

# Sex, Science, and America

AMS 311/WGS 301

Fall 2018

## COURSE DETAILS

### Unique Numbers:

AMS 311: 31092

WGS 301: 45953

### Professor Info:

Anna Lyon



### Course Description

Sex and science have long been intertwined in America, with anxieties about national identity at the crux of these entanglements. In this course, we will trace the legacy of science, medicine, public health, and reproduction from the Antebellum to the present day, studying everything from medical experiments on enslaved women to egg donations in the 21st century. We will draw on a variety of sources, including fiction, film, histories, and primary documents from the past and present, using the topic of reproduction as an entry point for understanding America's longstanding anxieties about the race, class, and genetic composition of the nation's residents.

### Guiding Questions

How have scientific and pseudoscientific discourses been used to encourage and discourage the reproduction of certain groups?

Who has been afforded and denied reproductive rights in American history, and how?

Whose bodies have been used to aid in the reproduction of others, and how have cultural and scientific discourses explained and justified this?

How do these histories help us understand sexual and reproductive politics in the present moment?

How do scientific and medical discourses shape and reflect American culture?

### Expected Outcomes

By the end of the course, you will understand how the fields of science, medicine, and public health have influenced and responded to anxieties about race and class in America. You will be able to synthesize primary and secondary sources, as well as historical and contemporary sources, to make original arguments about American history and how it has shaped our current moment. You will also become practiced at critically analyzing nonacademic sources and pairing them with scholarly sources to make historically grounded arguments about events unfolding in today's world.

### Writing Flag Requirements

You will write regularly and complete substantial writing projects.

You will receive feedback to help improve your writing, and be given an opportunity to revise at least one assignment.

Your writing will make up at least one third of your course grade.

# COURSE POLICIES

**Attendance and Participation:** Each student may miss two class days without penalty. Please notify me if you are not going to be in class, regardless of the reason. Attendance will be taken each day, and the participation portion of your grade will be determined based on a combination of your attendance, your completion of the readings, and your commitment to elevating our class discussions.

**Excused Absences:** If you need to miss class for a religious holiday, or if you are a student athlete and need to miss class for official events required by your team, please notify me (by email) of the dates within the first week of class. Illness-related absences will be excused if a doctor's note is provided within one week of the absence. All other absences will be unexcused.

**Class Conduct:** Students are expected to be attentive, respectful, and polite to all classmates, instructors, and guest lecturers. Our course covers material that American society encourages us not to discuss openly, and therefore students should expect to feel uncomfortable and challenged at times. Please manage your discomfort in respectful and mature ways. Behavior that undermines our learning will result in a stern request that you leave the classroom and rejoin us only when you are ready to comport yourself gracefully.

**Electronics:** Phones and laptops must be turned off and stowed during class. Students who wish to access the readings on a tablet may do so, though printing them out is preferred. You may take notes in a notebook or tablet, though abundant note-taking is not necessary for success.

**Academic Honesty:** Your own work, even if you are doubting yourself, will always score higher than plagiarized work. You will be graded based on your commitment to understanding our course material, and to improving your writing over the course of the semester. I do not expect your work to be perfect, but I do expect it to always be your own.

Students who commit academic dishonesty will receive a 0 on the assignment and will be referred to the Student Judicial Services and the Office of the Dean of Students. Please visit the Student Judicial Services website for additional information: [www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/](http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/). Plagiarism occurs if you represent as your own work any material that was obtained from another source, regardless of how or where you acquired it. For examples of plagiarism, see [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis\\_plagiarism.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis_plagiarism.php)

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have SSD accommodations, please submit your official letter within the first week of class. If you need a disability accommodation, contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) through the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at: 471-6259 (voice), or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. For additional SSD information, please see: <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/>.



## Wellness Resources

- Counseling and Mental Health Center: <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>
- Women's Health Center: <https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu/womenshealth.html>
- STI Testing: [https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu/h\\_s\\_uhsstitesting.html](https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu/h_s_uhsstitesting.html)
- Behavior Concerns advice line: <https://besafe.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line>
- Student Emergency Services <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>
- Student Legal Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/lss/>
- Legal Aid for Survivors of Sexual Assault: <http://www.legalaidforsurvivors.org/>
- Gender and Sexuality Center (can assist with name changes): <http://diversity.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality/>
- LGBTQIA+ Health Resources: [https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu/HT/HT\\_LGBTQIAhealthcare.html](https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu/HT/HT_LGBTQIAhealthcare.html)
- LGBTQIA+ Scholarships: <https://www.affordablecolleges.com/resources/lgbtq-college-resources/#scholarships-for-lgbtq-students>

## ASSIGNMENTS

All written work must be submitted in hard copy AND on Canvas by the beginning of class on the due date. Extensions will only be granted under extraordinary circumstances. Detailed instructions will be provided as each essay is assigned.

<b>25%</b>	Class participation	To earn full participation points, each student must have no more than two unexcused absences, and must participate richly in class discussions. It is obvious when a student has not completed the assigned reading, and students who fall behind on readings will notice an unpleasant impact on their participation grade.
<b>15%</b>	Paper 1: Reading Analysis (Choose Paper A or B)	A thesis-driven paper of 3-4 pages. You may choose <b>EITHER</b> Paper A, engaging with <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> , or Paper B, engaging with <i>Killing the Black Body</i> . Both papers will also consider contemporary events, additional course readings, and outside scholarly sources. Prompts and instructions will be provided on the date assigned (see syllabus).
<b>15%</b>	Paper 2: Primary Source Analysis	A 3-4 page paper analyzing a primary source that we will view together at the Briscoe Center. Your paper must draw on course readings and outside sources. You will analyze the document within its historical context, and consider the questions it answers and poses for scholars. Prompt and instructions will be provided on the date assigned (see syllabus).
-	Paper Revisions (Optional)	Students may revise Paper 1 and/or Paper 2, incorporating instructor feedback. Please meet with me before revising. The grade for your revised paper will replace your original grade. Revised papers will be accepted through December 3 <sup>rd</sup> . If you are happy with your grades on both papers, you may choose not to revise.
<b>10%</b>	Final Paper Proposal	A proposal of how you will approach your final paper. 1-2 pages plus an annotated bibliography. This proposal will require you to investigate your topic, locate sources, and formulate a thesis, so do not expect it to be a quick assignment.
<b>25%</b>	Final Paper	5-6 double-spaced pages on a topic relating to sex, science, or reproduction in the United States. Students will use the analytical tools they have developed in the class and apply them to a topic that expands the scope of what we have covered as a group.
<b>10%</b>	Final Presentation	Students will give a 5-minute presentation of their final papers on one of the last 3 class days. The presentation should be planned and practiced, with visual aids and an engaging delivery.

- Please purchase or borrow *Killing the Black Body, The Handmaid's Tale, and Beloved*. From the other books, we are only reading excerpts. Those can be found on Canvas. Additional primary sources will also be found on Canvas.
- All course books are available through the Co-Op, Amazon, and the UT Library system.
- Readings must be completed by the day they are listed on the syllabus.
- The reading schedule may be subject to minor changes.



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**Become an egg donor**


Women between the ages of 22 and 30 can help make a woman's dream come true.

**Egg donors are compensated \$8,000**

Social security number required

For more information, please call our toll-free number



 **Columbia University**

## BOOKS

- Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Anchor Books, 1998. **Buy/borrow**
- Briggs, Laura. *Reproducing Empire: Race and Sex, Science and Reform in Puerto Rico and the Mainland United States, 1880-1960*. University of California Press, 1998. **Canvas**
- Davis, Angela. *Women, Race & Class*. Vintage Books, 2001. **Canvas**
- Ehrenreich, Barbara, and Deirdre English. *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: a History of Women Healers*. Black Powder Press, 2005. **Canvas**
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Vintage, 2016. **Buy/borrow**
- Parens, Erik, et al. *Prenatal Testing and Disability Rights*. Braille Jymico Inc., 2009. **Canvas**
- Roberts, Dorothy E. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*. Vintage Books, 2017. **Buy/borrow**
- Schwartz, Marie Jenkins. *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South*. Harvard University Press, 2009. **Canvas**
- Seaman, Barbara. *The Doctor's Case Against the Pill*. Dolphin, 1980. **Canvas**
- Thomas de la Peña Carolyn. *The Body Electric: How Strange Machines Built the Modern American*. New York University Press, 2005. **Canvas**
- Washington, Harriet. *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*. Anchor Books, 2006. **Canvas**

# COURSE SCHEDULE

Subject to change at instructor's discretion

## UNIT 1: Contemporary Reproductive Technologies

### **Wednesday August 29: Syllabus Day**

In class: syllabus, expectations, discussion, trigger warnings

Reading due: none

Assignment due: none

### **Friday August 31: Assisted Reproduction and the role of the donor**

In class: activity and discussion, **bring laptops**

Reading due: "How In Vitro Fertilization Works" (on Canvas)

Assignment due: none

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### **Monday September 3: Labor Day—NO CLASS**

### **Wednesday September 5: Gauging our ethical position on donor selection**

In class: activity and discussion

Reading due: none

Assignment due: none

### **Friday September 7: Legislating Assisted Reproduction—Cramblett v. Midwest Sperm Bank**

In class: discussion

Reading due: "White Woman Who Sued Sperm Bank Over Black Baby Says It's Not About Race"  
AND "Wrongful Birth and Wrongful Life Lawsuits" (on Canvas)

Assignment due: none

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### **Monday September 10: Legislating Assisted Reproduction—Baby M**

In class: Discussion, Paper A/B sign-ups, Final Presentation sign-ups

Reading due: "Baby M" AND "Traditional vs. Gestational Surrogacy" (on Canvas)

Assignment due: Look at your schedule for all your courses and figure out whether you want to do Paper A or B, and which day you want to present your final paper.

### **Wednesday September 12: Disability Rights and the Ethics of Genetic Testing**

In class: discussion

Reading due: Saxton Chapter (on Canvas)

Assignment due: none

### **Friday September 14: Disability Rights and the Ethics of "Wrongful Birth" lawsuits**

In class: discussion

Reading due: "A Wrongful Birth?" (on Canvas)

Assignment due: Get a head start on *The Handmaid's Tale*

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**Monday September 17: Paper A Assigned—Don't come if you're signed up for paper B**

In class: Paper A Writing Workshop **Bring laptops**

Reading due: Get a head start on *The Handmaid's Tale*

Assignment due: none

**Wednesday September 19: Power and Reproduction in *The Handmaid's Tale***

In class: activity and discussion

Reading due: *The Handmaid's Tale* (Sections I through IX)

Assignment due: none

**Friday September 21: Power and Reproduction in *The Handmaid's Tale***

In class: activity and discussion

Reading due: *Finish The Handmaid's Tale*

Assignment due: none

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**UNIT 2: Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

**Monday September 24: Purity and the Sexual Double Standard in the 1950s**

In class: videos and discussion

Reading due: none

Assignment due: none

**Wednesday September 26: Kinsey busts the Myth**

In class: video, lesson, discussion

Reading due: none

Assignment due: none

**Friday September 28: Final Paper Proposal Assigned**

In class: writing workshop: final paper proposal **Bring laptops**

Reading due: none

Assignment due: Be ready with one or two final paper topic ideas

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**Monday October 1: The Pill and feminism**

In class: video and discussion

Reading due: Seaman chapter (on Canvas)

Assignment due: **Paper A due**

**Wednesday October 3: The Pill and imperialism in Puerto Rico**

In class: discussion

Reading due: Briggs chapter (on Canvas)

Assignment due: none

**Friday October 5: Racism and the fear of unconsensual sterilization**

In class: video and discussion

Reading due: Davis chapter (on Canvas)

Assignment due: none

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**Monday October 8: Paper B Assigned—Don't come if you wrote Paper A**

In class: Paper B Writing Workshop **Bring laptops**

Reading due: none

Assignment due: none

**Wednesday October 10 (Indigenous People's Day): Contraception and coercion**

In class: discussion

Reading due: *Killing the Black Body* (Chapter 3)

Assignment due:

**Friday October 12: Killing the Black Body—Criminalizing reproduction**

In class: discussion

Reading due: *Killing the Black Body* (Chapter 4)

Assignment due: **Final Paper Proposals due**

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**UNIT 3: Sex, Science, and National Identity in the Progressive Era**

**Monday October 15: Nerves and Nervous illnesses in the 1800s**

In class: lesson and discussion

Reading due: De la Peña chapter (on Canvas)

Assignment due: none

**Wednesday October 17: Guest Lecture—Hysteria and Vibrators**

In class: guest lecturer: Andi Remoquillo

Reading due: TBA

Assignment due: none

**Friday October 19: Social Darwinism and negative eugenics—1880s**

In class: Briscoe visit sign-ups, discussion

Reading due: *Killing the Black Body* (Chapter 2)

Assignment due: none

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**Monday October 22: Twilight Sleep and positive Eugenics**

In class: lesson and discussion

Reading due: Ehrenreich and English "Women and the Rise of the American Medical Profession" (on Canvas)

Assignment due: **Paper B due**

**Wednesday October 24: Visit to Briscoe Center, Paper 2 assigned**

In class: view James Percy obstetrical casebook

Reading due: none

Assignment due: register online in advance, Bring ID

**Friday October 26: Visit to Briscoe Center, Paper 2 assigned**

In class: view James Percy obstetrical casebook

Reading due: none

Assignment due: register online in advance, Bring ID

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**Monday October 29: James Percy and the medicalization of birth**

In class: primary source discussion—James Percy casebook

Reading due: none

Assignment due: none

**Wednesday October 31: Paper 2 Writing Workshop**

In class: Paper 2 Writing Workshop **Bring laptops**

Reading due: none

Assignment due: Be ready with an idea of what you want to argue in Paper 2

**Friday November 2: Eugenics in America today?**

In class: synthesizing course material so far, preparing for debate

Reading due: none

Assignment due: none

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**Monday November 5: Debate: Is assisted reproduction a form of eugenics?**

In class: debate

Reading due: none

Assignment due: be ready for the debate

**Wednesday November 7: Writing Workshop—Final Papers**

In class: Final paper proposals returned, final paper writing workshop **Bring laptops**

Reading due: none

Assignment due: none

**Friday November 9: Final Paper Meetings and Writing Time**

In class: one-on-one meetings and writing time

Reading due: none

Assignment due: **Paper 2 due**

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**UNIT 4: Sex, Science, and Slavery****Monday November 12: Slave breeding**

In class: lesson, discussion

Reading due: *Killing the Black Body* (Chapter 1)

Assignment due: none

**Wednesday November 14: Enslaved healers vs. doctors**

In class: primary source analysis, discussion

Reading due: Schwartz chapter "Healers" (on Canvas)

Assignment due: none

**Friday November 16: Enslaved women and pregnancy**

In class: discussion

Reading due: Schwartz chapter "Pregnancy" (on Canvas)

Assignment due: none

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**Monday November 19: Medical experiments on enslaved people**

In class: discussion

Reading due: Washington Chapter (on Canvas)

Assignment due: none

**Wednesday November 21—Thanksgiving Break—NO CLASS (read Part 1 of *Beloved*)**

**Friday November 23—Thanksgiving Break—NO CLASS (read Part 1 of *Beloved*)**

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**Monday November 26: Motherhood and slavery**

In class: discussion

Reading due: *Beloved*, part 1 (p. 1-195)

Assignment due: none

**Wednesday November 28: Slavery and psychological trauma**

In class: none

Reading due: *Beloved*, part 2 (p. 199-277)

Assignment due: none

**Friday November 30: Sex, science, and power throughout American history**

In class: discussion

Reading due: *Beloved*, part 3 (p. 281-324)

Assignment due: none

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**Monday December 3: Answering the guiding questions of the course**

In class: wrap up discussion of all course material

Reading due: none

Assignment due: **Revision papers due**

**Wednesday December 5: Final Paper Presentations**

In class: presentations

Reading due: none

Assignment due: **final paper due if presenting**

**Friday December 7: Final Paper Presentations**

In class: presentations

Reading due: none

Assignment due: **final paper due if presenting**

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**Monday December 10: Final Paper Presentations**

In class: presentations

Reading due: none

Assignment due: **final paper due if presenting**

**NO FINAL EXAM**