

APPLICATION | MATERNAL HEALTH IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

GBL HLTH 310 | Fall Quarter 2024 | Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30-1:50

Instructor | Sarah B. Rodriguez, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Instruction, Global Health Studies
847-467-2447 | srodriguez@northwestern.edu

Applications are due April 1, 2024. Applicants who are accepted will be notified by May 1, 2024. Only declared Global Health Studies Majors or Minors may apply.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Maternal health, in particular, maternal mortality, is a significant concern in global health, and in this class we will consider the historical roots of two areas of focus on improving maternal health and reducing maternal mortality: women having access to skilled birth attendants and birth control options. We will look at this broad international concern by focusing on the work of one organization in the 1960s-1970s, the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), by examining their papers, held at the Wellcome Library and Archives in London. We will visit the library the week before classes start and this research will form the basis of the seminar course during the quarter. This class will culminate in a major paper (20-25 pages) using the primary sources from the ICM research done in London.

Research In London

The anticipated travel dates to London are Saturday, September 14 – Saturday, September 21, 2024. Students will travel from Chicago to London.

When in London we will be looking at the broad international concern of maternal health through a focus on two groups who joined with the ICM to work on the concern during the 1960s-1970s: the International Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecology (FIGO) and the United States Agency for Development (USAID). Specifically, students will examine one of two (often overlapping) topics: 1) the Joint Study Committee (JSG), formed between ICM and FIGO in the early 1960s to collaborate on initiatives to address high maternal mortality rates in LMICs, especially the standardization of midwifery training; or 2) the grant provided by USAID from 1971 to 1980 to ICM and FIGO to integrate family planning into midwifery training.

Though students will pick one of the two topics to focus upon in their archival research, since they largely concern the same organizations – ICM, FIGO, and USAID – and the same topics – maternal health and mortality, birth control, and skilled birth attendants – there is a good deal of overlap, so following research in London we will hold seminar classes to discuss the two topics, as well as to discuss historical questions raised by the primary sources viewed at the Wellcome, other primary published sources from the 1960-1970s, and secondary sources (sources written/produced that interpret a certain time/event) relating to the larger topics of maternal health, maternal mortality, safe motherhood, access to skilled birth attendants, and access to birth control.

Why go to London to do this research when so much is available online? First, not everything – including the ICM materials – are available online. Second, while having materials online is a powerful tool rendering greater accessibility to many, examining digitized materials is not equivalent to examining physical materials in person. As Andrew Fisher, a historian at William & Mary College, said recently: “There is great value in being able to sit and browse through boxes and folders by hand. Many of the discoveries a historian makes in the archives are serendipitous, as pieces of evidence crop up unexpectedly in folders where you would not necessarily have looked for them.”¹ Archives can be considered “an educational laboratory,” per the Society of American Archivists, “an experimental space where hands-on experience in analyzing, asking questions of, and telling stories with primary source documents are possible.”² Serendipity is the ally of the historian, and it is the ability to look through materials that often results in our changing our historical question or thinking about our historical question in a new light.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Acquire skills of historical analysis by engaging with and evaluating primary sources, alongside secondary texts, that present the perspectives and actions of individuals and groups who sought to improve maternal health and spread use of birth control; use primary sources presenting a variety of perspectives, alongside secondary texts, to compare sources and to contextualize the primary sources as good historical practice.
2. Develop credible and effective historical questions, narratives, analyses, and arguments (in both oral and written forms) about maternal health in the past that show understanding of the contexts of different historical eras and cultures and perspectives; understand causation as complex, multi-factorial, and contingent.
3. Understand and emulate good historical practice in writing effectively and persuasively about their research, including coming up with an original historical question/argument and using their primary sources from the Wellcome Library and Archives collection to answer their question/to support their argument, contextualized with relevant secondary sources.
4. Connect contemporary issues and concerns regarding maternal health with their historical contexts and apply historical knowledge and historical thinking to contemporary issues in maternal health narrowly and global health more broadly.

Course Format & Length

This is a seminar course, with heavy emphasis on discussion during our meeting times, and on writing. Following our research in London, this seminar will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30-1:50 pm during the fall quarter.

¹ Fisher quoted in Sarah Jones Weicksel, “Records Retention,” *Perspectives on History* (April 2021), 10-12, quotation on 11.

² Rockenbach, “Archives, Undergraduates, and Inquiry-Based Learning: Case Studies from Yale University Library,” *The American Archivist* 74 (Spring/Summer 2011), 297-311, quotation on 301.

Archival Collections at the Wellcome Library in London

Each student will pick *one* of the below areas to examine while at the Wellcome Library; the research done here will be the basis for the final paper for the class. Here is the [ICM Finding aid](#) for you to use regarding these two collections.

Do note these topics are intertwined, and so a cross-pollination of ideas and questions will arise during the research time as well as when we meet to discuss the topics back in Evanston.

- 1) ICM/FIGO Joint Study Group** | In the early 1960s, the ICM and FIGO created the Joint Study Group (JSG) to have the two organizations work collaboratively on initiatives to lower high maternal mortality rates and improve maternal care in LMICs. In 1966, the JSG published *Maternity Care in the World*, and by the end of the decade launched an effort to standardize midwifery training. The aim of the JSG was to “continue the improvement of maternal and childcare, and the quality of maternal and child life through the inclusion of Family Planning among services provided by midwives of all categories in their expanding role.”

The materials to be examined in this collection include: meetings minutes of the JSG; reports and surveys regarding midwifery training and practice, including reports on family planning from around the world; correspondence; agendas, planning meetings, and a full report of the 1975 meeting, “Training and Practice of Midwifery and Maternity Nurses,” held in London; in-country national statistics and reports on traditional birth attendants; and the correspondence, papers, and reports relating to the FIGO workshop on “Innovative Approaches to Maternal and Perinatal Care as Part of Primary Health Care,” held in Tokyo in 1979.

- ICM/FIGO Joint Study Group: SA/ICM/M
 - JSG Sub-committee and Steering/Editorial Committee meetings: SA/ICM/M/1
 - Correspondence: SA/ICM/M/2
 - JSG Projects: SA/ICM/M/3
 - History of the JSG: SA/ICM/M/4
 - Workshop Reports: SA/ICM/M/5
 - *Maternity Care in the World* (1966) | Closed Storage, Shelfmark K44818
 - *Maternity Care in the World* (1976) | Closed Storage, Shelfmark SA/ICM/M/3/4/2: Box 63
- 2) ICM/USAID Grant to Expand the Role of the Midwife** | As part of their work in expanding the role of the midwife, following a series of meetings, ICM and FIGO decided to incorporate family planning into midwifery training in LMICs in 1971. In 1972, USAID awarded ICM a grant to promote family planning within midwifery training in LMICs. Under the grant’s terms, the ICM needed to conduct at least five regional meetings to analyze needs and resources to expand midwifery training to include family planning. The ICM also needed to develop recommendations and an

action plan based on these meetings on how best to incorporate family planning into midwifery training and practice. The grant continued until 1980, when it was not renewed.

Materials in this collection to be examined include: meeting minutes; correspondence; grant award information and background; ICM/USAID project updates and activities; guidelines for the regional meetings; newsletters for the regional directors; final report of the ICM/USAID project; termination of the grant letters; auditors' reports and ICM response to the auditors' reports.

- ICM/USAID: SA/ICM/L
 - ICM/USAID Project: SA/ICM/L/1
 - USAID Grant: SA/ICM/L/2
 - Correspondence: SA/ICM/L/3
 - ICM/USAID Project Reports: SA/ICM/L/4
 - Anglophone Africa Conference: SA/ICM/L/5

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

READ the pre-application materials:

- Hall, "[The International Confederation of Midwives](#)," Blog post, Wellcome Library, October 11, 2011
- Harvard College Writing Center, "[A Brief Guide to Writing a History Paper](#)"
- Archival Collections at the Wellcome Library (see descriptions and link to finding aid above on pages 3-4)
- [Archives at Wellcome Collection](#)

WRITE your application essay:

- Write an essay of no more than 2 pages, single spaced, 12-point font. The essay should do two things: 1) outline what historical question(s) you have regarding the collection you are interested in examining (there are two collections, you will work on one, and you should clearly indicate which one); and 2) describe why this course interests you and how you see it influencing your academic plans at Northwestern and/or your educational and/or career plans beyond your time at Northwestern.

FILL OUT the online application, which will require you to provide:

- Your country of citizenship and passport status.
- Your commitment to travel September 14-21, 2024 to London and register for a fall quarter course. Students who fail to complete either aspect will be responsible for reimbursing Global Health Studies for all costs related to the travel and course.
- Your resume or CV (saved with filename lastname_firstname_resume).

- Your unofficial transcript, including your grades from Fall Quarter 2023 (saved with filename lastname_firstname_transcript.pdf). This can be found on CAESAR>My Academics>View Unofficial Transcript>Go>Print>Save as PDF.

SUBMIT your application by **April 1, 2024** at 11:59pm CST. You will be notified by **May 1, 2024**.

Rubric for Weighing Applications:

- Does the application have a clear historical question (or questions) regarding the ICM materials and maternal health?
- Does the application show a clear understanding of the primary sources the student proposes to examine at the Wellcome Archives?
- Does the application describe why the course is of interest to the student?
- Does the application outline how this research and this class contributes to their academic plans at Northwestern and/or their academic and/or career plans beyond their time at Northwestern?
- Is the application well-constructed, and does it logically flow from start to finish?
- Is the application grammatically correct? Were there any spelling errors? Is it within the page limit?