



Winter 2019 (TTh 10:30 – 11:20 SMI 304)

BIO A 300 - Evolutionary Biology of Women

Instructor: Dr. Melanie Martin (martinm7@uw.edu), Office hours 144 Denny Hall
(By appointment <https://martinmelanie.youcanbook.me>)

TA: Delaney Glass (dglass1@uw.edu), Office hours by appointment

Course Description:

What are unique aspects of human female biology? How and why did they evolve? What social and ecological factors influence biological variation across individuals today? This course explores these questions using a biocultural and evolutionary life history approach. We examine the development and expression of female reproductive traits, and their implications for women's health, through puberty, pregnancy, birth, lactation, and menopause.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify key anatomical features and hormonal pathways that constitute and influence female biology, and how variation in these affect health and reproductive outcomes
- Examine the influence of cultural and ecological factors on facultative expressions of female biology, including the timing of reproductive development and senescence, sexual arousal and orgasm, and birth and breastfeeding practices
- Critically evaluate popular media related to women's biology for evidence of cultural bias and misapplication of evolutionary or scientific principles.
- Encourage integration of personal experiences into classroom discussions and assignments to illuminate variation in female biology and reproductive lives.
- Debate how and if these biocultural perspectives should inform decisions about your own health and reproductive lives, as citizens and potential parents, health care workers, recipients, or policy makers.

Course Readings:

- **REQUIRED:** *The wonder down under: the insider's guide to the anatomy, biology, and reality of the vagina* (2018) by Ellen Stokken Dahl and Nina Brochmann. (ISBN: 9781681440217)
- **RECOMMENDED:** *Breasts: a natural and unnatural history* (2012) by Florence Williams. (ISBN: 9780393063189)
- **Both texts are available at University Bookstore under BIO A 369 MARTIN.** They are also on 2-hr reserve at Odegaard Library.
- Additional research, popular media articles, movies and podcasts are assigned and linked to on Canvas course website (see course bibliography below)

Course Grades:

- Eight **assignments** (each 5%-15% of final grade), consisting of reflection essays, media critiques, and in-class quizzes and activities
- Two **exams** (each 25% of final grade) covering lectures and required readings from weeks 1-5 and 6-10. Both will be take-home, open-note/book, multiple-choice and short answer/essay

Makeup assignments and examinations will only be given with a documented medical excuse or upon prior arrangements with instructor.

COURSE POLICIES

Communication: you can arrange to meet with me by appointment in my office or via skype/zoom/gchat outside of posted office hours. Practice [professional communication in your correspondence](#): use your uw.edu email address, employ proper salutations (Dr. or Prof. Martin) and sign-offs, don't write in textpeak or emojis, and make sure you are not asking a question that is answered in the syllabus, on Canvas, or with a quick search. I will respond to emails within 48 hours. If you need to urgently communicate with me, please add *urgent* to the subject line.

Letters of recommendation: I am happy to write a letter of recommendation for you *if* I can confidently write a positive and personal one. Requests for recommendations should be made at least 2 weeks before the due date, and [should include all relevant information](#) (links or forms needed, your CV/resume, brief recap of the course(s) and/or other work you completed with me, your performance, brief description of the position, your qualifications, and any personal or professional details you would like me to include).

Technology in the classroom: Use of laptops, tablets, and smart phones during lectures can be overly distracting to you and other students, and ultimately detract from your learning. These devices are permitted for note-taking, but I ask that during lecture you disable notifications and Wi-Fi unless otherwise directed.

Absences and make-up work: In the event of a serious conflict or emergency, missed in-class and take-home assignments may be turned in late IF (a) you had prior communication and permission from me or (b) you provide appropriate documentation of extenuating circumstances.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Contact the [Disability Services Office](#) (206-543-6450 or dso@uw.edu) to request accommodations
- For writing, research, and language services or support, visit the [Anthropology Writing and Research Center](#), the [CLUE Writing Center](#), the [Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity Instructional Center](#), or the [Odegaard Writing and Research Center](#)
- [Anne Davis](#) is the UW Anthropology Librarian (adavey@uw.edu or 206-616-1969)
- Contact the [Counseling Center](#) (401 Schmitz Hall, 206-543-1240) for confidential counseling for stress, anxiety, depression and relationship problems. The Counseling Center also offers career counseling, to help you clarify a major or identify career interests.
- Call the Mental Health Clinic at Hall Health (206-583-1551) for same day and next day support and other psychiatric services.
- UW resources for [Emergency food or aid](#)

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Required and optional academic texts)

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