Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

CHERIE TORONCHUK

BA (University of British Columbia, 2012)

“Conceiving Women: Childbirth Ideologies in Popular Literature”

School of Child and Youth Care

Monday, August 17, 2015
1:00pm
Human and Social Development Building
Room A373

**Supervisory Committee:**
Dr. Sandrina de Finney, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Jennifer White, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic (Member)

**External Examiner:**
Dr. Sarawathi Vedam, Division of Midwifery, University of British Columbia

**Chair of Oral Examination:**
Dr. Jennifer Thom, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

North American research on childbearing demonstrates that many first-time mothers rely on educational books for information and advice concerning pregnancy and childbirth. Popular literature on childbearing advises women on a variety of topics including choosing a caregiver, prenatal testing, safety and risk, natural vs. medicated labour, and place of birth. Such information may shape women’s expectations, choices, and belief systems regarding the body, obstetric technology, pregnancy and birth. These varied forces and belief systems coalesce to influence the ways in which women experience birth, thereby affecting post-natal mental, socioemotional, and physical health. Currently, however, research exploring the various messages disseminated by popular literature on pregnancy and birth is limited. In this study, the author examines four popular North American childbearing advice books for discourses related to biomedical and midwifery cultures, ways of knowing, power, and choice. Discourses are considered through a feminist intersectional framework, with particular attention paid to the ways in which childbearing ideologies are shaped by interactive biological, sociocultural, economic, and political factors. The author explores how power matrices and the privileging of biomedical knowledge can shape conceptualizations of gender and sexuality, women’s bodies, maternity care, pregnancy, labour, and birth. In addition, peripheral discourses that provide possibilities for other, non-normative narratives of birth are highlighted.