

Women's Studies/Medical History/History of Science 431
Childbirth in the United States
Spring Semester, 2007

Judith W. Leavitt, Ph.D.

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, 1010 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.

This semester we have a course grader. Her name is Hilary Domush and she is a graduate student in the history of science.

Grading:

Undergraduates	Class participation	20%
	OBOS paper	20%
	Midterm exam	20%
	Oral History project	20%
	Final Exam	20%
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)

Margaret Charles Smith and Linda Janet Holmes, *Listen to Me Good: The Life Story of an Alabama Midwife* (Ohio State University Press paper).

431 Reader, available on line at My UW (referred to in syllabus by an *)

GRADUATE STUDENTS PLEASE MEET AFTER THE FIRST CLASS TO PLAN SEMINAR

Class Schedule

January 23 January 25	Introduction and Expectations Birth Stories and Their Meanings
January 30 February 1	Essentials of Birth: Pregnancy Essentials of Birth: Labor and Delivery
February 6 February 8	Episiotomy, VBAC, Epidurals OBOS and Childbirth
February 13 February 15	Some Childbirth Issues Motherhood issues
February 20 February 22	A Midwife's Tale (video) 18 th Century midwives OBOS PAPER DUE
February 27 March 1	Under the Shadow of Maternity Medicalization at home
March 6 March 8	Anesthesia Meddlesome Midwifery
March 13 March 15	Move to the Hospital Movement to Make Childbirth Safer
March 20 March 22	Doing Oral History IN CLASS MID-TERM EXAMINATION
March 27 March 29	Medicalization in the Hospital 20 th Century Hospital Experiences
April 3 April 5	Spring Recess Spring Recess
April 10 April 12	20 th Century Hospital Experiences and Procedures De-Medicalization: Natural Childbirth
April 17 April 19	De-Medicalization: Nurse Midwives, Birthing Rooms De-Medicalization: Dads and Doulas Second PAPER DUE
April 24 April 26	Traditional and Spiritual Midwives Reclaiming Midwives Exhibit
May 1 May 3	Reclaiming Midwives Re-medicalization in Childbirth Today
May 8 May 10	Making your own decisions and birth plan Course summaries and evaluations
May 13	FINAL EXAM, 2:45-4:45 pm

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

January 23 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 30-February 1 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

(Also please review relevant sections of Ethel Sloane, *Biology of Women*, especially pp. 291-305)

Gaskin video/ Rag doll and pelvis

February 8 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 13 Some Childbirth Issues

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

*Sandra Danziger, "Male Doctor-Female Patient," in Pamela Eakins, ed, *American Way of Birth* (1986), pp. 119-141.

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

February 15 Motherhood Issues

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

*Leslie Reagan, "From Hazard to Blessing to Tragedy: Teachings on Miscarriage in 20th 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 20th Century America* ed. Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky (1998), pp. 198 -219.

February 20 A Midwife's Tale

We will watch a video in class.

February 22 18th and 19th Century Childbirth: Midwives
REMEMBER: FIRST PAPER IS DUE IN CLASS

*Martha Ballard, Excerpts from her Diary

*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.

February 27 18th and 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.

March 1 19th Century Childbirth: Medicalization at Home

*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-19th Century American South," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (1990): 540-66.

March 6 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.

March 8 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 13 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 *JWL Women and Health in America* (1999), pp. 347-370.

March 15 Movement to Make Childbirth Safer

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

*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 20 Doing Oral History

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

March 22 IN CLASS MIDTERM EXAMINATION

March 27 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 Leotha Southmayd, "Motherhood—Third Class: A Reply," *Ibid.* (April 1934), pp. 509-10.

March 29 20th Century Hospital Experiences

*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.

April 3 Spring Recess

April 5 Spring Recess

April 10 20th Century Hospital Experiences and Procedures

*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 12 Demedicalization: Natural Childbirth Movement

*Marjorie Karmel, *Thank You Dr. Lamaze: A Mother's Experiences in Painless Childbirth* (1959), pp. 69-85, 87-89.

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

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

April 17

Midwives, Nurse Midwives & Birthing Centers

*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," pp. 246-272 and Pamela Eakins, "Out-of-Hospital Birth," pp 218-245 both in Pamela Eakins, ed, *The American Way of Birth* (1986).

April 19

Demedicalization: Dads & Doulas

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-20th Century Childbirth," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 77 (Summer, 2003) 235-262.

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

April 24

Traditional and Spiritual Midwives

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

*Linda Janet Holmes, "African American Midwives in the South," in Pamela Eakins, ed, *American Way of Birth* (1986), pp. 273-291.

April 26-May 1

Reclaiming Midwives Exhibit

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.

May 3

Re-medicalization of Childbirth

Readings TBA

May 8 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 10 Course Summaries and Evaluations

May 13 Final Exam, 2:45-4:45pm

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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 a subject related to childbirth that they want to look at; the papers should identify and analyze **changes over time**. The paper must be submitted EITHER before **February 22** 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 can submit the tapes or transcript as an appendix. The paper must be submitted on or before **April 19**. We will discuss this paper in detail in class.

Mid-term Examination (20%)

There will be an in-class blue book examination on **March 22**, 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.

Final Exam (20%)

There will be a final exam covering all the course material. 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, Nancy Worcester. 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.