Politics of Reproduction
SOCY 390/629, ER&M 360, HLTH 370, HSHM 432, WGSS 390
Spring 2016
Wednesday 2:30-4:20pm

Professor Rene Almeling
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Office hours: Wednesday 4:30-5, Thursday 4:30-5, and by appointment
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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 male and female bodies, family formation, and powerful social institutions such as medicine, law, and the marketplace. We will examine sociological 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, and sexuality.

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 the Classes Server by 1:30pm 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, disabilities, menstruation, transgender pregnancy, sex selection, fetal surgery, teen pregnancy, etc.). Use Sociological Abstracts to find one journal article on that topic. Read the article carefully, and prepare a four-minute presentation on the research question, methods, and main findings. Presentations will be in class during Week 12.
- 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 5, the second in Week 9, and the third in Week 13. 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 13.
- Research Paper – required for graduate students only - 30%
  Discuss your paper topic with me by April 8th. Email your final paper by 4pm on Friday, May 6th with the subject line “Reproduction Final Paper.” Papers should be 10 pages (not including bibliography), double-spaced with 1" margins written in Times New Roman, 12-point font.
Readings
All readings are available through course reserves on Classes*v2. Books with excerpts longer than 50 pages are also available for 2-hour checkout at the Bass Library reserves desk.

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.

Week 1: Introduction
*No reading

Week 2: Theoretical and Historical Approaches to Reproduction

Week 3: Pregnancy
Week 4: Birth in America


Week 5: Disciplining Reproduction

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


Week 6: Contraception and Sterilization


**Week 7: Abortion**


**Week 8: Infertility and *In Vitro* Fertilization**


**Week 9: Assisting Reproduction**

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


**Week 10: Making “Alternative” Families**


Week 11: Reproductive Aging


Week 12: Student Presentations

*No memos.

Week 13: Conclusion

*Undergraduate project #3 due at the beginning of class.

* Graduate student project due at the beginning of class.

*No memos.
Three-page Project Options

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

*Documentary*
Choose a documentary on some aspect of reproduction. You may watch the film with classmates.

*Lecture*
Attend a lecture on campus that addresses some aspect of reproduction. You may go with classmates.

*Field trip*
Go somewhere to learn about some aspect of reproduction, e.g. attend a museum exhibit, tour some facility, etc. You may go with classmates.

*DIY Project*
Create your own 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, paginate, and staple your paper.

Four-page Project Options

*Media Analysis*
Review one or two websites for organizations, products, or groups related to reproduction. Or use LexisNexis to find two newspaper articles on some aspect of reproduction. Conduct a content analysis, and write up your results in a 4-page paper using course readings and concepts. Include a bibliography on a separate page. Use Times New Roman, 12 point font. Double-space, paginate, and staple your paper.