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Proposed syllabus for Women's Health

GLOBAL WOMEN'S HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The slogan, "Healthy Women, Healthy World" embodies the fact that as caretakers of family health, women play a unique role in maintaining the well being of their families and communities. A woman's access to quality basic health care, family planning and obstetric services can be improved through commitment to basic human rights.

This course will take a human rights approach to provide an overview of health issues within the context of a woman's life cycle –childhood, adolescence, reproductive years, and aging. We will pay special consideration to the socio-cultural and economic factors that play a role in the woman's access to quality basic health care. Particularly important will be to understand women's capacities to have good health and manage their lives in the face of societal and cultural pressures and obstacles. Attention will be given to critical issues of women's health such as the demeaning of women, poverty, unequal access to education, food, and health care, and gender based violence. Such issues as maternal mortality, sexually transmitted disease, violence, harmful traditional practices, and sex trafficking will be discussed.

Course materials will draw from a wide variety of sources, including information about women's organizations inside and outside the US. After the second week, each consecutive week will be devoted to a particular phase of a woman's life and/or a health issue related to that phase. At the end of the semester, students will conduct a Women's Conference focused on a particular country on the topic of Women's Health and Human Rights.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

1. To understand women's health as a basic human right.
2. To introduce critical health issues affecting women globally in terms of cultural, social, and economic contexts.
3. To familiarize students with some of the strategies and programs that non-governmental organizations are using to address women's health issues.

4. To communicate a sense of personal empowerment and connection with women globally.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING POLICY

Discussion and participation. Class sessions will involve discussions, student presentations, in-class exercises, lectures (including guest lecturers), and films. Active participation in class discussion is required and essential for the success of the class. For many of the required readings, students will prepare discussion questions in advance and will have to use them as a guide for facilitating class discussions. Students are expected to regularly attend class and complete all assigned readings in advance of lecture in order to facilitate discussion. More than three absences will adversely affect the final grade

Midterm exam: The midterm will be an in-class exam. More specific guidelines will be provided in lecture.

Final paper: For the final paper each student will complete a two-part paper. The first part will be a 10-15-page analysis on a women's health issue. The topic could be either a domestic U.S. issue or an international issue that focuses on one country or region. The second part of the paper will be a 2-page memo to a policymaker of the relevant government(s) making recommendations for the improvement of women's health.

Teamwork: Specific guidelines will be distributed in lecture.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 Introduction

Introduction and overview of the course; rationale, structure, and context; expectations. Review of: requirements, website, film/video, books; review of syllabus, course reader, and reading lists; clarity about reading groups and assignments. Fill out contact sheets.

Week 2 Women's Health and Human Rights

What is Human Rights and What is Women's Rights? What is health? What is there about women's health that makes it a significant topic for study? Definitions and beyond. Discussion.

Week 3 Born a Girl; Poverty; Access to Education/Food

Critical issues of girls' childhood: being born a girl; poverty; access to education, food, health care; genital cutting and other harmful traditional practices; child labor and child

prostitution.

Week 4 Adolescence and Vulnerability

Adolescence: reproductive health; adolescence and vulnerability; fertility; sex trafficking; HIV/AIDS; contraceptive methods; female-controlled methods of HIV prevention.

Week 5 Reproductive Health; Sexuality; Maternity

Womanhood: sexuality; fertility; maternal health (maternal mortality and morbidity); breastfeeding; reproductive health; access to abortion and family planning; HIV/AIDS.

Week 6 Domestic Violence against Women

Domestic violence and abuse in a global context.

Week 7 Women in War and Refugee Situations

Women's health and special needs in times of war and/or conflict. Violence against women; refugee women.

Week 8 Globalization and Women and Work

Globalization and women's work; trafficking of women.

Week 9 Aging and the End of Life

Growing older: menopause; widowhood, poverty; access to services, end of life. Preparation for Women's Conference.

Week 10 Women's Mental Health

Addressing women's mental health issues in global perspective. Preparation for Women's Conference.

Week 11 Making a Difference and Choosing Priorities

Women's Rights and Women's Health across cultures, political systems, ideologies and religions. Preparation for Women's Conference.

Week 12 Women's Health and Human Rights
Women's Conference.