

Politics of Reproduction

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

Spring 2019

Wednesday 1:30-3:20pm

Professor Rene Almeling

Office: 493 College St., Room 406

Office hours: Tuesday 3:30-4:15, Wednesday 3:30-4:15, 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 powerful social institutions such as medicine, the family, 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, sexuality, and nationality.

Enrollment

This seminar will be limited to twenty 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. If you are interested in this course, please do not email me directly. Just attend the first day. If there are more than 20 grad students and seniors who want to take the class, I may assign a brief writing exercise to determine final enrollment.

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 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 7, 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 10th. Email your final paper by 4pm on Friday, May 3rd 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.

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: 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: 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: 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: Disciplining Reproduction

- Clarke, Adele. 1998. *Disciplining Reproduction: Modernity, American Life Sciences, and 'The Problems of Sex'* Berkeley: University of California Press. Pages 3-29.
- Greenhalgh, Susan. 2003. "Science, Modernity, and the Making of China's One-Child Policy." *Population and Development Review* 29: 163-96.
- Almeling, Rene and Miranda R. Waggoner. 2013. "More and Less than Equal: How Men Factor in the Reproductive Equation." *Gender & Society* 27:821-842.
- 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.
- Sufirin, Carolyn, Alexa Kolbi-Molinas, and Rachel Roth. 2015. "Reproductive Justice, Health Disparities, and Incarcerated Women in the United States." *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 47:213-219.

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.
- 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: Abortion

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

- 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: 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.

****Spring Break****

Week 9: Making "Alternative" Families

**Undergraduate project #2 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.

Week 10: Making "Alternative" Families, continued

**6-7 presentations in class*

- 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.
- Hertz, Rosanna. 2006. *Single by Chance, Mothers by Choice: How Women are Choosing Parenthood Without Marriage and Creating the New American Family*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pages xv-xviii, 3-20.
- MacDonald et al. 2016. "Transmasculine individuals' experiences with lactation, chestfeeding, and gender identity." *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* 16.

Week 11: Exposures

**6-7 presentations in class*

--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.

Week 12: Reproductive Aging & Concluding Discussion

**6-7 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.

--Lanbert et al. 2006. "The Male Biological Clock." *World Journal of Urology* 24:611-17.

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

Week 13: No Class.

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

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

Three-page 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. 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 and paginate your paper before uploading it to Canvas/Assignments/Projects.

Four-page Project Options

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, 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 and paginate your paper before uploading it to Canvas/Assignments/Projects.