

# Gender, Race, and Medicine

## Syllabus

### Course Description

This course will ask students to question what they “know” about science and the scientific process. We will problematize “scientific objectivity” and probe foundational scientific ideas about race, sex, and gender while simultaneously examining what these basic tenets have meant for marginalized groups in society, particularly when seeking medical care. Students will engage feminist science theories that range from explorations of the linguistic metaphors of the immune system, the medicalization of race, to critiques of the sexual binary. We will use contemporary as well as historical moments to investigate the evolution of “scientific truth” and its impact on the U.S. cultural landscape. Using the unique lens of feminist theory, students will revisit their disciplinary training as a site for critical analysis.



Some of the men recruited and used without their consent in the infamous Tuskegee Experiment  
Time Magazine

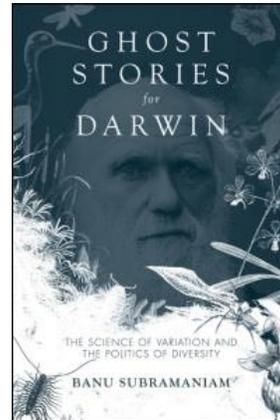
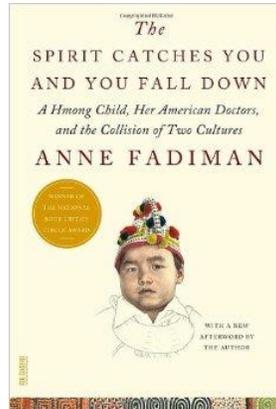
### Goals and Objectives

Students will

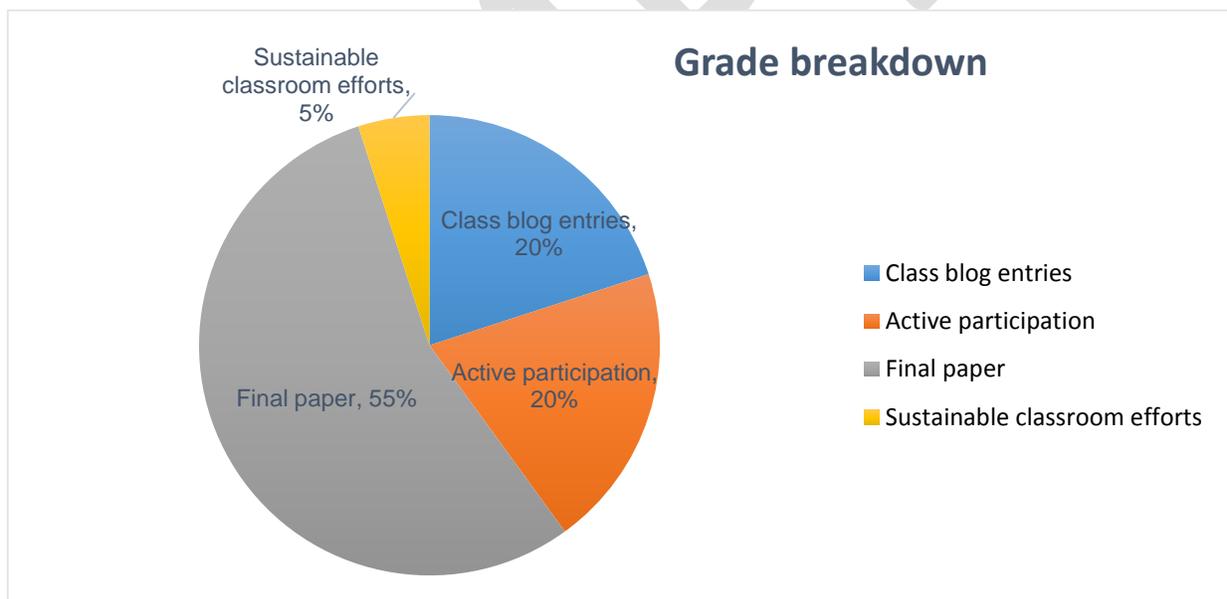
- determine the validity of scientific claims based on evidence, not opinion
- recognize societal and cultural influence on “biological” behavior
- grasp basic women’s studies concepts such as intersectionality and standpoint theory
- explore race, class, and gender’s impact on medicine

## Required Texts

*The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* by Anne Fadiman  
*Ghost Stories for Darwin* by Banu Subramaniam



## Grading and Requirements



## Class Blog

All students will post four blog entries that reflect their reaction to the required reading material. Blogs should show a connection to larger issues happening in the world. You will be graded on the evolution of your responses over the course of the class. Each entry should begin with one word that you think best describes the overall message of

the text. You will then write about how you think that one word is evocative of the message of the assigned reading.

Students must also comment on other classmates' posts two times. By the end of the semester students must have 4 posts and 2 responses. 2 posts and 1 response are due before Thanksgiving Break. Students who do not complete 2 posts and 1 response before Thanksgiving Break will have their final Blog grade reduced by 10% for each missing post or response. Students who go beyond this minimum may receive extra credit. FYI- Blogs are a public forum so other people from around the world can drop in our class conversations and will. Be prepared for this possibility.

### **Class Participation**

Students must participate in classroom discussions. To do so students must be present. Students can miss three classes without penalty. Any absence beyond these two will result in a percentage decrease from your class participation grade. Students are still responsible for any assignments missed. Tardiness is unacceptable. Excessive tardiness will result in a percentage decrease from your class participation grade.

### **Final Paper**

The final paper should be at least **12** pages in length, excluding bibliographic references. Different portions will be due over the course of the semester. All work must be turned in on the due date before class. More information will be given on a separate handout.

### **Sustainable Classroom Efforts**

As you will come to see in this course, medicine and health involves more than the body. The outer environment plays an essential role in how healthy we are and as you will see can disproportionately impact marginalized groups. We will attempt to tread a little lighter on the planet, at least in the context of this classroom. Papers, assignments, and grades will be submitted electronically and you are encouraged to use both sides of the page if you prefer for print assignments and handouts. Recycling backs of paper is encouraged, as well as students' suggestions of other sustainable practices that can be employed in the class.

### **Grades**

A = 100 – 93	B = 86 – 83	C = 76 – 73	F = 64 – Below
A- = 92 – 90	B- = 82 – 80	C- = 72 – 70	
B+ = 89 – 87	C+ = 79 – 77	D = 69 – 64	

**To earn an A students must participate in class and be present for class. All assignments must be complete, polished, and turned in on time. Work should be of excellent quality and demonstrate an understanding of class concepts and themes.**

### **Academic Integrity**

Students should be familiar with Northeastern’s academic integrity policy and Honor Code. Before submitting an article for the magazine, students must review the Academic Integrity Policy checklist. For more from the student handbook:

Academic dishonesty includes cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, participation in academically dishonest activities, and facilitating academic dishonesty. All members of the Northeastern University community—students, faculty, and staff—share the responsibility to bring forward known acts of apparent academic dishonesty. Any member of the academic community who witnesses an act of academic dishonesty should report it to the appropriate faculty member or to the director of the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. The charge will be investigated and if sufficient evidence is presented, the case will be referred to the Northeastern University Student Judicial Hearing Board. Visit [www.northeastern.edu/osccr](http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr) for a full description of these policies and procedures.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students should notify the professor within the first three class periods of their need for accommodations. Such requests should be accompanied by the appropriate paperwork from the Disability Resource Center. As noted in the handbook:

Northeastern University and the Disability Resource Center (DRC) are committed to providing disability services that enable students who qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) to participate fully in the activities of the university. To receive accommodations through the DRC, students must provide appropriate documentation that demonstrates a current substantially limiting disability. Accommodations are provided based on an evaluation of the information provided by students and their clinicians, on a case-by-case basis. Students should provide documentation to the DRC at their earliest convenience to allow for sufficient time for review. After the documentation has been reviewed, a disability specialist will contact the student regarding appropriate next steps. For additional information on the DRC, visit their website at [www.northeastern.edu/drc](http://www.northeastern.edu/drc) or contact staff at 617.373.2675.

### **Title IX**

*Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects individuals from sex or gender-based discrimination, including discrimination based on gender-identity, in educational programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance.*

Northeastern’s Title IX Policy prohibits Prohibited Offenses, which are defined as sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship or domestic violence, and stalking. The Title IX Policy applies to the entire community, including male, female, transgender students, and faculty and staff. Alleged violations can be reported non-confidentially to the Title IX Coordinator within **The Office for**

**Gender Equity and Compliance** at: [titleix@northeastern.edu](mailto:titleix@northeastern.edu) and/or through **NUPD** (Emergency [617.373.3333](tel:617.373.3333); Non-Emergency [617.373.2121](tel:617.373.2121)). Reporting Prohibited Offenses to NUPD does **NOT** commit the victim/affected party to future legal action.

**Extra Credit**

Students may attend events detailed by the professor and write a one-page reflection on the event. Each write up must include a reference to at least one class reading that connects to the event. Students may also post additional questions and materials to the class blog, making sure to make connections between what's posted and class themes. Other extra credit opportunities will be announced in class.

SAMPLE

## Reading and Discussion Schedule

### Introduction

#### Class 1

- Hey! How are you? Who are you? Why are you here?
- Syllabus

### Sex, Gender, and Science

#### Class 2

- “Body Matters: Cultural Inscriptions.” by Lynne Segal

#### Class 3

- *One in 2000* (in class)
- “The Medical Construction of Gender.” Suzanne Kessler

#### Class 4

- *Ma Vie En Rose* (in class)

#### Class 5

- Healthcare For All Website
- “While a hostile relative re-writes my life: ‘Who is, and is not, my family’” by Leslie Feinberg

### Sex, Race, and Science

#### Class 6

- “Towards a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality: The Problematic of Silence.” by Evelyn Hammonds
- “Lesbian Bodies: Tribades, Tomboys, and Tarts” by Barbara Creed
- Discuss Topic Proposals

#### Class 7

- “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” by Peggy McIntosh
- [“I Can Fix It! V.1 Racism.” By Damali Ayo](#)
- “Theories of Gender and Race.” By Londa Schiebinger

#### Class 8

- “Women as Victims of Medical Experimentation.” by Diana E. Axelsen
- *No Más Bebés* (in class)

#### Class 9

- Listen to “Remembering Tuskegee” – NPR

- CDC Tuskegee Timeline
- “Natural Laboratories: Medical Experimentation in Native Communities.” By Andrea Smith
- Topic proposal due

#### **Class 10**

- **No Class**

#### **Class 11**

- Killing the Black Body chapter 2 “The Dark Side of Birth Control” by Dorothy Roberts
- Timeline Due

### **Disability, Science, and Medicine**

#### **Class 12**

- “The Social Construction of Disability.” by Susan Wendell
- “Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the body.” By Lennard Davis

#### **Class 13**

- “Breast Cancer: Power vs. Prosthesis.” and “A Burst of Light: Living with Cancer.” by Audre Lorde

#### **Class 14**

- Ghost Stories for Darwin Chapter 3
- Outline & Bibliography due

#### **Class 15**

- “Disability Rights and Selective Abortion.” By Marsha Saxton
- “Managing Women’s Minds.” by Elaine Showalter

#### **Class 16**

- Bodies Out of Bounds: Fatness and Transgression “Editors’ Introduction” by Jana Evans Braziel and Kathleen LeBesco
- “The Sitcom Trope About Fat People That’s Way More F\*cked Up Than You Might Think” by Caleb Luna

### **Culture, Science, and Medicine**

#### **Class 17**

- Chapters 1-6 of The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down

#### **Class 18**

- Chapters 7-12 of The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down

### **Class 19**

- Chapters 13-19 of The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down

### **Class 20**

- “Poverty fuels medical crisis: Access to care is difficult for rural, urban residents.” by Laura Ungar
- Watch “Minorities and Environmental Racism” – Democracy Now
- First full draft of paper due

### **Class 21**

- “No Remedy for the Inuit: Accountability for Environmental Harms under U.S. and International Law.” by Anne E. Lucas
- Sheila Watt-Cloutier. “Inuit’s right to cold.” Video.  
<http://www.globalissues.org/video/743/sheila-watt-cloutier-inuits-challenge-in-the-arctic>

### **Class 22**

- “Flint, Environmental Racism, and Racial Capitalism” by Laura Pulido
- Papers Returned

### **Class 23**

- **No Class**

### **Class 24**

- Ghost Stories for Darwin Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9

### **Class 25**

- Paper Presentations

### **Class 26**

- Paper Presentations

### **Class 28**

- Paper Presentations

### **Class 29**

- Final Paper draft due by **4:30 pm EST**