

**WMST 319 (PSYC 461)**  
**Gender, Culture, and Health in the United States**  
**SPRING 2020**

<b>INSTRUCTOR</b>	Leah M. Adams, Ph.D. Office: David King 3057 E-mail: ladamse@gmu.edu Phone: (703) 993-4118
<b>MEETINGS</b>	Thursdays & Thursdays 1:30 – 2:45 am (Robinson Hal B122)
<b>OFFICE HOURS</b>	Thursdays 3:00 – 4:00 pm (or by appointment)
<b>DEADLINES</b>	January 28 is the last day to add this class; February 5 is the last day to drop this class with no tuition penalty

**TECHNOLOGY**

- **Official Communications via GMU E-mail:** Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.
- **Class cancellation policy:** If class is canceled, students will be notified via their GMU email and via Blackboard. The instructor will provide details regarding coursework and/or assignments.

**REQUIRED TEXT & COURSE TECHNOLOGY**

There is no required textbook for this course. Required readings for each class and assignment grading rubrics are available on Blackboard.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This seminar course examines issues related to gender, culture, and health in the United States from a variety of interdisciplinary (e.g., psychological, public health, sociological) perspectives. In the context of this course, “culture” is a broad term that, at times, will encompass racial and ethnic identification, geographic region, sexual orientation, gender identity, generational status, and more. Likewise, course content will be framed to emphasize the interplay between cultural, social, economic, environmental, and political factors associated with health, along with methodological issues in research on health status and health behaviors. Although we will cover health issues broadly, we will also apply these frameworks to understanding the roles of gender, sex, and culture in several specific health-related domains, including reproductive and sexual health, HIV/AIDS, and intimate partner violence. Because we only have 14 weeks (!) to address this enormous content area, some topics will not be covered in depth and some may not be covered at all (apologies in advance!). As such, the final assignment included in the course is designed to encourage students to examine (relevant) topics of interest that may not be touched upon through lecture, discussions, and readings.

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the completion of this course, students are expected to successfully be able to:

- Discuss the history of the women’s health movement in the United States
- Understand the distinction between health differences and health disparities among groups

- Discuss social determinants of health disparities, including the background and nature of gender-, sexual orientation-, racial/ethnicity-, location- driven health disparities in the United States
- Identify some of the socio-demographic, behavioral, and historical factors that influence health-related practices and statuses among specific populations in the United States
- Discuss the interrelationships between health, gender and gender-identity, sex, race & ethnicity, and SES in the United States
- Demonstrate content expertise on a specific health concern (of their choosing) as applied to a particular group in the U.S.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

*All assignments should be submitted via Blackboard under the “Assignments” tab. Rubrics and guides for assignments marked with an asterisk (\*) are available on Blackboard.*

- **Introductory Assignment (5%):** Please write a brief (1-page, double-spaced) statement about why you are taking this course, how it fits into your larger academic and/or professional goals, and any additional information about yourself you’d like me to know about you.
  - **DUE:** Thursday, January 23
- **Attendance & Participation (15%):** This is a seminar course – your participation is a *vital* component of its quality. Together, we will strive to create an atmosphere in which open dialogue and communication are encouraged and respectful, even in instances of disagreement. Please ask questions, offer observations, and suggest alternative perspectives during class with the aim of advancing discourse about *ideas*, rather than attacking *individuals*. By its nature, participation requires that you are in class. There will be weekly in-class activities that will count toward your participation grade – if you aren’t in class, your grade *will* suffer. If you know that you will be absent, please let me know as soon as you are aware.
  - **DUE:** Rolling
- **Interview Assignment\* (20%):** Students will interview an individual who identifies as a member of **two** identity groups to which they (the students) do not belong. The interview will focus on the health issues that the interviewee perceives to be most pressing for people of their identity group(s). Think broadly here – the person you interview may be a member of a different religious, ethnic, cultural, age, gender, sexual orientation, or any other group than you! The goal of this assignment is to assess the impact of identity status on health, and to identify different perceptions of health problems or gaps in health programming. This assignment will be completed in 2 parts:
  - Part 1 (5%): Conduct the interview and transcribe it.
    - **DUE:** Thursday, February 20
  - Part 2 (15%): Because no one person should be tasked with being the sole representative of their entire group(!), you will compare the interview answers to existing health data, and discuss the perceived health problems reported relative to the actual incidence and prevalence of these problems in that group. Address the degree to which the interviewee’s answers fit with the data. Findings should be summarized in a 4 – 6 page, double-spaced paper. Credible sources (e.g., CDC, SAMHSA, peer-reviewed journal articles) citing health literature should be used.
    - **DUE:** Thursday, March 5
- **Reaction Papers (3 @ 10% each: 30%):** Students will submit three (3) reaction papers over the course of the semester. You can choose to write a reaction paper on any of the topics that we discuss, but you must complete at least one before Spring Break! Reaction papers are due within 2 days of class – papers based on Tuesday classes are due by Thursday at 1:30pm, and papers based on Thursday class are due by Saturday at 1:30pm. You can choose to react to the readings, class

discussion, and/or class activities. However, reaction papers are not merely summaries of the readings or activities, it should be clear that you are thinking deeply and critically about the subjects they address. Reaction papers should be brief (2 - 3 double spaced pages, 1-inch margins, 12-point Times New Roman font). Reflections that are clear, thoughtful, and relevant will receive full credit. You do not have to answer each of these questions, but to get you thinking in line with the assignment, potential questions for you to consider in your reaction papers are:

- What about the reading and lecture material stood out or surprised you, and why?
- What connections can be made between the reading and lecture material covered and your experiences?
- What questions or issues did the material raise that you want to learn more about?
- How might the concepts discussed differ if applied to another group?
- **DUE:** Rolling deadline, though first paper must be completed by Saturday, March 7!
- **Final Paper\* (20%):** Students will select a health promotion (e.g., safe sex, exercise intervention, etc.) campaign or program and a target identity group (e.g., relating to gender identity or sex, sexual orientation, racial/ethnic group, immigration status, disability status, age, geographic region, etc.). You will provide an overview of the campaign’s general implementation and effectiveness. For the campaign’s target disease/illness, discuss any health disparities that may exist for your selected population. You will critique the campaign’s ability to meet the needs of your selected population, along with ways to improve it and/or extend its impact. The resulting paper should be 6 – 8 pages, double-spaced, and should include credible sources for citation. **Your topic should be chosen and approved by March 24.** This assignment will be completed in 2 parts:
  - Part 1 (5%): Complete an annotated bibliography of sources that discuss 1) the general literature regarding the health topic your final paper focuses on and 2) how this health topic is experienced by members of your target group (e.g., documented rates of the condition, gaps in care, barriers, etc.). The annotated bibliography should include at least 6 high quality sources.
    - **DUE:** Thursday, April 9
  - Part 2 (15%): **Final Paper**
    - **DUE:** Tuesday, May 12 by 4:15pm
- **Presentation\* (10%):** Students will give a brief (~10 minute) presentation of their final project, including discussion of the health topic, the target identity group, and the health promotion campaign being assessed. This presentation is meant to give you the chance to showcase your work and to take advantage of the many perspectives in the class as you finalize your written product. Constructive feedback from your presentation should help strengthen the final written product that you submit.
  - **DUE:** All presentations will occur between Tuesday, April 21 – Tuesday, April 28

## EVALUATION & GRADES

*Assignment grading rubrics are available on Blackboard.* Final course grades will be assigned according to the following percentages (with normal rounding rules for decimals):

### Semester Assignment Point Allocation

Introductory Assignment	5
Participation	15
Interview Assignment	20
Reaction Papers (3 total)	30
Final Paper	20

### UNDERGRADUATE

Percentage	Grade
93.0 – 100.0	A
90.0 – 92.9	A-
87.0 – 89.9	B+
83.0 – 86.9	B
80.0 – 82.9	B-

Final Presentation	10	77.0 – 79.9	C+
Total Points:	100	73.0 – 76.9	C
		70.0 – 72.9	C-
		67.0 – 69.9	D+
		63.0 – 66.9	D
		60.0 – 62.9	D-
		< 60.0	F

### **EXAM & HOMEWORK POLICY**

The following policy refers to all missed or late assignments, papers, or presentations that you fail to let me know about beforehand. Arrangements made beforehand with the professor (e.g., missing class for a religious holiday) are not included in this policy. There will be no extensions or make-ups without penalty except in instances such as the following:

- hospitalization or illness that has been documented and judged by your instructor as preventing you from a) preparing adequately for a presentation, b) attending class, or c) completing an assignment
- death or serious illness in your family
- court appearances

Documentation must be provided by health officials (e.g., a physician or member of the student health center staff) in the case of illness; an immediate family member in the case of death or serious illness in the family; and official paperwork in the case of court dates. Decisions regarding extensions and make-ups under these circumstances will be made on a case-by-case basis.

### **LATE WORK**

I work hard to ensure that I provide feedback to you in a timely manner, and I expect the same of your submitted work. Late work submitted without prior arrangements made with me will be deducted a letter grade for every day late, and will not be accepted after 5 days. The “late” clock begins as soon as the stated deadline passes. For example, for a reaction paper that is due by Thursday at 1:30pm, the assignment will be marked 1 day late if it is submitted that Thursday at 4:00pm.

### **HONOR CODE**

All students in this course are to become familiar with and follow the University’s honor code, which does not tolerate any form of cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. Exams and assignments are expected to be individual efforts unless otherwise noted by the instructor. Violations of the GMU Honor Code can result in failure of an assignment or exam, depending on the severity of violation. All violations will be reported to the Honor Committee. The instructor for this course reserves the right to enter a failing grade to any student found guilty of an honor code violation. For more information on the Honor Code please visit: <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>

### **COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY**

In this course, and across the University, we seek to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age, and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different from their own.

## **ACCOMMODATION OF DISABILITIES**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Services (DRC) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Note that this provision includes the range of disabilities, including physical, psychiatric, and learning disabilities.

## **NOTICE OF MANDATORY REPORTING OF SEXUAL ASSAULT, INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE, AND STALKING**

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1412. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at (703) 380 – 1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (703) 993 – 2380 (and below). You may also seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling (703) 993 – 8730, or e-mailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

## **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

George Mason offers services to support students’ academic and emotional development. Counseling and Psychological Services, located in SUB I room 3129 (<http://caps.gmu.edu/learning-services/>), offers workshops in academic skills, stress management training, and individual and group counseling for students who would like some help with social, emotional, or educational concerns. Consider taking advantage of these resources if you need them.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

**\*Note:** Required readings are due each week and are available on Blackboard

Week	Date	Topics	Assignments Due Today
1	1/21	Introductions! Review course syllabus and structure Foundational Concepts Part 1	
	1/23	Foundational Concepts Part 2	Introductory Assignment
2	1/28	Intersectional Identities & Health Part 1	
	1/30	Intersectional Identities & Health Part 2	Interviewee Selected
3	2/4	Differences & Disparities Part 1	
	2/6	Differences & Disparities Part 2	
4	2/11	Place & Health Part 1	
	2/13	Place & Health Part 2	
5	2/18	Place & Health Part 3	
	2/20	<b>Class canceled (Dr. Adams @ RP 2020)</b>	Interview Transcript
6	2/25	Violence As A Public Health Consideration: Gun Violence Part 1	
	2/27	Violence As A Public Health Consideration: Gun Violence Part 2	
7	3/3	Violence As A Public Health Consideration: Gun Violence Part 3	
	3/5	Violence As A Public Health Consideration: Intimate Partner Violence Part 4	Interview Assignment *And if you haven't submitted at least one reaction paper by now, this is your last chance!*
8	3/10 – 3/12	<b>Spring Break (Be safe &amp; Rejuvenate!)</b>	
9	3/17	Mental Health Part 1	
	3/19	Mental Health Part 2	
10	3/24	Substance Misuse Part 1	Final Paper Topic Approved
	3/26	Substance Misuse Part 2	
11	3/31	Family Planning, Reproductive & Sexual Health Part 1	
	4/2	Family Planning, Reproductive & Sexual Health Part 2	
12	4/7	HIV/AIDS in the U.S. Part 1	

	4/9	HIV/AIDS in the U.S. Part 2	Annotated Bibliography
13	4/14	*Attend Dr. Shannon Davis' Scholar's Lecture*	
	4/16	<b>Float Day – Snow/Planning/TBD Topic of Class's Choice</b>	
14	4/21	<i>Student Presentations</i>	
	4/23	<i>Student Presentations</i>	
15	4/28	<i>Student Presentations</i>	
	4/30	Class wrap-up!	<b>By This Date You Should've Completed:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 introductory assignment</li> <li>• 1 interview assignment</li> <li>• 3 reaction papers</li> <li>• 1 presentation</li> <li>• A lot of participation!</li> </ul>
<b>Tues 5/12</b>		<b>Final Papers Due via Blackboard by 4:15 pm!</b>	