

History of American Reproductive Politics
AS 100.319



“The Female Abortionist.” *National Police Gazette* 9, no. 27 (March 13, 1847).

Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:30 – 11:45 AM
Spring 2021

Instructor: Brooke Lansing
cblansing@jhu.edu
Office hours: by appointment online

This syllabus is subject to change at instructor’s discretion.

Course Overview

This course offers a history of reproductive politics in the United States from the colonial era through the present. “Reproductive politics” are considered through two broad lenses: people’s everyday practices regarding fertility and family formation, and how social, political, and religious authorities regulate reproduction. We will examine these topics in primary and secondary sources that take us through a survey of American history, paying attention to the impact of gender, class, and race on the possibilities and limitations of reproduction. Questions that will be considered in this course include: Who is allowed to reproduce, and who is allowed to constitute family? How does reproductive control carry different meanings across centuries, or even decades? How do historians discern those meanings for different actors? How is reproductive control related not only to gender, but also to race and class in the United States?

Note that this course covers a number of topics of a sensitive nature, including violence, emotional strain, and graphic descriptions of bodily or medical situations. Students are welcome to discuss any concerns with the instructor in advance.

Course Goals

At the completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand how reproduction is a socially, culturally, and politically contingent process
- Gain knowledge of women’s and gender history
- Interpret and develop arguments about primary sources in writing and speech
- Identify arguments in and evaluate secondary sources
- Think and write critically about current events using historical analysis

Course Requirements

The course is organized into two discussion-based seminar per week, with short lectures at the instructor’s discretion. Doing well in this course requires closely reading the assigned material, participating in discussion, and completing writing assignments.

You will need an Internet-enabled device by which you can log on to class sessions via Zoom. You are strongly encouraged to keep your camera on during class, but the instructor understands these are difficult times and that is not always possible.

Grading:

Grades will be determined as follows:

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Response Posts & Papers: 15%

Midterm Paper: 10%

Midterm Presentation: 10%

Annotated Bibliography: 15%

Final Presentation: 10%

Final Paper: 20%

Blackboard

The Blackboard website has the syllabus and a link to the reserve readings. To access the website, go to: <http://blackboard.jhu.edu>. Login using your JHED ID and select the course.

You will also upload your written assignments to Blackboard (see below).

Readings

You will find a link to course readings on EReserves on the library's website at <https://www.library.jhu.edu/library-services/course-readings/>. They are also linked via Blackboard. Please be advised that the total number of weekly pages may not be evenly divided between sessions.

Weekly Writing Assignments

Pre-class Blackboard posts: Post a short response (100-250 words) to the readings by 11:59 PM the night before the seminar occurs (by 11:59 PM on Monday night for Tuesday's session; 11:59 PM on Wednesday night before Thursday's session). Do this every week **except the weeks for which you choose or are required to write long reading response papers.**

There is an extra, mandatory discussion thread between Week 3 and 4 for which you are required to write a short response to one Zoom session for the Critical Conversations on Reproductive Health/Care Conference.

Long reading response papers: pick four weeks during the semester **prior to Week 9** for which you will upload a response paper of 300-500 words to Blackboard by 7:00 PM on Monday night (i.e., before Tuesday's seminar has occurred). **In addition to the three of your choice, a response paper for Week 10 is mandatory.** You do not have to post pre-class Blackboard posts during the weeks you write a long reading response paper.

An effective response paper will not simply summarize the readings, but show critical thinking about them. Use response papers as opportunities to exercise your skills as a historian: you might discuss an author's claim that you agree or disagree with; discuss how and why authors contradict or otherwise relate to one another; or put a primary source in conversation with a secondary source. You might also take the time to reflect on something that surprised or evoked emotion in you. These papers are important as opportunities for the instructor to provide substantive feedback on your writing and historical analysis.

Missed post policy: you may miss two pre-class Blackboard posts, no questions asked, during the semester. If you complete all 22, the two lowest scores will be dropped. 20 posts will be graded per student.

Midterm Writing and Presentation Assignment

Write a five-page analysis of a primary source of your choosing that is relevant to the themes of the course. Upload to Blackboard prior to the start of class in **Week 5**. You will then present on the primary source and your analysis for five to seven minutes during Week 5's class time, with five minutes allotted for questions from your peers.

We will discuss how to find a relevant source in class. Suggested databases for finding primary sources are:

- 19th Century Index
- Chronicling America: America's Historical Newspapers
- Gerritsen Collection--Women's History Online, 1543-1945
- North American Women's Letters and Diaries: Colonial to 1950

Databases are accessible via Sheridan Libraries at:
<http://databases.library.jhu.edu/databases/subject/history>.

Final Project

Part 1: Annotated Bibliography

In lieu of a response paper for **Week 11**, you will upload to Blackboard by the start of Thursday's class an annotated bibliography of sources that you will use for the final project.

Part 2: Research Paper

Issues of reproductive control remain a pressing part of modern American culture and politics. Given your expertise in the subject after taking this course, legislators have chosen you to advise them on creation of policy related to reproduction, contraception, and family formation. Select a modern issue on which to write a 10-15 page brief, explaining the topic and its relevant historical background.

Possible topics include:

- Overturning *Roe v. Wade*
- Parental consent for obtaining abortion or contraception
- Patenting mail-order contraception or the availability of over-the-counter contraception
- Federal policy including funding for the abortion (or the "gag rule")
- Employer provisions for birth control (such as *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*)

Part 3: Presentation

You will present your brief to the class during time allotted for the **final exam** (date TBA).

Example reading for final project:

Cheu, Maggie. "Now and Then: How Coverture Ideology Informs the Rhetoric of Abortion." *Texas Journal of Women & the Law* 22, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 113–30.

Academic Tools

For an explanation of how to analyze a primary source, please watch the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dVr-SAc2vU&t=17s>

(Additional resources on analyzing primary sources will be distributed throughout the semester.)

A useful video on writing technique may be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJrBr5VyQY0&t=10s>

You can find further writing assistance at the Writing Center, located in the north wing of the Hutzler Reading Room (Gilman Hall 230). For more information, and to make an appointment, please visit their website: <https://krieger.jhu.edu/writingcenter/>.

Disability Services

If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services at studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu or 410-516-4720. Please do so promptly; requests for extended time or other accommodations must be made well in advance of exams or due dates for assignments.

Academic Ethics

Doing history is a social process. We rely upon other scholars for finding sources, translating them, and offering us fresh interpretations based upon them. Therefore it is very important to credit others for such work, usually by means of footnotes or other forms of citation. Please see the helpful guide to citation practices on the library's research help website:

<http://library.jhu.edu/researchhelp/>, and if you have any questions, please raise them with me. It is also important to listen respectfully to the views of others; history is a conversation, and everyone is entitled to their own point of view, provided they can offer evidence for it. When you disagree with another student's interpretation, say so courteously and explain why you see it differently.

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity.

In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, re-use of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of student affairs and/or the chairman of the Ethics Board beforehand. See the guide on "Academic Ethics for Undergraduates" and the Ethics Board Web site (http://www.jhu.edu/design/oliver/academic_manual/ethics.html) for more information.

Thanks to Dr. Mary Fissell for this explanation of Academic Ethics.

Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction and Colonial America

Tuesday, January 26, 2021

- Solinger, Rickie. *Pregnancy and Power: A Short History of Reproductive Politics in America*. New York: New York University Press, 2005, 1-25.

Thursday: January 28, 2021

- Brown, Kathleen. "Murderous Uncleanness: The Body of the Female Infanticide in Puritan New England." In *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America*, edited by Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001, 77-94.
- Rebekah Chamblit, "The Declaration, Dying Warning and Advice of Rebekah Chamblit. A Young Woman Aged near Twenty-Seven Years, Executed at Boston September 27th. 1733. according to the Sentence Pass'd upon Her at the Superiour Court Holden There for the County of Suffolk, in August Last, Being Then Found Guilty of Felony, in Concealing the Birth of Her Spurious Male Infant, of Which She Was Delivered When Alone the Eighth Day of May Last, and Was Afterwards Found Dead, as Will More Fully Appear by the Following Declaration, Which Was Carefully Taken from Her Own Mouth.," *Samuel Kneeland and Thomas Green*, 1733. (version available on E-Reserves and in Course Content on Blackboard)

Week 2: Reproduction and Regulation in Early America

Tuesday, February 2, 2021

- Brown, Kathleen. "Chapter Six: From 'Foul Crimes' to 'Spurious Issue': Sexual Regulation and the Social Construction of Race." In *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia*, 187–211. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Cott, Nancy F., Jean Boydston, Ann Braude, Lori D. Ginzberg, and Molly Ladd-Taylor, eds. "Statutes on Slave Descent." In *Root of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women*, Second., 29–31. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996.

Thursday, February 4, 2021

- Klepp, Susan E. "Potions, Pills and Jumping Ropes: The Technology of Birth Control." In *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820*, 179–214. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Jennings, Samuel K. *The Married Lady's Companion, or Poor Man's Friend*. New York: Lorenzo Dow, 1808, 43-49.
http://www.popularmedicine.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Images/PM_63872_D/58#Chapters.

- Dayton, Cornelia Hughes. “Taking the Trade: Abortion and Gender Relations in an Eighteenth-Century New England Village.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1991): 19–49.
 - *Recommended:* Accompanying website: <https://history.uconn.edu/taking-the-trade-timeline/>
- Thomson, Alexander. *The Family Physician, or Domestic Medical Friend*. New York, N.Y.: James Oram, 1802, title page and “Tansy,” p. 429.

February 4-7: Critical Conversations on Reproductive Health/Care Conference

- Attend one Zoom session for Critical Conversations on Reproductive Health/Care Conference between February 4-7. Write a short response (less than 200 words) to the session on the separate Blackboard discussion group.

Week 3: Race and the Refraction of Freedom

Tuesday, February 9, 2021:

- Klepp, Susan E. “Chapter 3: Women’s Words.” In *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820*, 88–127. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Schwartz, Marie Jenkins. “Chapter 3: Fertility.” In *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South*, 67–106. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Thursday, February 11, 2021

- Schwartz, Marie Jenkins. “Chapter 4: Pregnancy.” In *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South*, 107–42. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Listen to Cureton, Emily, Celeste Headlee, and Deirdre Cooper Owens. “How Modern Medicine Was Born Of Slavery.” *GPB*. NPR, November 16, 2017. <https://www.gpb.org/news/2017/11/16/how-modern-medicine-was-born-of-slavery>.

Week 4: Urban Possibilities

Tuesday, February 16, 2021

- Walters, Delores M. “Introduction: Re(dis)covering and Recreating the Cultural Milieu of Margaret Garner.” In *Gendered Resistance: Women, Slavery, and the Legacy of Margaret Garner*, 1–22. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013.
- “The Slave Case in Cincinnati - Another Account.” *New York Herald*. February 3, 1856. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1856-02-03/ed-1/seq-6/>.
- Listen to “The Character of Margaret Garner” and “The Language in ‘Margaret Garner’” from NPR World of Opera: <https://www.npr.org/2010/11/17/131395936/a-mother-s-desperate-act-margaret-garner>.

Thursday, February 18, 2021

- Gilje, Paul. “Infant Abandonment in Early Nineteenth-Century New York City: Three Cases.” *Signs* 8, no. 3 (Spring 1983): 580–90.
- Owens, Deirdre Cooper. “Chapter 4: Irish Immigrant Women and American Gynecology.” In *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*, 89–107. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2017.

Week 5: Midterm Primary Source Presentations

No Blackboard posts or long reading response papers due.

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

- Primary source analysis due by email and in hard copy to instructor at the beginning of the seminar. Seminar time will be used for student presentations, including Q&A, on their selected primary source. See “Writing Assignments” section of syllabus for details.

Thursday, February 25, 2021

- Continued primary source presentations

Week 6: Physicians and Female Virtue

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

- Selected advertisements from Mrs. Bird and Madame Restell. (see Blackboard)
- “Trial of Madame Restell, Alias Ann Lohman, for Abortion and Causing the Death of Mrs. Purdy; Being a Full Account of All the Proceedings on the Trial, Together With the Suppressed Evidence and Editorial Remarks.” (For Sale at the Book Stand in Wall St., Adjoining the Custom House; at the Cottage No. 312 Broadway, Next to Masonic Hall; at the News Office, Corner of Duane and Greenwich St.; Corner of Nassau and Beekman Sts., and Bowery News Office, 1841).

Thursday, March 4, 2021

- Mohr, James C. “Chapter 6: The Physicians’ Crusade Against Abortion, 1857-1880.” In *Abortion in America: The Origins and Evolution of National Policy*, 147–70. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Storer, Horatio Robinson. *Why Not?: A Book for Every Woman*. Lee and Shepard, 1866, Sections 1, 2, 4, and 6.

Week 7: Late Nineteenth-Century Ideals and Practice

Tuesday, March 9, 2021:

- Tone, Andrea. “Black Market Birth Control: Contraceptive Entrepreneurship and Criminality in the Gilded Age.” *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (September 2000): 435–59.

- “Extracts from the Mosher Survey, 1892-1913.” In *Major Problems in American Women’s History*, Second Edition., 223–29. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1996.
- “The People vs. Charles Manches.” New York Court of Oyer and Terminer, March 14, 1872. Obscenity Trials Collection. Schlesinger Library. (*in Blackboard Course Content*)

Thursday, March 11, 2021:

- Gordon, Linda. “Chapter Four: Voluntary Motherhood.” In *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America*, 55–71. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002.
- Stockham, Alice Bunker. *Tokology; a Book for Every Woman*. Chicago: A. B. Stockham & Co., 1889: 14-24; 37-41; 150-62. (1889 digital edition accessible via JHU Libraries)
- Khazan, Olga. “The Suffragists Who Opposed Birth Control.” *The Atlantic*, July 16, 2019. <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2019/07/did-suffragists-support-birth-control/593896/>.

Week 8: “Birth Control”

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

- Watkins, Elizabeth Siegel. “Introduction and Genesis of the Pill.” In *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives, 1950-1970*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998, 1-33.
- Hall, Kristin. “Selling Sexual Certainty? Advertising Lysol as a Contraceptive in the United States and Canada, 1919–1939.” *Enterprise & Society* 14, no. 1 (March 2013): 71–98.
- Sanger, Margaret. *Margaret Sanger: An Autobiography*. New York: W. W. Norton & company, 1938: 86-92; 106-120; 192-96.

Thursday, March 18, 2021

- Roberts, Dorothy. “Chapter 2: The Dark Side of Birth Control.” In *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, 56–103. New York: Vintage Books, 1998.
- Document 36: Marie Levinson Warner, "Birth Control and the Negro," 1934, 15 pp., Box 122B, Margaret Sanger Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, by Marie Levinson Warner. Included in *What Perspectives Did African American Advocates Bring to the Birth Control Movement and How Did Those Perspectives Shape the History of the Harlem Branch Birth Control Clinic?*, by Carole McCann. (Binghamton, NY: State University of New York at Binghamton, 2006).

Week 9: Better Babies and Barren Mothers

Reminder: this is the last week by which you have to complete your four long reading responses of choice.

Tuesday, March 30, 2021

- Listen to Schmidt, Jennifer, Tara Boyle, Shankar Vedantam, Thomas Lu, and Laura Kwerel. “Emma, Carrie, Vivian: How A Family Became A Test Case For Forced Sterilizations.” NPR.org, April 23, 2018.
<https://www.npr.org/2018/04/23/604926914/emma-carrie-vivian-how-a-family-became-a-test-case-for-forced-sterilizations>.
 - Follow link “a 1910 document” and read Davenport, Charles. *Eugenics: The Science of Human Improvement by Better Breeding*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1910, 3-25.
- Stern, Alexandra Minna. “Better Babies Contests at the Indiana State Fair: Child Health, Scientific Motherhood, and Eugenics in the Midwest, 1920-35.” In *Formative Years: Children’s Health in the United States, 1880-2000*, 121–52. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

Thursday, April 1, 2021

- Schoen, Johanna. “Chapter Two: Nothing Is Removed Except the Possibility of Parenthood: Women and the Politics of Sterilization.” In *Choice and Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare*, 75–138. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- García, Ana María. *La Operación*. Latin American Film Project, 1982.
https://catalyst.library.jhu.edu/catalog/bib_7229347. (Available to check out from JHU Libraries)

Week 10: Case Study: Baltimore and Dr. Rhetta

Reminder: long response paper is mandatory this week. Pre-class Blackboard posts are not mandatory.

Tuesday, April 6, 2021

- Find readings under “Baltimore Rhetta” folder on Blackboard. They are instructed to read all primary sources in the Dropbox, and use their response papers to think like a historian: what is happening according to these primary sources? Consider the following questions: Who is Dr. Rhetta, and why did he attract so much public attention? How did race configure in his career, or in Baltimore at large? What are the limitations of the sources, and what further questions do they suggest? **This response paper is mandatory.**

Thursday, April 8, 2021

- Stein, Marc. “Race, Class, and the U.S. Supreme Court’s Doctrine of Heteronormative Supremacy.” In *Connexions: Histories of Race and Sex in North America*, 59–81. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2016.
- Moynihan, Daniel Patrick. *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action*. United States Department of Labor, 1965.

Week 11: Mid-Twentieth Century Crackdowns

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

- Reagan, Leslie. "Raids and Rules." In *When Abortion Was a Crime: Women, Medicine and Law in the United States, 1867 - 1973*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, 160-192.
- Johnson, Joyce. "Joyce Johnson on Obtaining an Illegal Abortion, New York City, 1955." In *Major Problems in American Women's History*, edited by Ruth M. Alexander, Mary Beth Norton, and Sharon Block, 5th ed., 412–15. Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2013.

Thursday, April 15, 2021

- **Assignment due: Turn in annotated bibliography of eight to ten sources that you will use for the final project.**
- In lieu of class, stream: Kirtz, Kate, and Nell Lundy. *Jane: An Abortion Service*, 1996. (available through JHU Libraries)

Week 12: *Roe v. Wade* and Retaliation

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

- Reagan, Leslie. "Chapter 8: Radicalization of Reform" and "Epilogue," in *When Abortion Was a Crime: Women, Medicine and Law in the United States, 1867 - 1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 216–54.
- *1973 CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite (1/22/73)* (CBS News, 1973), https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=221&v=Zv1bmY4Wd34.

Thursday, April 22, 2021

- Schoen, Johanna. "Chapter 5: To Protect the Lives of American Babies: The Escalation of Antiabortion Activism." In *Abortion after Roe: Abortion after Legalization*, 155–97. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015.
- Primary sources TBD

Week 13: Pro-Choice, Pro-Life, or Reproductive Justice?

Tuesday, April 27, 2021

- Price, Kimala. "What Is Reproductive Justice?: How Women of Color Activists Are Redefining the Pro-Choice Paradigm." *Meridians* 10, no. 2 (2010): 42–65.
- Simmons, LaKisha Michelle. "Black Feminist Theories of Motherhood and Generation: Histories of Black Infant and Child Loss in the United States." *Signs* 46, no. 2 (Winter 2021): 311–35.

Thursday, April 29, 2021

- Evans, Rachel Held. “So You’re Thinking of Voting for a pro-Choice Candidate...” Rachel Held Evans, August 2, 2016. <https://rachelheldevans.com/blog/pro-life-voting-for-hillary-clinton>.
- Wright, Jennifer. “Why A Pro-Life World Has A Lot of Dead Women In It.” *Harper’s Bazaar*, June 19, 2017.