new thinking about how to cure, prevent, and treat health disparities and inequities.

The course is geared to jointly facilitate and nurture the theory and praxis of women's health. The particular condition of women needs greater visibility on the national policy agenda. In recent years, we've witnessed greater efforts, and deservedly so, to cast public attention to the plight of African American males—from racial profiling, disproportionate rates of incarceration, and the profound decline in college classrooms. While these conditions are critical and need a mandatory agenda, so too should certain conditions be politicized for women of color.

**Research (10% of Final Grade)** All academic projects begin with research regardless of the genre used to present the information. Therefore, our activism will also begin with research. All students must turn in an annotated bibliography for the sources used in the research and development of their PSA and activism project.

**PSA (15% of Final Grade)** Create a 30 second Public Service Announcement (PSA) for an assigned topic, each student will create (1) PSA by the end of the semester. The medium that you choose is your own creative choice, however, you will be responsible for doing all of the research required on the specific health topic to ensure that your PSA is accurate. Everyone must choose a target group for the PSA, just like advertising executives and build their presentation to that audience. You can solicit other people to participate however only one grade is given per person per presentation topic (i.e. group skit – lead person only one receiving a grade for the skit). The project will be evaluated on creativity, content of the PSA, critical analytical thought in evaluating the problem and the corresponding solution, how well the student understands the health issue based on assigned readings for their target group. How well the student is able to integrate concepts learned in the course into the research and development of their PSA. Students are also evaluated on the presentation (of all parties) of their PSA. All projects must be digital and uploaded to googledocs.

**Project (35% of Final Grade)**

Each individual will formulate a community-based action focused on a health topic from the course readings. As a community, we will discuss everyone’s project, critique, share ideas and encourage one another throughout the semester. During the course of the semester the Professor will assign dates for various and sundry things such as project proposal, progress reports, annotated bibliography, problems and possible solutions etc. Although we will work in class as a community and assist one another in separate advocacy endeavors, each student will receive an individual grade. I have to approve every project. You are encouraged to be creative and innovative in your approach to your subject matter. For instance, your project may take the form of a march, or a play presented to an audience, etc. All projects must be videotaped and uploaded to googledocs.

*NOTE: During student presentations as a matter of courtesy to your fellow sisters if you are late we ask that you wait at the door until it is opened for you to enter. Please keep in mind that you have to be in the classroom when your group is called to present in order to receive a grade.*

**Grading Scale**

<b>A 100-93</b>	<b>B 86-83</b>	<b>C 76-73</b>	<b>D 66-63</b>
<b>A- 92-90</b>	<b>B- 82-80</b>	<b>C- 72-70</b>	<b>D- 62-60</b>
<b>B+ 89-87</b>	<b>C+ 79-77</b>	<b>D+ 69-67</b>	<b>F 59-0</b>

**Classroom Etiquette**

In order to make the teaching/learning process a smooth one, I ask the following:

1. Arrive on time
2. Stay until you have been dismissed
3. If you need to arrive late or leave early for a particular (good) reason, please notify me

- prior to the start of class – preferably one day or more notice
4. I don't care if you eat or drink during class, but try to be quiet about it
  5. What I **DO** find disruptive is when people hold side conversations. If I feel that you are being disruptive, I will ask you to leave. Every student is expected to participate in a responsible and mature manner that enhances education. If you are asked to leave you will also receive the same reduction in points as if you were absent.
  6. Turn **OFF** (not vibrate or silence mode) **all** electronic devices. There is **NO** text messaging during class. If you are texting during class you will be asked to leave and you will receive the same reduction in points as if you were absent.
  7. Respect for time - In our prompt arrival and our prepared participation, we shall respect each other's time as being valuable. We shall avoid frivolous comments and distracting questions, but we will respect all sincere comments and questions.
  8. Urgent bathroom needs - As mature young women, Spelman students should attempt to attend to normal personal needs before or after class. Tissue should be in the student's bag. However, an urgent need should be answered as quietly as possible.
  9. Discrimination, harassment, or intimidation will not be tolerated. Everyone has the right to her or his own opinion, but please remember that others also have the right to a classroom free from hostility, ridicule, or embarrassment, and an atmosphere conducive to learning.

**Disability Statement:** Spelman College is sensitive to the special needs of students with disabilities. Any student who feels she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services privately to discuss her specific needs. Please contact the Office of Disability Services at 404-270-5289 in MacVicar Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

**Academic Integrity:** At the heart of Spelman College's mission is academic excellence, along with the development of intellectual, ethical and leadership qualities. These goals can only flourish in an institutional environment where every member of the College affirms honesty, trust, and mutual respect. All members of the academic community of Spelman College are expected to understand and follow the basic standards of honesty and integrity, upholding a commitment to high ethical standards. Students are expected to read and abide by the Spelman College Code of Conduct (see the current Spelman College Student Handbook) and are expected to behave as mature and responsible members of the Spelman College academic community. Students are expected to follow ethical standards in their personal conduct and in their behavior towards other members of the community. They are expected to observe basic honesty in their work, words, ideas, and actions. Failure to do so is a violation of the Spelman College Academic Integrity Policy. Violators will be subject to the sanctions outlined in the Spelman College Bulletin (i.e. verbatim usage of material from published or web sources without proper citation, failing to acknowledge the ideas of others when paraphrasing).

### **Course Outline**

(Subject to modification and revision as the semester unfolds. The readings are not in order of priority and will be assigned in class. Naturally if absent, students are responsible for determining what was assigned during their absence).

**Week 1**  
1/12      **Introduction & Review: What is Women’s Studies and Why Study Women?**  
Shaw & Lee, “What is Women’s Studies” – handout  
Guy-Sheftall, “Gender as an Analytic Category” – handout  
(WOC) Chapter One – pages 1-24  
Film: Sicko

**Week 2**  
1/19      **Women and the Healthcare System**  
(WH) Chapter One – pages 1-80  
(WOC) Chapter Two – pages 25-48

**Oral Narratives: (BWHB) Killion** – “Service Without Subsistence: Reflections of a Registered Nurse” pages 240-250  
  
Jackson – “Notes From a Non-Western Healer” pages 299-304

**Week 3**  
1/26      **Women and the Healthcare System (Con’t)**  
(WH) Chapter One – pages 1-80  
(WOC) Chapter Two – pages 25-48

**Oral Narratives: (BWHB) Killion** – “Service Without Subsistence: Reflections of a Registered Nurse” pages 240-250  
  
Jackson – “Notes From a Non-Western Healer” pages 299-304

**Week 4**  
2/2      **Women’s Health Activism**  
(WH) Chapter Ten – pages 509-516 & 519-533 & 536  
(WOC) Chapter Six – pages 105 - 122  
Film: Reproductive Justice

**Week 5**  
2/9      **The Politics of Disease, Prevention, and the Environment**  
(WH) Chapter Thirteen pages 686-692 & 698-712  
(WOC) Chapter Three – pages 49 - 62 & Chapter Nine - 157 - 174  
Film: The Constant Gardener

**Week 6**  
2/16      **The Politics of Disease, Prevention, and the Environment (Con’t)**  
(WH) Chapter Thirteen pages 686-692 & 698-712  
(WOC) Chapter Three – pages 49 - 62  
Film: The Constant Gardener

**P.S.A. DUE**    **2/16/11**

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**Week 7**  
2/23      **Sex, Gender, Roles, and Health**  
(WH) Chapter Three – pages 145-208  
**Oral Narratives: (BWHB) Bounty** - “Surpassing Obstacles: Pioneering Black

Women Physicians” pages 44-50  
Lee – “Looking for Guidance: How I Stopped  
Smoking” pages 266-268

Film: Made in L.A.

**Week 8**

3/2

**Sex, Gender, Roles, and Health (Con’t)**

(WH) Chapter Three – pages 145-208

**Oral Narratives: (BWHB)** Bounty - “Surpassing Obstacles: Pioneering Black  
Women Physicians” pages 44-50

Lee – “Looking for Guidance: How I Stopped  
Smoking” pages 266-268

Film: Made in L.A.

*SPRING BREAK 3/7/09 TO 3/11/09*

**Week 10**

3/16

**Menstruation**

(WH) Chapter Five – pages 259-280

Film: Period The End of Menstruation

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**Begin Activism Projects**

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**Week 11**

3/23

**Food, Body Image, and Body Modification**

(WH) Chapter Eight – pages 377-432

Film: Super Size Me

**Week 12**

3/30

**Food, Body Image, and Body Modification (Con’t)**

(WH) Chapter Eight – pages 377-432

Film: Super Size Me

**Week 13**

4/6

**Sexuality**

(WH) Chapter Nine – pages 437-498

**Oral Narrative: (BWHB)** Leslie – “In a Family Way: Notes from a Black  
Teenage Mother” pages 112-119

Melton – “*Positive Perspectives on Prevention*”  
handout

**Week 14**

4/13

**Sexuality (Con’t)**

(WH) Chapter Nine – pages 437-498

**Oral Narrative: (BWHB)** Leslie – “In a Family Way: Notes from a Black  
Teenage Mother” pages 112-119

Melton – “*Positive Perspectives on Prevention*”  
handout

Film: Girl Posi+ive

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**ALL ACTIVISM PROJECTS DUE April 13th**

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**Week 15**

4/20

**Childbirth and Lactation**

(WH) Chapter Eleven pages 581-618

**Week 16**

4/27

**Readings and Assignments to be Announced**