WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

FALL 1990

MARY MADSEN

Lec. Thurs. 18:30-20:20
Tut. Thurs. 20:30-21:20

W.S. 001-3
ISSUES IN WOMEN'S HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE

This course looks at Western medicine and our modern health care system - how it happened, how it shapes our views of health, disease, and the kinds of medical treatment women receive. A feminist, historical perspective documents the decline of women healers with the rise of male 'experts' as the health care authorities. Modern medicine is almost exclusively a masculine domain (women comprise only 10% of North America's medical practitioners), yet women have become the major consumers of a health care system that doesn't meet their needs - women average 25% more visits to the doctor than men; take 50% more prescription drugs than men; and are admitted to hospitals much more frequently than men. This increasing ratio of women patients reflects not only the inadequate care women receive, but the need for a re-examination of the whole North American approach to health care generally and specifically to the need for increased control and responsibility by women for their own health.

The course is divided into three sections:

PART I: A FEMINIST SOCIOLOGY OF MEDICINE.

1. The Historical Perspective: Women as Healers
2. Medical Ideology
3. The Drug Industry: Profits, Politics and Victims
4. Medical Research: Male Prestige
5. Iatrogenic Diseases: Medically-Caused Illnesses

PART II: WOMEN'S HEALTH ISSUES.

6. Rethinking Menstruation
7. Birth Control - Political Perspectives
8. Birth Control - Personal Choices
9. The P.M.S. Controversy
10. Menopause: Treatment of Natural Female Processes

PART III: INFORMED CHOICE.

11. Women's Health Collectives
12. Alternative Health Resources
REQUIRED READING:

Ehrenreich, Barbara & English, Deirdre  
Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers.  
(The Feminist Press, 1973)

Boston Women’s Health Book Collective,  
The New Our Bodies/Ourselves.  
(Simon & Schuster, 1984)

McDonnell, Kathleen (ed),  
Adverse Effects: Women and the Pharmaceutical Industry.  
(Women’s Educational Press, 1986)

Taylor, Dena,  
Red Flower: Rethinking Menstruation.  
(The Crossing Press, 1988)

Vancouver Women’s Health Collective,  
Avoiding Pregnancy.  
(Press Gang, 1988)

ASSIGNMENTS:

15% Attendance, Participation and Readings
30% Health Journal
30% Research Paper
25% Take-Home Exam

"Caution: Sexism is Dangerous to Your Health - 
Patriarchy is Pathological!"