

BIO 104: F 2005 WOMEN'S HEALTH..  
THE BIOLOGY OF FEMALE SEXUALITY

Kathryn L. Edwards, instructor

TR 1:10-2:30pm

Higley AUD

<http://biology.kenyon.edu/courses/biol104/homewh.htm>

This class satisfies a requirement for the Women's and Gender Studies concentration  
for more information <http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/WMNS/>

**Description:**

This is an introductory course addressing the biology behind contemporary issues in women's health. Women's sexuality and women's reproductive potential/ability are unique and form the foundation of our exploration of women's health. The lens on this course is from a western feminist women's health movement perspective: one of "enhancing control of our bodies ourselves." The goal of this course is not to present a survey but rather to explore collectively some areas more deeply than others as we are directed by our questions. A course could be devoted to each area we will touch, but this course should give you the confidence and the tools to investigate health topics of pertinence to your own life on your own. My overall goals are to *i.* improve our capacity to act as health care consumers, *ii.* to forge feminist understanding of women's health issues, and *iii.* to promote cooperative and collaborative ways of being which emphasize community and alert us to our own and most often unknowing prejudicial ways –isms (racism, sexism, etc).

The approach I have taken is to present the biological basis of our understanding of the female body as unique: its anatomy, its physiology, and the health issues related to these. Some of the psychological and social dimensions of women's health will be considered tangentially and I rely on the class to provide these insights because I have found the class to be an excellent resource in this regard. Throughout our study we will explore perspectives of race, culture, class, age, and sexual orientation. We often read material written for a specific group to which we may or may not belong....the intent being that we learn to listen/hear what those of us who are different from the considered "norm" have to say. This will better our understanding of our diversity as women, better allow us to realize our relationship to the social "norm"; and, hopefully, to be encouraged as we are strengthened by knowledge, to make changes where change is needed. As common to health and feminist issues, considerable controversy exists about many of the topics. Differing opinions are welcome in the class. However, I cannot represent all views or sides to a controversy.

Feminist "gynegogy" should accompany any feminist course. This goal has been fraught with difficulty in the past by the large class size and the awkward and alienating space for feminist pedagogy in the Higley Auditorium. To aid "gynegogy", the class participants have been limited to 30. The nature of the topic and its personal implications provides additional challenge in a course that has participants of both sexes. The gynegogy will evolve I expect as we become accustomed to one another as individuals sharing this course experience. Remember: This course is always an experiment in and of itself, for myself, and for you.

For *males* in the class, you will undoubtedly learn much about your own bodies, health issues, and sexuality just as women have learned about theirs from courses and research focusing on men. My goal for you, however, is that you hone the skill of learning by listening. True listening is a difficult skill to acquire, but it is a very fruitful one in any career. How do you as a male learn to understand your privilege and how it intersects with women. How do you enable those who have less voice, are more restricted and less valued? What does it mean to come to understand the female body from a scientific and health perspective and from women's points of view? Your difficult task, moreover, is to identify the ways society influences your attitudes and behaviors towards women and girls: How do they affect your expectations and knowledge of female health issues, career relationships, parental relationships, sexual relationships, and in general relationships with those who are different from you? In what ways, even in this course, do your thoughts and actions reflect social bias or in what ways might they be harmful (try applying them to yourself or to your male friends)? What changes and gains would be realized if such social constructs were changed? In what ways can you help to make those changes happen? How might your awareness of bias and prejudice of women help you to be better care-givers and supporters of women and their lives? These are the kinds of questions you should try to address when doing the reading assignments and writing in your journal (see below).

There are many ways of learning. One major method is through observing, listening, reflecting, and cooperating. Note that I have used active verbs and not inactive nouns (eg. observation) to describe the

method, that is because learning is an active process. I recommend that these methods be your primary means of learning in this classroom as you work on the objectives above. Reflective and earnest inquiry is always welcome.

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### Requirements and Evaluation:

This college is under traditional academic paradigm and I must evaluate your work. The following requirements are set to help me do that as well as to assist you with your learning in a timely manner. This course relies on a heavy reading assignments, collaborative team work projects, and regular 30min quizzes or exercises on the biological material. My intent for this course, however, is that you motivate yourself to learn because you want to. I hope that you take the subject matter and the course seriously because it has direct meaning for you, the lives of those you care about, and your community at large.

#### 1. ATTENDANCE and constructive ATTITUDE

Attendance is taken by a sign-in sheet passed around each class. More than 3 unexcused classes automatically results in partial deduction from your letter grade in the course. You should notify the instructor in writing or email that you will be missing a class or have to leave the class early.

Attitude is everything to classroom learning. Be respectful and enable others.

Disregarding others limits yourself and your own growth.

#### 2. For women, PARTICIPATION by communication in class

For men, PARTICIPATION through attending to women's discussion and asking reflective questions relevant to the discussion in class

Participation in anatomy practical learning outside of class.

#### 3. Two graded ASSIGNMENTS ...for example Reading an analysis of a medical research paper.

#### 4. Nearly weekly in or out-of-class quizzes on the biological of topic material.

#### 5. Topic assigned discussions. Although everyone is expected to do the assigned article reading, the class will be divided up into groups. Each group will be responsible for leading/facilitating a discussion.

#### 6. Team PROJECTs, including a final annotated Powerpoint presentation in the last 3 class periods

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### More on My Evaluation of You:

\*For *women*, participation means making verbal contributions to discussions, showing that you have thought about the material being discussed. For *men*, participation means seriously attending to women's discussion and asking questions which will move you toward goals set for you in this course.

A = exceptional: consistently thinks about material and spends time to understand the material thoroughly. Contributes ideas and solid criticism that is well rationalized. Attends all classes. Group contributions are inventive or powerfully organized and rationalized, and student participates fully in development and execution of class project.

B = good: spends time thinking about most of the material (85%). Periodically contributes insight and good rational critique in journal and to class. Attends most classes (missing no more than 3). Group contribution shows potential strength which is not approached fully, and student participates fully in development and execution of class project.

C = fair: skims most of the reading material (75-80%) and a few times pursues material with in depth analysis/response. Attends most classes but contributes little to discussions. Group contribution is adequate, student participates in development and execution of class project.

D = poor: skips 25-35% of readings and skims remainder. Attends most classes, but does not participate. Group contributions are lacking in presentation, content, consideration, implementation, and student participates little or reluctantly. Class project contribution is considerably less than substantial, but some effort can be noted.

F = fail: fails to demonstrate a genuine interest in course (readings/class) Less than 40% of reading done. Assignments inadequate, participation is essentially nil. If a person misses a total of 9-12 classes they will fail the course despite other requirements unless otherwise negotiated with the instructor. Student does not participate in group endeavors either development or delivery, irrespective of the quality program the group produces. Little to no effort is contributed to the class project.

**Medical journal holdings:** *We now have a number of online holdings....see our Science Librarian, Julia Glynn (glynnj or x5834) if you have questions about accessing journals online:*

<http://lbis.kenyon.edu/> click on Electronic Journals (Ohio Link) or search via Consort.

You can also search for primary research literature on a medical topic or interest via

Pub Med: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi>

The Science Citation Index via LBIS: <http://wok3.ohiolink.edu/>

Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)

The New England Journal of Medicine

Science

The Proceedings of the National Academy of Science (PNAS)

Nature

- [The Lancet](#) (british journal)
- [Journal of Gender, Culture and Health](#)
- [Infectious Diseases in Obstetrics and Gynecology](#)
- [BMC Biology](#)
- [BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine](#)
- [Age and Ageing](#)
- [Allergy](#)
- [The American Journal of Cardiology®](#)
- [The American Journal of Medicine®](#)
- [Journal of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association](#)
- [The Breast Journal](#)
- [The Journal of Maternal-Fetal Medicine](#)
- [The Journal of Maternal-Fetal Medicine](#)
- [Journal of Midwifery and Womens Health](#)
- [Women's Health Issues](#)
- [Biology of Reproduction](#)
- [Biochemical Medicine and Metabolic Biology](#)
- [Isokinetics and Exercise Science](#)
- [Nutrition and Cancer](#)
- [Nutrition Journal](#)
- [Stress Medicine](#)
- [Trends in Endocrinology and Metabolism](#)
- [Alcohol](#)

WEB LINKS..much more on our course website

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/whi/>

<http://www.4woman.gov/>

<http://www.hesperian.org/index.htm>, a community grass roots health org.

<http://www.cwhn.ca/>, Canadian women's health orgs.

## BIO 4: BIOLOGY OF FEMALE SEXUALITY

SYLLABUS, Fall 2005

<http://biology.kenvon.edu/courses/biol104/homewh.htm>

Instructor: KathRyn L. Edwards, Higley Rm 214, PBX 5398, E-mail: EDWARDSR  
Office hours: M/W 10-noon, Fri 2:30-4:30.

Texts: NV A New View of a Woman's Body, Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers  
CWH Contemporary Women's Health, Kolander, Ballard, and Chandler  
BC Beggars and Choosers, Solinger

\*Articles on reserve in Higley Reading Rm 211. There will be 1 copy of each article. Individuals (or groups) can copy articles in Bio Rm 212 at a cost of 10¢/ page during the hours of 8:30am-noon, 1:00-4:30 pm M-F. These articles are not to be REMOVED from Higley Reading Rm except to copy).

Optional:

Our Bodies Ourselves, A New Edition for a New Era, Boston Women's Health Book Collective  
Diagnosis: Difference, Wilkerson

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Questions/issues that should run as an undercurrent to the course:

Locating praxis in our learning.

How to access, read, and understand scientific medical literature?

How do we learn about health issues and strategies? How is health "sold" to us? What are the benefits and worries of these approaches?

What is reliable online medical or science information?

How does medical knowledge advance?

**Team discussions:**

discussion of abortion and its representation on the internet

discussion of sex drive from perimenopause on.

discussion of breeding: to be or not to be

**Team project ideas:**

stem cell research and its impact on human health

ageing—menopause (HRT, etc)

nutrition—the new gov. food non-pyramid, is Adkins diet legit?, etc.

chronic fatigue syndrome: a female health problem

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\* = 1 copy on reserve in Biology Bldg Reading Rm 211 (in maroon 3 ring binder).

**Week of**

**Aug 30**

CWH: Ch 1

NV: Ch 1

**Opening of class:** Audre Lorde is our Muse; showing of ONE FINE DAY (Kay Weaver, 6min)

**The National Women's Health Initiative: WHI**

**The medical literature and mass media literature**

**Locating praxis in our learning**

**Some practical feminist theory to consider for our interactions**

**\*Joyce Trebilcot: "Dyke methods"**

- \*Sarah Hoagland: "Power, paternalism, and attending"
- \*Rebecca Christoph: "Anger, the creative fire"
- \*Audre Lorde: "There is no hierarchy of oppressions"
- \*Audre Lorde: "Age, race, class, and sex: women redefining difference"

### **Human tissue systems: some basics**

***Begin group project....whats hot in women's health?....due Sept 8***

**Sept 6**

NV: Ch 2, 3  
 CWH: Ch 15  
 \*Susan Cline: How to have an orgasm as often as you want  
 \*Rebecca Chalker: The Clitoral Truth  
 \*Marshall: Lets talk about sex...and drugs (libido boosting?)  
 Showing of Dodson: Self-Loving video in Crozier Center(A-V 92.0357)...*time to be announced*

### **Unique anatomy of the female body Gynecological examination : self look Physiology of female sexual response**

**Sept 13**

CWH: Ch 12, 13, 14  
 \*Philaretou: Perils of Masculinity excerpt  
 \*T. Beneke: "Rape language"  
 Kilbourne: Killing Us Softly video  
 BC: Ch 1

### **Rape and relational abuse.....guest Wendy Busenburg-Taylor Science of hormones**

*i fight fire with words  
 words are hotter than flames  
 words are wetter than water  
 --ani difranco*

**Sept 20**

CWH: 78-91  
 NV: Ch 4, 5  
 \*G. Steinem: "If men could menstruate"  
 BC: Ch 2

### **Ovarian/uterine cycle assignment: reading a medical research paper due**

**Sept 27**

CWH: Ch 17, 126-128, Ch 8  
 reproductive anatomy of the cat (groups)  
 BC: Ch 5

### **Reproduction: fertilization Early pregnancy: more hormones Early fetal development**

**Oct 4**

CWH: Ch 16, 9, 10, 11  
 NV: Ch 7, 9

\*N. Tuana: "The weaker seed: The sexist bias of reproductive theory."  
BC: Ch 6

**Birthing : Video: Jay Mothersoul's home video of giving birth while at Kenyon**  
**Birth Control: to be or not to be a breeder**

*When several male doctors were complaining about the decline  
in the use of the pill in a clinic used by poor  
women, a female physician confronted the men by  
asking: "would you take a pill that makes you  
temporarily sterile and might bring on blood clots,  
phelbitis, and even thrombosis?" The reply: "I  
wouldn't take the pill, period." --Ellen Frankfort*

**Oct 13** *one class*

**Oct 18** CWH: Ch 18

**Biology of infection: body defenses and how they work**

**Oct 25** **Biology of infection: HIV and other STDs**

*assignment: reading a cancer research paper.....due*

**Nov 1** CWH: Ch 20

**Biology of cancer**



*Begin Class Project: TBA*

**Nov 8** **Breast, ovarian, and uterine cancers**

**Nov 15** CWH: Ch 19  
**Biology of heart disease**



*Class Project: Progress reports by groups due*

**Nov 19-27** **Fall Break**

*When you look in the mirror and your heart races  
because you think,  
"I'm so fucking rad,"  
that's self protection.  
Protect your self.  
--inga muscio, from Cunt*

**Nov 29** **catch up**

**Dec 6**  **Class Project: group presentations**

**Dec 13** *one class*  **Class Project: group presentations**

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