

## ***GSFS 329***

### ***The Politics of Reproduction: Sex, Abortion, and Motherhood***

Dr. Carly Thomsen

Class days and time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9.30-10.45am

Office hours: Wednesdays 8.45-9.45am; Thursdays 11am-1pm

Office Location: Axinn 315

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#### ***Course Description***

This class begins from the position that cultural ideas about reproduction shape how we experience and understand gender and sexuality more broadly and broader ideas about gender and sexuality influence how we view reproduction. Put otherwise, we cannot challenge dominant ideas about gender without engaging in critical conversations about reproductive issues. Because requirements for being considered a “good” woman are so closely connected to what it means to be a “good” mother, any analysis of gender requires critical engagement with ideas about reproduction—even for those of us who plan to avoid parenthood or do not have heterosexual sex. So, let’s go there—let’s take on the paradoxes, horrors, desires, complexities, and joys of reproduction.

To do so, we will focus on the politics of reproduction in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and the social and political relations that shape reproductive politics. We will assess the ways that different women experience reproduction differently, considering throughout how the construction of gender, race, class, ability, sexuality, and geography inform understandings and experiences of reproduction. In the final section of the course, we will put course ideas into practice via engaged projects.

#### ***Course Objectives***

- ❖ Understand ideologies that inform common, as well as feminist and queer, perspectives on reproduction
- ❖ Explore the ways in which ideas surrounding reproduction are socially, politically, historically, and geographically constructed and situated
- ❖ Develop critical tools and frameworks through which we can imagine reproduction differently
- ❖ Translate the concepts learned in class so that they might circulate beyond our classroom through approaching thinking, writing, and informed social engagement as (aggravating and beautiful) *processes* and operate accordingly

#### ***Course Texts***

We will draw from a mix of documentaries, journalism, podcasts, and performance art, along with traditional academic texts, so you can expect some readings to be quite easy to get through while others will be much more theoretically dense and intellectually challenging. Expect this so you can prepare adequately! Required texts:

- Nancy Ehrenreich’s *The Reproductive Rights Reader: Law, Medicine and the Construction of Motherhood* (RRR)

- Course texts posted online. All readings are organized by week under the “Modules” tab in Canvass. Students are expected to bring **HARD COPIES** of the readings, annotated with notes, comments, and questions to **EVERY** class.

### ***Course Activities and Grade Distributions***

*For descriptions of these assignments, see pages 16-21 of this course guide.*

Attendance and Participation	10%
Journal Entries (daily 1 page reflection plus a final two page reflection)	10%
In-Class Midterm Exam (1)	20%
In-Class Quiz plus Take-Home Essay Question (3-4 pages)	20%
Translation Project, Final Portfolio, and Presentation	40%

### ***Deadlines***

9/28	Journals
10/3;	Workshop day: Project descriptions
10/3-10/7	Meeting with Professor
10/17	Project proposal
10/19	Exam 1
10/26	Revised project proposal
10/31	Workshop day: project materials
11/3	Revised project materials
11/9	Workshop day: revised project materials
11/16	Exam 2 and take-home essay
11/21	Journals
11/30 and 12/5	Student presentations
12/7	Final portfolio due

### ***Course Policies***

#### **Late Policy**

Assignments are due on the date listed in the syllabus and at the beginning of class. I do not ever want to receive late work. However, if you find yourself in a position in which you need to turn in something late, you may. The penalty for doing so is 10 points per 24 hour period after the deadline. This will be subtracted from what would have been your final grade on that assignment. Work is considered late 15 minutes after the start of class. I accept no assignments by email. However, in the case of late work, you should email your assignment to me as an attachment and also drop off a hard copy at my office. The moment that you have submitted both is the time stamp on your submission.

#### **E-mail Related Policies**

For a great tutorial (that you are expected to read and follow!!) entitled “How to Email Your Professor” by Laura Portwood-Stacer, see:

<https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087#.bjnk7pji>

Key take-aways from this tutorial:

- When you email a Professor, address them (e.g. “Hello Dr. Thomsen”). Sign your name. Use proper spelling and grammar. An email to your Professor is not a text message to your friend.

Some additional policies on email:

- Hard copies of assignments are required, so please do not email assignments to me. This applies to ALL assignments unless otherwise specified in class.
- I will respond to all emails within 48 hours. Please do not email me less than 48 hours before any assignment is due. Plan ahead.
- I should be able to answer any email you send in fewer than 100 words. If you have questions that require a discussion—such as those about course requirements, a reading, a grade and so on—please come to my office hours.
- Please do not email me to set up an appointment. If my office hours do not work for you, please talk with me immediately before or after class to schedule an outside appointment.

### **Office Hours**

There is a sign-up sheet hanging outside of my office door. To make an appointment with me, please write your name next to one of the listed time slots. This system is intended to prevent long wait times; however, even if you haven’t signed up, you are more than welcome to show up during my office hours and hope that there are open slots.

### **On Terminology and Titles**

It is a truism in GSFS to say that sexism is real and its impacts are profound, and yet, I’m consistently surprised by the ways in which sexism moves through feminist spaces, often under the guise of upending power. Power is complicated, and we will take serious its complexity, in part, by not assuming we can upend it in simple ways—such as by calling women professors, especially those who are untenured, by their first names. You may call me Dr. Thomsen or Professor Thomsen. For an analysis of the ways in which sexism is evident in the deployment of titles, see: <https://www.genderavenger.com/blog/forms-address-gender-bias>.

### **Technology Policy**

**NO COMPUTERS or other technological devices in the classroom**—because we all know that many students end up scrolling through Facebook and participating in other distracting behaviors. Furthermore, there is good evidence that suggests that most people engage more deeply when we write information by hand, as we are forced to think about what information is important to capture in ways that the speed of typing renders unnecessary. Cell phones must be turned off and stored away. If it is difficult for you to adhere to these policies, please speak with me or bring me documentation from Student Accessibility Services.

### **Trigger Warnings: The Complexity of Affect**

How we understand and experience sexuality, gender, race, class, ability, and geography—all things we will discuss in this course—are simultaneously and complexly structural, political, material, affective, and epistemological. Our conversations, which

will touch upon ideologies that many of us hold dear, are meant to allow us to grapple with this complexity. Our readings and related discussions should encourage us to re-think that which we think we know. This can be painful. One recent response to dealing with the discomfort of the social worlds around us has been to request faculty members to give trigger warnings. There has been great debate around the topic, through which some faculty members have critiqued the assumptions that motivate trigger warnings. See, for example, Dr. Laurie Essig's terrific piece entitled "Trigger Warnings Trigger Me" in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* at <http://www.chronicle.com/blogs/conversation/2014/03/10/trigger-warnings-trigger-me/>

Like many other critical feminist and queer studies scholars, I do not give trigger warnings in my classes. I find the production of students as incapable of responding to their own affective states to be dangerous. What is considered "triggering" is constructed, and, furthermore, trigger warnings have been and continue to be deployed to shut down complicated civil discussion and related social action. Feeling affectively moved by material is not cause for concern, but, instead, might be an impetus for reflection, analysis, and action.

### **Guidelines for Written Work**

Please make sure your writing for the course follows these conventions: **Times New Roman, 12 point font, double (not 1.5 or triple) spaced, 1 inch margins.** Any time you draw from course readings or material (aside from in-class discussions), please make sure you properly cite them—including in your course presentations or other course work. You may use whatever citation style you prefer. All work is expected to be typed and following these conventions unless otherwise noted in this syllabus.

### **Classroom Behavior**

We will have conversations that touch upon values and ideologies that many of us hold dear. I expect that we will consistently speak and listen to one another in intellectual, honest, and respectful ways so that we can create an environment from which we can take the risks necessary for provocative learning.<sup>1</sup> Beyond this, you are bound by Middlebury College's Community Standards and General Conduct policies. Please familiarize yourself with these policies. All forms of threatening behavior and sexual harassment are in violation of Middlebury's conduct policies and are unwelcome in this class.

### **Academic Integrity**

You are bound by Middlebury College's honor code, including its policies regarding plagiarism and cheating. Violation of these rules is grounds for failure of the course. In order to avoid charges of plagiarism, cite all sources that you use. More at: [http://www.middlebury.edu/about/handbook/student\\_policies/Academic\\_Disciplinary\\_Policies](http://www.middlebury.edu/about/handbook/student_policies/Academic_Disciplinary_Policies)

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students who have Letters of Accommodation are encouraged to contact me as early in the semester as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Dr. Beth Berila for some of this language and these perspectives!

fashion. For those without Letters of Accommodation, assistance is available to eligible students through Student Accessibility Services. Please contact Jodi Litchfield or Courtney Cioffredi, the ADA Coordinators, for more information. All discussions will remain confidential.

Middlebury College has recently purchased a subscription to SensusAccess, through which you can convert course documents into alternative formats. For more information, see: <http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/resources/ctlr/students/accessible-technology>

This course welcomes and accommodates all interested students. I will do everything possible to accommodate your needs, as permitted by SAS. For more information, see: <http://www.middlebury.edu/student-life/community-living/diversity-inclusivity/american-disability-act>

### **A Final Note**

I am here to help facilitate your learning process. However, the development of critical thinking skills and the ability to understand and engage with the world around us is not something that happens passively or easily. I expect you to be active agents in your educational process. If you miss class, contact a classmate to find out what we discussed. If you have questions, visit me in office hours. I am here for you!

Names and contact info for two classmates/fellow travelers/comrades:

1.)

2.)

### **Re-cap:**

Please do the work this class requires: READ, listen attentively, challenge your own assumptions, come to class, READ, take intellectual risks, don't cheat or lie, take thorough reading notes, READ, visit me in office hours, READ, write AND revise, and be willing to step out of your comfort zones as you digest new ideas. Think. Confront difficult ideas. Remember the objectives of the course as stipulated in the syllabus. Now, let's have some fun!

### ***Course Calendar***

\*\*\*This schedule is subject to change based on the needs of the class; you are responsible for remaining informed of the changes. \*\*\*

## I. Providing the Framework

**Class 1: Tues, September 12—Introductions:** Personal introductions, course introduction, discussion of syllabus and course expectations

1 page journal assignment: Prior to completing tomorrow's readings, please respond to the following questions: What do you expect to learn in this course? What do feminist positions on reproduction entail? Do you have any experience engaging with these positions? (Please do not do any research to complete this assignment; speak from what you know.)

**Class 2: Thurs, September 14—What Makes an Idea or Issue Feminist?: On Critical Constructivism and Incarceration**

- Nancy Ehrenreich, "Introduction" (1-19, RRR)
- Laura Briggs, Faye Ginsburg, Elena R. Gutiérrez, Rosalind Petchesky, Rayna Rapp, Andrea Smith, and Chikako Takeshita, "Roundtable: Reproductive Technologies and Reproductive Justice" in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*
- Rickie Solinger, "Interrupted Life: Incarcerated Mothers in the United States—A Traveling Public Art Exhibition" in *Meridians*
- Rachel Roth, "Searching for the State: Who Governs Prisoners' Reproductive Rights?" (243-251, RRR)
- Rafi Schwartz, "Tennessee Inmates are Being Offered a Horrifying Choice: Jail Time or Sterilization" at *Splinter*  
<http://splinternews.com/tennessee-inmates-are-being-offered-a-horrifying-choice-1797100263>

For additional discussion of incarcerated pregnant women and mothers, see *Babies Behind Bars*:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nErmW89\\_hr0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nErmW89_hr0)

**Class 3: Tues, September 19—Medicine, Health, Science**

- Eva Feder Kittay, "Forever Small: The Strange Case of Ashley X" in *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*
- Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, "The Sexual Politics of Sickness" (24-31, RRR)
- Kristin Luker, "Medicine and Morality in the Nineteenth Century" (69-76, RRR)
- Emily Martin, "Body Narratives, Body Boundaries" (42-45, RRR)

- Cheryl Case, “‘Cultural Practice’ or ‘Reconstructive Surgery’?: U.S. Genital Cutting, The Intersex Movement, and Medical Double Standards” (47-56, RRR)
- Leslie Reagan, “When Abortion Was a Crime: Women, Medicine and Law in the United States” (78-85, RRR)
- Maxwell Williams, “Millions Of Women Face Astonishing Pain When They Have Sex. Why Don’t Their Doctors Take Them Seriously?” at *Good Health* <https://health.good.is/features/vulvodynia-women-sexual-health-not-taken-seriously>

#### **Class 4: Thurs, September 21—The State: Dwindling Support and Heightened Surveillance**

- Please listen to this 53 minute podcast BEFORE class: “A Welfare Check: For Mothers in Time of Family Stress or Emergency” <https://www.revealnews.org/episodes/a-welfare-check/>
- Cynthia Dailard, “Sex Education: Politics, Parents, Teachers and Teens and Understanding Abstinence: Implications for Individuals, Programs and Policies” (210-219, RRR)
- Lucy Williams, “The Ideology of Division: Behavior Modification Welfare Reform Proposals” (288-293, RRR)
- Deborah Rhode, “Politics and Pregnancy: Adolescent Mothers and Public Policy” (201-207, RRR)
- Dorothy Roberts, “Making Reproduction a Crime” (368-386, RRR)
- Susan Fitzgerald, “‘Crack Baby’ Study Ends with Unexpected but Clear Result” at *philly.com* [http://articles.philly.com/2013-07-22/news/40709969\\_1\\_hallam-hurt-so-called-crack-babies-funded-study](http://articles.philly.com/2013-07-22/news/40709969_1_hallam-hurt-so-called-crack-babies-funded-study)

#### **Class 5: Tues, September 26—Queering Reproduction**

**Special guests:** former Politics of Reproduction students, who will talk about their course projects.

- Lee Edelman, “Introduction” to *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*
- Please listen to this 28 minute podcast BEFORE class: Commentary on AK Summers’ graphic novel *How to Be a Pregnant Butch*. <https://soundcloud.com/longestshortesttime/how-to-be-a-pregnant-butch>

Optional: To see selected images from the book (they are really neat!):  
<http://longestshortesttime.com/podcast-41-how-to-be-a-pregnant-butch/>

- Paisley Currah, “Expecting Bodies: The Pregnant Man and Transgender Exclusion from the Employment Non-Discrimination Act” in *Women’s Studies Quarterly*
- J Wallace, “The Manly Art of Pregnancy” in *Everyday Women’s and Gender Studies*
- Lisa Hymas, “I Decided Not to Have Children For Environmental Reasons” in *The Guardian*  
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/sep/27/not-have-children-environmental-reasons>
- Katha Pollitt, “There is a Reason Why Gay Marriage is Winning, While Abortion Rights are Losing” in *The Nation*
- Raina Lipstiz, “The Pivotal Issue That Pro-Trans Rights Celebrities Remain Oddly Silent About” in *Bustle*  
<https://www.bustle.com/articles/154340-the-pivotal-issue-that-pro-trans-rights-celebrities-remain-oddly-silent-about>

## II. The Politics of Abortion and Reproductive Control

### Class 6: Thurs, September 28—Beyond Rights vs. Justice

Assignment due: Journals

Special Guest: Katha Pollitt

- Carly Thomsen, “The Politics of Narrative, Narrative as Politic: Rethinking Reproductive Justice Frameworks through the South Dakota Abortion Story” in *Feminist Formations*
- Katha Pollitt, “Reclaiming Abortion Rights” in *Dissent*
- Dorothy Roberts, “Reproductive Justice, Not Just Rights” in *Dissent*
- Angela Davis, “Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights” (86-92, RRR)
- Sistersong: Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, “What is Reproductive Justice?” on Sister Song website  
<http://sistersong.net/reproductive-justice/>

For additional information regarding the case I write about, see the documentary film *The Middle of Everywhere*. For more information on Black women's relationship to abortion, see the documentary film *Silent Choices*.

### **Class 7: Tues, October 3—Workshop Day: Examining and Creating Cultural Representations**

**In-class activity:** Discussion of course projects.

**Assignment due:** Please come to class with three descriptions of ideas for course projects, each at least 200 words. Please follow the conventions for writing assignments. You will turn in this assignment.

**Assignment due:** Meet with Professor Thomsen and Grace Morrison during extended office hours the week of October 3-7 to discuss your ideas for course projects. Based on the in-class discussion, please come to this meeting with revised and updated descriptions (in writing) of your ideas for your course projects. At our meeting, you'll turn in your original articulation, as well as your revised version.

- Please view the documentary film *12<sup>th</sup> and Delaware* PRIOR to class.
- Alice Chen, "Crisis Pregnancy Centers: Impeding the Right to Informed Decision Making" in *Cardozo Journal of Law and Gender*
- Micaela Canales, "WTF Texas: Anti-Choice Group Tasked With Providing Health Care" at *Choicewords* blog  
<http://urge.org/wtf-texas-anti-choice-group-tasked-with-providing-healthcare/>
- Mary Ziegler, "Where the Pro-Life Movement Goes Next" in *The New York Times*  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/opinion/sunday/where-the-pro-life-movement-goes-next.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FAbortion>

### **Class 8: Thurs, October 5—Crisis Pregnancy Centers**

**Special Guest:** Grace Morrison

- Kimberly Kelly, "In the Name of the Mother: Renegotiating Conservative Women's Authority in the Crisis Pregnancy Center Movement" in *Signs*
- Andrea Smith, "Beyond Pro-Choice vs. Pro-Life" in *Feminist Frontiers*

- Amy Bryant, Subasri Narasimhan, Katelyn Bryant-Comstock, Erika Levi “Crisis Pregnancy Center Websites: Information, Misinformation, Disinformation” in *Contraception*
- B. Jessie Hill, “Casey Meets the Crisis Pregnancy Centers” in *The Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics*
- “False and Misleading Health Information Provided by Federally Funded Pregnancy Resource Centers,” a report prepared for Representative Henry Waxman as part of the Minority Staff Special Investigations Division <http://www.motherjones.com/files/waxman2.pdf>
- Sarah McCammon, “How Crisis Pregnancy Center Clients Rely On Medicaid” on *NPR* <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/07/24/538556088/crisis-pregnancy-centers-help-pregnant-women-enroll-in-medicaid>

**Class 9: Tues, October 10—Abortion Rights and Anti-Abortion Activism**

- Laury Oaks, “What are Pro-Life Feminists Doing on Campus” in *NWSA Journal*
- Annika Speer, “The Feminist Potential of Docudrama: Destabilizing the Primacy of Primary Source Materials through Paula Kamen’s *Jane*” in *Frontiers*
- Kate Manning, “The Amateur Abortionists” in *The New York Times* [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/22/opinion/sunday/the-amateur-abortionists.html?mcubz=3&\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/22/opinion/sunday/the-amateur-abortionists.html?mcubz=3&_r=0)
- Sandhya Somashekhar, “New Spa-Like Abortion Clinic is Part of a Trend to De-Stigmatize the Procedure” in *The Washington Post* [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/a-fluffy-robe-a-cup-of-tea-and-an-abortion/2015/03/29/0c55f17c-cbe7-11e4-8c54-ffb5ba6f2f69\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.71c2a8a3cb7c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/a-fluffy-robe-a-cup-of-tea-and-an-abortion/2015/03/29/0c55f17c-cbe7-11e4-8c54-ffb5ba6f2f69_story.html?utm_term=.71c2a8a3cb7c)
- Jill Filipovic, “How a New Generation of Activists is Trying to Make Abortion Normal” in *The Washington Post* [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/reclaiming-abortion/2015/06/12/310b2204-0f8e-11e5-a0dc-2b6f404ff5cf\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.e68cc4924269](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/reclaiming-abortion/2015/06/12/310b2204-0f8e-11e5-a0dc-2b6f404ff5cf_story.html?utm_term=.e68cc4924269)

For more information on The Jane Collective, see the short film *Jane: An Abortion Service*.

**Class 10: Thurs, October 12— Ongoing Abortion Debates and Issues**

- Prior to class time, please view the documentary *Unborn in the USA*

- Rigel Oliveri, “Crossing the Line: The Political and Moral Battle Over Late-Term Abortion” (180-188, RRR)
- Marsha Saxton, “Disability Rights and Selective Abortion” (231-238, RRR)
- “Our Issues: Abortion Access” at the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health website
- Callie Beusman, “A State-by-State List of the Lies Abortion Doctors Are Forced to Tell Women” on *Broadly* website  
[https://broadly.vice.com/en\\_us/article/a-state-by-state-list-of-the-lies-abortion-doctors-are-forced-to-tell-women](https://broadly.vice.com/en_us/article/a-state-by-state-list-of-the-lies-abortion-doctors-are-forced-to-tell-women)
- Patrick Adams, “From Uruguay, A Model for Making Abortion Safer” in *The New York Times*  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/opinion/from-uruguay-a-model-for-making-abortion-safer.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FAbortion>

There are a plethora of documentary films on contemporary abortion issues. For a film on clinic violence and the related decrease of abortion providers, see *After Tiller*. For additional history that explains how we got here, see Dorothy Fadiman’s trilogy (*When Abortion was Illegal: Untold Stories, From Danger to Dignity: The Fight for Safe Abortion, The Fragile Promise of Choice: Abortion in the US Today*).

### **Class 11: Tues, October 17— Reproductive Control, Colonialism, and the Nation**

**Assignment due:** Project proposal

- Lauren Berlant, “America, Fat and the Fetus” in *Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*
- Andrea Smith, “Better Dead Than Pregnant” in *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*
- Erik Eckholm, “Suit Challenges U.S. Over Abortions and Birth Control for Immigrant Minors” in *The New York Times*
- Jorge Rivas with María Teresa Rivera, “I’m the World’s First Abortion Refugee” at *Splinter*  
<http://splinternews.com/i-am-the-worlds-first-abortion-refugee-1797403271>
- Emily Bazelon, “Purvi Patel Could Be Just the Beginning” in *The New York Times Magazine*  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/01/magazine/purvi-patel-could-be-just-the-beginning.html?mcubz=3&r=0>

**Class 12: Thurs, October 19— EXAM 1**

**Class 13: Tues, October 24—**No class. Fall Break.

### **III. The Politics of Motherhood**

**Class 14: Thurs, October 26— Technology and Assisted Reproduction**

**Assignment due:** Revised project proposals

- Sujata Moorti, “Semiotics of Motherhood: Transnational Surrogacy and Technologies of Citizenship”
- Laura Harrison, “‘I am the Baby’s Real Mother’: Reproductive Tourism, Race, and the Transnational Construction of Kinship” in *Women’s Studies International Forum*
- Alison Kafer, “Debating Feminist Futures: Slippery Slopes, Cultural Anxiety, and the Case of the Deaf Lesbians” in *Feminist Disability Studies*
- Nancy Ehrenreich, “Surrogacy as Resistance? The Misplaced Focus on Choice in the Surrogacy and Abortion Funding Contexts” (116-122, RRR)
- Martha Ertman, “What’s Wrong with a Parenthood Market? A New and Improved Theory of Commodification” (299-306, RRR)
- Dorothy Roberts, “Race and the New Reproduction” (308-318, RRR)

For additional information on surrogacy in the Indian context, see the documentary film *Made in India: A Film About Surrogacy*.

**Class 15: Tues, October 31—Project Workshop Day**

**Assignment due:** Developed drafts of each of your project materials

**In-class activity:** All groups of students will give two other groups detailed feedback on every aspect of the written texts associated with their project.

- Prior to class time, please view the documentary *The Business of Being Born*

**Class 16: Thurs, November 2—Adoption**

**Assignment due:** Revised versions of your project materials, based on the workshop feedback you received from your peers. You will turn in your original versions, the comments from your classmates, and the revised versions. **Due Friday, Nov 3, 5pm.**

- Laura Briggs, “Introduction” to *Somebody’s Children: The Politics of Transracial and Transnational Adoption*

- Ana Teresa Ortiz and Laura Briggs, “The Culture of Poverty, Crack Babies, and Welfare Cheats: The Making of the ‘Healthy White Baby Crisis’” in *Social Text*
- Ann Fessler, excerpts from *The Girls Who Went Away*
- Aimee Phan, excerpts from *We Should Never Meet*

For additional information on international and transracial adoption, see the documentary film *Daughter from Danang*.

### **Class 17: Tues, Nov 7— Pregnancy, Birthing, and the Construction of Pain and Pleasure**

- Aly Patsavas, “Recovering a Cripistemology of Pain: Leaky Bodies, Connective Tissues, Feeling Discourse” in *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*
- Jennifer Musial, “From ‘Madonna’ to ‘Whore’: Sexuality, pregnancy, and popular culture” in *Sexualities*
- Lane Moore, “What It’s Really Like to Have an Orgasmic Birth” in *Cosmopolitan*  
<http://www.cosmopolitan.com/sex-love/news/a48889/orgasmic-birth-what-is-it/>
- Sarah Blackwood, “Monstrous Births: Pushing Back Against Empowerment in Childbirth” on *The Hairpin* blog  
<https://thehairpin.com/monstrous-births-3d666cda5030#.gbuqkralo>
- Laura Biel, “Millions of Women are Injured During Childbirth. Why Aren’t More Doctors Diagnosing Them?” in *Cosmopolitan*  
<http://www.cosmopolitan.com/lifestyle/a59626/birth-injuries-postpartum-pain-untreated/>
- Henrietta Aswad, “Checkpoints Compound the Risks of Childbirth for Palestinian Women,” a UNFPA Study  
<http://www.unfpa.org/news/checkpoints-compound-risks-childbirth-palestinian-women>

### **Class 18: Thurs, November 9—Project Workshop Day**

**In-class activity:** All groups of students will give two other groups detailed feedback on every aspect of the written texts associated with their project.

- Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, “Beyond a Woman’s Right to Choose’: Feminist Ideas about Reproductive Rights” (106-110, RRR)

- Kim Severson, “Thousands Sterilized, A State Weighs Restitution” in *The New York Times*  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/10/us/redress-weighed-for-forced-sterilizations-in-north-carolina.html?pagewanted=1&r=2&partner=rss&emc=rss&src=ig>
- Amy Westervelt, “Having it all Kinda Sucks” in *The Huffington Post*  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amy-westervelt/having-it-all-kind-a-sucks\\_b\\_9237772.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amy-westervelt/having-it-all-kind-a-sucks_b_9237772.html)

## V. Analyzing and Creating Cultural Texts: Translating Knowledge and Producing New Epistemologies

In this section of the course, we will explore the relationship between the analysis and production of cultural texts and will shift from being solely consumers of knowledge to further developing the skills required to put this knowledge to use. In so doing, you will deal with the complexities of putting nuanced intellectual ideas into practice. You will spend the majority of your time related to this class workshopping your project materials as well as those of your classmates, and, eventually, presenting your ideas to your classmates and to the world.

### Class 19: Tues, November 14— Social Reproduction and the Politics of Eating

- Claire Rasmussen, “Screwing with Animals: Industrial Agriculture and the Management of Animal Sexuality” in *Sexuality, Rurality, and Geography*
- Winona LaDuke, “Akwasasne: Mohawk Mothers’ Milk and PCB’s” in *All our Relations*
- Andrew Pollack, “Breastmilk Becomes a Commodity, With Mothers Caught Up in Debate” in *The New York Times*
- Atossa Araxia Abrahamian, “The Placenta Cookbook” in *New York Magazine*  
<http://nymag.com/news/features/placenta-2011-8/>

### Class 20: Thurs, November 16—Exam 2 and Project Workshop Day

**Assignment due:** Take-home essay (3-4 pages)

**In class activity:** After completing your quiz, you’ll spend the remainder of class time giving thorough and detailed feedback to one other group on every aspect of the written texts associated with their project.

### Class 21: Tues, November 21—Workshop: Creating a Collective Statement

What does a feminist reproductive justice politic look like? Who is it for? What do we do with it? How do we do something with it? What challenges do we experience when trying to craft a collective statement? What can we learn from this politically and epistemologically?

**Assignment due:** Journals

Final journal assignment:

Please return to the first journal entry you wrote for this class. **In a two page entry**, please answer the following two questions: How did your ideas shift over the course of this class? What were the top five ideas you learned or un-learned in this class?

**Thursday November 23**—No Class. Thanksgiving break.

**Class 22: Tues, November 28—Workshop: Creating a Collective Statement**

What does a feminist reproductive justice politic look like? Who is it for? What do we do with it? How do we do something with it? What challenges do we experience when trying to craft a collective statement? What can we learn from this politically and epistemologically?

**Class 23: Thurs, November 30**

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

**Class 24: Tues, December 5**

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

**Class 25: Thurs, December 7**

FINAL COURSE REFLECTIONS AND CELEBRATIONS

FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE

## Course Assignments and Descriptions

### **Attendance and Active Engagement (10%)**

Here is my hope: We collectively create the type of class where you want to come to class, you want your classmates to come to class, you want me to come to class, and I want you and your classmates to come to class. To create this space, we must show up (that's a given!) and we must be prepared and ready to thoughtfully and respectfully engage.\*\* **I expect that each of us will do ALL of the assigned readings for EVERY class.**

The course is structured so that we will use class time to address big questions and complex issues related to reproduction. In other words, our class discussions will provide the general frameworks that link the readings together, and the readings will provide specific examples from which we can examine these linkages and related questions. If you miss class, where we will collectively develop ideas about course content and questions, you will miss out on a significant part of the learning of this course—and this will be reflected in the quality of thinking you exhibit in your papers, tests, and projects. As such, your grade will reflect your attendance and participation. However, I will not take attendance—though **if you miss class and we do a graded activity (pop quiz, brainstorming, group work), you will not be able to make up these points.** If you have a reason that impacts your ability to be in class or complete course requirements, please communicate this with me PRIOR to class time.

\*\*Speaking in class is not the only way to actively engage in a course. If you are uncomfortable speaking in front of your classmates, please talk with me so that we can work to find ways that you might contribute your ideas to the classroom space and also identify alternative ways you might highlight your engagement with the class (e.g. by visiting me during office hours, organizing study sessions for you and a small group of classmates, emailing me thoughts about course readings prior to class, and so on).

### **Course Journal (10%)**

You will choose one of the academic course texts each day you are assigned readings/films to reflect on in a **one page double-spaced journal entry**. You are allowed to skip three days (excluding the first and final entries). You will also answer a prompt in your first entry (one page) and your final entry (two pages). As such, at the end of the semester, you will have 15 entries totally 16 pages of writing. Please number each entry. Please bring a hard copy of your journal entry to class each day. Please turn in all of your printed journal entries in a single folder. **I will collect your journals on 9/28 and 11/21.**

The goal of this assignment is two-fold: to help you push your thinking in preparation for class discussion and to offer you a space to practice the kinds of engagement expected in your course projects. As such, **you are expected to complete your journal entry prior to class.**

Please frame each entry as a conversation between you and someone who has not read the text, **taking great care to correctly articulate the author's main argument.** How

would you talk about this text with someone who has not read it? Sometimes your imagined conversation partner may agree or may not agree with the author's position, and for a variety of political reasons. Your job is to represent accurately the author's argument while also finding ways to connect with (an imagined) someone outside of this class. Examples of people with whom you might imagine (or really have!) this conversation include but are certainly not limited to: a stranger on a plane, your neighbor whose politics you do not know, a parent who claims to be "socially liberal but fiscally conservative," a taxi cab driver, a sexist/racist/classist/homophobic member of the College Republicans or College Democrats, a sibling, a close friend who does not believe in abortion but does believe in providing social welfare to the economically disadvantaged, an anti-abortion activist who you do not know, a Middlebury student majoring in the Sciences, a feminist activist on campus who organized a feminist event, an anti-abortion family member with whom you have a close relationship, your roommate who has/hasn't taken a GSFS course, an acquaintance who works for a reproductive justice non-profit, a GSFS major, and so on. In each of these cases, you should include a very brief (1-2 sentence) description of the person with whom you are engaging. What are their beliefs, their knowledge, their politics? Think about how these characteristics of your interlocutor as well as how the how your relationship with this person will inform how you talk about the ideas you're raising.

#### **Exam and Exam + Essay (40%)**

You will take one standard mid-term exam. You will also take a shorter second exam and, on that same day, turn in a 3-4 page take-home essay, responding to a question I will provide to you at least one week in advance. The exams and essay are meant to provide you with an opportunity to synthesize course content (including readings, discussions, activities). Should you miss an exam for any reason (with the exception of pre-approved absences or emergencies), there is no make-up. You may use hand-written notes on your exams, as well as your typed journal entries. **Exams will be on October 19 and November 16.**

#### **Translation Project**

One question students often ask is "What do we do with this information? How do we talk about this stuff with people who aren't in this class?" The translation assignment is your chance to build upon your journal entries to figure out how to address these questions. Translating course material is not a matter of simple conversion; indeed, your translation project should allow you to more deeply engage and think through course ideas, conversations, and texts—to think about these concepts in new and differently complex ways.

For this assignment, you will figure out how to talk about one specific reading or related set of ideas in a context other than our classroom. Your project will be informed by other course texts, and you can choose how you will make clear the linkages between these secondary course texts and your project. Possibilities for projects are endless. Use your imaginations! This context will determine the content of your translation. You might publish an Op-Ed, organize an event (a speaker, workshop, movie screening), launch a radio program. You might create a comic strip, a graphic novel, a series of blog posts or

memes, a music video, a zine, a podcast, a piece of art, or series of posts (and respond to the comments posted) using Twitter, Instagram, and/or Facebook. You might create a guide to understanding a complicated text or idea—think Cliffs Notes—and make it available online. If your medium (such as a photography exhibit) does not necessarily require that you spell out the theoretical underpinnings or political goals of your project, you will need to write an accompanying statement (such as an artists' statement) that explains your project through discussing it in relation to a particular course reading. A crucial aspect of this assignment is your drawing **SUBSTANTIALLY AND OVERTLY** from a course reading or set of ideas to create something new and to move our discussions beyond our classroom.

Because creating ideas and social change are collaborative processes, it makes sense that you would work collaboratively. Groups will be comprised of 3-5 students. You will complete all components of this assignment with your group. Please include all project components (including every draft) in the project portfolio.

**Getting started:** On **October 3**, you will come to class with three descriptions of ideas for course projects, each at least 200 words. You will turn in this assignment. That same week, **October 3-7**, you will meet with Professor Thomsen and Grace Morrison during extended office hours to discuss your ideas for course projects. Based on the in-class discussion, please come to this meeting with revised and updated descriptions of your ideas for your course projects. At our meeting, you'll turn in your original articulation, as well as your revised version.

**On October 17**, your group will submit a project proposal, timeline for completion of the project, a strategic plan for actualizing the project, and a group contract that spells out the duties of each group member. **A revised project proposal is due October 26.**

**You need to get feedback from me on EVERY component of your project**—big or small—before you share it with the world. (This includes emails, press releases, conversations, etc related to your project in any way.) **In order to get feedback from me, you need to have received and incorporated feedback from at least one other person** (a CTLR writing tutor, a classmate, a friend who is a good writer, and so on). When you're creating your timeline, **please build in one week for me to get you feedback** on each project component, time for you to make any necessary revisions based on my feedback, and time to get approval from me after submitting your revised version. Completing this project is a process, and as such, it cannot be done last minute.

You will submit multiple drafts of different components of this project and we will use some class time to workshop your materials. **The workshops are on: October 3, October 31, November 9, and November 16. Before you submit any of your project components to me, and prior to each workshop day, you need to submit your materials to at least one classmate outside of your project group for their feedback.** You will then incorporate their suggestions prior to the workshops and prior to submitting the revised versions to me. You may also want to schedule appointments with your classmates outside of class time to swap feedback. CTLR also is an excellent

resource. Writing is a collaborative process, and this project is structured to approach it as such. **You will submit revised project materials to me on Friday November 3, by 5pm, following the October 31 workshop.**

**You will present your projects to your classmates on November 30 and December 5. Final portfolios are due on December 7.**

Breakdown of project grade:

- Project Scaffolding—10%
  - You will submit a developed 3-4 page project proposal on October 17, and a revised proposal on October 26. In addition to a detailed description of your project, you will also submit a timeline for completion of the project (which is itself a sort of strategic plan for actualizing the project), and group contract that spells out the duties of each group member. When you are making your timeline, please plan for a week of turn-around time from when you give me your work until I return it with feedback. It is crucial you build that time into your timeline!
  - Thing to include in your proposal:
    - The text and argument, articulated correctly, that you seek to translate
    - Description of your project idea
    - How you will make this happen (work backwards and spell out EVERY task that will need to be done)
    - Why this project is important
      - To/for you
      - More broadly
    - The questions you will ask
    - The methods you will utilize
    - The sources you will draw from
      - Course texts
      - Outside research (not required)
    - Other people, groups, organizations, or institutions with which you will collaborate
    - How you will fund the project
    - Whether you are building on a previous idea/project or starting something new
    - Questions or concerns you have
- Project—10%
  - The project materials. We will workshop your project ideas and materials during class time. Please come to these classes prepared! Your classmates and I cannot possibly give you feedback on materials if you do not have any. Your engagement with the editing process will comprise a significant part of your grade.
- Formal Paper—10%

- In addition to conceptualizing and completing a project, you will also write an 8 page paper (plus bibliography) analyzing and describing the process of engaging this project. What is the academic argument you sought to translate? Why did you decide to translate this particular academic argument? What was the goal of your project? Who was your intended audience and why? What medium did you use and why? What challenges, achievements, personal and institutional barriers, and surprises did you experience? Did your project shift over the course of its life? How? In what ways did this assignment encourage you to engage differently with course material? What were the outcomes of your project? What would you do similarly or differently next time? What did you learn—about theory, about social engagement, about praxis—through this project? In what ways did this process encourage you to engage with course material in ways that were different from the classroom context?
    - You should answer each of these questions in the paper. If you cannot address each of these points within the time limits of the final presentation, just choose which aspects are most relevant to your particular project.
  - These are **INTELLECTUAL AND ACADEMIC REFLECTION** papers. As such, you should **REFLECT ON YOUR PROJECT** in terms of the course concepts and texts. You should make the argument you are translating central to your paper, and you should also cite at least five other course readings, explicating how these texts informed your project.
    - Depending on your project, you may decide to do additional outside research, although this is not required. In this case, you should cite additional sources, including academic journals, documentaries, books, some reputable websites and so on.
- Final presentation, portfolio, and personal and group assessments—10%

#### Presentations

- **Although these are FORMAL PRESENTATIONS, they should be FUN!** You are sharing with your classmates a project on which you spent the semester working!
- You must present on your project for 8-10 minutes. Not 4 and not 11. Practice your presentation in advance so you know how long it takes to communicate the information you want to share.
- Be organized, direct, and prepared. View this presentation as a persuasive speech in which you make an argument, rather than simply describe a topic. This is an opportunity to improve your public speaking skills.
- You may want to create a visual representation. This can be a hand-out, a pamphlet, a large poster, etc. If you need technological capabilities to show a blog or video that you made for the class, please let me know in advance.
- The goal: Help your colleagues further understand the course content and broaden your colleagues' understandings beyond what the course material can offer. Think about what additional goals you have for the presentation. Spell these out. **You**

**will turn this in with your final portfolio.** Questions to consider: who do you want this presentation to benefit? How can you package this information so that it is useful beyond our classroom? What would you need to do to make this information easily distributable?

- **Presentations will be November 30 and December 5. Portfolios are due December 7.**

#### Portfolio and Final Assessments

- Please include the physical manifestation of EVERY aspect of your project in a binder.
- This is the final representation of your project. As such, the aesthetics and organization of the portfolio is important.
- A grade and written assessment
  - The only item you'll turn in to me directly (outside of the portfolio) is a half page assessment you will write of your fellow group members and of yourself. What did each person in the group do? What was your role? What grade would you give to your partners and to yourself? Why? Your assessment should include a rationale for the grades you've articulated. The grades you and I assign could be vastly different.