

SOC 317: Reproductive Practices, Reproductive Policies

(Can Count as GSS Elective)

Block 1, 2018-19

Prof. Tori Barnes-Brus

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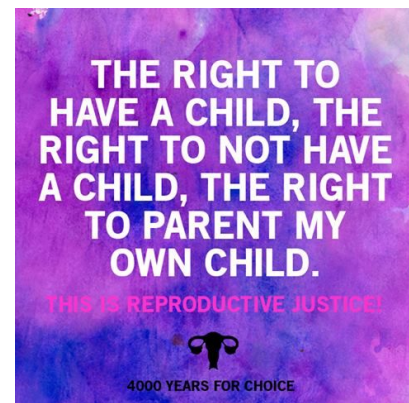
College Hall 211

Office Hours By Appointment

South Hall, room 18

Class Hours: Noon-3pm with additional morning sessions.

See Course Schedule



“To be clear, reproductive justice is not a label—it’s a mission.

It describes our collective vision: a world where all people have the social, political, and economic power and resources to make healthy decisions about gender, bodies, sexuality, reproduction, and families for themselves and their communities.

And it provides an inclusive, intersectional framework for bringing that dream into being.

Reproductive justice is visionary, it’s complex, it doesn’t fit neatly on a bumper sticker, and it has a lot to teach us about how to be successful in a changed and changing world.”

~Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas and Kierra Johnson¹

Course Description:

Contemporary understandings of reproductive practices, and the policies that govern them, generally invoke either a medical framework, one rooted in science and the “natural” or a moral framework which ascribes a hierarchy of worth to reproducing individuals and their (potential) offspring. Utilizing a sociological perspective of reproductive politics, this course explores the social construction of reproductive practices and policies in the contemporary United States and approaches reproduction as more than a biological imperative. Focusing on the ways in which women’s access to reproductive health and women’s decision-making regarding reproduction have been constrained based on their social location (i.e. gender, class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, ability, etc), this course invokes a reproductive justice framework. We will take a critical look at the way social authorities (institutions such as government, medicine, media, business) have advocated reproductive capacities for some people while limiting the reproductive opportunities for others- typically women of color, and queer individuals. Our analysis will investigate the ways in which reproductive control encompasses and intersections with various aspects of individuals’ lives.

In this course, we will investigate the ways that specific policies have shaped and influenced our understandings and practices of reproduction throughout American history. We will examine the norms and expectations for women’s reproduction, as well as the historical and contemporary movements that have restricted, contributed to, or advocated for reproductive justice. As such, this course emphasizes critical perspectives of governmental regulations surrounding reproduction, the medicalization of reproduction and the ways in which gender, race, and socioeconomic class affect women’s options surrounding reproductive practices such as menstruation, abortion, pregnancy, and childbirth.

As we move through this course, feminist theories of gender and intersectionality will guide our analysis of reproduction as we question the concepts of *choice*, *control*, and *authority*; examine social structures surrounding reproductive options; and investigate individuals’ experiences with reproductive decision-making. Many of the topics we will discuss are controversial and often evoke an emotional response. Our job in this class is to apply a sociological perspective as we examine and analyze the social patterns that shape various sides of an issue, not engage in a moral debate.

¹ [Beyond Choice: How We Learned to Stop Labeling and Love Reproductive Justice](#) (via [rhrealitycheck](#))

Learning Objectives:

After completing this course, students will have the skills to:

- ★ Describe the history of reproductive politics in the U.S., and place contemporary reproductive practices within historical/cultural context. (Knowledge)
- ★ Apply feminist and sociological theories to contemporary debates over reproduction, specifically as they relate to the debates about control and choice (structure/agency). (Knowledge, Inquiry, Intercultural Literacy)
- ★ Explain concepts and major perspectives relating to reproduction, including issues of reproductive justice and debates about childbirth, contraception, abortion, & midwifery. (Knowledge, Inquiry)
- ★ Articulate inequalities in the ways that reproductive health has been available based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and other social locations. (Knowledge, Reasoning, Intercultural Literacy)
- ★ Collaborate and share knowledge of media literacy (Reasoning, Communication, Citizenship, Ethical Behavior)
- ★ Demonstrate critical thinking, oral communication, and writing skills which strengthen our ability to understand, integrate, analyze, and communicate complex ideas. (Communication, Inquiry, Citizenship)

This course supports the Educational Outcomes and Priorities of the College with an emphasis on Knowledge, Inquiry, Reasoning and Communication. Intercultural Literacy and Citizenship are also addressed.

Course Information:

This course incorporates theory, history, policy, and empirical works. It has an average reading load of 70 pages per night. As such, it will require time, patience, and commitment to grasp the depth and nuance of the debates surrounding reproductive rights and reproductive justice. This means it is imperative for students to commit several hours a night to preparing for class so you are equipped and willing to contribute to the academic discussion.

As a student at a liberal arts college, you are responsible for your own engagement in the academic conversation. This means being a prepared and active participant. You must read the syllabus and all the assigned material, but as importantly, this means thinking critically, asking questions, coming to class having formulated your own ideas and responses to the course material, and engaging in dialogue with others. I will facilitate the discussion and lecture on concepts, but I also expect each student to develop, discuss, and express opinions and questions and actively listen as other students do so. You should not take this class if you feel that you are unable to (1) complete the required reading, (2) examine course material from an analytic, sociological perspective, and (3) engage in productive, challenging discussions in a non-combative manner.

Required Texts/Readings:

Solinger, Ricki. 2007. *Pregnancy and Power: A Short History of Reproductive Politics in America*. New York: New York University Press. (Noted on schedule as PP)

Ross, Loretta, et al. 2017. *Radical Reproductive Justice: Foundations, Theory, Practice, Critique*. NYC: Feminist Press.

Additionally, **required articles are available on Moodle**. Print these materials and bring them to class as we will frequently reference specific passages during discussion. Please let me know as soon as possible if you have any difficulty accessing the materials.

The following books are recommended and may be useful for the course.

Ehrenreich, Nancy. 2008. *The Reproductive Rights Reader: Law, Medicine, and the Construction of Motherhood*. New York: New York University Press.

Ross, Loretta and Rickie Solinger. 2017. *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Silliman et al. 2004. *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice*. Cambridge, Mass: South End Press.

Assignments and Evaluation:

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| Constructive Participation & Analytic Journals | 20% |
| Midterm Essay Exam | 30% |
| Research Project (Annotated Bib, Paper, Op-Ed) | 50% |
| TOTAL | 100% |

Grade Scale: I follow a traditional grading scale:

| | | | | | |
|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|----------------|
| A = 93-99 | A- = 90-92 | B+ = 87-89 | B = 83-86 | B- = 80-82 | C+ = 77-79 |
| C = 73-76 | C- = 70-72 | D+ = 67-69 | D = 63-66 | D- = 60-62 | F 59 and below |

Constructive Participation & Analytic Journals (20%):

Participation: This seminar class mixes lecture and discussion format and is designed to promote interaction and exchange. As such, each student must contribute to the academic conversation, and be actively engaged in the discussions taking place. This requires you read carefully and think about the assigned material before every class. No one—neither professor nor student—can participate effectively without having completed and contemplated the course readings. Be an informed participant—your comments should be related to the course material and should add to the topic being discussed. At the same time class discussion is a time to “think out loud” - to try out your ideas and work through your understanding of the issues at hand. Listen to each other with patience, empathy, and mutual respect. Respectfully share your ideas and be open to opposing perspectives. It is possible to disagree and still interact respectfully. I know talking in class can be difficult, but I expect each of you to set specific goals for contributing to the classroom learning community. You will be evaluated, in part, on the “quality” of your contributions in class. I will track students’ contributions to the class discussion as well as your responses and reactions to other students. Listening carefully, asking questions, and responding to what people have said demonstrates respectful engagement. On the other hand, arriving late, inattention, sleeping, talking to neighbors, texting, facebooking, and rude or disconnected responses all show a lack of respect for the members of this class and for your own intellect. I reserve the right to limit computer use if it is distracting or I feel that students are abusing this privilege. Participation may also be evaluated based on in-class group work or assignments. Throughout the block, students are expected to share information about current reproductive politics. On the last day of the block, students will share information about about contemporary reproductive justice initiatives/organizations. Being an engaged, vocal, and relevant contributor to the discussion is imperative for success in this course. Obviously, participation necessitates attendance, so be in class. Notify me of any college-sanctioned or pre planned absences in advance of the scheduled date. *Excessive absences may result in a failing course grade.*

Analytic Journals: Students will post a short analytic journal on the day's reading to Moodle. These journals will help you process your readings and prepare for class discussion. Journal entries are composed of a synthesis of the main ideas of all the readings, statement of theoretical framing in the readings, 1 discussion question, and a short reflection. Journals should **NOT** be a summary of the readings, but rather should examine the key issues of the day. Pose "true" discussion questions that require serious reflection on the material and encourage analytical, engaged discussion. Questions should not solicit simple summaries of the reading, simple pronouncements of opinion, or require significant factual knowledge outside of the reading material. We will use some of the questions generated in our class discussion so be prepared to discuss the questions that you pose. **Each journal must:**

- Identify and synthesize the main arguments/themes from the readings as whole;
- Summarize the key theory(ies) presented (or apply a theory to the readings if one is not presented);
- Pose a discussion question (see above);
- Reflect on the readings by offering a response to the discussion question, connecting the readings/theory to a real-world example, or explaining how the theory applies to the readings.

Reflections (~100-200 words) should integrate the major readings of the day, incorporate the overarching arguments and concepts raised, and illustrate how this material is relevant to in exploring the question you raise. This response should include direct references to course material (for example, by providing 1 or 2 quotes or examples from the assigned readings) and illustrate your engagement with this material.

There are 15 different reading topics, **12 journals are required for full credit.** Completing fewer 12 journals will negatively impact your grade and submitting fewer than 10 may result in a failing grade for the course, completing more than 12 journals may increase your participation grade. Bring copies of your journals to class in order to facilitate discussion. Journals are due at 10:30 AM for afternoon readings, 8 AM for morning readings. Late journals are not accepted.

Midterm (30%):

Students will complete a take home exam consisting of 1-2 essay questions requiring at least 750 word responses, each. Due on Sunday, September 2 at Noon via Moodle. Late papers may be penalized up to 5% per hour. The assignment will be distributed in class and posted to Moodle.

Research Project (50%):

Students will engage in a research project on a current reproductive health/justice issue. The project will require an annotated bibliography (due noon 9/2), 10-12 page research paper, and a 500-750 word op-ed. Both due at 5 PM on 9/19. Students will engage in several workshops to assist the development of the project. Completing all components of the projects is paramount for success, thus neglecting any components will negatively impact one's grade.

Policies:

Missed/Late Work:

Students are responsible for all assignments and materials covered in class, whether or not they attend and regardless of the reasons for absence. Without either prior approval or evidence of a serious emergency, late journals and make-up work for classroom assignments will not be accepted and other late work may be penalized. If an extension is needed, please consult with me prior to the assignment deadline. *Failure to turn in any of the assignments may result in a failing grade for the course, regardless of points.*

Course Accommodations:

[College Policy](#) regarding students with disabilities: Students who need accommodations for learning disabilities must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. Students requesting services may schedule a meeting with the disabilities services coordinator as early as possible to discuss their needs and develop an individualized accommodation plan. At the beginning of each course, the student must notify the instructor, ideally within the first three days of the term, of any accommodations needed for the duration of the course. I would appreciate hearing from anyone in this class who has a particular need related to this course. If you would like to request course accommodations for any reason, see me after the first class or make alternative arrangements to meet with me within the **first 3 days of the course**. While I am reasonably sure we can work out whatever arrangement is necessary, course accommodations should be discussed pro-actively before there is a failure to meet course requirements.

Academic Honesty:

College Policy: Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is their own work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Compass, under the heading "[Academic Policies – Honesty in Academic Work](#)".

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any student in this course who is involved in academic dishonesty (portraying another person's work or ideas as their own, submitting the same or similar papers in more than one course without permission from the course instructors, facilitating plagiarism, etc.) will not earn credit for the relevant assignments and may be formally charged with academic dishonesty, and could earn a failing grade in the course.

Additional Resources:

There are a number of resources on campus to support your academic work. I strongly encourage you to utilize the support of Jessica Johanningmeier, the Quantitative Reasoning Consultant; Laura Farmer and other consultants in the Writing Studio; and Rich Bergl in the Academic Media Studio and Meghan Yaminishi, Social Science Librarian. These individuals and offices can provide basic help as well as advanced guidance to help polish your research, writing, and presentation skills.