



Summer 2018 – Session A

## **ANTH 230 – Women's bodies: A biosocial approach**

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00 pm to 4:15 pm

Instructor: Claudia Valeggia, [claudia.valeggia@yale.edu](mailto:claudia.valeggia@yale.edu), 10 Sachem St, room 230. Office hours will be scheduled by appointment.

This course is not your regular lecture class. It is indeed a journey, an exploration of female reproductive lives from an evolutionary and biosocial perspective. We will focus on physiological, ecological, and social aspects of women's development from puberty, through reproductive processes such as pregnancy, birth and lactation, menopause and aging. We will also explore variation in female life histories in a variety of cultural and ecological settings. As a community of learners, we will share our own knowledge of women's biology and experiences. Examples will be drawn primarily from traditional and modern human societies. We will encourage critical thinking at all times with the hope that discussions in this class become useful when making decisions about your lives as citizens, potential parents, health care providers, health care recipients, and policy makers.

**Course requirements:** Grading will rest on two non-cumulative exams (20% each), two critiques (10% each), journal writing (15%), a final review paper (20%) and class participation (5%).

The **exams** will consist of short answers, and essay questions. Midterm I will be given on **Tuesday June 12** and Midterm II on **Thursday June 28**.

The **critiques** consist of a short (2 page) critical discussion of a media article (popular magazine, newspaper, popular/lay website) related to women's reproductive biology or health. The idea is to examine the main points or claims of the article and go to the primary sources to evaluate the validity of those claims. The 1<sup>st</sup> critique is due on **Friday June 8** and the 2<sup>nd</sup> on **Friday June 22<sup>nd</sup>**, both at 5 pm.

The **journal**: please bring a composition notebook to class. You will use this **journal** to write down anything you find relevant to this class. Your thoughts, your questions, your emotions while reading a paper or watching a class video, things you disagree with, topics you don't understand, etc. I will ask you to show me this journal as a way of assessing your engagement with the class and also getting your feedback. Your journal entries are strictly confidential and won't be judged in any way by its content. The grade is only to keep you motivated to do it for the entire session. **I will collect the journals on Tuesdays and give them back to you on Thursdays.**

For the **final review paper**, you will have your choice of a number of possible topics that will give you a more in depth understanding of the biology of women. The paper is to be written as a **scientific review** of the chosen topic and must contain the following sections: *Abstract, Introduction, Current ideas on the topic, Recommendations for future research, Conclusions, and Literature reviewed*. Length of the paper: max. 10 pages. The review paper is due on **Tuesday June 26**. A more detailed set of guidelines will be posted on Canvas.

## Schedule of meetings and readings

**Readings** There will be no required textbook. We will be reading selected articles and chapters from other sources which will be posted on the course's Canvas site. Please follow the schedule to know which articles you have to read each week.

### **Week 1: May 29 and 31**

Introduction to the course

- Trevathan, W. (2010) Chapter 0 – Introduction: what does evolution have to do with women's health. *Ancient Bodies, Modern Lives* (ABML), Oxford University Press, pp. 3-21.
- Ellison, PT (2001). *Two Births*, in *On Fertile Ground*, Harvard University Press, Pp. 1-15.

From conception to puberty

- Montañez (2017) Beyond XX and XY. *Scientific American*, September 2017, 50-51.
- Bogin, B. (1999) *Patterns of Human Growth* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Cambridge University Press, pp. 67-82.
- Trevathan's Chapter 1 – Are we grown up yet?

Puberty: Physiological and evolutionary bases

- Ellis, BJ (2004) Timing of Pubertal Maturation in Girls: An Integrated Life History Approach. *Psychological Bulletin* 130(6): 920-958.
- Kramer, K. (2017) Evolutionary Perspectives on Teen Motherhood: How Young Is Too Young? In *The Arc of Life*, Jasienska, Sherry and Holmes, Eds. Springer, pp. 55-75.

Puberty around the world

- Wyman, LC and Bailey, FL (1943) Navaho Girl's Puberty Rite. *New Mexico Anthropol* 6/7(1):3-12.

### **Week 2: June 5 and 7**

1<sup>st</sup> critique due Friday June 8 at 5 pm

Female Anatomy

- Lloyd et al (2005) Female genital appearance: 'normality' unfolds. *BJOG* 112:643-646.
- Angier (1999) The well-tempered clavier: The Evolution of the Clitoris. In *Woman: An Intimate Geography*. Houghton Mifflin Co., pp. 62-89
- Gould (1991) Male nipples and clitoral ripples. In *Bully for Brontosaurus*, W. W. Norton & Co., pp. 124-140.
- *Suggested, but not required*: "Fear of the clit" A brief history of medical books erasing women's genitalia. *Vice*, Broadly [https://broadly.vice.com/en\\_us/article/neiny8/fear-of-the-clit-a-brief-history-of-medical-books-erasing-womens-genitalia](https://broadly.vice.com/en_us/article/neiny8/fear-of-the-clit-a-brief-history-of-medical-books-erasing-womens-genitalia)

Establishment of mature cycles: The ovarian cycle

- Trevathan, W. (2010) Vicious cycles. In: *Ancient Bodies, Modern Lives* (ABML), Oxford University Press, pp. 41-61.
- The Menstrual Cycle (Wikipedia): [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menstrual\\_cycle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menstrual_cycle)

### **Week 3: June 12 and 14**

Tuesday June 12: Midterm I – In class written exam, which will take 1.5 hours of class

The evolution of menstruation

- Finn, CA (1998) Menstruation: a nonadaptive consequence of uterine evolution. *Quarterly Review of Biology* 73:163-173.
- Strassmann, B. I. (1996). "The Evolution of Endometrial Cycles and Menstruation." *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 71(2): 181-221.

Menstrual taboos: a cross-cultural and evolutionary overview

- [Period Podcast. Episode 3. Blood coming out of her wherever.](#)
- Gottlieb, A. (1988) Menstrual cosmology among the Beng of Ivory Coast. In Buckley and Gottlieb (eds.) In: *Blood Magic: The anthropology of Menstruation* pp. 55-74. University of California Press.
- Appell, L. (1988) Menstruation among the Rungus of Borneo: An Unmarked Category. In Buckley and Gottlieb (eds.) In: *Blood Magic: The anthropology of Menstruation* pp. 94-112. University of California Press.
- Strassmann, B. (1992) The function of menstrual taboos among the Dogon: Defense against cuckoldry? *Human Nature*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 89-131.

#### Female sexual arousal

- Shibley Hyde & Delamater Chapter on Sexual Arousal
- Pavlicev & Wagner (2016) The evolutionary origin of female orgasm
- Zuk (2006) The case of the female orgasm
- Frederick, D., St.John, H.K., Garcia, J. and Lloyd, E. (2017) Differences in Orgasm Frequency Among Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Heterosexual Men and Women in a U.S. National Sample. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-017-0939-z>

#### Optional readings

- Jannini, E. A. *et al.* (2014) Beyond the G-spot: clitourethrovaginal complex anatomy in female orgasm *Nat. Rev. Urol.* 11, 531–538
- Emhardt E, Siegel J, Hoffman L. (2016) [Anatomic variation and orgasm: Could variations in anatomy explain differences in orgasmic success?](#) *Clin Anat* 29(5):665-72
- Salama S, Boitrelle F, Gauquelin A, Malagrida L, Thiounn N, Desvaux P. (2015) Nature and origin of "squirting" in female sexuality. *J Sex Med* 12(3):661-6

### **Week 4: June 19 and 21**

2<sup>nd</sup> critique due Friday June 22 at 5 pm

#### Conception

- Trevathan Chapter 3 ABML
- Vitzthum, V. J., Thornburg, J., et al. (2009). Seasonal modulation of reproductive effort during early pregnancy in humans. *American Journal of Human Biology* 21(4): 548-558.
- Nepomnaschy, P. A., Welch, K. B., et al. (2006). Cortisol levels and very early pregnancy loss in humans. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* 103(10): 3938-3942.

#### Pregnancy: Physiological changes, gestation stages, pregnancy loss, prematurity

- Trevathan Chapter 4 ABML
- Pike, I. L. (2005). Maternal stress and fetal responses: Evolutionary perspectives on preterm delivery. *American Journal of Human Biology* 17(1): 55-65.
- *Suggested readings (not required)*: Espinoza, J. (2015) "Foetal–Maternal Conflicts" and Adverse Outcomes in Human Pregnancies. In "Evolutionary thinking in medicine" pp 19-32.

#### Birth/Evolutionary obstetrics

- Chapter 5 ABML
- Ellison, PT (2001). A Time to Be Born. In *On Fertile Ground*. Pp. 51-80.
- Pomeroy, Wells & Stock (2015) Obstructed Labour: The Classic Obstetric Dilemma and Beyond. In *Evolutionary Thinking in Medicine*, pp. 33-46
- Gaskin, IM (2003) Chapter 2: What happens in labor, in *Ina May Gaskin's Guide to Childbirth* pp. 143-149.

- *Suggested but not required*: “Parturition” chapter in *Williams Obstetrics*, 23ed ed., accessible on-line through library.

#### Birth around the world

- Jordan, B. (1993) Buscando La Forma: An Ethnography of Contemporary Maya Childbirth in Yucatan. In: *Birth in Four Cultures: A crosscultural Investigation of Childbirth in Yucatan, Holland, Sweden, and the United States*, Waveland Press, Prospect Heights, Illinois, USA, pp.15-44.
- Dunham, B. (2016) Home Birth Midwifery in the United States: Evolutionary Origins and Modern Challenges. *Human Nature*. DOI 10.1007/s12110-016-9266-7
- Jordan, B. (1993) The Crosscultural Comparison of Birthing Systems: Toward a biosocial Analysis. In: *Birth in Four Cultures: A crosscultural Investigation of Childbirth in Yucatan, Holland, Sweden, and the United States*, Waveland Press, Prospect Heights, Illinois, USA, pp.45-90.

#### **Week 5: June 26 and 28**

Tuesday June 26: REVIEW PAPER DUE

Thursday June 28: Midterm II – In class written exam, which will take 1.5 hours of class

#### Postpartum and Breastfeeding

- Callister, [LC](#), [Beckstrand RL](#), [Corbett C](#). Postpartum depression and culture: Pesado Corazon. [MCN Am J Matern Child Nurs](#). 2010 Sep-Oct;35(5):254-6
- Gallup, Spaulding, and Aboul-Seoud (2015) Bottle Feeding: The Impact on Post-partum Depression, Birth Spacing and Autism. In *Evolutionary Thinking in Medicine* pp 47 -60.
- Hinde & Milligan (2011) Primate Milk: Proximate Mechanisms and Ultimate perspectives. *Evolutionary Anthropology* 20: 9-23.
- Chapters 7 and 8 ABML
- Vallengia, C.R. and Ellison, P. T. (2004) Lactational amenorrhea in well-nourished Toba women of Argentina. [Journal of Biosocial Science](#) 36 (5) 573-595.

#### Reproductive Aging

- Sievert, LL. (2006) The Biological Bases of Menopause. In: *Menopause: A biocultural perspective*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, pp. 32-48.
- Sievert LL, Begum K, Sharmeen T, Murphy L, Whitcomb BW, Chowdhury O, Muttukrishna S, Bentley GR. (2016) Hot flash report and measurement among Bangladeshi migrants, their London neighbors, and their community of origin. *Am J Phys Anthropol* 161(4):620-633.