

Sociology 875

The Sociology of Reproductive Rights

Fall 2002

Professor Myra Marx Ferree
2458 Social Science
phone: 263-5204
e-mail: mferree@ssc.wisc.edu
Office Hours: Mondays 9-11 and by appointment

Course Description

This course is an effort to examine the law, practices and politics surrounding the exercise of reproductive choice in the US and abroad. While the extent of women's control is hotly debated in the US, it is not so controversial everywhere. In this seminar, we consider the ways in which issues of reproduction are part of national political projects, are historically situated in the understandings of social actors about themselves, their rights and their society, and differ and are debated among social groups.

Course Organization and Requirements

Class format: This seminar offers discussion-based examination of the readings in which class preparation and class participation is absolutely crucial. In addition to weekly participation in the seminar as such, all students are expected to be planning or moving forward with a significant piece of their own research related to this topic. Time will be allotted for class presentation and discussion of the projects you are working on or proposing.

Requirements:

- 1. Attendance and participation in class discussions:** Reading should be completed before the first class every week. For **any 5 weeks** (of your choice) you need to post a brief (250 words or less) reaction to that week's readings by 5 pm of the Monday BEFORE that week's readings are to be discussed. (25% of grade)
- 2. Thinking seriously** about the readings. For **any other 2 weeks** of your choice you need to post a more extensive but still short reaction paper (about 750-1000 words) that offers a summary of what you see as the main points of the reading and engages in some way with the author's point (or points). You can compare and contrast the readings of a particular week, use the week's reading to reflect back on an issue previously discussed, draw out the applicability of the argument for a situation with which you are familiar. Unlike the short reaction papers, these longer reaction papers should show some studied effort to think through a question or an issue that the author raises for you. Due by 5 pm of the Monday before the class discussion. (20%).
- 3. Class presentation.** For **one** class you are expected to present some additional reading in a concise form to supplement the reading assigned for that week. The reading you present should be taken from my suggestions for further reading and also reflect your own research and/or disciplinary perspective. The date and material that you will present will be arranged in the first few weeks of class. You should figure on 10 minutes to present and 10 minutes to discuss a

book, or about half that time to do an article (and then you would do two). (10%)

4. Seminar paper or proposal. This is the main requirement for the seminar. The paper should incorporate readings done in conjunction with the seminar as well as specific research focused on your specific topic. For most students, I anticipate this will take the form of a research proposal (i.e. a literature review leading up to a specific, answerable question, a methodologically sound plan for addressing that question, and a discussion of the significance of the answer) although students who have already had their proposal approved can work on the data collection or analysis phases of an ongoing project. I expect all students to meet with me several times to discuss their projects as well as to present them to the class as a whole (45%)

I have an extensive textual database (in Access) and SPSS files of data on approximately 2500 news articles and surveys of 100 organizations in Germany and the US concerned with abortion issues. Students who want to work with this data for a project are welcome to do so. The basic analysis of this data is available in Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards and Rucht, Shaping Abortion Discourse (Cambridge University Press, 2002) and the codebooks for the data are available at www.ssc.wisc.edu/abortionstudy.

Reading assignments.

All books have been ordered at *A Room of One's Own* Bookstore, 317 West Johnson St. (257-7888) and are on reserve at the social science library. Articles are available in a course pack from the Social Science Copy Center, on hard-copy reserve in the social science library (8432 Social Science) and on electronic reserve via MadCat.

Books ordered for everyone are those that we will read in their entirety. These are:

Nira Yuval-Davis, Gender and Nation

Dorothy Roberts, Killing the Black Body

Kristen Luker, Dubious Conceptions: The politics of teenage pregnancy

Celeste Condit, Decoding Abortion Rhetoric

Gail Kligman, The Politics of Duplicity

Helen Hardacre, Marketing the Menacing Fetus in Japan

Faye Ginsberg, Contested Lives

Wendy Simonds, Abortion at Work: Ideology and practice in a feminist clinic

I have also ordered (and placed on reserve) some copies of books that I think many of you will find useful:

Ferree et al. Shaping Abortion Discourse (Cambridge, 2002)

Susan Greenhalgh, Situating Fertility(Cambridge 1995)

Malcolm Goggin, Understanding the New Politics of Abortion (Sage 1993)

Outline of topics and readings by week

Sept 3 Organizational meeting and review of syllabus, discussion of possible proposal topics.

Sept 10 **Reproduction as a core element of state and society**

To read and discuss:

Nira Yuval Davis, Gender and Nation

Guiding questions: How is the construction of reproduction as a private@ itself a public@ issue of political philosophy and practice? Consider such key terms as liberalism, fundamentalism, family, autonomy, citizen. How would you define them? What are some of their implications for reproductive practice?

Related further readings:

Susan Sered, A>Woman= as symbol and women as agents: gendered religious discourses and practices@ Pp 193-221 in Ferree, Lorber & Hess, Revisioning Gender.

Rosalind Petchesky AFeminist ideas about reproductive rights@ Pp 1-18 in Abortion and Women=s Choice

Lenore Davidoff, ARegarding some >old husbands= tales=: Public and private in feminist history@ Pp 164-194 in Joan Landes, Feminism, the public and the private

Jean Cohen ADemocracy, difference and the right of privacy@ Pp. 187-217 in Seyla Benhabib, Democracy and Difference

Sept 17 **Reproduction as a matter of conflict and strategy**

To read and discuss:

Greenhalgh, Susan AAnthropology theorizes reproduction: integrating practice, political economic and feminist perspectives@ Pp 3-28 in Situating Fertility

Carter, Anthony, AAgency and fertility: For an ethnography of practice@ Pp 55-85 in Situating Fertility

Petchesky, Rosalind AFertility, gender and class.@ Chapter 1 (pp 25-66) in Abortion and Women=s Choice.

Rachel Fuchs and Leslie Moch, AInvisible cultures: Poor women=s networks and reproductive strategies in 19th century Paris@ Pp 86-107 in Situating Fertility

Gordon, Linda AWhy 19th century feminists did not support >birth control= and 20th century feminists do: Feminism, reproduction and the family.@ Pp 40-53 in Thorne with Yalom, Rethinking the Family.

Browner, Carol AThe politics of reproduction in a Mexican village@ Signs, 1986, 11(4) 710-724.

Guiding questions: How does making choices about reproduction involves issues of gender, class, power and opportunity as they are manifest in specific lives, in specific times, in relation to specific others? How do the 3 case studies illustrate and/or complicate the theoretical issues

presented in the 3 theory readings? What do such comparative and historical perspectives add to your perspective on Achoice@ and agency? What is the relation between cultural ideology at the macro level and lived experience at the micro level?

Related further readings:

Linda Gordon, Women=s Body, Women=s Right

Rosalind Petchesky, Abortion and Women=s Choice (rest of book)

J.A. and Olive Banks, Feminism and Family Planning in Victorian England

Dölling, Hahn & Scholz ABirth strike in the new federal states: Is sterilization an act of resistance?@ Pp 118-147 in Gal and Kligman, Reproducing Gender

Laslett & Brenner AGender and social reproduction: Historical perspectives@ Annual Review of Sociology, 1989, 15: 381-404.

Sept 24 Reproductive choices and alternatives in their social context

To read and discuss:

Kristen Luker, Dubious Conceptions

Guiding questions: To what extent does Achoice@ seem to be an appropriate word to describe the process of deciding to be a teen mother? When and how is conflict involved? With what agents (that Luker considers or not)? How does the Ateen pregnancy crisis@ relate back to concerns Yuval Davis discussed regarding national culture and reproduction of the nation? How does it relate to eugenic concerns, broadly understood? What does the interplay between national and local/interpersonal contexts look like in this instance?

Related further readings:

Rickie Solinger, Beggars and Choosers: How the politics of choice shapes adoption, abortion and welfare.

Gwendolyn Mink, The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the welfare state 1917-1940.

Rayna Rapp, Testing Women, Testing the Fetus: The social impact of amniocentesis in America

Emily Martin, The Woman in the Body: A cultural analysis of reproduction

Leslie King & Madonna Harrington Meyer AThe politics of reproductive benefits: U.S. insurance coverage of contraceptive and infertility treatments@ Gender & Society, 1997,11(1): 8-30.

Robert Plotnick A The Effects of Attitudes on Teenage Premarital Pregnancy and its Resolution@ American Sociological Review, 1992, 57(6): 800-811.

Lealle Ruhl, ADilemmas of the will: Uncertainty, reproduction and the rhetoric of control@ Signs, 2002, 27(3): 641-663.

October 1 The intersection of race and rights in contraceptive politics

To read and discuss:

Dorothy Roberts, Killing the Black Body

Guiding questions: Roberts is a lawyer rather than a social scientist B how does that shape her perspective or use of data? How are the policy issues Luker introduced changed by considering them explicitly from a framework of racial politics? In what ways does Roberts regard

liberalism and rights language as useful or not? How do the issues of agency, privacy, nationalism, and eugenics enter into her analysis?

Related further readings:

Rickie Solinger, Wake Up Little Susie: Single pregnancy and race before Roe v. Wade

Angela Davis, Women, race and class

Elaine Bell Kaplan, Not our Kind of Girl: Unraveling the myths of Black teenage motherhood

October 8 American discourses about abortion

To read and discuss:

Celeste Condit, Decoding Abortion Rhetoric

Ferree et al. AAbortion Talk in Germany and in the United States: Why Rights Explanations Are Wrong. @ Contexts, 2002, 1(2):27-33.

Guiding questions: How does American culture highlight certain kinds of reproductive issues and obscure others in practical political discourse? What is debatable and what is beyond debate in the American cultural context? Where does rights talk figure in? How do stories about abortion shape Acommonsense@ understandings of it? Is the Amiddle ground@ that Condit sees appear to be more or less culturally available today than when she collected her data? What do you think is the interaction between American (sexual, religious, consumer, etc) culture, liberal political ideology and policy (on abortion and other sexual and/or reproductive issues)?

Related further readings:

Andrea Press and Elizabeth Cole, Speaking of Abortion

Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards and Rucht, Shaping Abortion Discourse

Michele Dillon, AArgumentative complexity of abortion discourse@ Public Opinion Quarterly, 1993, 57 (3): 305-314.

Diana Meyers, AThe rush to motherhood: pronatalist discourse and women=s autonomy@ Signs, 2001, 26(3): 735-773.

Susan Bordo, AAre mothers persons? Reproductive rights and the politics of subject-ivity@ Pp 71-97 in Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body.

Rachel Roth, Making Women Pay: The Hidden Costs of Fetal Rights

Elizabeth Schneider AThe dialectic of rights and politics: Perspectives from the women=s movement@ Pp. 226-249 in Linda Gordon, Women, the State and Welfare, 1990

October 15 Japanese discourses about abortion

To read and discuss:

Helen Hardacre, Marketing the Menacing Fetus in Japan

Guiding questions: How are American and Japanese discourses about abortion fundamentally different? Who produces this discourse and how? What context does each give to thinking about women=s rights, choices, agency? How is each part of a larger picture of national culture and public policy? How do these contrasting discourses connect to other issues that are socially troubling in each case?

Related further readings:

Coleman and Steinhoff, Family Planning in Japanese Society

William Lafleur, Liquid Life: Abortion and Buddhism in Japan

Peggy Orenstein AMourning my miscarriage@ New York Times Magazine Apr 21, 2002, pp. 38-41.

October 22 Romanian policy and discourses about abortion

To read and discuss:

Gail Kligman, The Politics of Duplicity

Guiding questions: How does a repressive state context change the meaning of the boundary between public and private? What are the interests engaged in producing reproductive discourse and practice, both during and after the state socialist regime? How is propaganda to be understood in comparison to the culturally hegemonic discourses of (more) democratic societies such as the US and Japan? How well would you expect this case to reflect the experience of other state socialist regimes such as China (and why/why not)?

Related further readings:

Gal & Kligman, The Politics of Gender after Socialism

Gal & Kligman, Reproducing Gender

Susan Gal AGender in the post socialist transition: The abortion debate in Hungary@ East European Politics and Societies, 1994, 8(2): 256-287.

October 29 First round of discussion of student papers and projects.

November 5 Gender and social change B contexts for comparing reproductive politics

To read and discuss:

Kristen Luker, Abortion & the Politics of Motherhood, Ch 8 & 9

Chatterjee and Riley APlanning an Indian modernity: The gendered politics of fertility control@ Signs, 2001, 26(3): 811-845.

Susan Greenhalgh AFresh winds in Beijing: Chinese feminists speak out on the one-child policy and women=s lives@ Signs, 2001, 26(3):847-886.

Mira Marody and Anna Giza-Poleszczuk AChanging images of identity in Poland: from the self-sacrificing to the self-investing woman@ Pp 151-175 in Gal & Kligman, Reproducing Gender.

George Martine, ABrazil's fertility decline, 1965-95: A fresh look at key factors@ Population and Development Review, 1996, 22(1): 47-75.

Rachel Jones & April Brayfield ALife's Greatest Joy?: European attitudes toward the centrality of children@ Social Forces, 1997, 75 (4) 1239-1269.

Guiding questions: How are changes in the cultural representation and/or social location of women expressed and debated in the discourses around reproduction? How is this gender imagery (and reality) related to political and economic transformations that are not directly or obviously gendered? How are images of the nation and of women used to reinforce or to undermine each other? What is the role of states and politics in reproductive cultures?

Related further readings:

Tatlovich, The Politics of Abortion in the United States and Canada: A comparative study

Ann Orloff A Gender and the social rights of citizenship: The comparative analysis of gender relations and welfare states @ American Sociological Review, 1993, 58(3): 303-328.
Yuk-Lin Wong A Dispersing the "Public" and the "Private": Gender and the state in the birth planning policy of China @ Gender & Society, 1997, 11(4): 509-525.

November 12 Gender and social change - the struggle over abortion rights in the US

To read and discuss:

Faye Ginsberg, Contested Lives

Guiding questions: How does this case study cast light on the relation between social changes in the cultural representation of women in general, women's actual life chances, and the framing of abortion rights as a political issue? In what ways can the activists be seen as typical or atypical of wider American cultural concerns or political/economic conditions? Why does this specific issue seem to be more important to them than to most people? Who thinks there is a culture war @ going on and why do they think so?

Related further readings:

James Davison Hunter, Before the Shooting Begins

Laurence Tribe, Abortion: The Clash of Absolutes

Suzanne Staggborg, The Pro-Choice Movement

Dallas Blanchard, The Anti-abortion Movement and the Rise of the Religious Right

Rickie Solinger, Abortion Wars

Maxwell, Pro-Life Activists in America

November 19 Abortion as legal and illegal social practice in the US

To read and discuss:

Wendy Simonds, Abortion at Work

Guiding questions: What are the work and organizational processes through which the actual practice of abortion takes on social meaning for those who seek it and those who provide it? What role does the legal status of abortion play in shaping that meaning and for which social actors? When and how does the actual social practice of abortion enter into the local or national level debates about policy? What makes it easier or harder to discuss such social practices?

Related further reading:

Carole Joffe, Doctors of Conscience: The struggle to provide abortion before Roe v. Wade

Laura Kaplan, The Story of Jane: The legendary feminist underground abortion service

Treichler, Cartwright and Penley, The Visible Woman : Imaging technologies, gender, and science

Donnay, Bregentzer, Leemans, Verougstraete & Vekemans A Safe abortions in an illegal context: Perceptions from service providers in Belgium @ Studies in Family Planning, 1993, 24(3): 150-162.

November 26 Gender and social change B comparative abortion attitudes and political alignments in the US

To read and discuss:

- Halva-Neubauer, Glen A The states after *Roe*: No paper tigers@ Pp 167-189 in Malcolm Goggin, Understanding the New Politics of Abortion.
- Hansen, Susan A Differences in public policies toward abortion: electoral and policy context@ Pp 222-245 in Goggin
- Meyer and McFarlane A Abortion politics and abortion funding policy@ Pp 249-267 in Goggin
- Berkman & O'Connor A Do women legislators matter?@ Pp 268-284 in Goggin
- Paul DiMaggio, John Evans, Bethany Bryson A Have American's social attitudes become more polarized?@ American Journal of Sociology, 1996, 102(3): 690-755.
- Adams, Greg A Abortion: Evidence of an issue evolution@ American Journal of Political Science, 1997, 41(3). 718-737.

Guiding questions: How is gender politics competing with class politics today? How do debates over sexuality, gender relations, religion and abortion shape the political landscape for policy making in the different states? How are movement mobilizations around gender changing the relations between political parties? Changing the appeals from parties to their constituencies? How do popular understandings of gender relations feed back into elite politics? What impact is the struggle over reproductive rights likely to have on future political opportunities and issues?

Related further reading:

- Dorothy McBride Stetson, Abortion Politics, Women's Movements and the Democratic State: A comparative study of state feminism
- Jelen and Chandler, Abortion Politics in the US and Canada: Studies in public opinion
- Byrnes and Segers, The Catholic Church and the Politics of Abortion: A view from the states

December 4 Second round of student paper presentations, part I

December 11 Second round of student paper presentations, part II