

COURSE CODE: *SOCI 448*

**COURSE TITLE: CULTURE AND REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH**

**SESSION#: THREE – TITLE: THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH**

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UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

College of Education

School of Continuing and Distance Education

2017/2018 – 2018/2019 ACADEMIC YEAR

Course Information

Provide the following information:

Course Code:

SOCI 448

Course Title:

CULTURE AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Course Credit

3 Credits

**Session Number &
Session Title:**

**Session Three: The Cultural Context of
Reproductive Health**

Semester/Year:

Second Semester, 2018/2019

Course Information (contd.)

Provide the following information:

Lecture Period(s)

Insert Lecture Period(s): *(Online how many online interactions per week)*

Prerequisites

Insert Course Prerequisites: *(if applicable)*

Teaching Assistant

Insert Teaching Assistant's Information: *(where applicable, provide name and contact information)*



Course Instructor's Contact

Provide the following information:

**Course Instructor(s)
Name**

Dr Fidelia Ohemeng

Office Location

Insert Office Number:

Office Hours

Insert Office Hours: (Tuesday: 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm)

Phone

Phone Number:

E-mail

Your Email: fohemeng@ug.edu.gh

Session Overview

Culture is a way of life; its influence can be far reaching. In this section, the cultural influences on reproductive health would be discussed. The session begins with an explanation of culture, and continue with some specific aspect of Ghanaian culture, such as religious beliefs and practices, marriage practices and systems, attitudes towards children, and the status of women in society. The session ends with how these cultural practices influence reproductive health outcomes.

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Topic One—Kinship and marriage systems
- Topic Two—Attitudes towards children
- Topic Three—Harmful cultural practices
- Topic Four—Religious beliefs and practices
- Topic Five—The status of women

Session Learning Goals

- The goal of this session is to explain how culture influence reproductive health outcomes
- Describe different aspects of Ghanaian/African culture
- Explain how these cultural beliefs and practices influence reproductive health in general

Session Learning Objectives

- At the end of this session students should be able to:
 - Objective One: explain culture and its various components
 - Objective Two: identify various aspects of Ghanaian and African culture
 - Objective Three: explain how culture influence reproductive health
 - Suggest measures to deal with the various cultural beliefs and practices

Session Learning Outcomes

- Explain in broad terms how culture influence reproductive health
- Identify specific cultural issues and how they affect reproductive health
- Suggest ways culture can be used to improve reproductive health outcomes



Session Activities and Assignments

This week, complete the following tasks:

- **Log onto the UG Sakai LMS course site:**
 - <http://sakai.ug.edu.gh/XXXXXXXXXX>
- **Read** Horne, C., Doodoo, F. & Doodoo, N. A. 2013. The Shadow of Indebtedness: Bridewealth and Norms Constraining Female Reproductive Autonomy. *American Sociological Review* (78): 503-520.
 - Ngom, P et al. 2003. Gate-keeping and Women's Health Seeking Behaviour in Navrongo, Northern Ghana. *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 7(1): 17-26.
- **Watch** the Videos for Session 3 – Cultural Context of Reproductive Health
- **Review** Lecture Slides: Session 3– Cultural Context of Reproductive Health
- **Visit the Chat Room** and **discuss** the **Forum question** for Session 3
- **Complete** the **Individual Assignment** for Session 3

Creating Blended Assignment Instructions

Recommended eight (8) elements to include in written assignment instructions distributed to students online:

1. **Assignment title** (exactly the same as title used in syllabus and other course documents)
2. **Learning objective(s)** to which the assignment relates
3. **Assignment due date** (if receiving electronic submissions, include time/time zone also)
4. **Submission details** (electronic submissions only? required file format? via email? via assignment upload?)
5. **Scoring criteria/rubric**
6. **Level of group participation** (individual assignments, group or team projects, and entire class projects).
7. **Mechanical details** (number of words/pages, preferred style guide for citations, number/type of citations, etc.)
8. **Any supporting resources** necessary for assignment completion

Reading List

- **Required Text**

- Horne, C., Dodoo, F. & Dodoo, N. A. 2013. The Shadow of Indebtedness: Bridewealth and Norms Constraining Female Reproductive Autonomy. *American Sociological Review* (78): 503-520.
- Ngom, P et al. 2003. Gate-keeping and Women's Health Seeking Behaviour in Navrongo, Northern Ghana. *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 7(1): 17-26.

Topic One

DEFINITION OF CULTURE



Definitions of Culture

Here is an oft-used definition of culture:

- "Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by (a person) as a member of society" (Tylor 1958 [1871]: 1).



Elements of culture

- Note the links between the material aspects of culture (art, technology, fashion, food habits, etc)
- and the non-material (mores, beliefs, values, norms and sanctions, folkways, language, etc)



Cultural variations

- Culture is dynamic/socially constructed: Different practices in different parts. Among the Wodaabe of the Sahel the men are the ones who apply make-up



Ghanaian social and cultural contexts

- Kinship
- Marriage systems
- Cultural attitudes towards children
- Religious beliefs and practices
- The position of women in Ghana
- Harmful cultural practices towards women in Ghana



Sample Question

- Identify and explain two elements of culture.



Topic Two

KINSHIP SYSTEMS



Kinship

- Kinship is defined as all those people one is related to by blood, marriage and adoption
- Lineage systems: tracing ancestry to a common matriarch or patriarch
- Lineage arrangements determines an individual's right to status, residence, inheritance and succession



Matrilineal system

- Children belong to the female side of the family
- A man and his sisters' children are more closely related than his own biological children
- Inheritance and succession are through the female line



Matrilineal societies

- Matrilineal women have more autonomy compared to women in patrilineal societies
- This is significant because they have more resources at their disposal and can therefore pay for healthcare services
- Akans are matrilineal; form about 47.5% of Ghana's population and are situated in southern Ghana. Asante, Kwahu, Akyem, Fante, Akwapim, Nzema, Sewhi, etc



Patrilineal system

- Children are related to their father's family. Thus, a man is more related to his biological children
- Inheritance and succession are through the male line
- Examples are Ewe, Ga, Mole-Dagbon, Tallensi



Topic Three

MARRIAGE SYSTEMS



Marriage systems

- Marriage in Ghana is between two families and not individuals
- Bridewealth is paid by the man's family to the woman's family
- The marriage payments signifies the transference of power from the woman's family to the man's family
- Thus, the woman losses her decision-making power, sexuality, etc (refer to readings)



Types of marriages

- **Monogamous:** refers to marriage of one man to one woman
- **Polygynous:** refers to marriage of one man to more than one woman



GDHS (2008) on polygyny

- 18% of currently married women are in polygynous relationships
- Regional variations: 37% in Northern, 38% in Upper West, 31% in Volta, 32% in Upper East, 6% in Volta.
- Rural areas more likely to be in polygynous relationships than urban counterparts, while women in lower wealth quantile more likely to be in polygynous relationships than women in upper wealth quantile
- Decline from 28% in 1993; 23% in 1998; 18% in 2008



Other types of marriages

- **Sororal polygyny:** co-wives are sisters
- **Sororate:** where upon the death of a woman the husband is required or has the right to marry the sister of the deceased
- **Levirate:** where a widow is required to marry the brother of the deceased
- (discuss the implications of the types of marriages on reproductive health)



Sample Question

- Explain how bridewealth influence reproductive health outcomes



Topic Three

CULTURAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILDREN



Cultural attitudes towards children

- Ghana is a pronatalist society
- Women are expected to have many children as they can
- Ghanaian women's status is depended on the number of children she has
- An infertile woman is viewed with “malicious pity”



Sex preference

- Male children are preferred over female children
- Male children are believed to continue family traditions
- Thus, women are forced to have male children



Topic Three

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES



Religious beliefs and practices

- Health in Ghana is influenced by religious beliefs and practices
- There are two ways in which diseases are interpreted in Ghana.
 - The first is that some diseases are thought to be caused by germs.
 - The second is that some diseases are believed to be caused as a result of the violation of societal norms and values, as punishment from God/gods/ancestors, as a result of witchcraft, sorcery/magic
- Dominant religions: Christianity, Islam and traditional religion



Topic Three

THE STATUS OF WOMEN



The position of women in Ghana

- Ghana is a patriarchal society. Patriarchy is a society dominated by men. In such societies women are dominated by men.
- Thus men make most of the decisions in the home. Hence, most Ghanaian women lack decision-making power. For instance, decisions regarding number of children the couple want to have, which hospital to visit are made by men.
- Women also lack access to resources such as land, capital, education. This affect their ability to pay for their hospital bills.



Topic Three

HARMFUL CULTURAL PRACTICES



Harmful Cultural Practices

- There are some cultural practices which are harmful to women and affect their reproductive rights. These include female genital mutilation (FGM would be discussed into detail in another session), widowhood rites, and trokosi.
- **Female Genital Mutilation:** removal of part or all of the external genitalia of women or girls
- Prevalence in Ghana is 9-15%
- Performed for religious purposes, as a right of passage





Dipo and Trokosi

- **Trokosi:** is a cultural practice where virgin girls are given to a deity to atone for the violations of relatives. These girls become the property of the shrines and may live there for the rest of their lives.
- They sometimes become the sex slaves of the priests who may have sex with them
- This practice is common in parts of Volta region



Sample Question

- Suggest ways in which culture can be used to bring about change

