Health has been defined ("A Feminist Dictionary", 1985) as the 'condition of body and mind traditionally assigned to (women's) care'.

"As mothers and wives we have been held responsible for the health (or illness) of children, men and parents. As 'caring' nurses and auxiliaries in hospitals we have worked long hours for low pay. On the other hand our own health, in body and mind, has often been seen as flowing from, or blocked, by our female biology, and as something to be controlled by doctors".

In this course, we will look at Western theories of health and the Canadian health care system — how did Western medicine and the present health care system come about? How do they shape views of physical, mental and social health/disease; and how do they determine who controls the definition and provision of medical treatment? A feminist historical analysis documents the decline of women healers and the rise of 'professional' men as health care authorities, paralleled by the industrialization of medicine into a big and profitable business. At a time when universal health care is in danger of dying before being developed, we need to re-examine the whole approach to such care; and to develop ways for increased control by women of their own health.

This course is divided into three sections:

PART 1: A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

1. Women's diversity: international conceptions of health, care and womanhood.
2. Medical ideology: if man is to medicine as woman is to nature ... the medical system, science and norms
3. Research: priorities, problems and models of healthcare decision making.
4. Drugs: profits and politics.
5. Dis-ease: alternatives to the germ theory

PART II: WOMEN'S HEALTH ISSUES

6. Life stages: the male as norm and female as deviant (menstruation, pregnancy and menopause as illness)
7. Reproductive technologies both old and new: sterility and fertility as women's health problems.
8. "The Beauty Myth" and women's embodiment

PART III: ALTERNATIVES
9. “Platforms for Action” and international coalition
10. The definition of poverty: overcoming the myths of health literacy
11. Future directions

REQUIRED READINGS:


COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance, participation       15%
Journal                        15%
Research Paper (10-12 pages)   20%
Presentation                   10%
Midterm Examination            20%
Final Examination (take home)  20%

DESIGNATED CREDIT:

* This course may be applied to the Certificate in Liberal Arts.