

Politics of Reproduction

SOCY 390/629, ER&M 360, HLTH 370, HSHM 432, WGSS 390

Fall 2020

Professor Rene Almeling

Overview

Reproduction is a strategic site for examining the relationship between bodies and societies. In this class, we will approach reproduction as a process that is simultaneously biological and social, involving powerful social institutions such as medicine, the family, law, and the marketplace. We will examine social scientific research on a wide range of reproductive topics, including pregnancy, birth, abortion, contraception, infertility, reproductive technology, and aging. Using core sociological concepts (e.g. medicalization, kinship, commodification), we will pay particular attention to how the politics of reproduction are shaped by the intersecting inequalities of gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, and nationality.

Enrollment

Each section of this seminar will be limited to 12 students. Several spaces will be reserved for graduate students (including from professional schools), and priority will be given to seniors in the departments where the course is cross-listed. Then, in descending order, priority will next be given to other seniors, juniors, and sophomores.

Course Format

For Fall 2020, this seminar will meet remotely once per week on Zoom.

Requirements

- *Attendance and Active Participation in Class* - 20%
- *Weekly Response Memos* - 20%

In 250 words, summarize the main point of the week's reading and offer your own reflections. Memos are due in the Assignments section of Canvas by 12pm on the day of class. Late memos will receive no credit.

- *Presentation* - 15%

Identify a topic related to reproduction but not covered in the syllabus (e.g. adoption, menstruation, sex selection, etc.). Use Sociological Abstracts to find one peer-reviewed journal article on that topic. To avoid duplicate presentations, post your topic and article on Canvas/Discussions, and check other students' postings before finalizing your decision. Then read the article carefully, and prepare a four-minute presentation on the research question, methods, and main findings.

- *Projects* - 15% each

Undergraduates: Choose three projects from the list at the end of the syllabus. The first project will be due at the beginning of class in Week 9, the second in Week 11, and the third on December 18th. Late projects will be penalized one letter grade per day.

Graduate students: Choose one project from the list at the end of the syllabus. The project will be due at the beginning of class in Week 11.

- *Research Paper – required for graduate students only - 30%*

Discuss your paper topic with me by November 18th. Email your final paper by December 18th with the subject line “Reproduction Final Paper.” Papers should be 10-12 pages (not including bibliography), double-spaced with 1" margins in Times New Roman, 12-point font.

All readings are available through Canvas/Course Reserves.

Cheating and Plagiarism: Students who cheat on any of the assignments will receive an F for the class, and the matter will be referred to Yale's Executive Committee (see Yale's Academic Honesty Policy). A full discussion of citing sources and avoiding plagiarism is on the Yale Writing Center Website under “Using Sources.”

Week 1 (Section 1 meets Aug 31 // Section 2 meets Sept 2): **Introduction**

Week 2 (Sept 7 // Sept 9): **Theoretical and Historical Approaches to Reproduction**

--Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 2000. *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of the Body*. New York: Basic Books. Pages 1-29, 233-255.

--Solinger, Rickie. 2005. *Pregnancy and Power: A Short History of Reproductive Politics*. New York: New York University Press. Pages 1-25.

--Ross, Loretta and Rickie Solinger. 2017. *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*. University of California Press. Pages 1-17, 58-116.

--Almeling, Rene. 2015. "Reproduction." *Annual Review of Sociology* 41: 423-442.

Week 3 (Sept 14 // Sept 16): **Pregnancy**

-- Martin, Emily. 1991. "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles." *Signs* 16: 485-501.

--Ivry, Tsipy. 2010. *Embodying Culture: Pregnancy in Japan and Israel*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. Pages 1-33.

--Markens, Susan, Carole Browner, and Nancy Press. 1997. "Feeding the Fetus: On Interrogating the Notion Of Maternal-Fetal Conflict." *Feminist Studies* 23:351-72.

--Reed, Kate. 2009. "'It's them faulty genes again': Women, men and the gendered nature of genetic responsibility in prenatal blood screening." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 31: 343-359.

--Waggoner, Miranda R. 2013. "Motherhood preconceived: The emergence of the preconception health and health care initiative." *Journal of health politics, policy and law* 38: 345-371.

Week 4 (Sept 21 // Sept 23): **Birth in America**

--Armstrong, Elizabeth M. 2000. "Lessons in control: Prenatal education in the hospital." *Social Problems*: 583-605.

--Leavitt, Judith Walzer. 2010. *Make Room for Daddy: The Journey from Waiting Room to Birthing Room*. University of North Carolina Press. Pages ix-xi, 48-85, 284-296.

- Martin, Karin A. 2003. "Giving Birth Like a Girl." *Gender & Society* 17:54-72.
- Morris, Theresa. 2013. *Cut It Out: The C-Section Epidemic in America*. New York: New York University Press. Pages 1-28.
- Bridges, Khiara. 2011. *Reproducing Race: An Ethnography of Pregnancy as a Site of Racialization*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 103-143.

Week 5 (Sept 28 // Sept 30): Disciplining Reproduction

- Almeling, Rene. 2020. *GUYnecology: The Missing Science of Men's Reproductive Health*. Oakland: University of California Press. Pages 1-33.
- Morgan, Lynn M, and Elizabeth FS Roberts. 2012. "Reproductive Governance in Latin America." *Anthropology & Medicine* 19:241-54.
- Greenhalgh, Susan. 2003. "Science, Modernity, and the Making of China's One-Child Policy." *Population and Development Review* 29: 163-96.
- Paltrow, Lynn and Jeanne Flavin. 2013. "Arrests of and forced interventions on pregnant women in the United States, 1973-2005: implications for women's legal status and public health." *Journal of Health Politics, Policy, Law* 38: 299-343.

Week 6 (Oct 5 // Oct 7): Contraception and Sterilization

- Roberts, Dorothy. 1997. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty*. New York: Pantheon. Pages 56-103.
- Van Kammen, Jessika and Nelly E. J. Oudshoorn. 2002. "Gender and Risk Assessment in Contraceptive Technologies." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 24:436-461.
- Littlejohn, Krystale E. 2013. "'It's those Pills that are Ruining Me': Gender and the Social Meanings of Hormonal Contraceptive Side Effects." *Gender & Society* 27:843-863.
- Gutmann, Matthew. 2007. *Fixing Men: Sex, Birth Control, and AIDS in Mexico*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Page 1-27, 130-164.
- Balasubramanian, Savina. 2018. "Motivating Men: Social Science and the Regulation of Men's Reproduction in Postwar India." *Gender & Society* 32:34-58.

Week 7 (Oct 12 // Oct 14): Abortion

- Beisel, Nicola and Tamara Kay. 2004. "Abortion, Race, and Gender in Nineteenth-Century America." *American Sociological Review* 69: 498-518.
- Petchesky, Rosalind. 1987. "Fetal Images: The Power of Visual Culture in the Politics of Reproduction." *Feminist Studies* 13: 263-92.
- Kligman, Gail. 1998. *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pages 1-18, 42-70, 148-151, and choose your own selections to read from 151-178 and 178-206.
- Suh, Siri. 2015. "'Right tool,' wrong 'job': Manual vacuum aspiration, post-abortion care and transnational population politics in Senegal." *Social Sci & Medicine* 135: 56-66.

Week 8 (Oct 19 // Oct 21): Infertility and Assisted Reproduction

- Becker, Gay. 2000. *The Elusive Embryo: How Women and Men Approach New Reproductive Technologies*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pages 1-59.
- Almeling, Rene. 2011. *Sex Cells: The Medical Market for Eggs and Sperm*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pages 1-21, 52-83.
- Bell, Ann. 2009. "It's Way Out of My League: Low-Income Women's Experiences of Medicalized Infertility." *Gender and Society* 23: 688-709.
- Rudrappa, Sharmila. 2015. *Discounted Life: The Price of Global Surrogacy in India*. New York University Press. Pages 1-19, 99-125.

Week 9 (Oct 26 // Oct 28): Making "Alternative" Families

**Undergraduate project #1 due at the beginning of class.*

- Lewin, Ellen. 2009. *Gay Fatherhood: Narratives of Family and Citizenship in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pages 1-75.
- Mamo, Laura. 2007. *Queering Reproduction: Achieving Pregnancy in the Age of Technoscience*. Durham: Duke University Press. Pages 86-127.
- Hertz, Rosanna and Margaret Nelson. 2019. *Random Families: Genetic Strangers, Sperm Donor Siblings, and the Creation of New Kin*. Oxford Uni Press: 1-18, 49-62.
- Payne, Jenny Gunnarsson and Theo Erbenius. 2018. "Conceptions of transgender parenthood in fertility care and family planning in Sweden: From reproductive rights to concrete practices." *Anthropology & Medicine* 25(3): 329-343.

Week 10 (Nov 2 // Nov 4): Exposures

- Knight, Kelly Ray. 2017. "Women on the edge: opioids, benzodiazepines and the social anxieties surrounding women's reproduction in the US opioid epidemic." *Contemporary Drug Problems*. 44:301-320.
- MacKendrick, Norah and Kate Cairns. 2019. "The polluted child and maternal responsibility in the US environmental health movement." *Signs* 44:307-332.
- Sharp, Gemma, Deborah Lawlor, and Sarah Richardson. 2018. "It's the mother!: How assumptions about the causal primacy of maternal effects influence research on the developmental origins of health and disease." *Social Science and Medicine* 213: 20-27.
- Almeling, Rene. 2020. *GUYnecology: The Missing Science of Men's Reproductive Health*. Oakland: University of California Press. Chapter 6.

Week 11 (Nov 9 // Nov 11): Epidemics and Disabilities

**Undergraduate project #2 due at the beginning of class.*

**Graduate student project due at the beginning of class.*

- Reagan, Leslie J. 2010. *Dangerous Pregnancies: Mothers, Disabilities, and Abortion in Modern America*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Introduction, Chapter 2, and Chapter 4.

Week 12 (Nov 16 // Nov 18): Reproductive Aging

**6 presentations in class*

--Brown, Eliza and Mary Patrick. 2018. "Time, Anticipation, and the Life Course: Egg Freezing as Temporarily Disentangling Romance and Reproduction." *American Sociological Review* 83: 959–82.

--Dillaway, Heather E. 2005. "Menopause is the 'Good Old': Women's Thoughts about Reproductive Aging." *Gender & Society* 19:398-417.

****November Break****

Week 13 (Nov 30 // Dec 2): Conclusion

**6 presentations in class*

--No reading.

End of finals period on December 18th

**Undergraduate project #3 due at midnight*

**Graduate student final paper due at midnight*

Project Options

Interview

Choose one person to interview for 30-60 minutes about some aspect of reproduction, e.g. a grandparent, a clinician, a neighbor, etc.

Documentary

Choose a documentary on some aspect of reproduction. You may watch the film with classmates. An excellent list can be found [here](#). Many films are available through the Yale Library's Kanopy service.

Lecture

Attend a lecture on campus that addresses some aspect of reproduction.

Field trip

Go somewhere to learn about some aspect of reproduction, e.g. attend a museum exhibit, tour some facility, etc.

Media Analysis

Review one or two websites for organizations, products, or groups related to reproduction, OR you can use LexisNexis to find two newspaper articles on some aspect of reproduction. Conduct a content analysis.

DIY Project

Create your own project or a group project. If you choose this option, you must write a paragraph describing what you plan to do and have it approved by the professor.

Your paper should have two section headers: Summary and Analysis. The summary should be one page long and provide a brief overview of the content (interview, lecture, documentary, etc). The analysis section should begin with a one-sentence sociological thesis statement about some aspect of the content, and the remaining two pages should draw on course readings and concepts to substantiate your argument. Include a bibliography on page 4.

Use Times New Roman, 12-point font. Double-space and paginate your paper before uploading it to Canvas/Assignments/Projects.