

WMST 319 (PSYC 461)
Gender, Culture, and Health in the United States
FALL 2023

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 3:00 – 4:15 pm (West 1007)
OFFICE HOURS	Tuesdays 2:00 – 3:00 pm (or by appointment)
DEADLINES	August 28 is the last day to add this class; September 5 is the last day to drop this class with no tuition penalty September 26 is the last day to drop this class with 100% tuition penalty

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.
- **Email Policy:** I aim to respond to student emails in a timely manner, within 24 – 48 hours (not including weekends). If you have not received a reply within that timeframe, please do not hesitate to resend your message or follow-up with me.
- **Class cancellation policy:** If the campus closes or class is canceled, students will be notified via their GMU email. I 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.
- **Electronic Device Policy:** With regard to electronic devices (e.g., laptops, cell phones), I encourage note taking and there will be class sessions that require you to browse the internet to complete our activities. Nonetheless, please be respectful of your peers and of me, and do not engage in activities that are unrelated to class during our time together. Completing other work, communicating with others (e.g., email, text), and browsing the internet during class distracts from our shared community, shows a lack of professionalism, and may negatively affect your participation grad.

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, generational status, disability, 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, 8/29 by 3:00pm**
- **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**
- **Reaction Papers (4 @ 10% each: 40%):** Students will submit four (4) 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 one on the Foundational Topics (Weeks 1 – 4) and three on the Specific Health Issues (Weeks 5 – 13)! Reaction papers are due within 3 days of when a topic is finished. For instance, if you write a paper about Mental Health, it is due by Sunday, Oct. 8 at 3:00pm. Reaction papers should connect across the readings, class discussion, and/or class activities. Importantly, 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, see course calendar at end of syllabus!
- **Health Data Project* (10%):** Students will conduct an empirical analysis using data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) to answer a question related to social identity (e.g., sex, race, age, geographic location, etc.) and health. Students will use the BRFSS Prevalence and Trends tool to complete this project. Students will not need to have familiarity with or access to any other data analysis packages (e.g., SPSS, R, SAS, Stata). Students will write a two-page report on their findings, including how well their findings align with topics discussed in class thus far and including supporting literature about their findings (e.g., references, citations). Additional details about this assignment and a tutorial for using the BRFSS Prevalence and Trends tool will be provided in class.
 - **DUE: Tuesday, 10/24 by 3:00pm**
 - **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, sexuality, racial or 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 10/19.** 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 11/9**
 - Part 2 (15%): **Final Project**
 - **DUE: Thursday 12/7 by 4:15pm**
 - **Presentation* (5%):** 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 complete your final product. Constructive feedback from your presentation should help strengthen the final product that you submit.
 - **DUE:** All presentations will occur between **Tuesday, November 28 – Thursday, November 30**

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-
Health Data Project	10	87.0 – 89.9	B+
Reaction Papers (4 total)	40		

Final Project	25	83.0 – 86.9	B
Final Presentation	5	80.0 – 82.9	B-
Total Points:	100	77.0 – 79.9	C+
		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

LATE WORK, EXAM & HOMEWORK POLICY

I work hard to ensure that I provide feedback to you in a timely manner, and I expect the same of your submitted work. In general, I do not offer makeup assignments or provide extensions without arrangements made beforehand with me. Late work will lose one letter grade (10%) for every day late, up to 7 days, after which credit is no longer available. For example, if an assignment is due by Sunday at 3:00pm, submitting it on Monday morning will result in a one letter grade deduction. I work hard to keep us on track, and ask for the same from you.

Monica Policy (a.k.a. “Just one of them days”)

Still, I do recognize that sometimes things just *happen* – life gets away from us or an unexpected issue arises. Because of this you’ve got **four** “Monica” days – four free days to be tardy on an assignment, no questions asked, no explanations needed. This means that you can submit a single assignment up to four days late without penalty (e.g., grade reduction), submit each of four assignments one day late without penalty, or some combination (e.g., one submission 2 days late, plus another 2 days late). Weekends count as days! If you use a Monica day, please write “Monica day +1” (or +2, +3, +4) on your submission. It is up to you to keep track of how many Monica days you have left and to communicate your use of them with me. Please note that this policy does not extend to the final project, as this due date is set by the University.

Outside of the Monica Policy, there will be no extensions or makeups without penalty except in instances such as the following:

- Hospitalization or illness that has been documented and judged by me as preventing you from a) preparing adequately for an exam, b) attending class, or c) completing an assignment
- Death or serious illness in your family
- Court appearances

Decisions regarding extensions and makeups under these circumstances will be made on a case-by-case basis. In all instances, please reach out to me if you are encountering barriers to your success – I want everyone in this class to succeed and can plan with you.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & 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. Three fundamental principles to follow at all times are that: 1) all work submitted be your own, as defined by the assignment, 2) when you use the work, words, or ideas of others, including fellow students or online sites, you give full credit through accurate citations, and 3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment or exam, ask for clarification. The use of Generative-AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT), if accessed, should be used following the fundamental principles of the Honor Code. This includes being honest about the use of these tools for submitted work. Violations of the GMU Honor Code can result in failure of an assignment or exam, depending on the severity of violation, and no grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. All violations will be reported to the Honor Committee. I reserve 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
Foundational Topics			
<i>You must submit 1 reaction paper from the Foundational Topics section of the semester. You may choose from: Women's health & other health movements; Intersectionality & health; Differences & disparities; Place & health</i>			
1	T 8/22	Introductions! Review course syllabus and structure Foundational Concepts	
	R 8/24	Women's Health & Other Health Movements in the U.S.	
2	T 8/29	Intersectionality & Health	Introductory Assignment
	R 8/31	Differences & Disparities Part 1	
3	T 9/5	Differences & Disparities Part 2	
	R 9/7	Place & Health Part 1	
4	T 9/12	In class game day: Intersectionopoly!	
	R 9/14	Place & Health Part 2	
Specific Health Issues			
<i>You must submit 3 reaction papers from the Specific Health Issues section of the semester. You may choose from: Gun violence; Intimate partner violence; Mental health; Substance misuse; Family planning, reproductive & sexual health; COVID-19; HIV/AIDS</i>			
5	T 9/19	Violence As A Public Health Consideration: Gun Violence	
	R 9/21	In class film & discussion: <i>The Interrupters Pt. 1</i>	
6	T 9/26	In class film & discussion: <i>The Interrupters Pt. 2</i>	
	R 9/28	Violence As A Public Health Consideration: Intimate Partner Violence	
7	T 10/3	Mental Health Part 1	
	R 10/5	Mental Health Part 2	
8	T 10/10	No class: Fall Break	
	R 10/12	In class: Final project collaborative working/brainstorming session	
9	T 10/17	In class: Health Data Project	
	R 10/19	In class: Health Data Project	Final Project Topic
10	T 10/24	Substance Misuse Part 1	Health Data Project
	R 10/26	Substance Misuse Part 2	
11	T 10/31	Family Planning, Reproductive & Sexual Health Part 1	
	R 11/2	Family Planning, Reproductive & Sexual Health Part 2	
12	T 11/7	COVID-19 Part 1	
	R 11/9	COVID-19 Part 2	Annotated Bibliography
13	T 11/14	HIV/AIDS in the U.S. Part 1	
	R 11/16	HIV/AIDS in the U.S. Part 2	
14	T 11/21	In class: Synthesis activity	
	R 11/23	No class: Thanksgiving Break	
15	T 11/28	Student Presentations	

R 11/30 *Student Presentations*

**By This Date You
Should've Completed:**

- 1 introductory assignment
- 4 reaction papers
- 1 health data project
- 1 annotated bibliography
- 1 presentation
- A lot of participation!

Thurs 12/7 Final Projects Due via Blackboard by 4:15 pm!