**Final Course Paper**All Essays Must Meet Requirements: **Level 2-** a minimum of 2 ½ pages and a max of 3 ½ pages.
**Level 3-** a minimum of 2 pages and a max of 3 pages. **Level 4-** a minimum of 1 ½ pages and a max of 2/2 pages.

After completing the essay, turn in a printed copy on the last day of class accompanied by the rubric and all the above unit materials you completed. You should also upload a copy of your reflective paper on turnitin.com.
 **Possible Essay Topics**

**1. Cultural Practices and Women’s Health (Group Focus-Maternal Health)**

**Background**: Female genital mutilation (also known as female circumcision or genital cutting) directly affects women and girls’ reproductive and maternal health, and it can have grave consequences during childbirth. Female genital mutilation (FMG) involves the removal of part or all of the external genitalia, and in its most severe form, the procedure entails removal of all genitalia and adding stitches to leave a small opening for urination, intercourse, and menstruation. It is primarily practiced in African countries on the pretext of cultural and religious tradition or hygiene, and an estimated 135 million girls and women living today have undergone FGM with consequences ranging from infection (including HIV), to sterility. Others have died. Another two million girls are at risk each year. In the United States, where the practice is illegal, thousands of women and girls survive FGM each year. FGM practitioners, or “cutters,” are predominantly women. As Edna describes in the film, it is often the adult women in the family and community (mothers, grandmothers, community matriarchs) who instigate and facilitate the cutting of girls. Young women often look to it as a rite of passage. Because FGM is a highly controversial topic bound up in tradition, religious beliefs, and cultural identity, there has been a weak response from the international community.

**Prompt: In the film, Sheryl WuDunn says: “When there is a practice that is so offensive, it is OK to say ‘this is wrong’.” Agree or disagree with Sheryl WuDunn’s statement by exploring both global and American cultural practices that affect women’s health.**

Your reflection should discuss the cultural practice of FMG on a global level AND any American cultural practice (s) that affects women’s health in the U.S. Consider these questions: How does American culture affect women’s physical, emotional, maternal, and mental health? What kinds of health issues would you argue are a result of or are exacerbated by our culture?

**Research Requirement:** 2 research facts for global cultural practices and 2 research facts for American cultural practices. (you may use resources provided in class).

**2. Poverty and Gender (Group Focus-Women’s Economic Empowerment)**

**Background :** Women play a vital role in the economic prosperity of their families, communities, and countries, yet in every part of the world, women work longer hours than men, are paid less for their work, are at a higher risk of unemployment, and are far more likely to live in poverty. Fast Facts: • Approximately 70 percent of the world’s poor are women and girls. • Women earn less than 10 percent of the world’s wages, but do more than two-thirds of the world’s work. • In the United States, a woman earns approximately $0.76 for every $1.00 that a man earns in a similar job. • In one out of three households around the world, women are the sole breadwinners. • Economically empowered women tend to have fewer children. • Each additional year in school raises a woman’s earnings by about 15 percent. • Women reinvest 90 percent of their income into their families while men invest only 30 to 40 percent. In Brazil, when income is in the hands of the mother, the survival of a child increases by about 20 percent. • Women in sub-Saharan Africa own less than 2 percent of the land, but produce more than 90 percent of the food. • Studies show that when women have secure rights to their land, their family’s nutrition and health improve, they are less likely to be victims of domestic violence, and their children are more likely to receive an education and stay in school longer. • In developing countries, women and girls are most often responsible for household and community water management and travel great distances in search of water, which limits their time for other activities, including doing income-generating work. • South African women collectively walk the equivalent of a trip to the moon (384,400 kilometers or 238,855 miles) and back 16 times a day to supply their households with water.

**Prompt: According to the film and the book, what traditional expectations or stereotypes of men and women, both global and American, help reinforce the economic inequality between men and women?**

Your reflection should discuss the cultural expectations on a global level AND any American traditions/stereotypes/cultural practices that affects women’s economic power in the United States. Consider these questions: How well does American culture encourage women’s physical, emotional, maternal, mental and financial empowerment? How are empowered women in the Unites States regarded? Are powerful women treated in the same way as powerful men? What might be the financial effects of American culture on boys and girls?

**Research Requirement:** 2 research facts that focus on global expectations and 2 research facts for American expectations. (you may use resources provided in class).

3. **The Ripple Effect of Education (Group Focus-Education for All)**

**Background:** Of the approximately 75 million children who are currently not in school, the majority are girls. Worldwide, for every 100 boys out of school, there are approximately 122 girls who are unable to attend school. In developing countries and countries with strict cultural and religious codes regarding gender roles, this gap is much wider. • Of the 781 million illiterate adults in the developing world, two thirds are women. • U.S. women comprise 48 percent of the U.S. workforce but just 24 percent of science, technology, engineering, and math workers. • An extra year of primary school boosts girls’ eventual wages by 10 to 20 percent and an extra year of secondary school increases earnings by 15 to 25 percent. • Educated women have greater control over their financial resources and are more likely to invest in their family’s health, education, and nutrition. • A child born to a woman who can read is 50 percent more likely to survive past age five. Women with formal education are much more likely to delay marriage and have fewer and healthier babies. • Education fosters democracy and women’s political participation. A study in Bangladesh found that educated women are three times more likely to take part in political meetings. • Girls’ education ranks among the most powerful tools for reducing vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. In America the Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972, (also called Title IX) was enacted in 1972 and has been credited with raising the opportunity of girls and women in educational environments. While it is best known for paving the way for female student athletes, Title IX also ensures an equal education for pregnant and parenting students and for those seeking STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) careers, since previous to Title IX they could legally be kept out of these clubs or classes.

**Prompt: Explore the impact education has had on the women in your family. Focus on three different women from three different generations to be the focus of your discussion. Talk to or research members of your family. Try to address the following questions in your paper, offering research or anecdotal quotations from family as evidence: What role did education play in their lives? Was it different from the men in their time? What challenges did they face? Were there any barriers? How did their parents/guardians view education?**

**Your closing paragraph should connect your personal reflections on the impact of women’s education to the lack of and need for greater global education for women.**

**Research Requirement:** 2 research/anecdotal DQs from your family history and 2 references of research or connections to the film/book.

**4. Caste, Class, and Women’s Rights (Group Focus-Sex Trafficking and Prostitution)**

**Background:** Urmi Basu describes the cycle of intergenerational prostitution thus: “Women who are in prostitution have very little ability to make their daughters aspire to do something different. It’s not that transgenerational prostitution happens because they want to make it happen. It’s because they have no option, they have no escape.”In the United States,Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery where people profit from the control and exploitation of others. As defined under U.S. federal law, victims of human trafficking include children involved in the sex trade, adults age 18 or over who are coerced or deceived into commercial sex acts, and anyone forced into different forms of "labor or services," such as domestic workers held in a home, or farm-workers forced to labor against their will. The factors that each of these situations have in common are elements of force, fraud, or coercion that are used to control people. Then, that control is tied to inducing someone into commercial sex acts, or labor or services. Numerous people in the field have summed up the concept of human trafficking as "compelled service." Every year, human traffickers generate billions of dollars in profits by victimizing millions of people around the world, and here in the United States. Human trafficking is considered to be one of the fastest growing criminal industries in the world.

**Prompt: How does the caste system in India and or the social classes in other countries connect to sex trafficking and intergenerational prostitution? Examine other countries’ social hierarchy in relationship to the United States, which is among the least socially mobile of the industrialized countries. Consider these questions: Is there a caste system in the United States? What impact, if any, does our lack of social mobility have on women’s rights and their vulnerability to the sex trade? Would legalizing prostitution in the U.S. help or only hurt this problem? How does American culture reinforce a culture of sexual exploitation of women?**

**Research Requirement:** 2 research facts that focus on global systems and 2 research facts that explore America’s connection to this problem. (you may use resources provided in class).

**Note**: To cut down on class viewing time, I only showed the “Sex Trafficking in Cambodia” clip for this group. There is an addition clip on “Intergenerational Prostitution in India” that may be helpful with this essay prompt. It can be found at itvs.org/films/half-the-sky. Search for Intergenerational Prostitution in India” to see the 10 minute film clip.

**5. Men and boys, women and girls-the impact of gender-based violence. (Group Focus-Gender-Based Violence)**

**Background:** Violence prevention requires a change in the social conditions that make violence normal and acceptable. Men and boys receive messages about relationships, violence, and power every day, and they also experience different forms of oppression: racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, etc. Men also enjoy certain privileges in institutions established by sexism. Generally speaking, men have greater access to resources and opportunities and are in a position to influence large social structures and institutions. As a result, they can play an important role in preventing violence against women. Some fast facts (there are so many ☹)

* One out of every five American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime.
* *Approximately 1,270,000 women are raped each year. Another 6,646,000 are victims of other sexual crime, including sexual coercion, unwanted sexual contact, or unwanted sexual experiences.*
* 15% of sexual assault and rape victims are under age 12; 29% are age 12-17; 44% are under age 18; 80% are under age 30; ages 12-34 are the highest risk years.
* Girls ages 16-19 are 4 times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault.
* Most female victims are raped before the age of 25, and almost half of female victims are under the age of 18.
* 63.84% of women who reported being raped, physically assaulted, and/or stalked since age 18 were victimized by a current or former husband, cohabiting partner, boyfriend, or a date.
* 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys is a victim of child sexual abuse in the U.S.
* During any single year in the U,S. 16% of children aged 14-17 have been sexually victimized.
* Children aged 7-13 are most at risk for child sexual abuse.

**Prompt: Explore the root causes of violence against women and girls by examining how a culture’s gender roles or gender expectations can encourage gender-based violence. You should look at this through both a global and American lens. Consider how the negative consequences of violence against women affect the lives of boys and men as well as girls and women. How can we begin to change both the global and American culture? Do you thinks we live in a “rape culture” as so many American sociologists argue? (You should look up that term “rape culture” to understand what is meant by it).**

**Research Requirement:** 2 research facts that focus on global violence and 2 research facts that explore American violence. (you may use resources provided in class).