

Reproductive Rights: U.S. and Global Contexts

The University of Texas at Dallas—Fall 2010 (3 s.h.)

Course Number: AMS 4379 Section 003 (4298), GST 4370 Section 003 (4300)

Day/Times: Wednesdays, 2:30 – 5:15

Location: FO 2.702

Professor Information

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Office Hours:

- Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.
- Tuesdays, 4:00 -6:30 p.m.
- By appointment

Course Description

Do humans have the right to reproduce? Under what circumstances? Is access to reproductive health care a right? In what contexts? For whom? This course addresses the ways in which choices about reproduction and access to reproductive health care services are influenced by myriad factors including gender, age, marital status, race/ethnicity, geography, and ability, among others. Grounding our discussion in broader discourses of equality, human rights, citizenship, and non-discrimination, we will explore reproductive rights as an inherently charged political domain, one that has been and continues to be shaped at the intersection of political, medical/scientific, ethical, and religious ideologies. Through an examination of reproductive rights in both historical and contemporary contexts, we will gain a thorough understanding of central debates, key legislation, and various strategies that have been used by individuals, non-governmental organizations, governing bodies, and international organizations (such as the UN and the OAS) to limit and/or advance reproductive rights. We will also compare definitions of and access to reproductive rights in diverse global contexts, including the U.S. as well as industrialized and developing nations throughout the world.

Course Goals/Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Describe the ways in reproduction and access to reproductive health care have been and continue to be influenced by social identities such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, race, marital status, geography, sexuality, and ability;
2. Discuss varying definitions of “reproductive rights”;
3. Compare historical debates regarding reproductive rights with those that dominate contemporary discourse;
4. Identify key legal, medical/scientific, political, religious, and/or ethical arguments and developments as they pertain to reproductive rights;
5. Explain the various strategies used by individuals and groups to impact access to reproductive services;
6. Compare and contrast reproductive rights in the U.S. and in various global contexts.

This course will also provide students with opportunities to enhance their skills in the following areas:

1. Critical thinking and analysis;
2. Written communication (both formal and informal);
3. Oral communication (both formal and informal);
4. Academic research.

Required Texts

The following texts are required for this course and available for purchase at the UTD library:

1. Ehrenreich, Nancy (ed.). *The Reproductive Rights Reader: Law, Medicine, and the Construction of Motherhood*. NYU Press, 2008. (henceforth referred to as RRR in course calendar)
2. Hartmann, Betsy. *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs: The Global Politics of Population Control*. Revised edition. (South End Press, 1999). (henceforth referred to as RRW)
3. Silliman, Jael, Dorothy Roberts, et. al. *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice* (South End Press, 2004). (henceforth referred to as UR)

The above texts will be supplemented with a range of articles, chapters, and reports that are part of the required reading for this course. These readings are available to all course participants via the course eLearning site. These readings will be designated in the course calendar with an asterisk (*).

Assignments

Your performance in relation to the following course requirements will determine your grade for the course:

1. **Attendance (100 points):** Attendance is fundamental to the success of this course overall as well as your individual success in the course. Consequently, a significant portion of your grade is based on attendance. You are expected to arrive in class on time, to stay for the entire session, and to miss class only in rare and unavoidable circumstances. Points will be deducted for late arrivals and early departures. If you miss a class for any reason, it is your responsibility to update yourself (from your classmates!) on course activities and any changes to the schedule or activities. The attendance points you are awarded at the end of the semester will be based on the percent of class sessions you attend—thus, if you attend 95% of class sessions, your final attendance grade for the course will be 95 points.
2. **Participation (100 points):** It is expected that students will participate actively and thoughtfully in discussions based on careful reading of course material. The quality of your participation will have a significant influence on your grade. If you must miss a class for medical reasons, religious observance, caring for your sick child, or any other university-excused activity, you are expected to inform me before class and then submit appropriate documentation. Students who miss class sessions are responsible for obtaining notes from classmates and finding out all changes in deadlines and activities.

This class will include some lectures, but it is primarily designed as a seminar in which all participants share responsibility for augmenting the learning process by asking questions, offering ideas, and sharing information on appropriate resources with one another. I expect our class meetings to include discussion of the readings, debate, disagreement, critique, and exploration, and for members of the class to draw on their own knowledge and experiences when appropriate. In order for this format to be successful, it is imperative that we maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect for all course participants. This includes respecting one another by coming to class fully prepared for engaging, stimulating discussions—in other words, if you are in class, I will expect that you have read and thought about the assigned readings and are ready to discuss them.

3. Exams (2 x 100 points each = 200 points): You will take two exams in this course. For each exam, you will receive several writing prompts/questions—you will then choose and respond to one of the prompts/questions. Both exams are “take-home” and you are expected to use course readings and your own notes from class discussions to complete them. It is also appropriate for you to have another member of the class (or a roommate, sibling, parent, friend, etc.) read through drafts and give you feedback. However, it is **NOT** appropriate for another person to write your exam essays for you, either in part or in their entirety (please see university policies if you have questions about scholastic dishonesty and its

consequences). I expect that your exam essays will go through more than one draft and that the final essays you submit to me will reflect a significant amount of time, effort, and thought on your part.

In order to meet minimum requirements, each exam must have a separate cover page, be **approximately 4-5 pages in length**, have a clear central argument, and sufficiently and accurately incorporate at least 4 required course readings. Your argument/thesis should be the focus of the essay and course readings should be used only to support your argument or ideas (not to stand in for your own argument and ideas). Above all, you must address the question(s) or issue(s) raised in the writing prompts. Given that this is an exam, I cannot consult with you about or give you feedback on your exam essays prior to the due date.

4. Reproductive Rights Exhibit: (200 points): This project requires that course participants work in teams (only 2 people per team; you may choose your teammate, but choose wisely). Each team will focus on a specific country of their choosing—NOT the United States—and conduct research pertaining to reproductive rights in that country. As a culmination of their research, each group will create a professional-looking, informative poster that is intended to inform other members of the UTD community about reproductive rights and which will be included in a temporary exhibit, “Global Perspectives on Reproductive Rights.” Our exhibit will include all of the posters that are completed by teams in the Reproductive Rights course this semester (there are two sections) and posters will be exhibited together over a 1-week period in a public location on the UTD campus during the final week of the regular Fall 2010 semester.

Your final grade on this assignment will be based not only on your poster and your presentation of information during the exhibit, but also on a binder of information you submit concerning your project. The binder must contain all of your research for this project including such items as journal articles and book chapters (copies that you’ve marked up), notes from films, print-outs of websites (again, marked up), etc.

IMPORTANT NOTE—your goal is NOT to argue a particular position in relation to reproductive rights (for example, a position on the “Morning After Pill”). Instead, your goal is to provide factual information that will enable readers to gain a better understanding of reproductive rights in the country you have researched. Furthermore, your poster should be presented in a dynamic, visually-appealing manner that engages your readers (feel free to include images, graphs, and charts, as appropriate).

You should begin by finding a teammate and choosing a country. The content of final posters will vary somewhat from country to country, but as you begin your research you may want to consider the following cultural aspects as they relate to reproductive rights:

- a. Gender, race/ethnicity, age, marital status, sexual identity
- b. Legislation and court decisions
- c. Health care (access to, quality of, affordability, etc.)
- d. Education
- e. Religion
- f. Politics
- g. The family
- h. Work/employment
- i. War and other forms of violence
- j. Migration/immigration
- k. Economics
- l. Organizations (governmental, non-governmental) that address issues of reproductive rights

This is only a partial list and, depending on which country you choose, certain topics will become more or less salient than others. At minimum, however, you **MUST** include at least 6 topics/sections and include a list of references/sources.

We will discuss the exhibit regularly throughout the semester and you should feel free to contact me any time you have questions about or need guidance in regard to this project. In the meantime, keep the following dates in mind:

- **September 8th (Wednesday)**: you must have a partner and a country chosen (I need this in writing; NOTE: countries will be assigned on a “first come, first served” basis so it is in your best interest to choose early)
- **November 15th (Monday)**: your final copy of your poster (electronic version) must be submitted to me by 10 p.m. (this will give me time to proofread your document before forwarding it to the printing office)
- **December 1st (Wednesday)**: all course participants are required to be present at the exhibit during scheduled class time and to talk with visitors about their project; final project binders due on this date

Grading Policy

There are 600 points possible in this course as determined by the following assignments:

- Attendance (100 points)
- Participation (100 points)
- Exam #1 (100 points)
- Exam #2 (100 points)
- Reproductive Rights Exhibit (200 points)

Final course grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

Points	Grade	Points	Grade
582 - 600	A+	444 – 461	C
564 - 581	A	420 – 443	C-
540 - 563	A-	402 - 419	D+
522 - 539	B+	384 - 401	D
504 - 521	B	360 - 383	D-
480 - 503	B-	359 & below	F
462 - 479	C+		

Course Calendar

We will make every effort to maintain the calendar and schedule of activities that appear below. However, adjustments may need to be made in the event of inclement weather, university closings, and the like. If such adjustments become necessary, they will be posted to the course eLearning site so be certain to check it regularly.

Session 1: August 25th: Introductions

- Intro to course, policies, expectations
- Intro to one another: goals, aims, interest in the course
- Video Viewing and Discussion: segment from *Michelle Goldberg: Sex, Power, and the Future of the World*

Session 2: September 1st: Conceptual Frameworks

- Ehrenreich, “Introduction” (in RRR)
- Silliman, et al., “Chapter 1: Women of Color and their Struggle for Reproductive Justice” (in UR)
- Hartmann, “Chapter 1: Security and Survival” in RRW)
- Cook, et al., “Chapter 2: Reproductive and Sexual Health” (*)

Session 3: September 8th: Science, Medicine, and Health Care, Part I

- Cook et al., “Reproductive and Sexual Health” (*)
- Ehrenreich and English, “The Sexual Politics of Sickness” (in RRR)
- Todd, “Delusions in Discourse” (in RRR)
- Martin, “Body Narratives, Body Boundaries” (in RRR)

Session 4: September 15th: Science, Medicine, and Health Care, Part II

- Cook, et al., “Health Care Systems” (*)
- Chase, “Cultural Practice or Reconstructive Surgery?” (in RRR)
- Hartmann, “Chapter 2: The Malthusian Orthodoxy” (in RRW)
- Hartmann, “Chapter 4: The Plan Behind Family Planning” (in RRW)

Session 5: September 22nd: Historical Perspectives—Population Control, Part I

- Hartmann, “Chapter 6: Birth of an Ideology” (in RRW)
- Hartmann, “Chapter 7: The Population Establishment Today” (in RRW)
- Hartmann, Chapter 8: Building a ‘Consensus’ for Cairo and Beyond” (in RRW)
- Hartmann, “China—‘Gold Babies’ and Disappearing Girls” (in RRW)
- **Hand out questions for exam #1**

Session 6: September 29th: Population Control, Part II

- In-class video viewing and discussion: *The Dying Rooms*
- Exam #1 essays due at the beginning of class

Session 7: October 6th: Historical Perspectives—Pregnancy Termination

- Herring, “The Past as Prologue to the Present” (*)
- Luker, “Medicine and Morality in the Nineteenth Century” (in RRR)
- Reagan, “When Abortion was a Crime” (in RRR)
- Davis, “Racism, Birth Control, and Reproductive Rights” (in RRR)

Session 8: October 13th: Historical Perspectives—Contraception

- Hartmann, “Chapter 10: Shaping Contraceptive Technology” (in RRW)
- Hartmann, “Chapter 12: Bangladesh—Survival of the Richest” (in RRW)
- Solinger, “Racializing the Nation” (in RRR)
- Albiston, “The Social Meaning of the Norplant Condition” (in RRR)

Session 9: October 20th: Legislation and Public Policy

- Bridgewater, “Reproductive Freedom as Civil Freedom” (*)
- Weissman, “What Choice Do They Have?” (*)
- Shepard, “The ‘Double Discourse’ on Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Latin America” (*)
- Girard and Waldman, “Ensuring the Reproductive Rights of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons” (*)

Session 10: October 27th: Reproductive Rights as Human Rights

- Obermeyer, “A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Reproductive Rights” (*)
- Petchesky, “Rights and Needs” (*)
- Center for Reproductive Rights, “Reproductive Rights and Women with Disabilities” (*)
- Center for Reproductive Rights, “Reproductive Rights in the Inter-American System for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights” (*)
- **Hand out questions for exam #2**

Session 11: November 3rd: Access to Reproductive Health Care

- In-Class Video Viewing and Discussion: *A Walk to Beautiful*
- Exam #2 essays due at the beginning of class

Session 12: November 10th: Case Studies—Organizing for Reproductive Justice, Part I

- The following chapters can all be found in Silliman, et al., *Undivided Rights*:
 - “Chapter 3: African-American Women Seed a Movement”
 - “Chapter 4: Founding the National Black Women’s Health Project”
 - “Chapter 6: Native American Women Resist Genocide...”
 - “Chapter 7: The Mother’s Milk Project” (in UR)

Session 13: November 17th: Case Studies—Organizing for Reproductive Justice, Part II

- The following chapter can all be found in Silliman, et al., *Undivided Rights*:
 - “Chapter 9: Organizing by Asian and Pacific Islander Women”
 - “Chapter 11: The National Asian Women’s Health Organization”
 - “Chapter 12: We Will No Longer be Silent or Invisible”
 - “Chapter 14: The Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights”

Session 14: November 24th—NO CLASS/THANKSGIVING RECESS

Session 15: December 1st: “Global Perspectives on Reproductive Rights” Exhibit

- Class participants are required to be present at the exhibit during scheduled class time and to talk with visitors about their project (those who are absent will be docked 100 points from their final project grade)
- Final project binders due today

FINALS WEEK: No class meeting
