

Reproductive Justice

Seminar in Political Science MA Curriculum, University of Cologne
Module SpM Special Topics Political Science I (1335MSPIR1)

Summer Semester 2025

Instructor: Danielle Pullan
Email: pullan@wiso.uni-koeln.de
Office hours: By appointment

Course Description

This special topics seminar offers an introduction to the politics of reproduction and sexuality. We will cover a variety of topics in reproductive health from a political and social view, going beyond simply what *should* be legal or possible under various laws and treaties to explore what patients and advocates *actually* experience. We will consider who has access to reproductive healthcare and under what conditions, building on the perspective of “reproductive rights” into the more expansive “reproductive justice” framework pioneered by multiply-marginalized Black women whose perspectives were not represented by the mainstream white feminist movements. This course will take a comparative politics perspective rather than being anchored in one specific geography.

Accordingly, the course will be structured along the three principles of reproductive justice: 1.) the right *not* to have a child, 2.) the right to have a child, and 3.) the right to parent children in safe and healthy environments. This will take us through a variety of topics in reproductive politics such as contraception, abortion, social support for pregnant people and new parents, and parental leave policies. The reproductive justice structure will also draw the connections between these more obvious reproductive topics and other policy areas, such as climate, policing, and children’s health and safety as components of parenting children in safe and healthy environments.

Schedule

This seminar is scheduled for double blocks on Tuesday afternoons in the IBW Building, room 3.40. The classroom is accessible by elevator. **The time is slightly different some weeks, and we have one Friday session, so please check the calendar carefully!** Each week will be divided into two sessions with a break in the middle. We will meet on the following dates:

Tues April 15	12:00-15:30
Tues April 22	12:00-15:30
Tues April 29	12:00-15:30
Tues May 6	14:00-17:30

Tues May 13	12:00-15:30
Tues May 20	14:00-17:30
Fri May 23	12:00-15:30

Objectives

After participating in this course, students will:

- Be familiar with a variety of topics in reproductive politics, the interconnections between different aspects of reproduction and social reproduction, as well as the connections to intersectional social justice movements
- Know how to find related literature and connect it with the readings from the syllabus and course discussions
- Reflect critically on international and inter-cultural differences in reproductive health topics that cross over from political science into public policy studies, gender studies, critical theory, sociology, and anthropology

Requirements

This course will be evaluated by a portfolio of assignments, weighted as follows:

Two reaction papers (20 points each):

For two sessions of your choice (excluding the introduction and final presentations), write a reaction paper of about 500 words. This short paper should reflect on all of the readings for the session critically, demonstrating your familiarity with the material and raising potential areas for discussion. Reaction papers should be uploaded to Ilias by 23:55 on the Sunday night before our Tuesday meeting. Please note that each day we meet includes two sessions, so your paper should react to all of the readings for *one session*, not both of them. You may submit both papers for two sessions on the same day if you so choose, but please upload them separately as two files that each meet the requirements above.

Identify and present a published article on a reproductive justice topic (60 points):

A key research skill is identifying relevant and credible literature on your topic, as you have no doubt practiced in your other coursework. Throughout our discussions, we will cover many themes related to reproductive justice, but there are still so many additional important and relevant topics that will not fit in our syllabus. For this assignment, you should choose an article published in an academic journal or a chapter from an academic book. In your presentation, you must summarize the findings / theoretical contribution as well as connect this article / chapter to the class readings and discussions. A good starting point for finding an article would be to check the references cited in one of our assigned readings that interested you, but you are welcome to propose other articles as well.

Presentations will take place on the final day we meet, **23 May**. Depending on how many people enroll in the course, I will decide on the length of time of the presentations. Before preparing the presentations, students must send me the article they chose by no later than **5 May** so that I can approve this as an appropriate article for the assignment.

Grading Scale

The two reaction papers (20 + 20) and the final presentation (+ 60) total to 100 points. Consequently, grades will be awarded as follows:

Points Earned	Grade	Points Earned	Grade
95 - 100	1.0	65 - 69.5	3.0
90 - 94.5	1.3	60 - 64.5	3.3
85 - 89.5	1.7	55 - 59.5	3.7
80 - 84.5	2.0	50 - 54.5	4.0
75 - 79.5	2.3	0 - 49.5	5.0 (fail)
70 - 74.5	2.7		

Participation

It is the joint responsibility of instructors and students to create a respectful and inclusive atmosphere in our sessions together. Please attend the seminar regularly and participate in the discussion. Topics in this course may be emotional for some participants, and they relate to our individual deeply-held moral beliefs. All of us have opinions on these topics, and yours may be challenged during this course. The goal of this course is not to convince you to change your mind, but rather to expose you to the current debates on these topics. It is imperative that we respect one another's opinions in the spirit of collaboration and learning.

I want to help you succeed in this course. If you encounter problems during the semester, either with the contents of the course or personally (e.g. illness, family, visa, etc.) and you need an extension or assistance, please contact me as soon as possible. Should you require accommodations for a disability, please also bring this to my attention.

In the spirit of respectful and mutually beneficial participation in the course, it is inappropriate to use online artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT without citation. You are welcome to use whatever tools help you organize your ideas, find information, and improve your writing, but you should not use ChatGPT or similar tools to generate text for your assignments. This commonly results in citations to references that do not actually exist, and it can impair your learning. Please do not disrespect your classmates and instructors by trying to pass off AI-generated writing as your own work. For more information, you may consult the University of Cologne's statement on the use of AI tools: https://verwaltung.uni-koeln.de/stabsstelle02.1/content/faq/data/chatgpt/index_ger.html

Course Outline

Tues 15 April

12:00

Introduction

Ross & Solinger 2017, ch.1:

Chapter 1: A Reproductive Justice History. (2017). In L. Ross & R. Solinger, *Reproductive justice: An introduction* (Vol. 1, pp. 9–57). University of California Press.

Roberts 1997, introduction:

Introduction. (1997). In D. E. Roberts, *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty* (First Vintage Books Edition, January 1999, pp. 3–21). Vintage Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

The Right Not to Have a Child

Tues 15 April

14:00

Family Planning

O'Donnell Heffington 2023, introduction:

Introduction. (2023). In P. O'Donnell Heffington, *Without children: The long history of not being a mother* (pp. 1–24). Seal Press.

Mills et al. 2008:

Mills, M., Mencarini, L., Tanturri, M. L., & Begall, K. (2008). Gender equity and fertility intentions in Italy and the Netherlands. *Demographic Research*, 18, 1–26.
<https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2008.18.1>

Bond-Theriault 2024, ch.2:

Chapter 2: Queering the Right to Not Have Children. (2024). In C. Bond-Theriault, *Queering Reproductive Justice: An Invitation* (1st ed, pp. 42–77). Stanford University Press.

Tues 22 April

12:00

Contraception

Roberts 1997, ch.2:

Chapter 2: The Dark Side of Birth Control. (1997). In D. E. Roberts, *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty* (First Vintage Books Edition, January 1999, pp. 56–103). Vintage Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

Ignaciuk 2018:

Ignaciuk, A. (2018). Paradox of the Pill: Oral Contraceptives in Spain and Poland (1960s–1970s). In A.-K. Gembries, T. Theuke, & I. Heinemann (Eds.), *Children by choice?: Changing values, reproduction, and family planning in the 20th century: Vol. volume 3*. De Gruyter.

Stark et al. 2019:

Stark, B., Hughto, J. M. W., Charlton, B. M., Deutsch, M. B., Potter, J., & Reisner, S. L. (2019). The contraceptive and reproductive history and planning goals of trans-masculine adults: A mixed-methods study. *Contraception*, 100(6), 468–473.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.contraception.2019.07.146>

Tues 22 April

14:00

Abortion Part 1: Principles

Sommer & Forman-Rabinovici 2019, ch.5:

Chapter 5: Reproductive Rights and the Nation-State: The Cases of New Zealand and Rwanda. (2019). In U. Sommer & A. Forman-Rabinovici, *Producing Reproductive Rights* (pp. 110–132). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108694407>

Htun 2010, ch.6:

Chapter 6: Why Hasn't Abortion Been Decriminalized in Latin America? In M. Htun (Ed.), *Sex and the State* (pp. 142–171). Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511615627.007>

Mishtal 2014:

Mishtal, J. (2014). Reproductive Governance in the New Europe: Competing Visions of Morality, Sovereignty and Supranational Policy. *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, 23(1), 59–77.

Tella 2022, ch.5:

Chapter 5: Abortion in South Asia: 'Choice', Language, and Identity in India and Bangladesh. (2022). In K. K. Tella, *Abortion Rights, Reproductive Justice and the State: International Perspectives*. Routledge India. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003344322>

Tues 29 April

12:00

Abortion Part 2: Access

Foster 2021, ch.1:

Chapter 1: The Turnaway Study. (2021). In D. G. Foster, *The Turnaway Study: Ten Years, a thousand women, and the consequences of having—Or being denied—An abortion*. Scribner.

Foster 2021, ch.11:

Chapter 11: Next Steps for Science. (2021). In D. G. Foster, *The Turnaway Study: Ten Years, a thousand women, and the consequences of having—Or being denied—An abortion*. Scribner.

Jelinska & Yanow 2018:

Jelinska, K., & Yanow, S. (2018). Putting abortion pills into women's hands: Realizing the full potential of medical abortion. *Contraception*, 97(2), 86–89.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.contraception.2017.05.019>

Krajewska 2021:

Krajewska, A. (2021). Revisiting Polish Abortion Law: Doctors and Institutions in a Restrictive Regime. *Social & Legal Studies*, 31(3), 409–438.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/09646639211040171>

The Right to Have a Child

Tues 29 April

14:00

Pregnancy Care and Fertility

O'Donnell Heffington 2023, ch.5:

Chapter 5: Because we can't. (2023). In P. O'Donnell Heffington, *Without children: The long history of not being a mother* (pp. 125–151). Seal Press.

Roberts 1997, ch.6:

Chapter 6: Race and the New Reproduction. (1997). In D. E. Roberts, *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty* (First Vintage Books Edition, January 1999, pp. 246–293). Vintage Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

Vertommen 2017:

Vertommen, S. (2017). Babies from Behind Bars: Stratified Assisted Reproduction in Palestine/Israel. In M. Lie & N. Lykke (Eds.), *Assisted reproduction across borders: Feminist perspectives on normalizations, disruptions and transmissions* (Vol. 19, pp. 207–218). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Tues 6 May

14:00

Disability & RJ

Dietz 2022:

Dietz, E. (2022). Abortion, Disability Rights, and Reproductive Justice. In J. M. Reynolds & C. Wieseler (Eds.), *The Disability Bioethics Reader* (pp. 95–102). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003289487>

Scully 2022:

Scully, J. L. (2022). Being Disabled and Contemplating Disabled Children. In J. M. Reynolds & C. Wieseler (Eds.), *The Disability Bioethics Reader* (pp. 116–124). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003289487>

Herzog 2018, ch.1 excerpt:

Chapter 1 (excerpt). (2018). In D. Herzog, *Unlearning eugenics: Sexuality, reproduction, and disability in post-Nazi Europe* (pp. 28–41). The University of Wisconsin Press.

O’Connell 2016:

O’Connell, K. (2016, January 1). We Need to Talk About Disability as a Reproductive Justice Issue. *Reproaction Blog*.
<https://reproaction.org/we-need-to-talk-about-disability-as-a-reproductive-justice-issue/>

Tues 6 May

16:00

A Market for Babies

Satz 2010, ch.5:

Chapter 5: Markets in Women’s Reproductive Labor. (2010). In D. Satz, *Why some things should not be for sale: The moral limits of markets* (pp. 115–134). Oxford University Press.

Sandel 2012, ch.2 excerpt:

Chapter 2: Incentives. (2012). In M. J. Sandel, *What money can’t buy: The moral limits of markets* (pp. 43–60). Allen Lane.

Bonyad 2024:

Bonyad, T. (2024). Framing the Labor of Paid Egg Donors in Iran: Marginality, Gendered Care, and Divine Reward. *Medical Anthropology*, 43(8), 682–696.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01459740.2024.2395291>

Luna 2018:

Luna, Z. (2018). Black celebrities, reproductive justice and queering family: An exploration. *Reproductive Biomedicine & Society Online*, 7, 91–100.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rbms.2018.12.002>

Tues 13 May

12:00

Adoption and Queer Family Building

Bond-Theriault 2024, ch.4:

Chapter 4: Queering the Right to Have Partners and Children. (2024). In C. Bond-Theriault, *Queering Reproductive Justice: An Invitation* (1st ed, pp. 95–139). Stanford University Press.

Sisson 2024, ch.1:

Chapter 1: The Domestic Suppliers of Infants. (2024). In G. E. Sisson, *Relinquished: The politics of adoption and the privilege of American motherhood* (First edition, pp. 13–57). St. Martin's Press.

Sisson 2024, ch.3:

Chapter 3: The Family My Heartbreak Made Possible. (2024). In G. E. Sisson, *Relinquished: The politics of adoption and the privilege of American motherhood* (First edition, pp. 104–158). St. Martin's Press.

Farr & Goldberg 2018:

Farr, R. H., & Goldberg, A. E. (2018). Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Adoption Law. *Family Court Review*, 56(3), 374–383. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.12354>

The Right to Parent Children in Safe and Healthy Environments

Tues 13 May

14:00

The Right to Parent and Foster Care

Ross & Solinger 2017, ch. 4:

Chapter 4: Reproductive Justice and the Right to Parent. (2017). In L. Ross & R. Solinger, *Reproductive justice: An introduction* (Vol. 1, pp. 168–237). University of California Press.

Roberts 2022, introduction AND ch.1:

Introduction and Chapter 1: A Benevolent Terror. (2022). In D. E. Roberts, *Torn apart: How the child welfare system destroys black families—And how abolition can build a safer world* (First edition, pp. 13–46). Basic Books.

Bakhru & Benson 2024, ch5:

Chapter 5: Reimagining Care and Community: The Right to Parent. (2024). In T. S. Bakhru & K. L. Benson, *Reproductive Justice, Adoption, and Foster Care*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003303442>

Tues 20 May

14:00

Parental Leave and Social Benefits

Folbre 2010, ch.8:

Chapter 8: Subsidizing Parents. (2010). In N. Folbre, *Valuing Children: Rethinking the Economics of the Family*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674033641>

Folbre 2010, ch.10:

Chapter 10: Who should pay for the kids? (2010). In N. Folbre, *Valuing Children: Rethinking the Economics of the Family*. Harvard University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674033641>

Son 2024:

Son, K. (2024). The Origin of Social Policy for Women Workers: The Emergence of Paid Maternity Leave in Western Countries. *Comparative Political Studies*, 57(1), 69–100.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140231169024>

Tues 20 May

16:00

Environment and Climate

Albertyn 2023:

Albertyn, C. (2023). Radical Connectedness: Reproductive rights, climate justice and gender equality. In C. Albertyn, M. Campbell, H. Alviar García, S. Fredman, & M. Rodriguez de Assis Machado (Eds.), *Feminist Frontiers in Climate Justice*.
<https://doi.org/10.4337/9781803923796.00011>

O'Donnell Heffington 2023, ch.4:

Chapter 4: Because of the planet. (2023). In P. O'Donnell Heffington, *Without children: The long history of not being a mother* (pp. 97–124). Seal Press.

Murtaugh & Schlax 2009:

Murtaugh, P. A., & Schlax, M. G. (2009). Reproduction and the carbon legacies of individuals. *Global Environmental Change*, 19(1), 14–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2008.10.007>

Fri 23 May

12:00

Presentations and Conclusion

We will begin this double session with student presentations to ensure that there is enough time for everyone, then the remaining time will be a wrap-up discussion including the following text:

Roberts 1997, ch.7:

Chapter 7: The Meaning of Liberty. (1997). In D. E. Roberts, *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty* (First Vintage Books Edition, January 1999, pp. 294–312). Vintage Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.