Reproductive Health, Politics, and Inequalities

Prof. Eliza Brown (she/her)
elizaclairebrown@berkeley.edu
Office hours: Thursdays 2:00-4:00pm

Fall 2023
Thursdays 12:00-1:50pm
Social Sciences Building 402
Class #: 16943

Course Description
This course grounds the biological process of human reproduction in social processes and institutions. We will examine social scientific research on a wide range of reproductive topics, including contraception, abortion, assisted reproductive technologies, pregnancy, and birth. We will discuss how the politics of reproduction are shaped by the intersecting inequalities of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, disability, and nationality. This course includes readings about reproduction around the globe with particular attention to the current US context.

Course Objectives
After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:
• Articulate theories of stratified reproduction, reproductive governance, and reproductive justice.
• Draw connections between reproduction and broader social patterns.
• Conduct a research project expanding on course readings.

This class will be challenging on several levels:
• You will be expected to keep up with a number of readings for each class meeting. These readings will be challenging not only in terms of their length and number, but also in terms of the subject matter presented and the complex theories proposed.
• We will be speaking frankly about issues of race, ethnicity, class, disability, gender, and sexuality. Some topics may be challenging; you may find the subject matter difficult to discuss. Some of these topics will be graphic, controversial, or explicit. Frank discussions and presentation of material may include things that some find offensive or that differ greatly from your own experiences, preferences, and beliefs.

Office Hours
Students are encouraged to come to office hours (a one-on-one conversation outside of class) to discuss course material and assignments. You can book office hours at the following URL:
https://calendly.com/elizaclairebrown

Course Requirements:
All assignments should be double spaced, in 12pt Times New Roman with 1-inch margins.
All assignments should be uploaded to bcourses
Attendance and participation are not part of the grade. Your grade is solely based on academic mastery over the material demonstrated in exams and assignments. That said, a good seminar depends on high-quality student discussion, and you are encouraged to come to each class ready to actively participate.

Reading Memos
Due by November 30
I encourage students to submit memos throughout the course rather than waiting for the end of the semester to receive timely feedback on comprehension and writing.
40% of final grade
To assist you in preparing for discussion and your final projects, you will write 10 reflections/critiques of the week’s readings—you can choose which 10 texts you want to cover. Each memo should be 250-500 words. Memos should include a brief summary of the reading and then expand to questions raised by it.

In-Class Mini-Midterm
October 5
10% of final grade
This will be an in-class handwritten short midterm (think quiz) asking a few questions on the core concepts and readings covered thus far in class, such as reproductive governance and stratified reproduction.

Final Paper Abstract and Annotated Literature Review
Due October 26
15% of final grade
Your final draft should include an introduction of the topic, background information about the topic, and an annotated bibliography of 5 texts from class and 5 original sources. Original sources should be academic books or articles related to the topic of your choosing on reproduction. Good places to search for these sources include Google Scholar and JStor. Start by looking at who is cited in class readings, or who later cited the readings that we read in class. If for example, you are writing about egg freezing as a college graduation present (see below), then you should look for an article or two about egg freezing beyond the one assigned for class.

Midterm Reflection
Due November 9
5% of final grade
Based on the feedback on your final paper abstract and preliminary literature review, submit a 250-500 word memo on how you plan on revising your paper for the final. This might mean altering your topic, revising your research question, or finding more appropriate sources for your case.

Final Paper
Due December 15
30% of final grade
The final paper is on a topic of your choosing related to reproduction. There are many topics related to reproduction that we are unable to cover in class – menstruation, menopause,
postpartum care, holistic reproductive medicine, and more. You are encouraged to focus on a topic that we did not cover directly, delve in more deeply on a topic that we discussed (e.g., the shortage of sperm donors of color), examine a historical topic we discussed with a more contemporary lens (e.g., the contemporary development of birth control methods), or interrogate an element of a broader predominant theory in sociology of reproduction (e.g., the changing targets of medicalization within reproduction). The paper should include 10 texts from class and 10 original sources. It should include background of the topic, research questions, theoretical development, a clear argument, and supporting sources. You do not need to conduct any fieldwork or statistical analyses. It should be 12-15 pages, including references.

**Example of final paper topic and abstract:**

*Egg freezing as a graduation present?*

Over the past decade, every other year or so there is an Op-Ed writer or celebrity who suggests that egg freezing is the perfect college graduation present from parents. In this paper, I explore what it would mean for people to start freezing their eggs at much younger ages than has been typical (Brown and Patrick 2018). Building on Rene Almeling’s scholarship on how egg donation is framed as a gift, I argue that egg freezing can be understood as a parental gift because of gendered meanings of economic exchange. I show how this is the latest iteration on a longstanding historical practice of parents’ attempting to control their children’s reproduction, and of children feeling like they owe their parents a grandchild. I use the framework of stratified reproduction (Ginsburg and Rapp 1995) to speculate about the inequalities inherent in egg freezing as a college graduation present, and what the effects of this practice might be.

**Rubrics for all assignments are available on bcourses.**

**Required Texts:**
All readings will be posted on bcourses.

**Course Policies**

**Late Work Policy**

Because each part of the course builds on the other, it is important to submit all work on time. You will have one week after the posted due date of each assignment to complete and submit each assignment without penalty. After that, each week that the assignment is late will result in a reduction of 20% in the total points you can earn for the individual assignment.

**Honor Code**

The student community at UC Berkeley has adopted the following Honor Code: “As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others.” The expectation is that you will adhere to this code. Read the entire Berkeley Honor Code for more information.

**Collaboration and Independence**

Reviewing lecture and reading materials can be enjoyable and enriching things to do with fellow students. This is recommended. However, all assignments are to be completed independently and should be the result of one’s own independent work.
Incomplete Grades
Students who have substantially completed the course but for serious extenuating circumstances, are unable to complete the preliminary research paper, may request an Incomplete grade. This request must be submitted in writing to the instructor. According to the policy of the university, Incomplete grades must be made up within the first three weeks of the next semester.

University Resources and Policies
Accessibility
If you require course accommodations due to a physical, emotional, or learning disability, contact UC Berkeley’s Disabled Students’ Program (DSP). Please notify me via email of the accommodations you would like to use.

Sexual Violence and Harassment
If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support from an advocate through the Center for Advocacy Resources and Education (CARE). You can also report sexual harassment, sexual violence, or gender discrimination directly to the University’s Title IX Office, the Office for Prevention of Harassment & Discrimination 6 at ask ophd@berkeley.edu. Faculty can assist you in making a report or accessing resources as needed. Please note: All professors, lecturers, and teaching assistants are considered Responsible Employees under the UC Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment policy. This means they must notify the Title IX office following a disclosure of sexual violence or sexual harassment. For more information about mandated reporting, visit https://svsh.berkeley.edu/responsibleemployee

Economic, Food, and Housing Support
If you are in need of economic, food, or housing support, you can find help at The Basic Needs Center. You may be eligible for money to buy groceries via CalFresh. If you are in need of food immediately, please contact the UC Berkeley Food Pantry.

The UC Berkeley Financial Aid Office also offers Short-Term Emergency Loans, and provides a way to request a Cost of Attendance Adjustment. There is also an Emergency Rental Assistance Program, which aims to help stabilize housing for undergraduate and graduate students in emergency financial situations by providing them with a month’s rent.

Childcare
Student parents are eligible for up to 64 subsidized hours of subsidized BackUp Childcare per fiscal year. Any parenting students who cannot find childcare are welcome to bring their children to class.

Mental Health Resources
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): Individual, group, and career counseling for students, crisis drop-in, and after hours assistance.

Social Services (SOS): Counseling and case management for students presenting with alcohol/drug, sexual assault/rape, relationship or other violence concerns; chronic or newly diagnosed medical conditions, pregnancy, medical withdrawals. Support and resources for family housing residents at University Village.
Course Schedule:
*Please note that texts are listed in the recommended order for reading.*

Thursday August 24
**Class 1: What is reproduction?**

Thursday August 31
**Class 2: Contraception**

Thursday September 7
**Class 3: Reproductive Governance**

Thursday September 14
**Class 4: Abortion I: Having Abortions**

Thursday September 21
**Class 5: Abortion II: Providing Abortions**
• Rough Translation - Ukraine: The Handoff
   o https://www.npr.org/2023/02/02/1153779472/ukraine-the-handoff

Thursday September 28
Class 6: Stratified Reproduction

Thursday October 5
Class 7: Sterilization
• First ~30 minutes of class for midterm
• The remainder of class we will watch and discuss *La Operación*

Thursday October 12
Class 8: Reproductive Technologies
• Mamo, Laura. 2013. "Queering the Fertility Clinic." *Journal of Medical Humanities* 34: 227-239.

Thursday October 19
Class 9: Reproductive Work and Markets
• https://radiolab.org/podcast/birthstory-2301

Thursday October 26
Class 10: Reproductive Justice
Thursday November 2

Class 11: Pregnancy


Thursday November 9

CLASS CANCELLED - PROF. BROWN AT 4S CONFERENCE

Thursday November 16

Class 12: Childbirth


Thursday November 30

Class 13: Men’s Role in Reproduction