

Women's Studies/History of Medicine 431  
Childbirth in the United States  
Spring Semester, 2001-2002

Judith W. Leavitt, Ph.D.

1419 MSC

263-4560

Office Hours: 11:00 am – noon and 2:15-3:15 pm TR

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Course meets: TR 1:00-2:15 pm, 5295 MSC

Course Description:

The course examines women's childbirth experiences in the United States from the colonial period to today. It addresses throughout questions of authority and decision-making issues that remain central in women's health policy debates today. Basic physiology of childbirth, interactions between birthing women and their attendants, changes in experiences over time, and evolving ideas about "choices" in childbirth are major themes addressed during the semester.

Course Requirements:

Enrollment for the course is kept as low as possible so that the class can be run as a seminar-discussion. Everyone is expected to complete the assigned readings before coming to class and to take responsibility as an active participant in class discussions. The success of the class depends on the time, energy, and commitment you are willing to invest. You should come to class prepared to engage in thoughtful and constructive conversation that is respectful of others in the classroom and takes seriously the issues and themes presented in the readings.

The class is conducted as a seminar-discussion, an approach that grows directly out of an appreciation of the benefits of *active learning*, in which the professor is a facilitator of learning rather than a dispenser of information and students actively pursue their own education rather than passively receive knowledge. The general goals of a university education focus on critical thinking being willing to explore ideas contrary to one's own beliefs, knowing when information or data are relevant to an issue and how to seek and find that information and apply it methodologically to the problem at hand. Class time will be a time to present new material, but even more, it will be used to provide experiences in learning what to do with new material and to clear up problems so that students can take responsibility for learning and solving problems rather than waiting for them to be solved by the instructor. Cooperative and group learning exercises will be encouraged, with the assumption that everyone brings something valuable and unique to the class. Active discussion, expressing one's

ideas and getting reactions from other students and the instructor, has been demonstrated to make a big difference in learning, retention, and use of knowledge. Articulating an idea can be one way of getting checks and extensions of it. Thus students are required to talk about their ideas openly, listen and respond to others' ideas, remain sensitive to the feelings of other class members, and take responsibility for moving class discussions forward.

If any problems arise, either academic or personal, that might jeopardize your performance in the course, please try to inform me of the problem before class or at the next available office hour, or by leaving a message or an email for me.

Any student who has a disability that may prevent her or him from fully demonstrating her or his abilities should contact me personally as soon as possible so that we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities.

Graduate students must attend an additional seminar, the time of which will be arranged on the first day of class.

Students are required to familiarize themselves with the UW policies on plagiarism and to assume responsibility for honest in all course work.

#### Grading:

Undergraduates	Class participation	20%	
	OBOS paper	15%	due 2/21
	Oral History paper	15%	due 4/9
	Midterm exam	15%	
	One step further project	15%	due 5/7
	Final Exam	20%	
Graduate Students	Class participation	20%	
	Research paper	60%	
	Seminar leadership	20%	

#### Required Reading:

431 Reader, available from Ag Journalism Copy Shop (referred to in syllabus by \*)

Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America 1750-1950* (Oxford University Press paperback)

**GRADUATE STUDENTS PLEASE MEET AFTER THE FIRST CLASS TO PLAN**

## Class Schedule

January 22 January 24	Introduction and Expectations Basic Anatomy and Physiology of labor and delivery
January 29 January 31	Basic Anatomy and Physiology OBOS and Childbirth
February 5 February 7	Meanings and Experiences of Childbirth & Motherhood Meanings and Experiences of Childbirth & Motherhood
February 12 February 14	18 <sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Midwives 18 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Under the Shadow of Maternity
February 19 February 21	19 <sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Midwives and Medicalization at home 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Differences in Experience
February 26 February 28	19 <sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Anesthesia 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Meddlesome Midwifery
March 5 March 7	19 <sup>th</sup> - 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Move to the Hospital Doing Oral History
March 12 March 14	Exam review In Class Midterm Examination
March 19 March 21	20 <sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Medicalization 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: MDs and OB Nurses
March 26 March 28	Spring Recess Spring Recess
April 2 April 4	20 <sup>th</sup> Century: Hospital Experiences and Procedures 20 <sup>th</sup> Century: De-Medicalization: Natural Childbirth Movement
April 9 April 11	20 <sup>th</sup> Century De-Medicalization: Nurse Midwives, Birthing Rooms 20 <sup>th</sup> Century: Traditional & Spiritual Midwives
April 16 April 18	20 <sup>th</sup> Century: Traditional & Spiritual Midwives 20 <sup>th</sup> Century: Direct Entry Midwives
April 23 April 25	20 <sup>th</sup> Century: Doulas and Dads NO CLASS
April 30 May 2	Childbirth Today: How Dangerous was/is Childbirth? Childbirth Today: Hospital v. Home
May 7 May 9	21 <sup>st</sup> Century Childbirth: Where are we headed? Final Exam Review
May 15	FINAL EXAM WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 12:25pm

Women's Studies/ History of Medicine 431  
Required Readings

**January 24-29                      Basic Anatomy and Physiology of labor and delivery**

Students are expected to learn the basic anatomy and physiology of pregnancy, labor, and delivery. In class we will review this, view childbirth videos, and use a plastic pelvis and rag doll to deliver in various presentations.

\* Norman Miller et al, *Human Parturition* (1958), pp. 62-82.

**January 31                      OBOS and Childbirth**

\*Judy Norsigian et al, "The Boston Women's Health Book Collective and *Our Bodies Ourselves: A Brief History and Reflection*," *JAMWA* (1999).

\*Linda Gordon and Barrie Thorne, "*Our Bodies Ourselves* review (1992).

**February 5                      Meanings and Experiences of Childbirth & Motherhood**

\*Adrienne Rich, "Alienated Labor," in her *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976), pp. 156-185.

\*Deborah Goleman Wolf, "Lesbian Childbirth and Woman-Controlled Conception," in *Women-Identified Women*, ed. Trudy Darty and Sandee Potter (1984), pp. 185-193.

\* Patricia Hill Collins, "Shifting the Center: Race, Class and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood," in *Representations of Motherhood*, eds Donna Bassin, Margaret Honey, and Meryle Mahrer Kaplan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 56-74.

**February 7                      Meanings and experiences of Childbirth & Motherhood**

\*Rayna Rapp, "The Power of "Positive" Diagnosis: Medical and Maternal Discourses on Amniocentesis," in Karen Michaelson, ed, *Childbirth in America: Anthropological Perspectives* (1988), pp. 103-116.

\*Leslie Reagan, "From Hazard to Blessing to Tragedy: Teachings on Miscarriage in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America," *Feminist Studies*, forthcoming, 2002.

\*Diana Tietjens Mey, "The Rush to Motherhood – Pronatalist Discourse and Women's Autonomy," *Signs* 26 (2001): 735-773.

\*Elaine May, "NonMothers as Bad Mothers," in *"Bad" Mothers: The Politics of Blame in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America* ed. Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky (1998), pp. 198 -219

\*Betty Jean Lifton, "Bad/Good, Good/Bad," in *"Bad" Mothers: The Politics of Blame in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America*, ed. Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky (1998), pp. 191-197.

\*Katha Pollitt, "Fetal Rights," in *"Bad" Mothers: The Politics of Blame in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America*, ed. Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky (1998), pp. 285-298.

## **February 12            18<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Midwives**

\*Martha Ballard, Excerpts from her Diary.

\*Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "The Living Mother of a Living Child: Midwifery and Mortality in Post-Revolutionary New England," *William And Mary Quarterly* 66 (1989): 27-48.

A Midwife's Tale website is [www.dohistory.org](http://www.dohistory.org)

## **February 14            18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Under the Shadow of Maternity**

\*Letters from Jane to Elizabeth Gordon, 1846.

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

Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*, pp. 1-35.

## **February 19            19<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Midwives and Medicalization at Home**

\*HB Willard, *Obstetrical Journal*, 1849-56, excerpts.

Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*, pp. 36-63.

\*Steven Stowe, "Obstetrics and the Work of Doctoring in the Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century American South," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (1990): 540-66.

\*Charlotte Borst, "The Training and Practice of Midwives: A Wisconsin Study," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 62 (1988): 606-27.

A Midwife's Tale website is [www.dohistory.org](http://www.dohistory.org)

**February 21**                    **19<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Differences in Experience**

\*Nettie Fowler McCormick - Anita McCormick Blaine Letters, 1890 excerpts.

\*Virginia Drachman, "The Loomis Trial: Social Mores and Obstetrics in Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century America," in *Women and Health in America* (1984), pp. 166-74.

Leavitt, Brought to Bed, pp. 64-115.

**February 26**                    **19<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Anesthesia**

\*Fanny Longfellow, Diary and Letters, 1844-1856, excerpts.

\*Marguerite Tracy and Constance Leupp, "Painless Childbirth," *McClures Magazine* 43 (1914), pp. 37-51.

Leavitt, Brought to Bed, pp. 116-141.

**February 28**                    **19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Meddlesome Midwifery**

\*S.D. Gross, "Lacerations of the Female Sexual Organs Consequent upon Parturition: Their Causes and Their Prevention," *JAMA* (1884), pp. 337-45.

Leavitt, Brought to Bed, pp. 142-170.

**March 5**                         **19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: the Move to the Hospital**

Leavitt, Brought to Bed, pp. 171-218.

\*Susan Cotts Watkins and Angela D. Danzi, "Women's Gossip and Social Change: Childbirth and Fertility Control among Italian and Jewish Women in the United States, 1920-1940," *Gender and Society* 9 (1995), pp. 469-490.

\*Carolyn Leonard Carson, "and the Results Showed Promise ... Physicians, Childbirth, and Southern Black Migrant Women, 1916-1930:Pittsburgh as a Case Study," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 14 (1994), as reprinted in in JWL *Women and Health in America* (1999), pp. 347-370.

**March 7**                         **Doing Oral History**

\*A Basic Guide to the Concepts, Techniques and Strategies of Oral History Research, Parts I and II," Virginia Folklife Program (1998).  
(<http://minerva.acc.virginia.edu/vfh/vfp/oh2.html>)

\*"Do's and Don't' for Oral History Interviewing," Institute for Oral History, Baylor University ([http://www.baylor.edu/Oral\\_History/](http://www.baylor.edu/Oral_History/)) (2001).

**March 12**                      **Exam review**

**March 14**                      **In Class Midterm Examination**  
**March 19**                      **20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Medicalization**

\*Letter in Response to Author's Query, 1983.

\*Gladys Denny Shultz, "Journal Mothers Report on Cruelty in Maternity Wards," Ladies' Home Journal (May, 1958), pp. 44-45, 153-4, (December, 1958), pp. 58-59, 135, 137-139.

\*Lenore Pelham Friedrich, "I Had a Baby," *Atlantic Monthly* (April, 1939): 461-65; and "I Had a Baby Too: A Symposium," *Ibid* (June, 1939), pp. 764-72.

\*Ann Rivington, "Motherhood—Third Class," *American Mercury* 31 (Feb, 1934): 160-65, and Leatha Southmayd, "Motherhood—Third Class: A Reply," *Ibid.* (April 1934), pp. 509-10.

\*Julie Harris, as told to Betty Friedan, "I was Afraid to Have a Baby," *McCalls*, Dec 1956, pp. 68-74.

\*Naomi Wolf, "Giving Birth," in her *Misconceptions: Truth, Lies and the Unexpected Journey to Motherhood* (2001), pp. 135-143.

**March 21**                      **20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: MDs and OB Nurses**

\*Joseph B. DeLee, "Prophylactic Forceps Operation," *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 1 (1920): 34-44, 77-80.

\*J. Whitridge Williams, "A Criticism of Certain Tendencies in American Obstetrics," *New York State Journal of Medicine* (1922): 493-99.

\*JWL, "'Strange Young Women on Errands': Obstetric Nursing Between Two Worlds," *Nursing History Review* 6 (1998): 3-24.

**April 2**                              **20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Hospital Experiences and Procedures**

\*Joann Bromberg, "Having a Baby: A Story Essay," in Shelly Romalis, ed, *Childbirth: Alternatives to Medical Control* (UT Press, 1981), pp. 33-62.

\*Robbie Davis-Floyd, "The Technocratic Model of Birth," in Susan Tower Hollis, et al., eds, *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore* (1993), pp. 297-326.

\*Margaret Nelson, "Working-Class Women, Middle-Class Women, and Models of Childbirth," *Social Problems* 30 (1983): 284-97.

\*Joseph B. DeLee, "The Maternity Ward of the General Hospital," *The Modern Hospital Yearbook* 6 (1926): 67-71.

#### **April 4            20<sup>th</sup> Century Demedicalization: Natural Childbirth Movement**

\*Marjorie Karmel, Thank You Dr. Lamaze: A Mother's Experiences in Painless Childbirth (1959), pp. 69-85, 87-89.

\*Grantly Dick-Read, "The Relief of Pain in Labour," *Western Journal of Surgery, Obstetrics, and Gynecology* 62 (1954): 591-97.

\*Letters 10, 11, 12, 35, 45, and 56 in *Post-War Mothers: Childbirth Letters to Grantly Dick-Read 1946-1956* Ed. Mary Thomas (1997).

\*Suzanne Arms, "Moving Toward Normal Childbirth," in her *Immaculate Deception II: Myth, Magic & Birth* (1994), pp. 149-171.

#### **April 9            20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Nurse Midwives & Birthing Rooms**

\*Nancy Schrom Dye, "Mary Breckinridge, the Frontier Nursing Service, and the Introduction of Nurse-Midwifery in the United States," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 57 (1983): 485-507.

\*Regi Teasley, "Nurse and Lay Midwifery in Vermont," in Pamela Eakins, ed, *The American Way of Birth* (1986), pp. 246-272.

\*Elissa Y. Sonnenberg, "The Story of Midwives Care: A Birth Center in Cincinnati," *Mothering* (May-June, 2001), pp. 55-63.

A Midwife's Tale website is [www.dohistory.org](http://www.dohistory.org)

#### **April 11           20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Traditional and Spiritual Midwives**

\*Linda Janet Holmes, "Thank You Jesus to Myself: The Life of a Traditional Black Midwife," in *The Black Women's Health Book: Speaking for Ourselves* ed. Evelyn White, pp. 98-106

\*Linda Janet Holmes, "African American Midwives in the South," in Pamela Eakins, ed, *The American Way of Birth* (1986), pp. 273-291.

\*Sheila Davis and Cora Ingram, "Empowered Caretakers: A Historical Perspective on the Roles of Granny Midwives in Rural Alabama," in Barbara Bair and Susan Cayleff, eds, *Wings of Gauze: Women of Color and the Experience of Health and Illness* (1993), pp. 191-201.

A Midwife's Tale website is [www.dohistory.org](http://www.dohistory.org)



**April 16            20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Traditional and Spiritual Midwives**

\*Susan Smith, "White Nurses, Black Midwives and Public Health in Mississippi, 1920-1950," *Nursing History Review* 2 (1994), pp. 29-49.

\*Neal Devitt, "The Statistical Case for Elimination of the Midwife: Fact versus Prejudice, 1890-1935," *Women & Health* 4 (Spring, 1979), pp. 81-96; *ibid* (summer, 1979), pp. 169-86.

\*Ina Mae Gaskin video

**April 18            20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Direct Entry Midwives**

\*John A. Foote, "Legislative Measures Against Maternal and Infant Mortality: The Midwife Practice Laws of the States and Territories of the United States," *Journal of Obstetrics* 80 (1919): 534-51.

\*Holly Mathews, "Killing the Self-Help Tradition Among African Americans: The Case of Law Midwifery in North Carolina, 1912-1983," in *African Americans in the South: Issues of Race, Class and Gender*, ed Hans Baer and Yvonne Jones (1992), pp. 60-78.

\*Leonie van der Hulst et al, "Telling Stories of Midwives," in Raymond De Vries et al, *Birth By Design* (2001), pp. 166-179.

\*Judy Luce, "The Honor, Joy, Power and Challenge of Community, Independent Midwifery," and Naoli Vinaver, "Autonomy: Using Your Full Potential," in *Paths to Becoming a Midwife: Getting An Education* (1998), pp. 144-155.

A Midwife's Tale website is [www.dohistory.org](http://www.dohistory.org)

**April 23            20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: Doulas and Dads**

\*Coleman Romalis, "Taking Care of the Little Woman: Father-Physician Relations during Pregnancy and Childbirth," in Shelly Romalis, ed., *Childbirth: Alternatives to Medical Control* (UT Press, 1981), pp. 92-121.

\*JWL, "All Alone in the Stork Club" Fathers and the Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth Experience."

\*Marshall Klaus, John Kennell, and Phyllis Klaus, "Birth with a Doula," in their *Mothering the Mother: How a Doula Can Help you Have a Shorter, Easier, and Healthier Birth* (1993), pp. 53-63.

\*Laura Shanley, "Why Choose an Unassisted Childbirth?" (<http://ucbirth.com>, 2001)

**April 25**                      **NO CLASS**

**April 30**                      **20<sup>th</sup> Century Childbirth: How Dangerous was/is Childbirth?**

\*Charles R. King, "The New York Maternal Mortality Study: A Conflict of Professionalization," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 65 (1991): 476-502.

\*Eugene Declercq and Kirsi Viisainen, "The Politics of Numbers: The Promise and Frustration of Cross-National Analysis," in *Birth by Design* (2001), pp. 267-279.

\*John Figgis Jewett, et al, "Childbed Fever – A Continuing Entity," *JAMA* 206 (Oct, 1968), pp. 344-350.

**May 2**                              **Childbirth Today: Hospital v. Home**

\*Ruth Watson Lubic, "Alternative Maternity Care: Resistance and Change," in Shelly Romalis, ed, *Childbirth: Alternatives to Medical Control* (UT Press, 1981), pp. 217-249.

\*Pamela Eakins, "The Rise of the Free Standing Birth Center: Principles and Practice," *Women and Health* 9 (1984): 49-64.

\*Ashley Montagu, "Babies Should Be Born at Home," *Ladies' Home Journal* 72 (1955), pp. 52+

\*Bonnie O'Connor, "The Home Birth Movement in the United States," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 18 (1993): 147-74.

\*Pamela Eakins, "Out of Hospital Birth," in her edited, *The American Way of Birth* (1986), pp. 218-245.

\*Eugene Declercq et al, "Where to Give Birth? Politics and the Place of Birth," in Raymond DeVries, et al, eds, *Birth By Design: Pregnancy, Maternity Care, and Midwifery in North America and Europea* (2001), pp. 7-27.

\*Nina Shapiro, "Give me Drugs!" (1999), and Jean Hanff Korelitz, "Cut Me Open!" (1999), and Susan Gerhard, "Take me to a hospital!" (1999) "*Salon Mothers Who Think*" (*Salon.com*).

**May 7**                              **21<sup>st</sup> Century Childbirth: Where are we headed?**

\*Brigitte Jordan, "Studying Childbirth: The Experience and Methods of a Woman Anthropologist," in Shelly Romalis, ed., *Childbirth: Alternatives to Medical Control* (UT Press, 1981), pp. 181-216.

\*Barbara Katz Rothman, "Recreating Motherhood: Toward Feminist Social Policy," in *Recreating Motherhood: Ideology and Technology in a Patriarchal Society* (1989), pp. 246-260.

\*Raymond DeVries et al, "What (and Why) Do Women Want? The Desires of Women and the Design of Maternity Care," in their *Birth By Design* (2001), pp. 243-266.

**431 Spring 2002**  
**Course Requirements explained**

**Attendance/class participation (20%)**

Students' attendance and participation in class discussions and in the business of the class (for example, on email and on any relevant out-of-class activity) will be graded, qualitatively, and will count as 20% of the course grade. This is important because the seminar active-learning process does not work without student active involvement in class activity.

***Our Bodies Ourselves* Paper (15%)**

A short paper (no longer than 5 typed double-spaced pages) analyzing one aspect of childbirth over at least four editions of *Our Bodies Ourselves* is required. Students will select the subject they want to look at; the papers should identify and analyze changes over time. The paper must be submitted on or before **February 21**. We will discuss this paper in detail in class on January 31.

**Oral History Paper (15%)**

A short paper (no longer than 5 typed double-spaced pages) conducting, describing, and analyzing one oral history interview, preferably a family member of your grandmother's generation (but others acceptable too), is required. Students can submit the tapes or transcript as an appendix. The paper must be submitted on or before **April 9**. We will discuss this paper in detail in class on March 7.

**Mid-term Examination (15%)**

There will be an in-class blue book examination on **March 14**, covering all the material to that date in the syllabus and in class. There will be an in-class review for this Exam on March 12. Students can expect one part of the exam to be short answer and one part to be a longer essay.

**One-Step Further Paper (15%)**

A short (c. 5 typed double-spaced pages) paper, taking either your OBOS or your oral history paper one step further is required. This paper should be based on additional research, aiming to provide a deeper context in which to understand your first paper. For example, you might want to compare your findings from OBOS with a standard medical text or medical writings from the

same period. Or you may want to do oral histories on additional people AND read some of the popular literature of the period that addresses some of the themes you found. Remember that this should represent ONE step further and need not be a major research paper. In fact, you may want to include in the paper a discussion of what else would be needed to make this a full-scale term paper. This paper is due on **May 7**.

### **Final Examination (20%)**

There will be blue book final examination during the Exam Period, at 12:25 pm on Wednesday, **May 15, 2002**. Students can expect one part of the exam to be short answer and one part to be a longer essay. The exam will be similar in form to the mid-term and will cover all of the course subjects and material.

If you have questions about a grade, please speak first to your instructor. If the question is not resolved, speak with the Chair, Mariamne Whatley, or Associate Chair, Helen Klebesadel. They will attempt to resolve the issue informally and inform you of the Appeals Procedures if no resolution is reached informally.

I wish to include fully any students with special needs in this course. Please let me know if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or evaluation procedures in order to enable you to participate fully. The McBurney Center will provide useful assistance and documentation.