ETHNOGRAPHY OF REPRODUCTION

Course Syllabus

Reproduction is a central issue in theories of gender stratification cross-culturally. Reproduction is both a most intimate topic for individuals, and one of great concern for states and international organizations formulating population policy. This seminar explores the meanings of reproductive beliefs and practices in comparative perspective. Our comparison focuses on (but is not limited to) ethnographic examples from North America and from sub-Saharan Africa (contrasting societies with relatively low fertility and high utilization of technology with those exhibiting mostly high fertility and low utilization of technology). Two themes run throughout the course to best examine the role of reproduction in social and anthropological theory. On the one hand, we explore how reproductive beliefs and practices produce and transform the multiple identities that define persons and groups (regarding gender, sexuality, culture/ethnicity, citizenship, and class). On the other hand, we investigate the relationship between reproductive beliefs and practices and the concept of agency. We look at the social construction of “choice” and choosers regarding decisions to conceive or not to conceive, to bear or not to bear children, and the timing of these events. We examine the topics of abortion activism, social vs. biological entry into motherhood, birth practices in relation to symbolism and racialization, infancy and sociability, indigenous theories of procreation and belonging, reproductive insecurity, infertility, assisted fertility, pre-natal diagnosis, coming of age in the neo-liberal sexual economy, stratified reproduction, and medical citizenship.

The class will be run as a seminar. A small amount of lecturing will accompany professor and student-led discussions. There is a lot of room for student input into the shape of daily class sessions. Prior experience in anthropology and either gender studies, medical anthropology, or African studies is assumed. Pre-requisites for the course are an entry-level SOAN course, and at least one upper-level SOAN or WGST course addressing issues related to health and gender.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Student Learning Objectives for this course include learning to: 1) Connect information about historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena; 2) Formulate appropriate anthropological research questions; 3) Select appropriate anthropological research methods and 4) Apply anthropological theory to analyze socio-cultural phenomena. For more on SOAN student learning outcomes, see: [http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/soan/maior/slos/](http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/soan/maior/slos/). This course also serves as one of WGST’s capstone options, and meets numerous WGST student learning objectives including: investigating how gender intersects with race, class, sexuality, ethnicity and citizenship; how gender, sex and sexuality are socially and historically constructed; and how discourses, institutions, and intellectual pursuits can be structured by gender.
REQUIRED TEXTS (available at bookstore)
All required article-length readings will be posted on our Moodle site. To help you with all your papers, and particularly with your final project, please consult the research guide for our course at the following URL: http://gouldguides.carleton.edu/soan395

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Attendance and Participation: This is a seminar class. Attendance is important because you are present and participating makes a difference in how both you and other members of this seminar learn. There are many ways of participating: questioning, commenting, listening carefully, and answering student questions or proposing new ideas. Think about the materials we are studying, your contact, and your responses. We should all honor and encourage these different forms of participation in each other. I hope and expect that everyone will participate verbally by at least the second week of class. It should be said that being present in class means that students should refrain from inappropriate use of electronic devices during class time. Finally, I am dedicated to making our classroom a respectful environment where everyone can participate comfortably. One part of this is that we should refer to everyone by their chosen name, the correct pronunciation of their name, and their chosen pronouns. Another aspect of respect is recognizing that this course may deal with difficult topics, and that what might be an obvious trigger for you may not be so for others, and vice versa. (10%) .

B. Discussion Starters: Based on your reading of assigned texts and the way you relate these to other readings or issues, prepare a small set of questions to start class discussion for a day. Each student will do this at least two times, depending upon the size of the class. (15% total)

C. Abstract-Response on two Robbie Davis-Floyd Chapters: For Thursday April 19, you should choose two of the remaining chapters from Robbie Davis-Floyd’s book to read. I aim to be responsive to your particular interests by giving you the opportunity to choose chapters by one of the most prominent (if sometimes controversial) figures in the anthropology of childbirth. Write a 150 to 200-word abstract on each chapter, and a brief response to the two chapters combined. Bring your two abstracts and one response to class (i.e., to our fieldtrip). The entire assignment should be 1 1/2 to 2 pages single-spaced. Due April 19 (Wk 4). (5%) .

D. Topic Statement and Preliminary Bibliography for Final Project: Hand in one paragraph describing the topic you have chosen for your final project (see F., below). Attach a ten-item preliminary bibliography, written in Chicago Manual of Style author-date version. Bibliographies should include both books and research articles from scholarly anthropological (perhaps also sociological, demographic, gender studies, and medical social science) journals. Please indicate which option you plan to choose for the final project. Due April 20 (Wk 4). (10%)

E. Book Reviews: After examining some examples of book reviews in professional anthropological journals, you will write a two to three page book review worthy of submission to a scholarly journal. I will give you a letter of request (as do journals) and a set of criteria to follow. The book you review should be a recent and meaningful anthropological work related to your final project. Due May 11 (Week 7), (15%)

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F. Theoretical Focus Statement for Final Project: Hand in a one page discussion of the theoretical focus you will use in your final project. What key questions regarding reproduction and social theory will you address? What is the relation between these questions and the empirical materials you are using in your project? At this time you should also finalize, in writing, your final project option. Week 8. (10%)

G. Final Project: Your final project should be on a topic of your choice relating to the ethnography of reproduction. If you wish, feel free to reach beyond the cultures and geographic areas dealt with in this syllabus. Keep in mind your own experiences and interests; I hope the work you do on this project will help you in other endeavors both at Carleton and beyond (e.g. comps, Fulbright applications, graduate school, non-profit work). While using sources from other disciplines is fine, and in many cases desirable, the project must use contemporary anthropological writing from prominent professional journals and presses. In evaluating the final project, I look for thoroughness and imagination in both topic development and library research skills, synthesis of materials, critical analysis, and use of anthropological concepts.

There are two options for your final project, both of which require similar, and extensive, library research. Option One is a fifteen to twenty page term paper. Option Two is a ten page research proposal (submittable to a major funding source, such as the Social Science Research Council or the National Science Foundation, accompanied by an extensive annotated bibliography. Specific guidelines for the research proposal will follow early in the term. Due Wednesday, May 31, at 4:00 p.m. (30%)

H. Oral Presentation of Final Project: The last class session will be devoted to oral presentations of the final projects. We will run this session as a professional workshop. Paper writers will “teach” their topic to the class, through formal presentation followed by Q/A discussion. Proposal writers will similarly present their proposals in a mock research funding interview. The rest of the class will serve as a panel of NSF, SSRC or Fulbright reviewers, generating a Q/A discussion. (5%)

I. Academic honesty: Cite correctly (using Chicago Manual of Style author-date style located on their website) and do not plagiarize (see http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/).

J. Citation norms: You are required to follow Chicago Manual of Style author-date citation style (guideline in syllabus). This is part of professional practice: this is what anthropologists now use, and because this is an anthropology seminar, you will write like an anthropologist. See “Citing Like An Anthropologist.”

K. Deadlines and accommodations: If you have disabilities or other concerns that affect your ability to participate fully in class or to meet all course please bring this to my attention at the beginning of term and see the “Helpful Information” section regarding how to arrange a confidential discussion with Chris Dallagher to insure equitable access and reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. The Dean of Students strongly encourages Carleton faculty to wait for official notification of accommodations before modifying course requirements for students. I thus appreciate it if you seek accommodations so the office can notify me early in the term. Students with any other concerns needing special consideration should also bring this to my attention early in the term.

Deadlines are deadlines, including presentations for which you have signed up. Nonetheless, if you talk to me beforehand about extenuating circumstances, I am not an ogre and will accommodate your needs by negotiating a new due date within the realm of fairness. Departmental policy is to subtract one letter grade per assignment for each day that assignment is late.

CITING LIKE AN ANTHROPOLOGIST (CMOS Author-Date citation style)

In papers for this and other anthropology classes, you should use the correct citation style, following common practice in professional scholarly journals. This means you need to cite, both in the text and in a section titled “References Cited” following the text, works from which you have drawn ideas as well as works you quote. Anthropologists use the author-date style in the Chicago Manual of Style, which can be located on their website.

In the course of your text, you should cite authors whose ideas you use with their last name and the date of publication; you can even include more than one citation if you got the idea from more than one source (Ginsburg 1989; Ginsburg and Rapp 1991). If you quote an author, e.g. that “the powers of village women...[do not] provide women with the last word” (Harding 1975, 308), you must include the page number(s). Note the placement of punctuation, and that the citation and period/comma are outside of the quotation marks.


References Cited (please, not “Bibliography” or “Works Cited”), placed starting on a new page at the end of your text, includes only publications cited in the text. All entries must be listed alphabetically by last name of author, and chronologically arranged for two or more titles by the same author. The layout should be as follows:

1a) for a journal article, showing the volume and issue numbers, and page numbers:

1b) If you find and read/download the journal article from an online source, include the DOI (Digital Object Identifier) if the journal lists one. A DOI is a permanent ID that, when appended to http://dx.doi.org/ in the address bar of an Internet browser, will lead to the source. If no DOI is available, list a URL. Include an access date.

2) for a chapter in a book of collected essays (Author. date. “chapter title.” In Book Title, edited by Editors, pages. Place of Publication: Publisher.):

3) for a book (title is capitalized; date, place of publication [use the first one listed], and publisher all included):

4) for an article in a newspaper or popular magazine (include the issue and page numbers if using print versions):

5) for website content, include as much of the information you’d need for a printed publication’s citation as possible (including author’s name, date of publication, title, publisher), followed by the URL of the site you are citing. Because such content is subject to change, include an access date or, if available, a date that the site was last modified. In the absence of a date of publication, use the access date or last-modified date as the basis of the citation:

Following this style is a requirement. Ask if you have questions.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

Office Hours
I encourage students to see me during my office hours at least once during the first two weeks of the term. After that, please continue to make use of my scheduled office hours. I am there for you! Click here to sign up for OFFICE HOURS. If you cannot come during my normal office hours, please e-mail me about scheduling another time.

Ask a Librarian
Ask a librarian—especially our social science superhero specialist librarian Kristin Partlo—for help with your research in this class. You can drop by the library’s Research/IT desk to ask any question you have, at any point in your process. Librarians help students find and evaluate articles, books, websites, statistics, data, government documents, and more. For more information on hours and librarians, visit the Gould Library website at go.carleton.edu/library.
Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Services office (Burton Hall 03) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, sensory, or physical), please contact Chris Dallager, Director of Disability Services (507-222-5250; edallager@carleton.edu) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

The Writing Center
I urge all students to utilize The Writing Center, located in 420 4th Libe; it has peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours and more information can be found on the writing center website. You can reserve specific times for conferences in 420 4th Libe by using their online appointment system. Walk-ins are welcome, though writers with appointments have priority.

Writing Assistance for Multilingual Writers
If you are a second language or multilingual writer and believe you might benefit from working individually with a writing consultant on a regular basis this term, email Renata Fitzpatrick, Multilingual Writing Coordinator, call her at x5998, or stop by her office in 420D 4th Libe. She can arrange once- or twice-a-week meetings between you and a specific writing consultant throughout the term.

Public Speaking (think ahead to oral presentations)
Speech coaching is a student-staffed resource designed to assist you with class presentations, comp talks, and other speech-related events. Your coach can assist you with speech & communication skills including clarity, organization, articulation, projection, body language, eye contact, and effective use of aids (e.g., notes, PowerPoint, Keynote). Depending on your goals, your coach can also work with you on the content of the presentation: organization, voice, clarity, and, ultimately, persuasive impact. Individuals and groups are welcome to request a speech coach by completing a brief, online form. The speech coach will meet you at a mutually convenient time and place. For more information, visit go.carleton.edu/speakeasy.

Time Management
All Residential Life Area Directors are trained to work with you to improve your time management and academic skills. Their goals are to heighten your awareness of your personal strengths and skills and to offer different ways you can approach your academic work so you're more efficient and effective. Meetings are by appointment; you simply need to email one of them to arrange a visit. For details and resources: Academic Skills Coaching website.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

SUMMARY OF TOPICS
Theorizing Reproduction
Abortion: Reproductive Rights and Choices
Entry into Social vs. Biological Motherhood
Birth, as a Rite of Passage and as a Site of Racialization
Reproducing the Culture of Infancy
Stratified Reproduction: Care Work, Gender/Sexuality, and Distributed Parenting
Reproductive Insecurity and Affective Circuits: Transnational Mothers
Coming of Age/Imagining the Future in the Neoliberal Sexual Economy
DAY BY DAY READINGS AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

Week 1
T Mar 27  Introduction

Th Mar 29  Theorizing Reproduction
In what ways are human and social reproduction distinctive, and in what ways do they relate to each other? What is the relationship between human reproduction and social identities? What is the relationship between human reproduction and gender stratification? With what different perspectives have anthropologists approached the issue of reproduction?


Week 2
T Apr 3  Abortion
Abortion has been the focus of women's struggle for reproductive choice and reproductive rights in the U.S. in recent years. This book focuses particularly on the role of personal life histories in becoming a “pro-choice” or “pro-life” activist. What links can you discern between the reproductive life stories of these Fargo activists and broader issues regarding the relationship between human reproduction and social reproduction? Does anthropology offer any tools in seeking a middle ground in this increasingly polarized debate?


Th Apr 5  Abortion II
What different voices can we discern regarding the risks of reproduction and women's disproportionate burden? How is gender stratification differently construed by activists on both sides of the abortion rights debate? How does the issue of abortion bring the relationship between human reproduction and assumptions about gendered roles in social reproduction into sharp relief? Can we fruitfully connect abstract and aggregate notions such as social reproduction to the concrete particulars of Ginsburg's life history approach?


Week 3
T Apr 10  Entry into Social vs. Biological Motherhood
Culturally ideal life courses as well as an individual’s reproductive goals are often quite different from the messiness of actual life histories, which nonetheless get patterned into demographic “facts” and “reproducible” social structures. What are the contingencies that shape young Cameroonian women’s entry in social motherhood? How do the concepts of vital conjunctures and horizons help us understand not only the relationship between education and fertility in Cameroon, but also pathways to becoming an activist in the U.S. abortion debate (cf. Ginsburg)?

Th Apr 12  Entry into Social vs. Biological Motherhood II
In what ways can ethnography best be used to address political and policy implications of demographic "facts," such as the relationship between education and fertility? In what ways can quantitative demographic work (e.g., on patterns of spacing between first and second births, or on contraceptive use and abortion) inform ethnographic work on the locally-bounded lived experience of reproductive processes?


Week 4
T Apr 17  Birth as Rite of Passage
In what ways do the experience and social organization of birth serve as a rite of passage? In this segment we explore the role of birth, especially first births, in the creation and transformation of identities.


Possible Film Selections: The Business of Being Born

Th Apr 19  Birth Models, Birth Settings, and Hegemony-Resistance
Fieldtrip to First Touch Birth Center, Northfield Hospital
Continuing our exploration of the role of birth in the creation and transformation of identities, what other identities—cross-cutting with gendered identities—are formed through the birthing process? How is birth a site of control, hegemony, and resistance? Does this change when alternatives to hospital birth are created within the American context?

Please come to class with questions for Lisa Bauer, Director of the First Touch Birth Center, and with open eyes about Labor and Delivery at Northfield Hospital. Please keep in mind that as the director of a hospital-based birth center, Ms. Bauer may not share Davis-Floyd's point of view regarding birth as a site of control, hegemony, and resistance. We should keep an open mind and be eager to learn about multiple perspectives.

Davis-Floyd, R. 2018. Ways of Knowing About Birth: Mothers, Midwives, Medicine and Birth Activism. Long Grove: Waveland. (Choose two remaining chapters to read; write a 150 to 200-word abstract on each chapter, and a brief response to the two chapters combined. Bring this to class.)

F Apr 20  Topic statement and preliminary bibliography due, 5:00 pm, electronic submission
**Week 5**

T Apr 24  **Pregnancy and Birth as Sites of Racialization: Class**
While Davis-Floyd focuses on the formation of gender identities through the interaction rituals in American hospital birth, what happens when we take race and class into serious consideration? How do doctors and other medical professionals perceive their patients when they are low-income, and/or women of color?


**Possible Film Selections: All My Babies**

Th Apr 26  **Pregnancy and Birth as Sites of Racialization: “Race”**
How does race influence medical care, particularly during pregnancy and birth, and particularly in public health care institutions? What effect does racialization surrounding pregnancy and birth have on the maternal, gender, racial, and class identities of the pregnant black women at Alpha Hospital? What does this book reveal regarding the relationship between human reproduction and social reproduction?


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**Midterm Break**

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**Week 6**

T May 1  **Reproducing the Culture of Infancy I**

**Guest speaker:** Kristin Partlo (on book reviews): 30 min.
Moving our focus from mothers to babies, how does birth, quite literally, serve as a “passage” between different identities? How do religion and practical action combine to reproduce Beng identities?


Th May 3  **Reproducing the Culture of Infancy II**

Why is stranger anxiety so rare in Bengland? What do “memories” of wugbe tell us about the colonial and post-colonial experience? How do mundane activities of caring for infants shape multilayered visions of belonging, through time and space?

Week 7

T May 8  
**Stratified Reproduction I: Carework and Distributed Parenting, at Both Ends of the Life Course**

How do issues of racialization and class described by Bridges for Alpha Hospital in the U.S. play out for African and Caribbean migrants, and other people of color, in other settings transnationally? How do the global, national, and personal politics of care work intersect with notions of rites of passage, hegemony, and agency that we explored in Davis-Floyd’s book? In what ways does the concept of stratified reproduction shed light on the division of household—and particularly care-giving—labor in black, lesbian families in the U.S. and among aging Ghanaian migrant care workers who return to Ghana?


Th May 10  
**Stratified Reproduction II: Gender, Sexuality, and the “Moral Calculus” of Parenthood**

How do gender, sexuality, and money figure into the “moral calculus” of parenthood (and parenting) in the U.S. and Nigeria? What is being reproduced, and what is being resisted and/or transformed, by these forms of parenting? What do we discover about stratified reproduction and distributed parenting by attending to (gay and straight) fatherhood as well as motherhood?


F May 11  
**Book reviews due, 5:00 p.m., electronic submission**

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Week 8

T May 15  
**Reproductive Insecurity and Affective Circuits: Transnational Mothers I**

How is insecurity concerning human reproduction related to insecurity regarding the reproduction of a sense of cultural distinctiveness and group identity? In other words, about what aspects of reproduction do migrant mothers feel insecure? How do migrant mothers manage their emotion-laden ties to kin (and others) when bearing and raising children?

Th May 17 Reproductive Insecurity and Affective Circuits: Transnational Mothers II
What kinds of ties do mothers maintain to migrant community organizations and to representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations? What flows along these types of connection, and how do migrant mothers manage these flows or exchanges? What is the consequence of mothering for migrant women’s (and their children’s) citizenship (therapeutic, cultural, and political/legal)? More broadly, can the anthropology of reproduction be fruitfully related to political anthropology (e.g. the politics of belonging/primary patriotism), and to concepts such as legal consciousness?
Feldman-Savelsberg, Pamela. 2016. Mothers on the Move: Reproducing Belonging between Africa and Europe. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Ch. 5-6, pp. 128-208.)

F May 18 Theoretical focus statement due! 5:00 p.m., electronic submission

Week 9
T May 22 Coming of Age/Imagining the Future in the Neoliberal Sexual Economy I
These five chapters provide the macro-level context of Malagasy society and historical change without which the central arguments of Cole’s book cannot be understood. How does Cole’s concept of “disembedding” differ from more familiar stage theories of modernization? How do the categories “youth” and “jeunes” differ in Malagasy usage? How can we connect Johnson-Hanks’ concepts of vital conjunctures and horizons, and Ginsburg’s approach to life histories to Cole’s analysis of the changing social economy of the female life course and imagined futures?

Th May 24 Coming of Age/Imagining the Future in the Neoliberal Sexual Economy II
What was/is your emotional reaction to Cole’s materials on love, maternal sentiments, and money? How do you understand them intellectually, thinking of such phenomena as the globalization of companionate marriage, the political economy of marriage migration, and the concept of stratified reproduction? How does love link human and social reproduction? What does love mean, anyway?

Week 10
T May 29 Final Project Presentations
W May 30 Final Project Due, by 4:00 p.m. in my office, Leighton 233, and electronically.

♀️Have a Wonderful Summer♀️
Selected Supplemental Recommended Readings

Theorizing Reproduction

Abortion

Entry into Social vs. Biological Motherhood
There is also a growing literature on entry into parenthood for queer men and women. Some of which we are reading under the rubric “stratified reproduction.” To explore this topic further, see two books by Ellen Lewin, and an article by SOAN’s own Liz Raleigh:

Birth

Infancy

**Stratified Reproduction (see also transnational parenting, below)**


**Reproductive Insecurity**


**Transnational Parenting**


**Coming of Age in the Neoliberal Sexual Economy**