

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. Please request instructor permission through the Yale course system. 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 Canvas/Assignments by noon on the day of class. Memos will be graded pass/fail, and late memos will receive no credit. All students receive one "free pass" per semester; i.e. you can skip one memo with no penalty (but you still need to do the reading!).

- **Presentation** - 15%

Team up with one classmate to 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. Both members of the group should read the article, share presentation responsibilities, and be prepared to answer questions.

- **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 11th. 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 15th. Papers are due in Canvas by December 16th and 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 – including using ChatGPT or any other AI composition software to complete them – 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 the 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](#)]

--Bond-Theriault, Candace. 2024. *Queering Reproductive Justice: An Invitation*. Stanford University Press. 1-27. [[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 University Press. Pages 1-28. [[link](#)]
- Bridges, Khiara. 2011. *Reproducing Race: An Ethnography of Pregnancy as a Site of Racialization*. University of California Press. Pages 103-143. [[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](#)]
- 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](#)]

Week 5: Reproductive Governance

- Morgan, Lynn M, and Elizabeth FS Roberts. 2012. "Reproductive Governance in Latin America." *Anthropology & Medicine* 19:241-54. [Canvas/Reserves]
- Greenhalgh, Susan. 2003. "Science, Modernity, and the Making of China's One-Child Policy." *Population and Development Review* 29: 163-96. [[link](#)]
- Balasubramanian, Savina. 2018. "Motivating Men: Social Science and the Regulation of Men's Reproduction in Postwar India." *Gender & Society* 32:34-58. [[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](#)]
- Suh, Siri. 2021. *Dying to Count: Post-Abortion Care and Global Reproductive Health Politics in Senegal*. Rutgers University Press. Pages 1-24. [[link](#)]
- Cohen, David S. and Carole Joffe. 2020. *Obstacle Course: The Everyday Struggle to Get an Abortion in America*. University of California Press. Pages 1-25, 216-236. [[link](#)]

Week 8: Making Knowledge about Reproduction

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

--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 [\[link\]](#)

--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: Reproductive Technologies, Family-making, and Kinship

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

--Joslin, Courtney and Douglas NeJaime. Forthcoming (2024). "Multiparenthood." *New York Law Review*. 99: 102-192. [\[link\]](#)

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

Week 10: Markets for "Assisted" Reproduction

--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. [\[link\]](#)

Week 11: Population and the Environment in the 20th Century

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

*Graduate student project due at the beginning of class.

Merchant, Emily Klancher. 2021. *Building the Population Bomb*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pages 1-11. [\[link\]](#)

Merchant, Emily Klancher. 2022. "Environmental Malthusianism and Demography." *Social Studies of Science* 52: 536-60. [\[link\]](#)

Merchant, Emily Klancher. 2021. *Building the Population Bomb*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pages 193-206. [\[link\]](#)

Week 12: Population and the Climate in the 21st Century

*5 presentations in class

Sasser, Jade S. 2024. *Climate Anxiety and the Kid Question: Deciding Whether to Have Children in an Uncertain Future*. University of California Press. Pages xi – 144 (full book). [\[link\]](#)

Week 13: Conclusion

*5 presentations in class

--No reading.

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.

Interview

Choose one person to interview for 30-60 minutes about some aspect of reproduction, e.g. a grandparent, a clinician, a neighbor, etc. You must receive approval for your interview questions from the Professor or TF before conducting the interview.

Documentary

Choose a documentary on some aspect of reproduction. You may watch the film with classmates. An excellent list can be found [here](#).

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.

Content Analysis

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

Historical Archive

Visit a digital or physical archive (e.g. medical history library, Beinecke) and analyze a small amount of historical material related to reproduction.

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.