

LAS4935/6938/WST4930: Reproduction and Reproductive Justice in the Americas

Assistant Professor Meg Weeks (weeksm@ufl.edu)

Office hours (Grinter 378): TBD

Spring 2026

Mondays, 12:50-3:50

Grinter 376



Course Description: In this seminar, we will think broadly about the history of reproduction and movements for reproductive justice in the Americas, examining foundational theoretical texts as well as anthropological and historical articles and monographs. Reaching back to the nineteenth century, we will explore the ways in which families and individuals, including enslaved women, have understood and experienced reproduction. In the capacious spirit of the reproductive justice (RJ) framework, we will examine efforts to control fertility and terminate unwanted pregnancies, as well as campaigns to end sterilization abuse and advocate for better conditions for parenting. By reading texts on both individual women's reproductive strategies, analyses of social movements making claims for reproductive rights, and scholarship on reproductive governance, students will gain an understanding of the political role that sexual discipline, eugenics, pronatalism, reproduction, population control, and childrearing have played in empire, slavery, and nation-building projects. We will also consider the historical forces that have structured the adoption and surrogacy markets, as well as thinking critically about reproduction for queer and incarcerated people. Finally, we will look to the long history of abortion rights activism to examine the recent decriminalization of abortion in Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico, while seeking to understand the ongoing illegality of the procedure in Brazil, El Salvador, and, as of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, a number of US states. Primary sources for this course include foundational theory and praxis texts by the founders

of RJ, activist periodicals from the 1970s and '80s, poetry, visual art, and films, in addition to secondary-source historical, sociological, and anthropological texts.

Course Learning Objectives:

- Gain an understanding of the underlying theory and praxis of movements for reproductive justice in the Americas
- Learn how reproduction and reproductive control were related to projects of slavery, pronatalist nationalism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism
- Learn how women from the broader Americas have attempted to secure reproductive autonomy for themselves and their communities
- Understand the dynamics surrounding abortion legislation in the US and Latin America
- Learn how Black, Indigenous, and other grassroots feminists in the Americas have pioneered novel strategies for reproductive autonomy
- Develop varied research skills with the ability to critically analyze a variety of different mediums, both scholarly and cultural
- Develop and refine writing skills through the execution of written assignments

Recommended Text:

- *Radical Reproductive Justice: Foundations, Theory, Practice, Critique*, edited by Loretta J. Ross, Lynn Roberts, Erika Derkas, Whitney Peoples, and Pamela Bridgewater Toure (Feminist Press, 2017)

Assignments:

Attendance: 15%

Participation: 15%

Weekly Comment/News presentation: 10%

First paper (prompt, 5-7 pages/ 1300-1600 words): 15%

Second paper (prompt OR film review or analysis of cultural production, 5-7 pages/ 1300-1600 words): 15%

Final Paper proposal and bibliography: 10%

Final Paper (For graduate students, 12-15 pages/3800-5000 words): 20%

Final Exam (For undergraduate students): 20%

Each week, students will submit a brief **comment or question** (one paragraph maximum, 9 comments total over the course of the semester) that relates to the weekly readings. The comment, which should attempt to cover all readings assigned, will be posted to a collective message board in order to facilitate classroom discussion. **Please include quotations and engage directly with the assigned texts.** Comments should be posted by 8 am each Monday. Students are permitted to skip two weeks over the course of the semester, but you must keep track of your own submissions. Additionally, in lieu of one weekly comment, each student will briefly present to the class a recent news story about reproduction (I will provide a sign-up sheet).

Attendance and active participation are key to the successful completion of this course. I will assess participation not only on the frequency of contributions to classroom discussion, but also on

the quality of comments, which should indicate thoughtful engagement with our assigned readings and other materials.

Please come to class having read the assigned texts and ready to participate in group discussions. If you are unable to read a particular text in a comprehensive manner, try to at least distill its main arguments. If helpful to you, prepare a list of questions in advance of each class so that our discussion will proceed dynamically. I encourage lively, rigorous debate but I ask that you engage with your peers and with me in a respectful manner.

- Attendance and absence policy: If you have to miss class, I ask that you email me to notify me of your absence and make every effort to come to office hours to make up the missed material. Excused absences require a doctor's note or some other compelling indication of a medical or other inability to attend class. Multiple unexcused absences will adversely affect your participation grade. Otherwise, requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>
- I ask that you make every effort to arrive on time to class, so we can take full advantage of the limited time we have together as a course. Regular tardiness will adversely affect your participation grade.
- I ask that you refrain from texting, chatting, or using your computers for tasks not related to our course during class time. Phones should be kept out of sight for the duration of the class.

Over the course of the semester, students will be expected to submit **three writing assignments**. The first will draw on foundational RJ theory to answer one of two prompts provided by the instructor. This assignment will pertain to historical questions of reproduction and reproductive autonomy. The second assignment is more flexible and can either respond to a prompt or review a film or another work of cultural production (short stories, poetry, visual art, etc.), drawing on RJ theory, history, and critique. The final paper will be an original research project that focuses on any aspect of the history of reproduction or movements for reproductive justice in the Americas and must involve analysis of primary sources and historical argumentation. The nature of these sources can be determined by the student. We will have an opportunity to workshop paper proposals, bibliographies, and paper drafts before the final assignment is due.

Policies and Additional Information

Note This course will count towards the minor/certificate in Latin American Studies. For more information about enrollment in the **undergraduate** programs offered by the Center for Latin American Studies, contact the undergraduate coordinator Luis Felipe Gómez Lomelí at luisgomezlomeli@ufl.edu. If you are a **graduate student**, contact the graduate coordinator, Clate Korsant at ckorsant@latam.ufl.edu.

Extension policy: I will grant extensions of up to three days if requested in writing, preferably several days in advance of the original due date. Plan ahead! If extenuating circumstances require a lengthier extension, please contact me and we can work out an alternate submission date.

Late papers: If a student has not requested an extension, I will deduct five points from the final grade each day that the paper is late. Please communicate with me if you are facing circumstances that may challenge your ability to turn an assignment in on time!

Students with disabilities: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center (DRC): <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/> I ask that students share their accommodation letter with me and reach out to discuss access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Evaluations: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals at the end of the semester. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>.

Library Use: UF has a world-class library, and I strongly encourage you to make good use of it. The Latin American and Caribbean Collection at Smathers Library has extensive secondary sources in addition to many fascinating collections of primary documents, ready to be analyzed for our final research paper. I suggest you reach out to LACC chief librarian Margarita Vargas-Betancourt (mvargasb@ufl.edu) or one of the other excellent librarians to learn more about the collection and see what possibilities exist for accessing sources either on campus or online. For more information: <https://lacc.uflib.ufl.edu/> or stop by the third floor of Smathers Library. Remember to plan ahead! Start thinking about your research topic in October.

UF Honesty Policy: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. For more information: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

ChatGPT and Plagiarism Policy:

The use of uncited AI software is not appropriate for written contributions to this course. These assignments are meant to foster creative, critical, and synthetic thinking through evaluation and integration of course materials, personal experiences, discussion, independent research, and reflection. TURN IT IN will be used to confirm that written work is original.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

A	100 pts to	93 pts
A-	<93 pts to	90 pts
B+	<90 pts to	87 pts
B	<87 pts to	83 pts
B-	<83 pts to	80 pts
C+	<80 pts to	77 pts
C	<77 pts to	73 pts
C-	<73 pts to	70 pts
D+	<70 pts to	67 pts
D	<67 pts to	63 pts

D-	<63 pts to	60 pts
F	<60 pts to	0 pts

Please consult the UF website for further information on grades and grading policies:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Rubric for papers /100

	Great	Good	Average	Poor	Absent
	19-20	16-18	9-15	2-8	0-1
Analysis	The thesis is original. Compelling ideas throughout.	The thesis is interesting. At least one original perspective in one of the points.	The essay is focused on a single thesis or idea.	The thesis is split or unclear; the paper wanders off-topic.	No thesis or focus. Or seems AI-generated.
Evidence	27-30	23-26	15-22	11-14	0-10
	A variety of support for every claim, and it is strong, concrete, and appropriate.	Supporting evidence for all claims, but it is not as strong or complete in some areas.	Supporting evidence for most of the claims, but some evidence may be unrelated or vague.	Some evidence, but in key places evidence is vague or missing.	Almost no detailed evidence to support the thesis.
Organization	19-20	16-18	13-15	7-12	0-6
	Each paragraph is focused and in the proper order. Introduction and conclusion are complementary. Excellent transitions. In the main, content and not vocabulary, achieves the transition.	Each part of the paper is engaging, but better transitions, more/fewer paragraphs, stronger conclusion are needed.	Clear introduction, body, and conclusion, but some paragraphs may need to be focused or moved.	Some organization, but the paper is “jumpy” without a clear introduction and conclusion. Paragraphs are not focused or out of order.	Little or no organization.

Language	10	8-9	6-7	4-5	0-3
	Creative word choice and sentence structure enhance the meaning and focus of the paper. Special attention to precise verbs. Avoids cliché.	The language is clear with complex sentence structure but contains minor grammatical errors.	Writing is clear, but sentence structures are simple or repetitive; or repeated grammatical errors.	Grammatical mistakes slightly interfere with the meaning of the paper. Basic and imprecise verbs. Or excessively informal expression.	Frequent and serious grammatical mistakes make the meaning unclear.
Style/Voice	9-10	8-9	6-7	4-5	0-3
	A keen sense of the intended audience. The author's voice and the writing convey passion.	The paper addresses the audience appropriately and is engaging with a strong sense of voice.	Essay addresses the audience appropriately with some examples of creative expression.	Writing is general with little sense of the audience or communication of the writer's voice or passion.	Writing is general with no sense of either the writer or audience. Robotic.
Citations	10	9	7-8	4-6	0-3
	All evidence is well cited in appropriate format.	All evidence is cited, but with minor format errors.	Good citations but not enough of them.	Some citations but either incomplete or inappropriate.	Almost entirely without citations. Or AI-generated content.

IMPORTANT: If I notice that a student's writing is in need of improvement prior to the final assignment, I may refer them to the UF Writing Studio. This is not meant as a punishment, and it is not a requirement, just a recommendation. On-campus resources are available so that we can all continue to improve our skills; there is no shame in needing a little extra help. Working with the Writing Studio will allow you to workshop drafts, improve sentence structure, clarify grammatical issues, and get a handle on organization. I strongly suggest availing yourself of this FREE resource to get your writing in top shape!

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138, <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Course Schedule:

January 12, Week 1: Course Introduction

January 19: NO CLASS, University Holiday

January 26, Week 2: Theories of Reproduction and Reproductive Justice

- Loretta Ross, et al, "Introduction," and Toni M. Bond Leonard, "Laying the Foundations for a Reproductive Justice Movement," in *Radical Reproductive Justice: Foundations, Theory, Practice, Critique*, p. 11-31, 39-49
- Laura Briggs, *How All Politics Became Reproductive Politics: From Welfare Reform to Foreclosure to Trump*, Introduction, p. 1-18
- Lynn M. Morgan and Elizabeth F.S. Roberts, "Reproductive Governance in Latin America," *Anthropology & Medicine*, p. 241-254

February 2, Week 3: Reproduction Under Slavery and in its Aftermath

- Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*, Chapter One: "Reproduction in Bondage," p. 22-55
- Camillia Cowling, *Conceiving Freedom: Women of Color, Gender, and the Abolition of Slavery in Havana and Rio de Janeiro*, Introduction, Chapter Three, p. 1-20, 71-96 (Optional, Chapter Eight: 198-213)
- Cassia Roth, "From Free Womb to Criminalized Woman: Fertility Control in Brazilian Slavery and Freedom," *Slavery & Abolition*, p. 269-286
- Optional: Angela Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," *The Massachusetts Review*, p. 81-100

February 9, Week 4: Imperialism, Nationalism, and Eugenics

- Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and US Imperialism in Puerto Rico*, Introduction, Chapters Four and Five, p. 1-20, 109-161
- Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*, Introduction, p. 1-20
- Alexandra Minna Stern, "Sterilized in the Name of Public Health: Race, Immigration, and Reproductive Control in Modern California," *American Journal of Public Health*, p. 1128-38

February 16, Week 5: The Origins of Reproductive Justice in the US

- **FIRST PAPER DUE ON FEB. 20**
- Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement*, Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2, p. 1-83
- Kirsten Swinth, *Feminism's Forgotten Fight: The Unfinished Struggle for Work and Family*, Introduction and Chapter Six, p. 1-12, 156-179
- Watch *The Janes*, dir. by Tia Lessin and Emma Pildes

February 23, Week 6: Militant Motherhood and Maternalist Movements

- Meghan Gibbons, "Political Motherhood in the United States and Argentina," in *Mothers Who Deliver: Feminist Interventions in Public and Interpersonal Discourse*, p. 253-78
- Tracy Crowe Morey and Cristina Santos, "Las Madres Guerreras: Testimonial Writing on Militant Motherhood in Latin America" in *Motherhood and War*, p. 61-83
- Susan Francheschet, Jennifer M. Piscopo, Gwynn Thomas, "Supermadres, Maternal Legacies and Women's Political Participation in Contemporary Latin America," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, p. 1-32

March 2, Week 7: Abortion and Family Planning in the Americas 1: Religion, Medicine, and the Law

- Elizabeth O'Brien, “‘A Tacit Pact with the State’: Constrained Choice and the Politics of Abortion in 1930s Mexico,” *Journal of Women’s History*, p. 53-75
- Jane Marcus-Delgado, *The politics of abortion in Latin America: public debates, private lives*, Chapters One and Five; p. 1-26, 85-101
- Elise Andaya, *Conceiving Cuba: Reproduction, Women, and the State in Post-Soviet Cuba*, Introduction and Chapter Four, p. 1-23, 68-92

March 9, Week 8: Abortion and Family Planning in the Americas 2: Struggles from Below

- Mala Htun, *Sex and the State: Abortion, Divorce, and the Family Under Latin American Dictatorships and Democracies*, Chapter Six, p. 142-171 (Recommended: Skim Chapter One)
- Jane Marcus Delgado, *The Politics of Abortion in Latin America*, Chapter Four; p. 65-84
- Alba Ruibal, “Using constitutional courts to advance abortion rights in Latin America,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, p. 579-599

March 15-23: SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS

March 23, Week 9: Black and Indigenous Feminisms and Efforts to Resist Forced Sterilization

- **SECOND PAPER DUE ON MARCH 27**
- Rafael de la Dehesa, “Social Medicine, feminism, and the politics of population: From transnational knowledge networks to national social movements in Brazil and Mexico,” *Global Public Health*, p. 803-816
- Sônia Beatriz dos Santos, “Controlling black women’s reproductive health rights: An impetus to black women’s collective organizing,” *Cultural Dynamics*, p. 13-30
- Ernesto Vasquez Del Aguila, “Precarious Lives: Forced sterilization and the struggle for reproductive justice in Peru,” *Global Public Health*; p. 100-114

March 30, Week 10: Adoption in the Americas: Geopolitics, Race, and Family

- **FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL DUE ON APRIL 3**
- Kimberly McKee, “Adoption as a Reproductive Justice Issue,” *Adoption & Culture*, p. 74-93
- Laura Briggs, *Somebody’s Children: The Politics of Transracial and Transnational Adoption* Introduction; p. 1-24
- Rachel Nolan, *Until I Find You: Disappeared Children and Coercive Adoptions in Guatemala*, Introduction, p. 1-25
- Podcast: “Adoptive Couple v. Baby Girl” Radiolab: <https://radiolab.org/podcast/295210-adoptive-couple-v-baby-girl>

April 6, Week 11: Surrogacy in the Americas: Queerness, Disability, and Labor

- Sophie Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family*, Chapter One (Recommended: Skim the rest of the book)
- Carolin Schurr and Elisabeth Militz, “The affective economy of transnational surrogacy,” *Environment and Planning*, p. 1626-1645
- Lucía Franco, “Colombia’s surrogacy market: Buying a baby for \$4,000,” *E/ País*: <https://english.elpais.com/international/2023-01-04/colombias-surrogacy-market-buying-a-baby-for-4000.html>
- Podcast: “Birthstory,” Radiolab: <https://radiolab.org/podcast/birthstory2018>

April 13, Week 12: Reproduction Under the Carceral State

- **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE ON APRIL 17**
- Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*, Chapter Four, “Making Reproduction a Crime,” p. 151-201
- Rachel Roth, “She Doesn’t Deserve to Be Treated Like This: Prisons as Sites of Reproductive Injustice” in *Radical Reproductive Justice*, p. 285-301
- Carolyn Sufrin, “Making Mothers in Jail: Carceral Reproduction of Normative Motherhood,” *Reproductive BioMedicine and Society Online*, p. 55-65

April 20, Week 13: Contemporary Struggles over Reproduction

- Readings TBD