

# **Anthropology of Reproduction**

Anthropology 45826

Spring 2008 / MW 11:45-1:00 in De Bartolo Hall B011

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Office hours: T 2:00-3:30  
W 2:30-4:00  
Or by appointment

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## **Course description:**

In this course we will examine a variety of issues related to reproduction. We will concentrate on anthropological studies related primarily to reproductive health throughout the life cycle, such as pregnancy and childbirth, midwifery, reproductive freedom, and the politics of the nation-state as they affect women's and men's reproductive lives. We will use ethnographic readings and examples from around the world to illustrate our discussions and gain an understanding of the complex intertwining of local and global politics regarding reproductive experiences and choices.

## **Course Goals:**

The goals of this class are threefold: 1) to appreciate the ways that anthropologists have studied reproduction in a variety of contexts, 2) to assess the importance of an anthropological perspective on reproductive health issues and, 3) to critically understand that reproduction is shaped by broad social, political, and economic forces.

## **Learning Goals:**

At the end of the semester I expect students to:

- a. Apply anthropological and ethnographic methods in their assignments
- b. Demonstrate the ability to think critically and articulate their thoughts in class and assignments
- c. Apply anthropological critique to cultural problems and situations regarding reproduction

## **Readings:**

This course has a significant amount of reading, which includes two ethnographies and a variety of articles and chapters from several sources targeting specific elements of the course material. A major part of contributing to the discussion is by reading the relevant course material and extracting three major elements from it: what is being said, why is it being said, how it is being said. Through challenging the material, each other, yourselves and, yes, even the professor, the class discussion should bring forth not only the salient points of the reading and topic, but also help you to understand reproduction at a deeper level and place it into its relevant social, political, economic, medical, or cultural context.

1. Brigitte Jordan (**BJ**) – Birth in four cultures: A cross-cultural investigation of childbirth in Yucatan, Holland, Sweden, and the United States. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

2. M. Catherine Maternowska (**CM**) – Reproducing inequities: Poverty and the politics of population in Haiti. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

3. Various readings (**VR**) – on Library E-reserve and Concourse

- a. Ginsburg, Faye, and Rayna Rapp. 1991. The politics of reproduction. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 20:311-343.
- b. Browner, Carole H. 1983. Male Pregnancy Symptoms in Urban Colombia. *American Ethnologist* 10(3):494-510.
- c. Coreil, Jeannine, et al. 1996. Arrested Pregnancy Syndrome in Haiti: Findings from a National Survey. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 10(3):424-436.
- d. Patil, CL. Food aversions and cravings and pregnancy sickness among the Iraqw of Tanzania.

- e. Browner, Carole H., and Nancy A. Press. 1995. The normalization of prenatal diagnostic testing. In *Conceiving the new world order*. Pp. 307-322.
- f. Inhorn, Marcia C. 2006. "He won't be my son." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 20(1):94-120.
- g. Inhorn, Marcia C. 2003. Global infertility. *Social Science and Medicine* 56:1837-1851.
- h. Warner, Judith. 2008. *Outsourced wombs*. New York Times.
- i. Hanson, F. Allan. 2001. Donor insemination. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 15(3):287-311.
- j. Conklin, Beth, and Lynn M. Morgan. 1996. Babies, bodies, and the production of personhood. *Ethos* 24(4):657-694.
- k. Davis-Floyd, Robbie, and Carolyn Sargent. 1997. Introduction: The anthropology of birth. In *Childbirth and authoritative knowledge*. Pp. 1-51.
- l. Davis-Floyd, Robbie. 1987. The technological model of birth. *Journal of American Folklore*.
- m. Craven, Christa. 2005. Claiming respectable American motherhood. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 19(2):194-215.
- n. Pigg, Stacy. 1997. Authority in translation. In *Childbirth and authoritative knowledge*. Pp. 233-262.
- o. Sesia, Paola. 1996. "Women come here on their own when they need to." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 10(2):121-140.
- p. Stuart-Macadam, Patricia. 1995. Biocultural perspectives in breastfeeding. In *Breastfeeding: Biocultural perspectives*, Pp. 1-37
- q. McKenna, James, and Nicole Bernshaw. 1995. Breastfeeding and infant-parent co-sleeping as adaptive strategies. In *Breastfeeding: Biocultural perspectives*, Pp. 265-303
- r. Quandt, Sara A. 1995. Sociocultural aspects of the lactation process. In *Breastfeeding: Biocultural perspectives*, Pp. 127-143.
- s. Leinaweaver, Jessa. 2005. Mass sterilizations and child circulations in Peru. *Anthropology News* 13 & 18.
- t. Anagost, Ann. 1995. A surfeit of bodies. In *Conceiving the new world order*. Pp. 22-41.
- u. Gutmann, Matthew. 2005. Scoring men. *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 29:79-101.
- v. Lazarus, Ellen. 1997. What do women want? *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 8(1):25-46..
- w. Browner, C.H. 2000. Situating women's reproductive activities. *American Anthropologist* 102(4):773-788.
- x. Morsy, Soheir. 1995. Deadly reproduction among Egyptian women. *Conceiving the new world order*. Pp. 162-176.
- y. Crane, Barbara B. 2004. Power and Politics in International Funding for Reproductive Health: The US Global Gag Rule. *Reproductive Health Matters* 12(24):128-137
- z. Inhorn, Marcia C. 2006. Defining women's health. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 20(3):345-378.

### **Grading:**

This is a reading-intensive, critical-thinking course based primarily on readings and discussions; it will be managed in the form of a seminar, where student participation in discussion is vital for the class to function and be stimulating. Come prepared – active participation in class, evidence of commitment, enthusiasm, and preparedness will help to make this class enjoyable and challenging.

I will determine your grade from the following sources in order to evaluate your progress towards attaining the class goals. Further details about these assignments will be announced in class.

**There is NO final exam for this course.** The breakdown is as follows:

**Exams (2)** - 15% each

**Leading Discussion** – 15%

**Research Project and Poster** – 35% (in 2 parts: 10%, 25%)

**Presentation** – 10%

**Attendance and Participation** - 10%

The grading scale I use is as follows: **A=96-100, A- = 90-95, B+ = 87-89, B= 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C= 73-76, C- = 70-72, D = 60-69, F = under 60.** I do not use a grading curve.

### **Assignments:**

Assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of the class period on the date listed in the syllabus. Late assignments will be penalized. I strongly encourage you to meet with me and discuss any concerns or questions you have with your assignment grades. Due to the short length of the term, however, these concerns or questions can only be addressed within two weeks after I have returned the assignment.

If you have a documented learning disability and are authorized to have special arrangements for assignments, please inform me at the beginning of the course.

Below are the descriptions and/or expectations for the class assignments. I encourage you to turn in any typed work **single spaced and double sided.**

### **Exams:**

These will require you to demonstrate, appraise, and synthesize your knowledge by being able to apply it to particular situations. The questions will require you to think, hence they will be **short answer and essay** questions.

### **Leading Discussion:**

The course will be run as a seminar, meaning that your participation in class discussion is essential for the class to be intellectually stimulating. You **MUST** come to class having done all the readings and be prepared to talk actively about the topic at hand. A very important part of your grade will be leading a class discussion. To do this, you, and one or two of your classmates, will lead one discussion during the semester using any methods you deem appropriate. This activity will prepare you for public speaking and critical thinking. Some Notre Dame students in the past have chosen to lead these discussions using examples from ND, visual aids, participant observation, additional readings, role playing, debates, etc. Use your imagination.

### **Research Project and Poster Session:**

A major course requirement will be carrying out an anthropological field investigation, in combination with library research, of any aspect of reproduction, reproductive health care, reproductive politics, etc. that inspires you to want to understand it better. I encourage you to look off campus for a good topic, but you are also welcome to carry out research on some part of Notre Dame culture of reproduction that interests you.

You can carry out this project on your own or in a group of no more than 3 people. If you carry it out in a group, you must inform me who the members are. The grade obtained for this assignment will thus be for the entire group, not on an individual basis. It is up to the group members to assign duties and roles so the final grade is acceptable to all.

This project will require you to begin early on during the semester by handing in a **research question (graded on a check/check-minus scale)**. Halfway through the semester you will hand in a **midway report (10%)** detailing your progress in your project thus far. This assignment should be around 1200 words long. The remainder of your grade for this assignment (**25%**) is the production of a poster, which is to be created in electronic format and printed professionally. You will have the opportunity of presenting your poster at the **Undergraduate Research Expo** organized by the anthropology department on April 3rd. In the final days of the semester you will showcase your results to the rest of the class in an oral presentation.

Presentations:

By the end of the semester you will have become an expert on your chosen topic and thus you will share it with the rest of your classmates. It is an opportunity to highlight the interesting elements of your research as well as the innovative conclusions you have drawn.

Extra Credits:

I will announce extra credit assignments during the semester, which could take the form of lectures, exhibits, or films. For these assignments you have to write up a brief summary of the main points and then devote the rest of the paper to an analysis of the material from an anthropological perspective. Please write between 600-800 words. Each one you do will be worth **1%** of your final course grade; you can carry out up to **two** extra credits (for a total of **2%**). This is a useful enterprise for those of you on the margin between grades.

Possible extra credits:

- ❖ Interview your mother about her experience giving birth to you and your siblings, analyze those experiences in the context of your readings.
- ❖ Using Jordan's categories for cross-cultural comparison of birthing systems, compare and contrast traditional systems of birth in two different cultures. How might systems of mutual accommodation between technomedicine and traditional birthing systems be created and sustained?
- ❖ Address issues of the definition of various kinds of midwives (TBA? Nurse-midwife? Lay-midwife? Etc.). How important are the differences? How do they relate to one another?

**Important policies:**

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. More than **three unexcused absences** will result in the failure of this course.

Honor Code:

I expect all students to adhere to academic honesty following the tenets of the Notre Dame Honor Code ("As a member of the Notre Dame, community I will not participate in or tolerate academic dishonesty"). A violation of this code is serious and could result in a failing grade.

Office hours:

I encourage you to come to my office to discuss your queries, progress in class, or any issues that come up. If you cannot come to my office hours you can make an appointment at a time that suits us both. This is an opportunity for you to ask questions outside of class in a less formal setting.

**Lecture and Reading Schedule:**

<b>Week #1</b>	<u>Introduction to Anthropology of Reproduction</u>
01/16	No reading for today
<b>Week #2</b>	<hr/> <u>Pregnancy</u>
01/21	<b>VR</b> – Ginsburg and Rapp; Browner
01/23	<b>VR</b> – Coreil; Patil
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<b>Week #3</b>	<u>Pregnancy and Reproductive technologies</u>
01/28	<b>VR</b> – Browner and Press <b>Research question due today</b>
01/30	<b>VR</b> – Inhorn <i>Student-led discussion</i>
<b>Week #4</b>	<u>Reproductive technologies continued</u>
02/04	<b>VR</b> – Inhorn; Warner
02/06	<b>VR</b> – Hanson <i>Student-led discussion</i>
<b>Week #5</b>	<u>Fetal personhood</u>
02/11	<b>VR</b> – Daniels
02/13	<b>VR</b> – Conklin and Morgan
<b>Week #6</b>	<u>Birth</u>
02/18	<b>VR</b> – Davis-Floyd and Sargent; Davis-Floyd
02/20	<b>BJ</b> – Ch. 1 – 4 <i>Student-led discussion</i>
<b>Week #7</b>	<u>Birth and authoritative knowledge</u>
02/25	<b>BJ</b> – Ch. 5 – 8
02/27	<b>Exam #1</b>
03/03-03/07	<b>No class – Mid-term break!!</b>
<b>Week #8</b>	<u>Birth and midwifery</u>
03/10	<b>VR</b> – Craven <b>Midway report due</b> Guest lecture
03/12	<b>VR</b> – Pigg; Sesia
<b>Week #9</b>	<u>Breastfeeding and child nutrition</u>
03/17	<b>VR</b> – Stuart-Macadam; McKenna and Bernshaw Guest lecture
03/19	<b>VR</b> – Quandt <i>Student-led discussion</i>
<b>Week #10</b>	<u>Population control</u>
03/24	No class, Easter holiday

03/26	<b>CM</b> – Foreword, Ch. 1 – 2
<b>Week #11</b>	<hr/> <u>Population control continued</u>
03/31	<b>CM</b> – Ch. 3 – 5
04/02	<b>VR</b> – Anagost; Leinaweaver; Gutmann <i>Student-led discussion</i> <b>Undergraduate Research Expo on the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Poster must be finished)</b>
<b>Week #12</b>	<hr/> <u>Reproduction and choice</u>
04/07	<b>CM</b> – Ch. 6; <b>VR</b> - Lazarus
04/09	<b>VR</b> – Browner
<b>Week #13</b>	<hr/> <u>Global reproductive policies</u>
04/14	<b>CM</b> – Ch. 7 – epilogue; <b>VR</b> – Crane <i>Student-led discussion</i>
04/16	<b>VR</b> – Morsy; Inhorn
<b>Week #14</b>	<hr/> <u>Last thoughts I</u>
04/21	No reading for today <b>Exam #2</b>
04/23	No reading for today Student presentations (attendance <b>mandatory</b> ) <b>All extra credits due by today</b>
<b>Week #15</b>	<hr/> <u>Last Thoughts II</u>
04/28	No reading for today Student presentations (attendance <b>mandatory</b> )
04/30	No reading for today Student presentations (attendance <b>mandatory</b> )
<b>Exam Week</b>	<hr/>
<b>05/05</b>	<b>Final project due in my office from 8:00 to 10:00 am</b>  <b>Happy summer holidays!</b>