

FRESH(WO)MAN SEMINAR
“Reproductive Technologies: Global Perspectives”
ANTH/WGSS 011b
TTh 9-10:15 am
Spring 2015
Room 212, Anthropology 10 Sachem

Prof. Marcia C. Inhorn
Office Hours: Tuesday 11-1 pm
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Course Description

This fresh(wo)man seminar explores how reproductive technologies are changing lives around the globe. Since the introduction of oral contraceptives in the early 1960s, the past 50 years have seen the rapid innovation and globalization of many other reproductive technologies, for both men and women, and spanning the life course from birth to menopause. As reproductive technologies have evolved over time, so have the social, cultural, legal, and ethical responses to them. Reproductive technologies are a key symbol of our times, representing the growing prominence of biotechnologies in the configuration of individual, familial, and collective identities around the globe.

This fresh(wo)man seminar will introduce students to the growing scholarship on the anthropology of reproduction. The focus of the course will be on reproductive technologies, including childbirth technologies, prenatal diagnostic technologies, contraception, abortion, assisted reproductive technologies, hormone replacement therapy, and reproductive technologies that engender “harm” (i.e., female circumcision and ultrasound-assisted female feticide). Such reproductive technologies have direct and indirect effects in many areas of social life, including the domains of kinship, marriage, family, gender, religion, biomedicine, and population demography. Sometimes helpful, sometimes harmful, such technologies have both generative and destabilizing impacts at the interface of science and society. Thus, reproductive technologies are “good to think with,” especially for new college students whose lives may be significantly affected by the uses of these technologies in the new millennium.

In this student-led seminar, we will think, talk, and write about women’s and men’s reproductive lives as portrayed in ten key books, all of them anthropological ethnographies. Through such reading, students in this course will gain broad exposure to a number of exigent reproductive health issues around the world, not only in the United States, but also in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. Japan, Israel, and Brazil will receive special attention. In addition, students will carefully assess the methods used by feminist ethnographers who conduct fieldwork in local cultural contexts. Does local-level, field-based, humanistic anthropological inquiry contribute something “value-added” to public policy debates about reproductive technologies such as abortion? This is a question that we will be asking throughout the semester, as we read, discuss, and watch a series of riveting documentaries, newscasts, and Hollywood films.

Course Assignments

- 1) **Keeping Up, Being There, Breaking the Silence:** This seminar is intended to be a twice-a-week feminist reading group, where we engage each other, courteously and constructively, in a thoughtful and reflexive conversation about the impact of reproductive technologies on the lives of women and men around the globe. Together, the class will read ten books, watch five films, and take a class field trip. Your major assignment in this seminar is simply being there each Monday and Wednesday morning, with reading assignments completed, in order to “break the silence,” individually and collectively, about many important issues of reproductive health. Everyone is expected to participate in these conversations, which are intended to be very friendly and welcoming, but nonetheless thought-provoking and rigorous. You will be evaluated in this seminar in large part on your classroom engagement over the course of the semester. **20% of the total grade**
- 2) **Leading Seminar Discussions:** Each participant in this seminar will lead the discussion once or twice during the course of the semester. We will decide this schedule on the first day of class. As discussion leader, you are expected to *briefly* (no more than 10 minutes) summarize the book in an informal but structured manner. (Please, no reading of prepared written comments. Also, no chapter-by-chapter summaries. Just highlighting of major arguments, themes, and issues.) Please withhold any critical comments for the classroom discussion that follows. Pedagogically, we need to find the value in each book, rather than only looking for faults. As part of your role as discussion leader, you should assemble a list of what you consider to be 3 key questions for discussion raised by the book. If you are leading discussion of the first half of a book, then the first question should be methodological in nature, with the second and third questions revolving around major arguments/ themes/content. If you are leading discussion of the second half of a book, then the first two questions should be about arguments/themes/content, and the final question should be policy oriented. Your job is to systematically cover these questions during the course of the discussion. Questions should be sent the evening before class (by 5 pm) to Dr. Inhorn, who will look over and print out copies. **20% of the total grade**
- 3) **Two Book Reviews:** During the course of the semester, each student will write two, 2-page, single-spaced book reviews, focusing on two books from different sections of the course. The book review should provide a) a compelling introductory paragraph, b) a brief description of the book’s setting and methodology, c) descriptive summaries of the book’s content (major arguments, themes, issues), d) analysis of the book’s major strengths, e) analysis of the book’s major weaknesses, and f) potential audiences, including academic disciplines. The first page should focus on a) – c). The second page should focus on d) – f). These short book reviews are preparation for the longer comparative book review. Book reviews are due at the beginning of class, on the morning in which the book is first being discussed. Do not review the book for which you are leading the seminar discussion. *Please turn your first book review in before spring break!* **30% of the total grade, 15% each**

- 4) **Final Comparative Book Review Essay**: Each participant in this seminar will write one, final 10-page, double-spaced paper, comparing two of the books read in class, neither of which have been covered in your previous book reviews. This review should be written in *Reviews in Anthropology* format; instructions and an example will be provided. The essay should summarize and critically review both books, but the essay should also be explicitly synthetic, examining the books' similarities and differences and attempting to outline some common theme(s). References to other books are allowed in the essay, but not required. This essay is due *no later than Monday, May 6. 30% of the total grade*

Academic Integrity: Please refer to:

<http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/advice-students/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism/plagiarism-quiz>

Books: All books are available at the Yale Bookstore, and on reserve in the Bass Library.

Schedule of Readings and Films

Jan. 13, Introduction to the Seminar

Part I. Pregnancy and Childbirth

Jan. 15, Documentary Film, “The Business of Being Born”

Jan. 20, Robbie Davis-Floyd, *Birth as an American Rite of Passage*, Preface, Introduction and Chapters 1-4

Jan. 22, *Birth as an American Rite of Passage*, Chapters 5-9 and Conclusion

Jan. 27, Tsipy Ivry, *Embodying Culture: Pregnancy in Japan and Israel*, Introduction and Chapters 1-3

Jan. 29, *Embodying Culture*, Chapters 4-6 and Conclusion

Feb. 3, Documentary Film, “Made in India”

Feb. 5, Elly Teman, *Birthing a Mother: The Surrogate Body and the Pregnant Self*, Introduction and Parts 1 and 2

Feb. 10 *Birthing a Mother*, Parts 3 and 4 and Conclusion

Part II. Contraception and Abortion

Feb. 12, Motion Picture, “If These Walls Could Talk,” Parts 1 & 2

Feb. 17, “If These Walls Could Talk,” Part 3 and Discussion

Feb. 19, Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania*, Chapters 1-4

Feb. 24, *The Politics of Duplicity*, Chapters 5-8

Feb. 26, Anne Dalsgaard, *Matters of Life and Longing: Female Sterilisation in Northeast Brazil*, Prologue and Chapters 1-3

Mar. 3, *Matters of Life and Longing*, Chapters 4-7 and Epilogue

Mar. 5, Elisabeth Croll, *Endangered Daughters: Discrimination and Development in Asia*, Whole Book

Part III. Assisted Reproduction

Mar. 24, Documentary Film, “Beautiful Sin”

Mar. 26, Marcia C. Inhorn, *The New Arab Man: Emergent Masculinities, Technologies, and Islam in the Middle East*, Prologue, Introduction and Chapters 1-4

Mar. 31, *The New Arab Man*, Chapters 5 – 8, Conclusion, Appendix

Part IV. Altering Reproductive Bodies

Apr. 2, Documentary Film, “Rites”

Apr. 7, Ellen Gruenbaum, *The Female Circumcision Controversy: An Anthropological Perspective*, Introduction and Chapters 1-4

Apr. 9, *The Female Circumcision Controversy*, Chapters 5-8

Apr. 14, Alexander Edmonds, *Pretty Modern: Beauty, Sex, and Plastic Surgery in Brazil*, Introduction, Parts I and II

Apr. 16, *Pretty Modern*, Part III and Conclusion

Part V. Reproductive Endings

Apr. 21, Margaret Lock, *Encounters with Aging: Mythologies of Menopause in Japan and North America*, Prologue and Ch. 1-6

Apr. 23, *Encounters with Aging*, Ch. 7-Epilogue

May 5, Final Papers Due—9 am, Class Party and Film, “Menstrual Man”