



**Gender and
Women's Studies**
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Gen&WS 359: The Nature of the Womb: Epigenetics and Parental/Child Health

Instructor: Dr. Ruth Goldstein

Contact: ruth.goldstein@wisc.edu

Office: Sterling Hall 3312

Office hours: Walk-in Wednesdays 12-2pm or by appointment

3 Credit Course: This intermediate level social science course fulfills the humanities and social science approach and gender, race, and the environment areas in the Gender & Women's Studies major.

This class meets for two 75-minute class periods each week over the fall semester. and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, etc.) for about 3 hours out of classroom for every class period. The syllabus includes more information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

Canvas Course URL: https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/244438/external_tools/5326

Requisite: Sophomore standing.

Seminar Time: Tues/Thursday 11am-12:15pm

Location: Via Zoom

Course Description

Concentrating social and ecological environments as well as that of the body, this course focuses on the toxic effects of late industrialism, epigenetics and maternal/fetal health as well as destabilizing ideas about “normal” reproduction. We examine how the possibilities for expanding the scope from maternal/fetal health to “parent/child” health – where kinship is not strictly about biologic belonging or coming “straight from the womb,” but also about love and a safe home or chosen family. Undergirding our analysis are questions of what constitutes “health,” access to living a healthy life – in a body and on a planet that feels safe to inhabit.

Course Learning Outcomes

- To increase knowledge of epigenetics and maternal/fetal as well as parent/child health.
- To develop analytical thinking and improve written and spoken communication skills.
- To engage empathic connections and ethical actions in the face of climate change, environmental racism, and social injustice broadly conceived yet deeply and specifically experienced.

Required Materials:

- *Inclusion: The Politics of Difference in Medical Research* (available as an e-book through UW libraries)
- *Intersex: A Perilous Difference* (available as an e-book through UW libraries)
- All other course readings will be made available on Canvas

Course Policies:

Universal Design & Accommodations: I believe everyone has a right to a quality education and that classrooms can adapt to students' needs. Everyone learns differently. If you have ideas on how you can best learn and express your learning in this class, if you have an undocumented disability, or if you have a change in disability status during the semester, I encourage you to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss a learning plan. If you have a documented disability, please provide me your accommodation information within the first two weeks of class. The University accommodation policy reads as follows:

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty, will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Questions about documenting your disability can be directed to the McBurney Disability Resource Center (mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu, 608/263-2741).

Classroom Conduct: Students are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful manner toward both their peers and faculty at all times. While disagreement and passion are welcome in our discussions, the emotional and intellectual safety of everyone is of utmost importance. Students behaving in a way which disrespects, harms, threatens or otherwise significantly negatively impacts others in the classroom will have their participation grade voided for that class period. Repeated violations will result in a zero for participation in the course.

Late Policy: All assignments lose five percent for each day they are late, unless an accommodation plan is already in place. In emergency cases, students may request extensions and must do so at least 24 hours before the assignment is due with evidence of emergency situation and evidence of progress on the assignment. A common complaint is work being lost on broken computers or lost flash drives. Please utilize the existing technologies: a cloud account like Dropbox or Google Docs or Box to save your work.

Technology: Technology is a vital part of our everyday lives and, for many, a useful learning tool. You are welcome to bring laptops or tablets to use during class for referring to articles, taking notes, or looking up information related to the class discussion. Make choices about technology in the classroom that are right for you and your learning, however, please make sure all devices and your use of them are not distracting to your peers: turn off sound and vibrations before class begins. Internet is not required during class meetings, however, students should have regular, reliable access to the internet to access course readings online well as to submit their written work.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to uphold University expectations for academic integrity by submitting only their own original works and ideas for all assignments in this course. Violations of academic integrity can result in a range of repercussions depending on the severity of the violation, from having to repeat the assignment to expulsion from the University. All academic integrity violations will be recorded and reported to the Office of

Student Conduct & Community Standards (OSCCS). For more on academic misconduct procedures at UW-Madison see: <https://students.wisc.edu/student-conduct/academic-integrity/>

Assignments:

This course is graded on the UW-Madison grading system: A (93-100%), AB (88-92%), B (83-87%), BC (78-82%), C (70-77%), D (60-69%), F (below 60%). The assignments are weighted as follows:

Attendance	10%
Participation	10%
Discussion Questions Presentations	15%
Midterm	20%
Proposal for Final	5%
Final Paper/Project	35%

Attendance: Attendance is graded by percentage of classes attended. There are **no excused absences** in this class, however, your first three absences count as 50% attendance; all additional absences count as a zero. If you anticipate frequently missing class, you should consider taking another course. If a medical or personal emergency results in your missing *multiple* class sessions, contact Dr. Goldstein as soon as possible to set up a meeting to discuss how you can keep up with the course. Students with disabilities should meet with Dr. Goldstein to set up an accommodation plan for their absences. Attendance counts for 10 percent of the final grade.

Participation: Participation is a vital part of the course and one of the primary ways through which students learn to become critical thinkers. Participation in this course will be half constituted by pre-class writing assignments of 200-300 words submitted to Canvas and half constituted by being actively involved in the class in a respectful manner. Pre-class writing assignments will respond to a different prompt each week (you can choose whether it is Tuesday or Thursday). Late pre-class assignments are worth 50% and your lowest grade assignment will be dropped. In-class participation includes communicating in class discussions (including asking questions) and engaging in class activities, such as group work, in-class writing assignments, writing on the board, and reading aloud. Since participation is essential to practicing expressing critical thinking skills, it is important that students be on time and prepared for class and ready to actively participate each day. Excessive tardiness, sleeping in class, or distracting use of technology will reduce your participation grade.

Presentations: Students will be assigned groups to do a presentation on one set of class readings. The presentation need not be exhaustive. It can simply be a set of questions about the readings, in response to classmates posted comments as well as to current events. Music videos, poetry, artwork and such can be brought into frame or expand discussion. There is a minimum of **ten minutes** to present discussion questions and comments. This is worth **15%** of the final grade.

Midterm Paper: The midterm is a **3-5 double-spaced paper with 12-point Times New Roman font** or equivalent. Bibliography required. There are several prompts for the midterm that will also serve for the final. Choices range from an annotated bibliography, a climate manifesto, sci-fi short story, performance or visual art to more typical academic papers. The midterm is meant to be a stepping-stone for the final paper or project, but students are not beholden to one just because this was the choice for the midterm. It is worth **20%** of the final grade.

Final Paper/Project Proposal or Reflection: All students must submit a 2-page (double-spaced, 12 pt font) proposal or reflection for their final paper or project (see Final Paper/Project assignment description for details on

the options). If students are continuing to build on their midterm, then this assignment will be more of a reflection about the midterm process and how they will make the revisions and grow the project or paper. If a proposal for a different paper or project, then students must submit a title, a working thesis statement and outline with an annotated bibliography of two academic sources (which can be from class) and how they relate to your paper/project. This is worth 5% of the final grade.

Final Paper/Project: For the final, students may decide between two options, a traditional paper or a creative project. The final paper/project is worth 35 percent of the final grade.

The final project has a 6-8 page as an analytical text for undergraduates, 12-15 pages for graduate students. An ethnographic component with interviews and participant observation is strongly encouraged but not required. Should you want to incorporate a creative piece—a sculpture, painting, photography or performance piece, please come to office hours and discuss this by midterm. Note that a creative piece must also be accompanied by a short analytical paper (around 2-4 pages). The idea is that if we (humans) are to think differently about gender and sexuality, about the world and bodies that we live in and with, and about (re)production, then our modes of expressing ourselves might be a starting point for imagining otherwise. How might you think differently and envisage difference in poetry or lyrical prose? In music, dialogue, the spoken word? What if your words made a design on the page; how would you think differently about what you might be able to say? Beyond page and word count, I am asking you to analyze the ways that language(s) shape(s), constructions of health, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and “the ability to feel “at home” in one’s body and in the world.

Option 1: Traditional academic paper. Write a 6-8 page paper (undergraduates) and 12-15 (graduate students) with double-spaced, 12 point font: Thus far, we have opened conversations about the connections among the individual body, the social body, the body politic and “nature’s body.” These bodies are porous and interrelated, highlighting how entangled human social and ecological environments are. We have considered how epigenetic science calls into question the line between “society” and “ecology”, where traumatic stress can be as toxic as lead or mercury. It isn’t just the blood-brain or placental boundary for toxics to pass, there seems to be more for us to consider. This prompt asks you to: **1)** Beyond the gender-binary, how can we begin to consider “family” and parenting in more expansive ways? **2)** How *can* ideas about heterosexual kin be limiting, rather than inclusive of love and nurturing? This is not to diminish the importance of motherhood or maternal/child health. It is to ask: **3)** How does the framing of maternal/fetal health and the importance of the womb might direct our attention away from, say, sperm and fatherly or donor responsibilities?

For this prompt, please chose a total of 5 sources, of which, at least 2 come from the syllabus (they may all be from the syllabus, but I encourage/invite you to engage your own library too).

Option 2: Creative project. This project can be done independently, in pairs, or in a group of three students. The project should be a creative engagement with some of the issues and themes we have addressed throughout the semester regarding ecogender and ecosexuality studies and environmental racism. Examples include short films, zines, original songs, spoken word poetry, creative writing, and visual art – see the prompts for a climate manifesto, sci-fi story and visual/performance work). The length of the project depends on the project and should be accompanied by a 3-5 page artist’s statement, reflecting on the choices made, class themes engaged as well as sources cited from class. Depending on the project, at least 3 sources from class should be cited in a formal bibliography.

Week 1	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Introduction to the Course</i></p> <p>Tuesday, January 26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review syllabus <p>Thursday, January 28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becky Mansfield & Julie Guthman “Epigenetic life: biological plasticity, abnormality, and new configurations of race and reproduction.” • Margot Parkes et al. “Preparing for the future of public health: ecological determinants of health and the call for an eco-social approach to public health education.”
Week 2	<p style="text-align: center;">Nature’s Body and Mining Earth’s Womb</p> <p>Tuesday, February 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schiebinger, Londa. “Introduction” (1-10), “Chapter 2: “Why Mammals Are Called Mammals” (40-74), “The Anatomy of Difference” (115-120), “Do Women Shape the Race?” (135-142), “Nature’s Body Wronged” (201-212). In <i>Nature’s Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science</i>. <p>https://www-fulcrum-org.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/concern/monographs/th83m010f</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna Bonnell-Freidin “Well-Born: The Ancient History of Making the Best Babies.” https://eidolon.pub/well-born-the-ancient-history-of-making-the-best-babies-e396e2c2d6b7 <p>Thursday, February 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carolyn Merchant “Mining the Earth’s Womb” • Faye Flam “Scientist says Mother Earth is Out to Kill Us.” https://www.inquirer.com/philly/blogs/evolution/Scientist-says-Mother-Earth-is-Out-to-Kill-Us.html • James Lovelock 2019. How to save humankind (according to James Lovelock) The Economist (Watch in class) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuGj5n_vYz4
Week 3	<p style="text-align: center;">The Four Bodies: A Permeable Body Politic of Environmental Health</p> <p>Tuesday, February 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret M. Lock. “The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology” • 2) Planetary Health 101 – Information and Resources <p>Thursday, February 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becky Mansfield "A New Biopolitics of Environmental Health: Permeable Bodies and the Anthropocene" • Andrea Lilly Ford “Purity is not the point: Chemical toxicity, childbearing, and consumer politics as care”

Week 4	<p style="text-align: center;">What if the Environment is a Person? What if the Person is an Environment?</p> <p>Tuesday, February 18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janelle Lamoreaux “What if the Environment is a Person? Lineages of Epigenetic Science in a Toxic China” • Natali Valdez “The redistribution of reproductive responsibility: On the epigenetics of “environment” in prenatal interventions” <p>Thursday, February 20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mansfield, Becky. 2012.</i> “Environmental health as biosecurity: “Seafood choices,” risk, and the pregnant woman as threshold”
Week 5	<p style="text-align: center;">More Work for Mother? Transing Women’s Health (finally) and Racialized Reproductive Futures</p> <p>Tuesday, February 25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris Barcelos “Transfeminist Pedagogy and the Women's Health Classroom” • Reproductive Futurisms: A Conversation w/ Loretta Ross and Alexis Pauline Gumbs (ASA Freedom Course) <p>Thursday, February 27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norah Mackendrick “More Work for Mother: Chemical Body Burdens as a Maternal Responsibility.” • Center for Disease Control (CDC). “Racial and Ethnic Disparities Continue in Pregnancy-Related Deaths, September 5, 2019 • Gina Melillo. Racial Disparities Persist in Maternal Morbidity, Mortality and Infant Health, American Journal of Managed Care

Week 6	<p style="text-align: center;">Inclusion/Exclusion: The Politics of Difference (Part 1)</p> <p>Tuesday, March 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Epstein “Introduction: Health Research and the Remaking of Common Sense” (1-16) and “Chapter 1: How to Study a Biopolitical Paradigm” (17-29). In <i>Inclusion: The Politics of Difference in Medical Research</i>. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wisc/reader.action?docID=408322 • Karen O’Connell and Isabel Karpin. “Bioinequalities: Rethinking Legal Responses to the Biological and Intergenerational Harm Caused by Inequality” (63-89). In <i>A Jurisprudence of the Body</i>. • 3) Shteyler, Vadim M. 2020. “Failed Assignments — Rethinking Sex Designations on Birth Certificates.” (This is short!) <p>Thursday, March 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Epstein “Chapter 2: Histories of the Human Subject” (30-52). In <i>Inclusion: The Politics of Difference in Medical Research</i>. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wisc/reader.action?docID=408322 • Watch: “What It's Like To Be Intersex” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAUDKEI4QKI&t=5s • Watch: “What Does Intersex Mean? InQueery them.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_5I2fwWGco
Week 7	<p style="text-align: center;">The “Trouble” with Intersex: Legislating Gender and (Health Care) Law</p> <p>Tuesday, March 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holmes, Morgan. 2008. “Introduction: Intersex/uality is Trouble” (13-22) and “Chapter 1: Making Meaning” (23-64). In <i>Intersex: A Perilous Difference</i>. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wisc/reader.action?docID=3116177&ppg=1 <p>Thursday, March 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fae Garland and Travis, Mitchell. “Legislating Intersex Equality: Building the Resilience of Intersex People through Law.”
Week 8	<p style="text-align: center;">Different Assignments, Different Notions of Care and Personhood Midterms Due by March 15, 2021 at Midnight</p> <p>Tuesday, March 16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruth Dietz Chris Pearce “Depathologising Gender: Vulnerability in Trans Health Law.” In <i>A Jurisprudence of the Body</i>. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42200-4_8 <p>Thursday, March 18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margaret Robinson “Two-Spirit Identity in a Time of Gender Fluidity.”

Week 9	<p>Inclusion/Exclusion: The Politics of Difference in a racialized “cis”tem(Part 2)</p> <p>Tuesday, March 23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epstein, Michael. 2007. “Chapter 3: The Rise of Resistance” (53-73). In <i>Inclusion: The Politics of Difference in Medical Research</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <p>Thursday, March 25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Epstein “Chapter 10: “To Profile or Not to Profile: What Difference Does Race Make?” (203-232). In <i>Inclusion: The Politics of Difference in Medical Research</i> • Cynthia Prather et al. “Racism, African American Women, and Their Sexual and Reproductive Health: A Review of Historical and Contemporary Evidence and Implications for Health Equity.”
Week 10	<p>Distributed Reproduction, Distributed Justice: Chemical Latency and Future Potentials</p> <p>Tuesday, March 30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michelle Murphy. “Distributed reproduction, chemical violence, and latency.” https://sfoonline.barnard.edu/life-un-ltd-feminism-bioscience-race/distributed-reproduction-chemical-violence-and-latency/ • Elizabeth Hoover et al. “Indigenous Peoples of North America: Environmental Exposures and Reproductive Justice.” • Mary Annette Pember “Intergenerational Trauma: Understanding Natives’ Inherited Pain.” https://amber-ic.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ICMN-All-About-Generations-Trauma.pdf <p>Thursday, April 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachel Carson “A Fable for Tomorrow” (1-4), “The Obligation to Endure” (5-13), and “The Other Road” (277-297). In <i>Silent Spring</i> • Hepler-Smith, Evan. “How to Save Your Sperm: We don’t just need safer chemicals, we need safer chemistry.”
Week 11	<p>More Troubling Figures: Endocrine Disruptors and Attempts to Disrupt Structural Inequality</p> <p>Tuesday, April 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reena Shadaan and Michelle Murphy. “Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) as industrial and settler colonial structures: Towards a decolonial feminist approach.” <p>Thursday, April 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logan Natalie O’Laughlin “Troubling figures: Endocrine disruptors, intersex frogs, and the logics of environmental science.”

Week 12	<p style="text-align: center;">UnBecoming Jane: Going Nuclear and Chemical Politics</p> <p>Tuesday, April 13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shannon Cram 2015. "Becoming Jane: The making and unmaking of Hanford's nuclear body." <p>Thursday, April 15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mayra G Sánchez Barba "Keeping them down": Neurotoxic pesticides, race, and disabling biopolitics."
Week 13	<p style="text-align: center;">Placental Politics, Continuing Colonialisms, and Childbirth as Intervention</p> <p>Tuesday, April 20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DeLisle, Tina. 2015. "A History of Chamorro Nurse-Midwives in Guam and a 'Placental Politics' for Indigenous Feminism." <i>Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific</i> 37: 1-18. Martine Lappé and Robbin Jeffries Hein. "Human Placenta, Birth Cohorts, and the Production of Epigenetic Knowledge." http://somatosphere.net/2020/placenta-epigenetics-knowledge.html/ Michael D. Nelson "How the placenta affects your life, from womb to tomb." <p>Thursday April 22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Janelle Lamoreux "Toxicology and the chemistry of cohort kinship." http://somatosphere.net/2020/chemical-kinship.html/ Rosita Gabbianelli et al. Nutri-Epigenetics and Gut Microbiota: How Birth Care, Bonding and Breastfeeding Can Influence and Be Influenced?"
Week 14	<p style="text-align: center;">Artificial Wombs and Surrogate Bodies: Beyond the Laboring Body and Chosen Family</p> <p>Tuesday, April 27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sophie Lewis "Defending Intimacy against What? Limits of Antisurrogacy Feminisms." April Hovav "Cutting out the surrogate: Caesarean sections in the Mexican surrogacy industry." <p>Thursday, April 29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Horn, Claire and Romanis Elizabeth Chloe. 2020. "Establishing Boundaries for Speculation About Artificial Wombs, Ectogenesis, Gender, and the Gestating Body." <i>In A Jurisprudence of the Body</i>. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-42200-4_10
Week 15	<p><i>*Final Papers/Projects due May 5, 2021</i></p>