

WMST 319 (PSYC 461)
Gender, Culture, and Health in the United States
FALL 2021

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| INSTRUCTOR | Leah M. Adams, Ph.D. [she/her/hers] <u>Office:</u> David King 3057 <u>E-mail:</u> ladamse@gmu.edu <u>Phone:</u> (703) 993-4118 |
| MEETINGS | Thursdays & Thursdays 12:00 – 1:15 pm (Horizon 3010) |
| OFFICE HOURS | Tuesdays 2:00 – 3:00 pm (or by appointment) |
| DEADLINES | August 30 is the last day to add this class; September 7 is the last day to drop this class with no tuition penalty September 27 is the last day to drop this class with 100% tuition penalty |

SAFE RETURN TO CAMPUS

- All students taking courses with a face-to-face component are required to follow the university’s public health and safety precautions and procedures outlined on the university Safe Return to Campus webpage (<https://www2.gmu.edu/safe-return-campus>). Similarly, all students in face-to-face and hybrid courses must also complete the Mason COVID Health Check daily, seven days a week. The COVID Health Check system uses a color code system and **students will receive either a Green, Yellow, or Red email response**. Only students who receive a “green” notification are permitted to attend courses with a face-to-face component. **If you suspect that you are sick or have been directed to self-isolate, please quarantine or get tested. Faculty are allowed to ask you to show them that you have received a Green email and are thereby permitted to be in class.**
- Students are required to follow Mason’s current policy about facemask wearing. As of August 11, 2021, all community members are required to wear a facemask in all indoor settings, including classrooms. An appropriate **facemask must cover your nose and mouth at all times** in our classroom. If this policy changes, you will be informed; however, students who prefer to wear masks either temporarily or consistently will always be welcome in the classroom.

TECHNOLOGY

- **Official Communications via GMU E-mail:** Students must use their GMU email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. I will not respond to messages sent from or send messages to a non-Mason email address.
- **Class cancellation policy:** If the campus closes or class is canceled, students will be notified via their GMU email. The instructor will provide details regarding coursework and/or assignments.
- **Blackboard:** Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use the Blackboard learning system, available at <https://mymason.gmu.edu>. Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OSX 10.13 or higher) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, etc.).
- **Web-conferencing:** All class activities are currently expected to be in person. However, flexibility is a must as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. If the University requires it, we will pivot to online instruction. If this happens, all activities and assignments in this course will regularly use web-conferencing software (Zoom). In addition to the requirements above, students are required to have a device with a functional microphone and camera. In an emergency, students can connect through a telephone call, but video connection is the expected norm.
- **Course Materials and Student Privacy:** All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private to this class; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class. Video recordings – whether made by instructors or students – of class meetings that include audio, visual, or textual information from other students are private and must not be shared outside the class. Live video

conference meetings (e.g., Zoom) that include audio, textual, or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household or recorded and shared outside the class.

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, sexuality, 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, intimate partner violence, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Because we only have 15 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
- Compare and contrast theoretical frameworks that seek to explain health disparities
- Discuss social determinants of health disparities, the background and nature of gender-, sexuality-, 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, 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 submit a brief written statement (< 1 page) or video (< 5 min) 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: Tuesday, 8/31 by 12:00pm**
- **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, 9/23**
- 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, 10/7**
- **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 12:00pm, and papers based on Thursday class are due by Saturday at 12:00pm. 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, 9/25!
- **Final Project* (25%):** 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 format for this final project is open – that is, you may choose to submit a paper, a recorded presentation, infographic, etc. Whichever format you choose, be sure to fully address the required components included here and be sure to include reputable references/citations! **Your topic should be chosen and approved by Thursday 10/21.** This assignment will be completed in 2 parts:
 - Part 1 (10%): 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 11/11**
 - Part 2 (15%): **Final Project**
 - **DUE: Tuesday 12/9 by 1:15pm**
- **Presentation* (5%):** Students will give a brief (~5 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, November 30 – Thursday, December 2

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 | | UNDERGRADUATE | |
|---|------------|----------------------|-------|
| | | Percentage | Grade |
| Introductory Assignment | 5 | 93.0 – 100.0 | A |
| Participation | 15 | 90.0 – 92.9 | A- |
| Interview Assignment | 20 | 87.0 – 89.9 | B+ |
| Reaction Papers (3 total) | 30 | 83.0 – 86.9 | B |
| Final Project | 25 | 80.0 – 82.9 | B- |
| Final Presentation | 5 | 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

Without prior arrangement, 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

Decisions regarding extensions and make-ups under these circumstances will be made on a case-by-case basis.

When possible, I encourage students to reach out as soon as you know that you may miss class and/or related work; it is much easier to develop a plan for your success in advance than it is to do so later!

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 12:00pm, the assignment will be marked 1 day late if it is submitted that Thursday at 12:10pm.

○ A “Life Happens Pass” Policy can give any student an automatic 72-hour extension on a (major) assignment once per semester, no questions asked, as long as the student informs you in writing

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

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Note that this provision includes the range of disabilities, including physical, psychiatric, and learning disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. All academic accommodations **must** be arranged through Disability Services. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993 – 2474.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT, SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, AND INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE POLICY

As a faculty member and designated “Responsible Employee,” I am required to 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 the Student Support and Advocacy Center (703-993-3686) or Counseling and Psychological Services (703-993-2380). You may also seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator (703-993-8730; 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 (caps.gmu.edu), offers workshops in academic skills, stress management training, and virtual counseling for students who would like some help with social, emotional, or educational concerns. Consider taking advantage of these resources if you need them. For additional information about other student support services offered, visit: <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/knowning-mason-students/student-support-resources-on-campus/>

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change as needed)

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

| Week | Date | Topics | Assignments Due Today |
|------|---------|---|--|
| 1 | T 8/24 | N/A | |
| | R 8/26 | Introductions! Review course syllabus and structure Foundational Concepts | |
| 2 | T 8/31 | Women's Health Movements in the U.S. | Introductory Assignment |
| | R 9/2 | Intersectionality & Health | |
| 3 | T 9/7 | Differences & Disparities Part 1 | |
| | R 9/9 | Differences & Disparities Part 2 | Interviewee Selected |
| 4 | T 9/14 | Place & Health Part 1 | |
| | R 9/16 | In class game day: Intersection-opoly! | |
| 5 | T 9/21 | Place & Health Part 2 | |
| | R 9/23 | *Flex day for catch up!* | Interview Transcript |
| 6 | T 9/28 | Violence As A Public Health Consideration: Gun Violence | |
| | R 9/30 | In class film & discussion: <i>The Interrupters Pt. 1</i> | |
| 7 | T 10/5 | In class film & discussion: <i>The Interrupters Pt. 2</i> | |
| | R 10/7 | Violence As A Public Health Consideration: Intimate Partner Violence | Interview Assignment *And if you haven't submitted at least one reaction paper by now, this is your last chance!* |
| 8 | T 10/12 | No class: Fall Break | |
| | R 10/14 | In class: Final project collaborative working/brainstorming session | |
| 9 | T 10/19 | Mental Health Part 1 | |
| | R 10/21 | Mental Health Part 2 | Final Paper Topic Approved |
| 10 | T 10/26 | Substance Misuse Part 1 | |
| | R 10/28 | Substance Misuse Part 2 | |
| 11 | T 11/2 | Family Planning, Reproductive & Sexual Health Part 1 | |
| | R 11/4 | Family Planning, Reproductive & Sexual Health Part 2 | |
| 12 | T 11/9 | COVID-19 Part 1 | |
| | R 11/11 | COVID-19 Part 2 | Annotated Bibliography |
| 13 | T 11/16 | HIV/AIDS in the U.S. Part 1 | |
| | R 11/18 | HIV/AIDS in the U.S. Part 2 | |
| 14 | T 11/23 | In class: Synthesis activity | |
| | R 11/25 | No class: Thanksgiving Break | |

15 T 11/30 *Student Presentations*

R 12/2 *Student Presentations*

By This Date You Should've Completed:

- 1 introductory assignment
 - 1 interview assignment
 - 3 reaction papers
 - 1 annotated bibliography
 - 1 presentation
 - A lot of participation!
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Tues 12/9 Final Projects Due via Blackboard by 1:15 pm!