

COURSE CODE: *SOCI 448*

**COURSE TITLE: CULTURE AND REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH**

SESSION#: SEVEN – TITLE: ABORTION

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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 Seven: Abortion

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

Abortion often engenders a lot of emotions, the world over. This is because it is influenced by religious beliefs, cultural practices and human rights issues. This session reviews the abortion law in Ghana, the socio-cultural contexts of abortion in Ghana and elsewhere and ends with the debate on whether abortion should be legalized or not.

Session Outline

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

- Topic One—Defining Abortion
- Topic Two—Abortion law in Ghana and elsewhere
- Topic Three—Unsafe Abortion
- Topic Four—Socio-cultural context of Abortion

Session Learning Goals

- Understand why people terminate pregnancy
- Describe the abortion laws of countries including Ghana
- Explain unsafe abortion and identify the factors that constitute unsafe abortion
- Explain the socio-cultural contexts underlying abortion

Session Learning Objectives

- At the end of this session students should be able to:
 - Objective One: identify the various types of abortion
 - Objective Two: assess the abortion law in Ghana and elsewhere
 - Objective Three: explain the reasons why people terminate pregnancy
 - Objective Four: explain what constitute unsafe abortion
 - Objective Five: explain the cultural factors that underly abortion

Session Learning Outcomes

- Explain the reason why abortion is a highly debatable reproductive health issue
- Identify the reasons people terminate pregnancy
- Describe the determinants of abortion
- Join in the debate whether abortion should be legalized or not



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:** Bleek, W. 1990. Did the Akan resort to Abortion in Pre-colonial Ghana? Some Conjectures. *Africa* 60 (1): 121-131.
- Morhee, R. A. S., Morhee, E.S.K. 2006. Overview of the Law and Availability of Abortion Services in Ghana. *Ghana Medical Journal*, 40 (3): 80-86.
- Sedgh, G. 2010. Abortion in Ghana. *In Brief*, New York: Guttmacher Institute, No. 2.
- **Watch** the Videos for Session 7– Issues and Challenges of Adolescents Reproductive health
- **Review** Lecture Slides: Session 7 – Issues and Challenges of Adolescents Reproductive Health
- **Visit the Chat Room** and **discuss** the **Forum question** for Session 7
- **Complete** the **Individual Assignment** for Session 7

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

- Bleek, W. 1990. Did the Akan resort to Abortion in Pre-colonial Ghana? Some Conjectures. *Africa* 60 (1): 121-131.
- Morhee, R. A. S., Morhee, E.S.K. 2006. Overview of the Law and Availability of Abortion Services in Ghana. *Ghana Medical Journal*, 40 (3): 80-86.
- Sedgh, G. 2010. Abortion in Ghana. *In Brief*, New York: Guttmacher Institute, No. 2.

Topic One

DEFINITION OF ABORTION



Definitions of Abortion

- Abortion is the termination of pregnancy or expulsion of a foetus from the womb before viability (it is sufficiently developed to survive).
- A foetus is considered to be viable from 28 weeks of gestation.
- However, there are variations between some countries because viability of a foetus is being revised as new knowledge emerges from research findings. The original cut-off point for foetus viability was 28 weeks, but it keeps going down. These variations are a result of social, moral, religious, and legal pressures and advances in technology.



Types of Abortion I

- **Spontaneous abortion:** sometimes known as miscarriages, this occurs without deliberate effort to terminate the pregnancy. It is a non-intentional process occurring due to various factors beyond the control of the woman, such as illnesses, accidents, and emotional stress.
- **Induced abortion:** occurs through a deliberate effort to terminate the pregnancy by the woman and/or by another person. Induced abortion should only be performed according to the provisions of the law and recommended medical procedures. However, sometimes induced abortion is performed outside the law and under conditions that are not medically safe. Most abortions in developing countries are believed to be induced and performed by unqualified people. In communities where effective contraceptives are not easily available or not affordable, it is believed that most women will resort to induced abortion at some point.



Types of Abortion II

- Incomplete abortion: this occurs if some of the products of pregnancy are retained in the uterus, for example the placenta. Incomplete abortion can result from spontaneous or induced abortion.
- Complete abortion: means that all the products of pregnancy have been expelled from the uterus.
- Threatened abortion: this refers to bleeding during pregnancy. The bleeding will often be accompanied by abdominal pains, though sometimes there is no pain at all. In some women, bleeding stops and the foetus continues to grow normally. However, in some women, pain, bleeding may continue and result in complete or incomplete abortion.
- Missed abortion: refers to retention of a dead foetus in the uterus.

Key facts about abortion

- Between 2010–2014:
 - On average, 56 million induced (safe and unsafe) abortions occurred worldwide each year.
 - There were 35 induced abortions per 1000 women aged between 15–44 years.
 - 25% of all pregnancies ended in an induced abortion.
 - The rate of abortions was higher in developing regions than in developed regions.



Key facts II

- Around 25 million unsafe abortions were estimated to have taken place worldwide each year, almost all in developing countries (1).
 - Among these, 8 million were carried out in the least- safe or dangerous conditions.
 - Over half of all estimated unsafe abortions globally were in Asia.
 - 3 out of 4 abortions that occurred in Africa and Latin America were unsafe.
 - The risk of dying from an unsafe abortion was the highest in Africa.



Key fact III

- Each year between 4.7% – 13.2% of maternal deaths can be attributed to unsafe abortion .
- Around 7 million women are admitted to hospitals every year in developing countries, as a result of unsafe abortion.
- The annual cost of treating major complications from unsafe abortion is estimated at US\$ 553 million.



Abortion trends in Ghana

- The exact number of abortions in Ghana is not known
- A recent newspaper report indicated that in 2012 alone, 290 unsafe abortions were recorded at the Saint Theresa's Catholic Hospital at Nkoranza in the Brong Ahafo Region.



Topic Two

ABORTION LAWS



Legal context of abortions

- The conditions under which abortion is legally permitted differ from country to country
- In 98% of countries abortion is allowed to save a woman's life
- only in 28% of countries is abortion available on request.
- Induced abortion is generally permitted to save the woman's life in all but a few countries



Abortion in Ghana

- Permitted only under three conditions
 - The life of the mother is at risk or threaten the physical or mental health of the mother
 - If the pregnancy is the result of rape, incest, or “defilement of a female idiot”
 - Or if there is substantial risk to the fetus, in terms of physical abnormality or disease.



Topic Three

UNSAFE ABORTIONS



Unsafe abortions

- WHO defines unsafe abortion as a procedure for terminating an unintended pregnancy carried out either by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment that does not conform to minimal medical standards, or both



Characteristics of unsafe abortions

- no pre-abortion counseling and advice;
- abortion is induced by an unskilled provider, frequently in unhygienic conditions
- practitioner outside official/adequate health facilities;
- abortion is provoked by insertion of an object into the uterus by the woman herself or by a
- traditional practitioner, or by a violent abdominal massage;



Unsafe abortions II

- a medical abortion is prescribed incorrectly or medication is issued by a pharmacist with no or inadequate instructions and no follow-up;
- abortion is self-induced by ingestion of traditional medication or hazardous substances.



Unsafe abortions III

- Further hazardous features of unsafe abortion are:
 - the lack of immediate intervention if severe bleeding or other emergency develops during the procedure;
 - failure to provide post-abortion check-up and care, including no contraceptive counseling to prevent repeat
 - the reluctance of a woman to seek timely medical care in case of complications because of legal restrictions and social and cultural beliefs linked to induced abortion.



Barriers to safe abortion

- Restrictive laws
- Low availability of hospital services
- Cost of care
- Social, cultural and religious barriers



Sample Question

- Identify and explain five characteristics of unsafe abortion.



Topic Three

SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO ABORTIONS



Socio-Cultural factors that lead to abortion I

- The major reason for inducing abortion is an unwanted pregnancy. Some of the reasons why the pregnancy may not be wanted are:
 - The cultural/religious expectation that women are virgins before marriage
 - The postponement of marriages
 - The need for girls to complete formal education
 - The economic burden of large families
 - Pregnancy occurs outside of marriage
 - A girl may be too young to marry



Socio-Cultural factors that lead to abortion II

- A spouse/sexual partner does not accept responsibility of pregnancy
- Pregnancy occurs too soon after another child
- Pregnancy occurs from socially unacceptable sexual relationship such as rape, incest, or extra-marital affairs
- Pregnancy occurs when the couple or woman already has the desired number of children
- Pregnancy occurs after contraceptive has failed

Sample Questions

- Suggest three ways in which maternal health can be improved in Ghana.

