

2016, Institute for Transforming Social Justice

Reproductive Justice, June 20-24, 2016

Course Overview: As the recent appeals court decision in Texas highlights, abortion rights continue to be contested throughout the world. Although abortion was legalized in the U.S. in 1973, there have been significant erosions in rights and access, especially for the most vulnerable populations, including those who are poor, young, and of color. We will look at the historical roots of contemporary restrictive policies. We will explore the ethical, political and legal dimensions of abortion and investigate the anti-abortion and abortion rights movements. At the same time, this course examines the abortion debate in the wider context of reproductive justice. While abortion has been in the foreground of efforts to control the lives of women and other vulnerable populations, it is only one of the many ways in which governments, religious organizations, and others have asserted control. In addition to a focus on abortion, specific topics of inquiry include: population control including coercive contraception and sterilization abuse, the criminalization of pregnancy, barriers to care faced by transgendered people, and people with disabilities.

Course Goals: Students will gain an understanding of the basic frameworks used to advance abortion rights, including choice, population control, reproductive justice, and human rights. Students will also have gained knowledge, both historical and current, about the political movements associated with each frame. We will also look at how new issues and constituencies are being incorporated within the reproductive justice vision.

Philosophy of Critical Education (adapted from Chris Tinson's syllabus):

Our classroom is a learning community, and we have joint responsibility for creating and maintaining this space. You should be prepared to engage with ideas and opinions that you do not share, and might even find objectionable. Active and informed dialogue and critical thinking are encouraged; attacks and self-righteousness are not. While it is fine to draw on your own experience and knowledge, please ground your comments in critical engagement with the readings. We should expect some discomfort at times, and anticipate that some issues will be left unresolved and require longer consideration.

Required Readings: While I have divided the readings for purposes of discussion, please complete all of the required readings for the day before class begins.

Assignment: Due Tuesday a.m. Select a topic you want to probe this week. Write a two page essay setting out the issue as you see it and the questions you want to explore through further research. Look at the issue from various grounded perspectives, e.g. as a pregnant person, a person who has faced reproductive coercion/oppression, a group dedicated to securing reproductive justice for a specific community, a provider of reproductive health care. You will work on this throughout the week, expanding/changing it in light of the readings, discussion, and your own research. By the end of the week, write an action plan in which you suggest and explain a policy change that would meaningfully address the issues you have raised, and two-three actions that you will take after the institute that could advance that policy.

June 20 – Introduction, Frameworks, Illegal Abortion

Morning: Group introductions and introduction to reproductive rights, health and justice

*Defining Reproductive Justice: What does a person need to create family they want to have?
Discussion of various frameworks for advancing reproductive health, rights and justice.

*Images Exercise – select images and explain/make meaning in terms of reproductive justice.

*Current debates: what issues are of greatest concern to you? For those who attended carceral studies, are there cross over issues?

Readings: Fried, “Reproductive Rights Activism in the Post-Roe Era,” Perez; “A Tale of Two Movements; <http://www.colorlines.com/articles/tale-two-movements>”

Afternoon: Origins of Current Debates – Illegal abortion

Guest Speaker: Laura Kaplan, member of the Jane collective and author, The Story of Jane

Readings: Illegal Abortion: Reagan, introduction “When Abortion Was a Crime;” Joffe, preface and chapter -- 2 from Doctors of Conscience; Kaplan, “Jane;” Greenlee, “The Road to Roe: Paved with Bodies of Women of Color and the Legal Activism of African Americans,” <http://rhrealitycheck.org/article/2013/01/23/covering-our-base-why-i-fight-affordable-reproductive-care/>

Film in class; “Back Alley Detroit”

June 21 – Origins of current debates – Population Control

Morning – Discussion of Roberts; Film, “No Más Bebés”

Readings: Dorothy Roberts, Killing the Black Body, chapter 2

Afternoon — Population Control and Reproductive Justice

Guest Speakers: Betsy Hartmann, Professor Emeritus

Readings: Hartmann, Hendrixson, Sasser, “Population, Sustainable Development and Gender Equality.”

June 22 -- From Choice to Reproductive Justice (RJ)

Morning – Reproductive Justice and Human Rights

Guest Speaker: Loretta Ross, activist, speaker, author, birth mother of the term, "Reproductive Justice."

Readings: Ross, “Reproductive Justice Theory and Black Feminism: A Manifesto for Activism;” Silliman et al, Undivided Rights, chapters 1,2.

Afternoon – visit SSC (Sophia Smith Collection)

June 23 – Current Challenges – Law and Policy

Morning – Barriers and Resistance: Fighting for Reproductive Justice for People in Prison

Guest Speaker: Marianne Bullock (Co-founder of Prison Birth Project)

Video in class: Anti-Shackling

Readings: Handouts: Massachusetts Anti-Shackling Coalition;” “On the First Anniversary of the Pregnancy Care and Anti-Shackling Law, Preliminary Data shows Better Implementation is Needed;” Adams, “Despite Anti-Shackling Laws Pregnant Prisoners Say Practice Persists;” Law, “Pregnant Women in Massachusetts are still being Shackled”

Afternoon -- Criminalizing Pregnancy/Pregnant People

Readings: Roth and Ainsworth, “If They Hand You a Paper, You Sign it;” Paltrow and Flavin, “The Policy and Politics of Reproductive Health- Arrests and Forced Interventions on Pregnant Women in the United States, 1973-2005- Implications for Women’s Legal Status;” Bazelon, “Purvi Patel Could Be Just the Beginning, (NYT short).”

June 24 – Reproductive Justice: An Expanding Agenda

Morning – Barriers to care faced by Transgender, LGBTQ, and Gender Non-Conforming People; Disability Rights/Justice, Immigration Rights.

Readings: “Fact Sheet: Transgender Equality, Transgender Sexual and Reproductive Health: Unmet Needs and Barriers to Care;” Kafer, “Feminist, Queer, Crip,” Disability Justice;” Sebastian Margaret, “Disability Justice is Reproductive Justice,” (speech from 2015 CLPP Conference); Hafir, “5 Years after SB 1070 Women are Still on the Front Lines of the Struggle to End Harsh Enforcement Policies;” “Deportations Hurt Women;” National Latina Institute for Reproductive Rights, Fact Sheet, March, 2015.

Afternoon – presentations based on assignments; wrap up issues – bridge to Immigration Rights; questions you are carrying forward.