

Women's Studies/Medical History/History of Science 431  
Childbirth in the United States  
Spring Semester, 2006

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1419 MSC

263-4560

Office Hours: 11:00 am – noon and 2:30-3:30 pm TR and by appointment

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Course meets: TR 1:00-2:15 pm, 224 Ingraham

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	20%	due 2/23
	Midterm exam	20%	in class 3/7
	Oral History project	20%	due 4/13
	Third paper	20%	due 5/4
Graduate Students	Class participation	20%	
	Research paper	60%	
	Seminar/class leadership	20%	

Required Reading: (Books ordered through Room of One's Own, 307 W. Johnson St)  
Ina May Gaskin, *Ina May's Guide to Childbirth* (Bantam Books, 2003)  
Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America 1750-1950*  
(Oxford University Press paperback)  
Fran Leeper Buss, *La Partera: Story of a Midwife* (U Michigan Press paper)  
Margaret Charles Smith and Linda Janet Holmes, *Listen to Me Good: The Life Story of an Alabama Midwife* (Ohio State University Press paper).

Also there is a Reader:

431 Reader, available from History of Science Department, 7143 Social Science Building, 1180 Observatory Drive (referred to in syllabus by an \*)

**GRADUATE STUDENTS PLEASE MEET AFTER THE FIRST CLASS TO PLAN**

## Readings for Graduate Students

- Irving Loudon, *Death in Childbirth* (1992); *Tragedy of Childbed Fever* (2000)  
Wendy Mitchenson, *Giving Birth in Canada, 1900-1950* (2002)  
Charlotte Borst, *Catching Babies: Professionalization of Childbirth 1870-1920* (1996)  
Robbie Davis-Floyd, *Birth as an American Rite of Passage*  
Brigitte Jordan, *Birth in Four Cultures*  
Margot Edwards and Mary Waldorf, *Reclaiming American Birth: History and Heroines of American Childbirth Reform*  
Amalie Kass, *Midwifery and Medicine in Boston*  
Deborah Sullivan and Rose Weitz, *Labor Pains: Modern Midwives and Home Birth*  
Katherine Arnup et al, *Delivering Motherhood: Maternal Ideologies and Practices in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries*  
Adrian Wilson, *The Making of Man-midwifery: Childbirth in England 1660-1770*  
Alice Adams, *Reproducing the Womb: Images of Childbirth in Science, Feminist Theory, and Literature*  
Rayna Rapp, *Testing Women, Testing the Fetus*  
Virginia Metaxas Quiroga, *Poor Mothers and Babies: Social History of Childbirth and Child Care Institutions in 19<sup>th</sup> C NYC* (1990)  
Jacques Gelis, *History of Childbirth: fertility, pregnancy and birth in early modern Europe*  
Marjorie Tew, *Safer Childbirth? A Critical History of Maternity Care* (1995)  
Jo Murphy-Lawless, *Reading Birth and Death: A History of OB Thinking* (1999)  
Amanda Cross Banks, *Birth Chairs, Midwives and Medicine*  
Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale*  
Sally McMillen, *Motherhood in the Old South: Pregnancy, Childbirth and Infant Rearing* (1990)  
Margarete Sandelowski, *Pain, Pleasure and American Childbirth* (1984)  
Sylvia Hoffert, *Private Matters: American Attitudes Toward Childbearing and Infant Nurture in the Urban North, 1800-1860* (1989)  
Rima Apple and Janet Golden, eds *Mothers and Motherhood: Readings in American History* (1997)  
Robbie Davis-Floyd and Carolyn Sargent, *Childbirth and Authoritative Knowledge: Cross Cultural Perspectives* (1997)  
Susan Smith, *Japanese American Midwives* (2005)

## Videos

- A Midwife's Tale*  
*Spiritual Midwifery*  
*Miss Margaret* (if available)  
*Susanne Arms*  
TV scenes

## Class Schedule

January 17 January 19	Introduction and Expectations Birth Stories and Their Meanings
January 24 January 26	Essentials of Birth: Pregnancy Essentials of Birth: Labor and Delivery
January 31 February 2	Episiotomy, VBAC, Epidurals OBOS and Childbirth
February 7 February 9	Choosing attendants and location Motherhood and difference
February 14 February 16	A Midwife's Tale (video) 18 <sup>th</sup> Century midwives
February 21 February 23	Under the Shadow of Maternity Medicalization at home <b>FIRST PAPER DUE</b>
February 28 March 2	Anesthesia Meddlesome Midwifery
March 7 March 9	<b>IN CLASS MID-TERM EXAMINATION</b> Doing Oral History
March 14 March 16	Spring Recess Spring Recess
March 21 March 23	Move to the Hospital Movement to Make Childbirth Safer
March 28 March 30	Medicalization in the Hospital 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Hospital Experiences and Procedures
April 4 April 6	20 <sup>th</sup> Century Hospital Experiences and Procedures De-Medicalization: Natural Childbirth
April 11 April 13	De-Medicalization: Nurse Midwives, Birthing Rooms De-Medicalization and Dads <b>SECOND PAPER DUE</b>
April 18 April 20	De-Medicalization and Doulas Traditional and Spiritual Midwives in the 20 <sup>th</sup> century
April 25 April 27	Traditional, Spiritual, and Direct-Entry Midwives Midwife and Doula Videos
May 2 May 4	Childbirth Today: Making your own decisions and birth plan Course summaries and evaluations <b>THIRD PAPER DUE</b>

Women's Studies/ History of Medicine/History of Science 431  
Required Readings

**January 19 Birth Stories and their Meanings**

Ina May Gaskin, *Ina May's Guide to Childbirth*, pp. 1-125.

\*Karin Martin, "Giving Birth Like a Girl," *Gender and Society*, Vol. 17 No.1 February 2003, 54-72.

**January 24-26 Essentials of Birth**

Ina May Gaskin, *Ina May's Guide to Childbirth*, pp. 127-248.

\*Norman Miller, et al, *Human Parturition* (1958) excerpts, pp 62-82

Gaskin video/ Rag doll and pelvis

**February 2 OBOS and Childbirth**

\*Linda Gordon and Barrie Thorne, "*Our Bodies Ourselves* review (1992).

\*Wendy Kline, "'Please Include This in Your Book': Readers Respond to *Our Bodies Ourselves*," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 79 (Spring 2005): 81-110.

**February 7-9 Issues in Childbirth Today**

Everyone read:

Ina May Gaskin, *Ina May's Guide to Childbirth*, pp. 248-315.

\*Adrienne Rich, "Alienated Labor," in her *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976), pp. 175-185.

\*Sharon LaFraniere, "Nightmare for African Women: Birthing Injury and Little Help," *New York Times*, September 28, 2005, pp. 1, 12.

And choose at least ONE of the following:

\*Deborah Goleman Wolf, "Lesbian Childbirth and Woman-Controlled Conception," in *Women-Identified Women*, ed. Trudy Darty and Sandee Potter (1984), pp. 185-193.

\*Rayna Rapp, "The Power of "Positive" Diagnosis: Medical and Maternal Discourses on Amniocentesis," in Karen Michaelson, ed, *Childbirth in America: Anthropological Perspectives* (1988), pp. 103-116.

\*Leslie Reagan, "From Hazard to Blessing to Tragedy: Teachings on Miscarriage in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America," *Feminist Studies*, 29, no.2 (Summer 2003) pp.357-378.

\*Elaine May, "NonMothers as Bad Mothers," in *"Bad" Mothers: The Politics of Blame in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America* ed. Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky (1998), pp. 198 -219

**February 14                      A Midwife's Tale**

\*Martha Ballard, Excerpts from her Diary

We will watch this video in class.

**February 16                      18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Midwives**

\*Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "The Living Mother of a Living Child: Midwifery and Mortality in Post-Revolutionary New England," *William and Mary Quarterly* 66 (1989): 27-48.

\*Charlotte Borst, "The Training and Practice of Midwives: A Wisconsin Study," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 62 (1988): 606-27.

**February 21                      18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 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 23                      19<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Medicalization at Home**  
**REMEMBER: FIRST PAPER IS DUE IN CLASS**

\*HB Willard, *Obstetrical Journal*, 1849-56, excerpts.

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

\*Steven Stowe, "Obstetrics and the Work of Doctoring in the Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century American South," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (1990): 540-66.

**February 28                    19<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Anesthesia**

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

Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*, pp. 64-141.

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

\*Marguerite Tracy and Constance Leupp, "Painless Childbirth," *McClures Magazine* 43 (1914), pp. 37-51.

**March 2                        19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Meddlesome Midwifery**

\*S.D. Gross, "Lacerations of the Female Sexual Organs Consequent upon Parturition: Their Causes and Their Prevention," *JAMA* (1884), pp. 337-45.

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

**March 7                        IN CLASS MID TERM EXAMINATION**

**March 9                        Doing Oral History**

\*Judith Moyer, "Step by Step Guide to Oral History"  
([http://www.dohistory.org/on\\_your\\_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html#LINKS](http://www.dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html#LINKS))

**March 14                    Spring Recess**

**March 16                    Spring Recess**

**March 21                    20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: the Move to the Hospital**

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

\*Susan Cotts Watkins and Angela D. Danzi, "Women's Gossip and Social Change: Childbirth and Fertility Control among Italian and Jewish Women in the United States, 1920-1940," *Gender and Society* 9 (1995), pp. 469-490.

\*Carolyn Leonard Carson, "and the Results Showed Promise ... Physicians, Childbirth, and Southern Black Migrant Women, 1916-1930:Pittsburgh as a Case Study," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 14 (1994), as reprinted in in *JWL Women and Health in America* (1999), pp. 347-370.

### **March 23      Movement to Make Childbirth Safer**

\*Dorothy Reed Mendenhall, "Prenatal and Natal Conditions in Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Medical Journal*, 15 No.10 (March 1917) 353-369.

\*Wisconsin Department of Public Health, "Prenatal Letters," 1956, 1961.

\*Charles King, "The New York Maternal Mortality Study: A Conflict of Professionalization," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 65 (1991): 476-502.

\*Sean Patrick Adams, "Who Guards our Mothers?" *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 83 (2000): 181-201.

### **March 28      20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Medicalization in the Hospital**

\*Letter in Response to Author's Query, 1983.

\*Gladys Denny Shultz, "Journal Mothers Report on Cruelty in Maternity Wards," Ladies' Home Journal (May, 1958), pp. 44-45, 153-4, (December, 1958), pp. 58-59, 135, 137-139.

\*Lenore Pelham Friedrich, "I Had a Baby," *Atlantic Monthly* (April, 1939): 461-65; and "I Had a Baby Too: A Symposium," *Ibid* (June, 1939), pp. 764-72.

\*Ann Rivington, "Motherhood—Third Class," *American Mercury* 31 (Feb, 1934): 160-65, and Leatha Southmayd, "Motherhood—Third Class: A Reply," *Ibid*. (April 1934), pp. 509-10.

\*Naomi Wolf, "Giving Birth," in her *Misconceptions: Truth, Lies and the Unexpected Journey to Motherhood* (2001), pp. 135-143.

### **March 30- April 4      20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Hospital Experiences and Procedures**

\*Joseph B. DeLee, "Prophylactic Forceps Operation," *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 1 (1920): 34-44, 77-80.

\*J. Whitridge Williams, "A Criticism of Certain Tendencies in American Obstetrics," *New York State Journal of Medicine* Vol. 22 No. 11(1922): 493-99.

\*Robbie Davis-Floyd, "The Technocratic Model of Birth," in Susan Tower Hollis, et al., eds, *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore* (1993), pp. 297-326.

\*JWL, "Strange Young Women on Errands': Obstetric Nursing Between Two Worlds," *Nursing History Review* 6 (1998): 3-24.

\*Margaret Nelson, "Working-Class Women, Middle-Class Women, and Models of Childbirth," *Social Problems* 30 (1983): 284-97.

**April 6                      20<sup>th</sup> Century Demedicalization: Natural Childbirth Movement**

\*Marjorie Karmel, *Thank You Dr. Lamaze: A Mother's Experiences in Painless Childbirth* (1959), pp. 69-96.

\*Grantly Dick-Read, "The Relief of Pain in Labour," *Western Journal of Surgery, Obstetrics, and Gynecology* 62 (1954): 591-97.

\*Letters 10, 11, 12, 35, 45, and 56 in *Post-War Mothers: Childbirth Letters to Grantly Dick-Read 1946-1956* Ed. Mary Thomas (1997).

\*Suzanne Arms, "Moving Toward Normal Childbirth," in her *Immaculate Deception II: Myth, Magic & Birth* (1994), pp. 149-171.

Video

**April 11                                      20<sup>th</sup> Century Demedicalization: Nurse Midwives & Birthing Centers/Rooms**

\*Nancy Schrom Dye, "Mary Breckinridge, the Frontier Nursing Service, and the Introduction of Nurse-Midwifery in the United States," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 57 (1983): 485-507.

\*Regi Teasley, "Nurse and Lay Midwifery in Vermont," in Pamela Eakins, ed, *The American Way of Birth* (1986), pp. 246-272.

\*Elissa Y. Sonnenberg, "The Story of Midwives Care: A Birth Center in Cincinnati," *Mothering* (May-June, 2001), pp. 56-59.

\*Eugene Declercq et al, "Where to Give Birth? Politics and the Place of Birth," in Raymond DeVries, et al, eds, *Birth By Design: Pregnancy, Maternity Care, and Midwifery in North America and Europe* (2001), pp. 7-27.

**April 13                      20<sup>th</sup> Century Demedicalization: Dads  
REMEMBER: SECOND PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

\*Coleman Romalis, "Taking Care of the Little Woman: Father-Physician Relations during Pregnancy and Childbirth," in Shelly Romalis, ed., *Childbirth: Alternatives to Medical Control* (UT Press, 1981), pp. 92-121.

\*JWL, "What do Men have to do with it? Fathers and Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 77 (Summer, 2003) 235-262.

**April 18      20<sup>th</sup> Century Demedicalization: Doulas**

\*Marshall Klaus, John Kennell, and Phyllis Klaus, "Birth with a Doula," in their *Mothering the Mother: How a Doula Can Help you Have a Shorter, Easier, and Healthier Birth* (1993), pp. 53-63.

\*Amy Gilliland, "Beyond Holding Hands: The Modern Role of the Professional Doula," *JOGNN* 31 (2002): 547-554.

**April 20-25      20<sup>th</sup> Century: Traditional, Spiritual, and Direct-Entry Midwives**

**Either**

Fran Leeper Buss, *La Partera: Story of a Midwife*

**Or**

Margaret Charles Smith and Linda Janet Holmes, *Listen to me Good*

\*Judy Luce, "The Honor, Joy, Power and Challenge of Community, Independent Midwifery," and Naoli Vinaver, "Autonomy: Using Your Full Potential," in *Paths to Becoming a Midwife: Getting An Education* (1998), pp. 144-155.

Videos

**May 2      Childbirth Today: Making your own birth plans**

\*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 4      Class Summaries and Evaluations**  
**REMEMBER: THIRD PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

## **431 Spring 2004**

### **Course Requirements explained**

#### **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 quantitatively, 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.

There will be occasional pop quizzes in class, which will contribute to this grade. These quizzes will cover the reading required for that day's discussion. If a student is absent, the quiz cannot be made up unless arrangements for the absence are made in advance.

#### ***Our Bodies Ourselves* Paper (20%)**

A short paper -- 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 concerning childbirth that they want to look at; the papers should identify and analyze **changes over time**. The paper must be submitted EITHER before **February 23** or in class that day. We will discuss this paper in detail in class.

#### **Oral History Paper (20%)**

A short paper -- approximately 5-7 typed double-spaced pages -- conducting, describing, and analyzing at least one oral history interview, preferably a family member of your grandmother's generation (but others acceptable too), is required. The paper should give the woman's story within the context of the time period in which she delivered her babies and connect to class readings or other literature of the same period. Students should submit the tapes or transcript as an appendix. The paper must be submitted on or before **April 13**. We will discuss this paper in detail in class.

#### **Mid-term Examination (20%)**

There will be an in-class blue book examination on **March 7**, covering all the material to that date in the syllabus and in class. Students can expect one part of the exam to be short answer and one part to be a longer essay.

### **Third Paper (20%)**

There will be a third required paper due **at the last class on May 4**. The paper builds on one of the two previous papers and must relate specifically to class readings and themes. STUDENTS MUST CLEAR THE THEME(S) AHEAD OF TIME WITH THE INSTRUCTOR OR ELSE USE ONE OF THE SUGGESTED THEMES THAT WILL BE DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS. It will have five double spaced pages as a maximum length. Suggestions for how to approach this essay/paper will be presented in class and also can be developed specifically with the instructor. More details will be provided in class.

If you have questions about a grade, please speak first to your instructor. If the question is not resolved, speak with the Chair, Jane Collins, or the Associate Chair, Mariamne Whatley. 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.