

**Politics of Reproduction**  
**Professor Rene Almeling**  
**Yale University**

SOCY 390/629, ER&M 360, HLTH 370, HSHM 432, WGSS 390/629, AMST 690  
Fall 2022

**Course 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, contraception, abortion, infertility, and reproductive technologies. 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**

Enrollment is by instructor permission only. Undergraduate enrollment will be limited to 15 students, with priority going to seniors. Graduate student enrollment will be limited to 5 students, with priority going to sociology grad students.

**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 reflections. Memos are due in the Assignments section of Canvas by 2pm 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 8, the second in Week 11, and the third on December 15th. 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 only for graduate students only - 30%

Discuss your paper topic with me by November 18th. Email your final paper by December 15th 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.

## **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 policy on [academic integrity](#) and guide to [citing sources and avoiding plagiarism](#).

## **Accessibility**

My goal is to create a learning environment that is accessible, equitable, and inclusive. If you are experiencing any difficulties with the class, including with accessibility, please feel free to contact [me](#) and/or your teaching fellow. You may also wish to contact [Student Accessibility Services](#), which can provide information and arrange accommodations. Other useful resources on campus include the [Writing Center](#), residential college [tutors](#), and [Academic Strategies](#).

## **Schedule**

All readings are available for no cost via syllabus links or PDFs in Canvas/Course Reserves.

### [Week 1: Introduction](#)

--No reading.

### [Week 2: Historical and Theoretical Approaches to Reproduction](#)

--Hopwood, Nick, Rebecca Fleming, and Lauren Kassel. 2018. “Introduction: Reproduction in History” in *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day*. Cambridge U Press. Pages 3-18. [[link](#)]

--Almeling, Rene. 2015. "Reproduction." *Annual Review of Sociology* 41: 423-442. [[link](#)]

--Ross, Loretta and Rickie Solinger. 2017. *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*. University of California Press. Pages 1-17 [[link](#)]

### [Week 3: 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. [[link](#)]

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

--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. [[link](#)]

--Valdez, Natali. 2019. "Improvising Race: Clinical Trials and Racial Classification." *Medical Anthropology* 38: 635-650. [[link](#)]

#### Week 4: Birth in America

- Morris, Theresa. 2013. *Cut It Out: The C-Section Epidemic in America*. New York: New York University Press. Pages 1-28. [[link](#)]
- Davis, Dána-Ain. 2019. "Obstetric Racism: The Racial Politics of Pregnancy, Labor, and Birthing." *Medical Anthropology* 38: 560-573. [[link](#)]
- Besse, Margaret, Nik Lampe, and Emily S. Mann. 2020. "Experiences with Achieving Pregnancy and Giving Birth Among Transgender Men." *Yale J Biol & Med* 93:517-28. [[link](#)]
- Leavitt, Judith Walzer. 2010. *Make Room for Daddy: The Journey from Waiting Room to Birthing Room*. Univ of North Carolina Press. Pages ix-xi, 48-64, *skim* 64-85, 284-296. [[link](#)]

#### Week 5: Reproductive Governance

- Morgan, Lynn M, and Elizabeth FS Roberts. 2012. "Reproductive Governance in Latin America." *Anthropology & Medicine* 19:241-54. [[link](#)]
- Balasubramanian, Savina. 2018. "Motivating Men: Social Science and the Regulation of Men's Reproduction in Postwar India." *Gender & Society* 32:34-58. [[link](#)]
- Greenhalgh, Susan. 2003. "Science, Modernity, and the Making of China's One-Child Policy." *Population and Development Review* 29: 163-96. [[link](#)]
- 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. [[link](#)]

#### Week 6: Contraception and Sterilization

- Roberts, Dorothy. 1997. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty*. New York: Pantheon. Pages 56-103. [Canvas/Reserves]
- Stern, Alex Minna. 2005. *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*. University of California Press. Pages 1-26. [[link](#)]
- Van Kammen, Jessika and Nelly E. J. Oudshoorn. 2002. "Gender and Risk Assessment in Contraceptive Technologies." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 24:436-461. [[link](#)]
- Littlejohn, Krystale E. and Katrina Kimport 2017. "Contesting and Differentially Constructing Uncertainty: Negotiations of Contraceptive Use in the Clinical Encounter." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 58: 442-454. [[link](#)]

#### Week 7: Abortion

- Petchesky, Rosalind. 1987. "Fetal Images: The Power of Visual Culture in the Politics of Reproduction." *Feminist Studies* 13: 263-92. [[link](#)]
- Kligman, Gail. 1998. *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania*. University of California Press. Pages 1-18, 42-70, 148-151, *skim* 151-206. [[link](#)]
- Cohen, David S. and Carole Joffe 2020. *Obstacle Course: The Everyday Struggle to Get an Abortion in America*. Berkeley, University of California Press. Pages 1-25. [[link](#)]
- Suh, Siri. 2021. *Dying to Count: Post-Abortion Care and Global Reproductive Health Politics in Senegal*. Rutgers University Press. Pages 1-24. [[link](#)]

## Week 8: Exposures

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

--Reagan, Leslie J. 2010. *Dangerous Pregnancies: Mothers, Disabilities, and Abortion in Modern America*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pages 1-29. [[link](#)]

--MacKendrick, Norah and Kate Cairns. 2019. "The polluted child and maternal responsibility in the US environmental health movement." *Signs* 44:307-332. [[link](#)]

--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. [[link](#)]

## Week 9: Making Knowledge about Reproduction

--Clarke, Adele. 1998. *Disciplining Reproduction: Modernity, American Life Sciences, and 'The Problems of Sex'*. Berkeley, University of California Press. Pages 3-29. [Canvas/Reserves]

--Almeling, Rene. 2020. *GUYnecology: The Missing Science of Men's Reproductive Health*. University of California Press. Pages 1-53, 86-90, *skim pages 91-116*, pages 119-164 [[link](#)]

## Week 10: Reproductive Technologies, Family-making, and Kinship

*\*6 presentations in class*

--Mamo, Laura. 2007. *Queering Reproduction: Achieving Pregnancy in the Age of Technoscience*. Durham: Duke University Press. Pages 1-22, 86-127. [[link](#)]

--Frith, Lucy, Eric Blyth, Marilyn Crawshaw, and Olga van den Akker. 2018. "Searching for 'relations' using a DNA linking register by adults conceived following sperm donation." *BioSocieties* 13:170-89. [[link](#)]

--Cromer, Risa. 2019. "Making the Ethnic Embryo: Enacting Race in US Embryo Adoption." *Medical Anthropology* 38:603-19. [[link](#)]

## Week 11: Markets for "Assisted" Reproduction

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

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

--Hovav, April. 2019. "Producing Moral Palatability in the Mexican Surrogacy Market." *Gender & Society* 33:273-95. [[link](#)]

--Deomampo, Daisy. 2019. "Racialized Commodities: Race and Value in Human Egg Donation." *Medical Anthropology* 38(7):620-33. [[link](#)]

--Wahlberg, Ayo. 2018. *Good Quality: The Routinization of Sperm Banking in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pages 1-28. [[link](#)]

--Bell, Ann. 2009. "It's Way Out of My League: Low-Income Women's Experiences of Medicalized Infertility." *Gender and Society* 23: 688-709. [[link](#)]

**\*\*November Break\*\***

Week 12: Temporality and Potential Reproductive Futures

*\*6 presentations in class*

--Brown, Eliza and Mary Patrick. 2018. "Time, Anticipation, and the Life Course: Egg Freezing as Temporarily Disentangling Romance and Reproduction." *Amer Soc Rev* 83: 959–82. [[link](#)]

--Lampe, Nik M., Shannon K. Carter, and J.E. Sumerau. 2019. "Continuity and Change in Gender Frames: The Case of Transgender Reproduction." *Gender & Society* 33: 865-887. [[link](#)]

--Almeling, Rene. 2020. *GUYnecology: The Missing Science of Men's Reproductive Health*. Oakland: University of California Press. Pages 165-182. [[link](#)]

--Cohen, David S. and Carole Joffe 2020. *Obstacle Course: The Everyday Struggle to Get an Abortion in America*. University of California Press. Pages 216-236. [[link](#)]

Week 13: Conclusion

*\*8 presentations in class*

--No reading.

December 15<sup>th</sup>

*\*Undergraduate project #3 due at midnight*

*\*Graduate student final paper due at midnight*

## Projects

Your project 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.

### 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 or panel discussion 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.