Frontiers in Women's Health (WHx)

Instructor: Canan Dagdeviren, Associate Professor of Media Arts and Sciences; LG Career Development Professor of Media Arts and Sciences

Semester: Spring 2026

Schedule: Wednesdays 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (TBD), E15-466

Format: Guest lectures, reading groups, final project

Credits: 12 units

Email: canand@media.mit.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This seminar-style course explores key issues and innovations in women's health through a biweekly speaker series followed by alternating biweekly recap classes. Each session features a guest working at the intersection of science, medicine, and technology, offering students a firsthand look at the questions, gaps, and opportunities shaping the future of women's health.

After each talk, students will write a short summary and reflection. In between sessions, students will meet in small reading groups to discuss assigned articles and reflect on emerging themes. These discussions will help students prepare thoughtful questions for guest speakers and connect ideas across different sessions. At the end of the semester, students will develop a final paper or creative project on a women's health topic of their choice, inspired by the course conversations.

The course is open to students from all backgrounds who are curious about how health systems, research practices, and technology design can better serve women and people assigned female at birth. Topics will range from reproductive health and hormone research to clinical trial design, data equity, and innovation in care.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- To expose students to a wide range of historical and current issues in women's health
- To critically analyze the role of sex and gender in medicine and innovation

- To develop communication and synthesis skills through written reflections, group discussion, and a final paper
- To foster discussion and collaboration across disciplines for inclusive health design
- To elevate the work of leaders and disruptors in the women's health space

Structure & Evaluation

I. **Biweekly Seminars (40%):** Students are expected to attend each speaker session, engage in Q&A, and submit a short (1-page) reflection summarizing key points and personal takeaways after each talk.

II. **Biweekly Group Participation (20%):** Between seminars, students will meet in small groups to discuss assigned readings and prepare questions for upcoming speakers. Participation will be evaluated based on contribution and consistency.

III. **Final Project (40%):** Students will choose a women's health issue or theme explored in the course and develop a final piece. This can be either a short paper, a creative media project, or an early-stage proposal (individual or group). Projects will be presented in the final week of class.

Readings & Materials

Supplementary readings and media will be provided based on the speaker's topics, including articles, scientific literature, podcasts, and/or reports. No required textbook.

Syllabus

Date	Session	Deliverables
February 4	Course Kickoff: What is Women's Health?	No deliverable
February 11	Reading Group #1	Complete assigned readings before meeting.
February 18	Guest Speaker 1: Reproductive Health & Policy	Reflection #1 due Monday, February 23
February 25	Reading Group #2	Complete assigned readings before meeting.
March 4	Guest Speaker 2: Hormones, Immunity, and Sex Differences	Reflection #2 due on Monday, March 9
March 11	Reading Group #3	Complete assigned readings before meeting.
March 18	Guest Speaker 3: Clinical Trial Equity & Bias	Reflection #3 due on Monday, March 23
March 25	MIT Spring Break	N/A
April 1	Guest Speaker 4: Women's Health Startups & FemTech	Reflection #4 due on Monday, April 6
April 8	Reading Group #5	Complete assigned readings before meeting.
April 15	Guest Speaker 5: Data Gaps in Medicine	Final project proposal due before class. Reflection #5 due on Monday, April 20
April 22	Reading Group #6 and Final Project Work Week	Complete assigned readings before meeting.
April 29	Guest Speaker 6: Sex Bias in AI & Precision Medicine	Reflection #6 due on Monday, May 4
May 6	Final Presentations Wrap-Up (Last Day of Classes)	Final project due before class.

Add Date: Friday, March 6, 2026

Drop Date: Tuesday, April 21, 2026