

The History of Women in Medicine

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Course Description

Much has been made of sex and gender differences in medicine and the particularities of women's experiences as patients and healthcare practitioners. However, people have not always understood the significance of sex and gender differences for medical knowledge and practice in the same way they do today. This course will explore how ideas about the significance of these differences have changed over time due to a confluence of scientific, socio-cultural, and political factors. Focusing on the U.S., this course looks at the complexity of sex and gender as relevant categories in medicine, and the ways women have mobilized their gender identity in their activities as practitioners, activists, and patients. In doing so, it draws out several themes in the history of women in American medicine, including the heavy focus on reproductive potential; struggles for autonomy and agency; and the intersection of race, class, and gender.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how ideas about the significance of sex and gender difference in medicine have changed over time
2. Understand how women have mobilized their identities in their experiences as patients, practitioners, and activists
3. Elaborate central themes in the history of women's participation in medicine

Course Calendar

Week 1: Sex, Gender, and Difference in Medicine: An Historical Perspective

Readings: S. Eder, "The volatility of sex: Intersexuality, gender and clinical practice in the 1950s," *Gender & History* (2010); S. Klein, et al., "Sex inclusion in basic research drives discovery" *Proc. of the NAS* (2015); S. Richardson, et al., "Focus on preclinical sex differences will not address women's and men's health disparities" *Proc. of the NAS* (2015)

Week 2: Technology and the Medicalization of Reproduction

Readings: L. Freidenfelds, "Examining technology's effect on early pregnancy detection" radio segment (2013); J. Wolf, "Risk and reputation: obstetricians, cesareans, and consent," *JHMAS* (2017); Historical images of reproductive tools

Week 3: Race, Class, and Gender

Readings: Selections from K. Wailoo, *How Cancer Crossed the Color Line* (2011); N. Lira and A. Minna Stern, "Mexican Americans and eugenic sterilization: resisting reproductive injustice in California, 1920-1950," *Aztlán* (2014); Loretta Ross and Rickie Solinger, *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction* (2017)

Week 4: Women as Healthcare Practitioners

Readings: Selections from E. More, E. Fee, and M. Parry, *Women Physicians and the Cultures of Medicine* (2009); W. Muigai, "'Something wasn't clean': black midwifery, birth, and postwar medical education in *All My Babies*" *BHM* (2019); C. Choy "Nursing justice: Filipino immigrant nurse activism in the United States" *Nursing Clio* (2020)

Week 5: Women's Health Activism

Readings: Selections from J. Koslow, *Cultivating Health: Los Angeles Women and Public Health Reform* (2009); W. Kline, "'Please include this in your book': Readers respond to 'Our Bodies, Ourselves,'" *BHM* (2005); N. Kim, "How Asian and Latina immigrant women fight to help us breathe easier" *Gender and Policy Report* (2021)

Week 6: Women as Patients: Contemporary Perspectives from Cedars-Sinai

Guest Lecture/Panel: TBD (Cedars-Sinai)

Readings: Selections from J. Viridi, "Painful realities," Wellcome Collection Blog,
<https://wellcomecollection.org/series/XTg5pRAAACUAP5U5>