GWS 533—Fall 2015
Women and Childbirth: Global and Historical Perspectives on Midwifery, Medicine, and Technocratic Hospital Birth

Karen Walloch, Ph.D.
3312 Sterling Hall
Gender and Women Studies
kwalloch@wisc.edu or wallochkaren@gmail.com

Office Hours: 2:00-3:30 Tuesdays and Thursdays and by appointment

Course Description:
Although certain elements of giving birth remain constant over time, the lived experience of childbirth has changed immensely for women, especially in the developed world over the course of the last three centuries. Birth for women living in high tech, post-modern society is a highly medicalized event that takes place in a hospital. And although birth retains much of its traditional meaning as a social and family event in rural areas of developing nations, medical technology exerts a steadily increasing influence even in home births attended by midwives.

How did an event that was once a part of ordinary life managed by women in their own homes become a medical drama that plays out in hospital operating theaters? This course starts with the physiology of birth and then moves on to explore what it signified in women’s lives—how power and meaning shifted in childbirth as birthing women struggled to exert control over this big event in their lives. We will ask: What choices did women make to shape their birthing experience and ensure the best result? Why did they make these decisions? How did changes medical authority and technology affect women’s birth experience? How did shifting the location of birth change the experience for women? By analyzing issues of authority and decision-making as they have played out in interactions between birthing women and their attendants, we will find that women have always sought to make their birth experiences safer and better, even if those choices did not always work out the way they hoped.

Course Format:
This is a course that emphasizes discussion of the materials you read, write, see, and hear. We will use visual materials as well as readings from both primary and secondary sources. I will give short lectures designed to prompt discussion, and part of your responsibility will be to contribute verbally in class, both responding to questions and asking questions.

Required Books: [Available for purchase at Room of One’s Own bookstore.]
[Various articles will be posted also on Learn@UW.]
Course Requirements:
25%: Attendance/Class participation
25%: Midterm
25%: Oral history paper
25%: Final Exam

Explanation of Grading—Participation
Your grade for participation is based on an accumulation of points for attendance, involvement in class discussion, and completion of the course readings.

Attendance is crucial: I structure this course around active participation. This means that I expect you to attend every class session fully prepared to engage with the readings and my lectures. You can’t participate if you don’t come to class. If you don’t come to class, you get an automatic 0 for that day from me unless you have a valid excuse. Then and only then, a written response might suffice as a substitution for verbal participation.

Participation points: Each meeting, you will assign your own participation grade on a 10-point scale (although I reserve the right to alter that grade if I disagree with your evaluation). Participation points gauge several aspects of course involvement: attendance, preparation, and contributions to discussion. They reflect whether you understood the basic issues, engaged with the material, volunteered your opinions, and listened to your classmates.

Each class, you can earn up to 10 points.
YOU assign your own grade—I expect scrupulous honesty.
This is how it works: Take notes as you read, watch films, listen. They don’t have to be fancy—just enough to help you respond to the material and organize your thoughts for each day. At the end of each class, assign yourself points in the three areas described below, along with any comments about that day’s class, and post them in the Learn@UW dropbox for that day. If you watched a film and we did not have a discussion, then include some comments about the film. Please do not wait more than a day to post! It gets too confusing otherwise. If you have an excused absence for that day, please post a note to that effect in the dropbox. You may write a one-page reaction essay to one of the readings for that day in order to get some points. If there are no readings for that day, select a reading from the previous day for your short essay.

Attendance: up to 3 points
• Add 3 points, if you show up on time, pay attention, and stay the whole class period.
• Deduct 1 point if you are more than five minutes late.
• Deduct 1 point if you daydream, fall asleep, text, etc.

Reading: up to 4 points
• Add 4 points if you read all the assignments. Deduct accordingly if you haven’t.
Contributions to discussion: 3 points
• Add 3 points if you asked or answered a question, offered analysis or summary, or responded to a comment.
• Give yourself fewer points if you verbally contributed, but only minimally.
• Additionally, if you wanted to speak, but didn’t get a chance to get into the conversation, or if someone else made the same point that you wanted to make, then give yourself 1 point for nonverbal engagement with the discussion. Make a note of it on your reading/class notes in order to get credit though.

If you miss class: 0-10 points, depending on the situation.
• If you are not present, you may not assign yourself points for the day. You should alert me to the fact of your absence at some point before or after class if it is unplanned. Otherwise, please let me know about any upcoming events that will impede your attendance.
• In order to make up for your absence you may write up a one-page reaction essay to one of the readings for that day. This essay should consist of a description of the reading and your assessment of it in terms of the issues and themes of the course. I will assign the points based on the thoroughness of your essay. Please, please complete these essays promptly. I may or may not accept them if you let them go for too long.

Explanation of Grading—Written Assignments
Midterm Exam
• This is an exam of your basic knowledge of terms, persons, procedures, and concepts. The format will be identification, definition, or short answer. Write it up on a laptop or tablet at a time and place convenient for you, and then post it to the dropbox on Learn@UW.

Oral History Project
• Write a 10 page paper based on birth stories from selected relatives, friends, willing subjects. This paper is not just a transcription of their birth stories, but your attempt to add historical dimension and meaning to the stories. You will use the interviews as a historical document from which to refer, but then you will also use your readings as a touchstone of historical facts and analysis to include in your paper. I expect to see proper documentation in the form of footnotes or endnotes.

Take-Home Final
• Write a 7-10 page essay prompted by a question that I will provide sometime during the last week of class.
• This paper also should be properly documented by references to specific historical events and persons, giving names, dates, places in the body of your text and providing footnotes or endnotes for the sources of your quotations or facts.
Grading Scale—Exams and Paper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95-100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-94</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83-89</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78-82</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-77</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participation Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>266-280</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>252-265</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>232-251</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>218-231</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>196-217</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168-195</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-167</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your Rights

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 [me] 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 [I], 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.
Class Schedule

Part I:  The Essentials of Birth
Sept. 3:  Introduction/Expectations
Sept. 8:  Childbirth and Authoritative Knowledge
Sept. 10:  Technocratic Childbirth
Sept. 15:  Attitudes about Childbirth in a Technocratic Setting
Sept. 17:  Persistence of Older Birth Traditions

Part II: Historical Roots of Medicalization—The American Experience
Sept. 22:  Emergence of the Man-Midwife in England
Sept. 24:  Martha Ballard’s Practice/Midwifery in the Late 18th Century
Sept. 29:  The Shadow of Maternity
Oct. 1:  General Practitioners and Obstetrics in the 19th Century
Oct. 6:  Anesthesia in the 19th Century
Oct. 8:  Meddlesome Midwifery
Oct. 13:  Move to the Hospital

Part III:  Consequences of Medicalization—The American Experience
Oct. 15:  Safe Childbirth Movement
Oct. 20:  Twentieth-Century Obstetrics
Oct. 22:  Twentieth-Century Obstetrics/Hospital Procedures and Routines
Oct. 27:  MIDTERM EXAM DUE
Oct. 29:  Twentieth-Century Hospital Childbirth Experiences
Nov. 3:  Natural Childbirth Movement
Nov. 5:  Hospitals Adapt: Fathers and Epidurals

Part IV: Persistence and Resurgence of Midwifery
Nov. 10:  Grand Midwives of the South
Nov. 12:  The Midwifery Model of Care in Action
Nov. 17:  Midwifery in Brazil, Mexico, and the Philippines
Nov. 19:  Childbirth in Transition: Japan
Nov. 24:  The Resurgence of Midwifery in the United States
Nov. 26:  THANKSGIVING RECESS
Dec. 1:  Ina May Gaskin: Pioneer of the Home Birth Movement
Dec. 3:  Reclaiming Home Birth
Dec. 8:  Cesarean Section Controversy
Dec. 10:  Emergence of the Doula
Dec. 15:  Course Review/Evaluations/PAPER DUE
Dec. 19:  FINAL EXAM DUE
Reading & Film Schedule

Part I: The Essentials of Birth
Sept. 3: Introduction and Expectations
Book:
Film:
Eugene DeClerq lecture, “Birth By the Numbers” (2008). [22 minutes]
Learn@UW Readings:

Sept. 8: Childbirth and Authoritative Knowledge

Sept. 10: Technocratic Childbirth
Learn@UW Readings:
Robbie Davis-Floyd, “The Technocratic Model,” in her *Birth as an American Rite of Passage*, 44-72.

Sept 15: Attitudes about Childbirth in a Technocratic Setting
Book:
Gaskin: 204-257.
Learn@UW Readings:
Films:


**Sept 17: The Persistence of Older Birth Traditions**

**Book:**
Gaskin: 133-182.

**Learn@UW Readings:**


**Film:**

**Part II: Historical Roots of Medicalization—The American Experience**

**Sept. 22: Emergence of the Man-Midwife in the 1700s: England**


**Sept 24: Midwifery in Late Eighteenth Century America/Martha Ballard’s Practice**

**Learn@UW Readings:**

Martha Ballard, Excerpts from her Diary.

**Film:**
*A Midwife’s Tale* [88 min.]

**Sept. 29: The Shadow of Maternity**

**Book:**

**Learn@UW Readings:**
Letters from Jane to Elizabeth Gordon, 1846.

Letters from Bessie Huntting Rudd to Edward Payson Rudd, 1860.

**Oct. 1: General Practitioners and Obstetric Practice in the 19th Century**

**Book:**

**Learn@UW Readings:**

**Oct 6: Anesthesia in the Nineteenth Century**  
**Book:**  
**Learn@UW Readings:**  
Fanny Longfellow, Diary and Letters, 1844-1856.  
Nettie Fowler McCormick-Anita McCormick Blaine Letters, 1890.

**Oct. 8: Meddlesome Midwifery**  
**Book:**  
**Learn@UW Readings:**  

**Oct. 13: Move to the Hospital**  
**Book:**  
**Learn@UW Readings:**  

**Part III: Consequences of Medicalization—The American Experience**  
**Oct. 15: Safe Childbirth Movement**  
**Learn@UW Readings:**  

**Oct. 20: Twentieth Century Obstetrics**  
**Learn@UW Readings:**  

Film:
Joseph B. DeLee, *Breech Birth* (1930s?) [39 minutes].

**Oct. 22: Twentieth Century Obstetrics/Hospital Procedures & Routines.**

*Learn@UW Readings:*


**Oct. 27: MIDTERM EXAM DUE**

Film:
*The Chicago Maternity Center Story* (1970s) [58 minutes].

**Oct. 29: Twentieth-Century Hospital Experiences**

*Learn@UW Readings:*

Letter in Response to Author’s Query, 1983.

**Nov. 3: Natural Childbirth Movement**

*Learn@UW Readings:*


**Nov. 5: Hospitals Adapt: Fathers and Epidurals**

*Learn@UW Readings:*

Film:
*The Steve Allen Show*: Henry Fonda & Steve Allen skit (late 1950s) [about 10 minutes].

**Part IV: The Persistence and Resurgence of Midwifery**

**Nov. 10: Grand Midwives of the South**

**Book:**

**Film:**
*Miss Margaret* (2010). [38 minutes] or George Stoney’s *All My Babies* (1952). [54 minutes]

**Nov 12: The Midwifery Model of Care in Action**

**Learn@UW Readings:**


**Nov. 17: Midwifery in Brazil, Mexico, and the Philippines**

**Learn@UW Readings:**


**Nov. 19: Childbirth in Transition: Japan**

**Learn@UW Readings:**


**Nov. 24: The Resurgence of Midwifery in the United States**

**Learn@UW Readings:**


**Film:**
Nov 26: THANKSGIVING RECESS

Dec. 1: Ina May Gaskin: A Pioneer of the Home Birth Movement
Learn@UW Readings:
Film:
Birth Story: Ina May Gaskin and the Farm Midwives (2012). [95 minutes]

Dec. 3: Reclaiming Home Birth
Learn@UW Readings:
Andrew Goldman, “Extreme Birth: The Fearless--Some Say Too Fearless--New Leader of the
Film: The Business of Being Born (2007). [84 minutes]

Dec. 8: Cesarean Section Controversy
Learn@UW Readings:
Katherine Beckett, “Choosing Cesarean: Feminism and the Politics of Childbirth in the United
Jennifer Block, “The Short Cut,” in Pushed: The Painful Truth About Childbirth and Modern
Maternity Care (2007): 45-72

Dec. 10: Emergence of the Doula
Learn@UW Readings:
Amy Gilliland, “Beyond Holding Hands: The Modern Role of the Professional Doula,” JOGNN

Dec. 15: Last Class Day/Review/Evaluations
PAPER DUE!!!!!