

Seminar: The Politics of Reproduction Politics 460

Spring 2004

Dr. Susan Roberts

“The expansion brings with it not only a seemingly effective way to select a child’s gender, it also highlights a host of ethical and practical considerations that accompany sex selection, especially for the majority of families who use the technique for non-medical reasons.”

- Shari Roan, Los Angeles Times, March 17, 2003

“Scientists wasted little time deploring the announcement by a religious sect that it has created the first human clone. It’s not just because Clonaide, the company founded by the leader of the sect, the Raelians, has so far failed to support its claims with even a shred of evidence. It is also because cloning has two meanings. And scientists worry that the public and Congress don’t understand the distinctions.”

- Gina Kolata, “The Promise of Therapeutic Cloning”
The New York Times , 5 January 2003

“The Peterson case is going to be a tough one for the pro-choice lobby. They have a special interest in limiting the definition of ‘person’ to those already born. Any jury is likely to be sympathetic to the dead woman and her dead baby and reject a political argument.”

- Cal Thomas, Tribune Media Services,
April 23, 2003

“Books on racial justice tend to neglect the subject of reproductive rights: and books on reproductive freedom tend to neglect the influence of race. Few, if any, have addressed the many dimensions of governmental regulation of Black women’s childbearing or the impact this repression has had on the way Americans think about reproductive liberty.”

- Dorthory Roberts, Killing The Black Body, 1997

“We breed for quality, not quantity in the human species, or the end is nigh.”

- Birth Control News, August 1922

As the above quotations illustrate, reproductive questions abound with political issues. While one normally associates politics with electoral offices and the economy, there are politics involving most contentious social issues, and their resolution is never easy, and rarely is it definitive. Lawrence Tribe, writing about abortion politics in 1990, terms these politics as “a clash of absolutes, or life against liberty.” He goes on to ask: “Are there ways of approaching issues like abortion that avoid pitting these absolutes against one another? Ways of choosing that maintain respect for the deepest values on

both sides of the equation? Ways that face the realities of sex and power that underlie the struggle?”

The politics over access to abortion has been a volatile one even prior to the Supreme Court case of Roe v. Wade. Our government has had to face the politics of abortion, and indeed other reproductive issues, even if society has yet to resolve the issues. On January 22 of 2003, the Roe decision marked its 30th anniversary. Several days before the 30th anniversary of Roe, President George W. Bush declared Sunday January 19 National Sanctity of Human Life Day. Obviously, the debate over access to abortion has not been resolved.

The discussion of reproductive politics extends far beyond a debate over access to abortion. The politics of reproduction involves issues of sex, race, governmental responsibilities, technology, medical needs, and morality. Most Americans would be surprised to learn of eugenics efforts in this country around the turn of the 20th century.

Questions concerning reproductive rights are both complex and controversial. Recent courts cases such as Ferguson v. The City of Charleston involve drug testing of pregnant women, arrest, and incarceration. The court had to ask “is a state hospital’s performance of a non-consensual diagnostic drug test, in order to obtain evidence of a patient’s criminal conduct for law enforcement purposes, an unreasonable search?” The Court had to recently deal with the issue termed both “partial birth abortion” and “late term abortion” with terminology determined by ideologies.

***This class is specifically designed to address the politics of a wide array of reproductive issues, **not the promotion of any bias or viewpoint**. It is a subject of serious inquiry, and students uncomfortable with such **should not** enroll.

***The textbooks chosen are selected for their ability to raise certain questions fundamental to an understanding of the politics of reproduction. Their selection can not be construed to reflect endorsement of any certain ideas or biases.

Textbooks

Tone	DEVICES & DESIRES
Patterson	PROTECT AND DEFEND
Roberts	KILLING THE BLACK BODY
Gorney	ARTICLES OF FAITH: A FRONTLINE HISTORY OF THE ABORTION WARS
Woliver	THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF PREGANCY

Black	WAR AGAINST THE WEAK: EUGENICS...RACE
Ordoover	AMERICAN EUGENICS: RACE, QUEER ANATOMY, & THE SCIENCE OF NATIONALISM
Bonnicksen	CRAFTING A CLONING POLICY
Course Packet	to be distributed (student generated)

General Course Requirements & Information

Participation:

This is a SEMINAR. Participation is an integral part of your grade. While quantity of discussion does not equate with quality, you are expected to regularly participate in class discussion in a meaningful manner. I will assess your participation daily, but my evaluation will be cumulative, not a seminar to seminar grade. I will consider peer assessment at the midterm of the semester and at the end of the semester.

The subject matter of this course may be considered sensitive, and I reiterate that students who treat the material in a trivial or demeaning manner will receive low marks for participation. Such assessment is the purview of the professor.

In addition, any student offended or distracted by such continued participation is encouraged to alert the professor. Offending students may be asked to leave, and subject to the consultation of the registrar, they will be able to withdraw from the class.

Attendance:

No student will receive a passing grade in the class should they miss more than one seminar. The only exception to this requires an approved absence specifically from the Dean of Students; no other absence will be excused.

Conferences:

Students will be expected to consult with the professor at least twice during the semester about their term paper. The students must schedule these conferences. They require between 30 minutes and one hour. They must be scheduled at the mutual convenience of both the professor and the student.

Ad hoc discussions outside of the office do not constitute a conference. Students who fail to schedule conferences will have one letter grade deducted from their final grade. Students bear full and sole responsibility to schedule these conferences. As this is a senior level seminar, the students will not be reminded to schedule these appointments. In addition, students coming to the scheduled conference unprepared or without specific

questions, evidence of prior work, or drafts will have one letter grade deducted from their final grade.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand what constitutes plagiarism. Students must consult with the professor or a trained individual in the Writing Center. Any and all suspicions of plagiarism will be turned over the Honor Council for adjudication.

Grading:

This course is designed to meet the requirements for the senior thesis within the Department of Political Science. While students may have met the requirement for a thesis in a previous course such as the Senior Colloquium, they are still subject to writing such a research paper in this course.

In addition, students will be required to turn in a proposal, a literature review, and a rough draft for their thesis. Also, students will be required to make a presentation, preferably involving Power Point, to the entire class, with class assessment of such a presentation.

Participation	20%
Reading Questions	10%
Proposal	10%
Literature Review	15%
Term Paper	40%
Presentation	5%

Each student must submit reading questions (via e-mail attachments, clearly identified in the subject line) by 5pm the Tuesday prior to the Wednesday seminar. A minimum of two discussion (not fact-based) questions must be submitted. These will form much of the basis for our discussion. Each set of questions must be accompanied by a minimum of three paragraphs discussing the material assigned. Each student will receive one free “pass” during the semester. Reading questions submitted after the 5pm hour will have one letter grade deducted from the discussion/ questions.

The term paper is expected to have between 20 – 25 pages of text. This excludes notation, documentation and bibliography. It is due APRIL 26, two weeks prior to the last class day so that presentations may begin. There will no exceptions to this stipulation.

Students must select a topic about which they wish to do detailed research and careful assessment. One must create an argument and not just a recitation of materials and “facts.” Without commentary as to their particular merits, here are some titles of recent seminar papers:

- “Implications Of Society’s Perception On The Reproductive Rights Of The Mentally Retarded.”

- “Ferguson v. City of Charleston: An Important Landmark Decision Or Merely A Combination Of Unique Factors?”
- “When Legislation and Poverty Control Reproductive Rights”
- “The Development of Eugenics: How Has Such A Controversial Idea Maintained Popularity Throughout American History and Culture?”
- “The Human Genome Project And Abortion”
- “Eggs On Ice: Orphans or Real Estate?”
- “Partial Birth Abortion: How Far Will The Court Go?”
- “Test and Arrest: Whitner v. South Carolina, Ferguson v. Charleston, and the Impact of the American Crack Epidemic On Reproductive Rights”
- “The Politics of Teenage In The United States”
- “How Will Technological Advances Affect Wrongful Life and Wrongful Birth Claims?”

Assignment Overview

W	Jan 14	Overview and Introduction
W	Jan 21	Policy Dynamics
W	Jan 28	Fiction & Policy Issues: <u>Protect and Defend</u> (entire book)
W	Feb 4	The Cultural Politics of Contraception <u>Devices & Desires</u> Parts 1 and 2
W	Feb 11	<u>Devices & Desires</u> Part 3 “John Rock’s Error” <u>New Yorker</u> article (to be on electronic reserve)
W	Feb 18	Fertility, Access to Abortion: Origins & History Fertility Control Policy & The Policy Process Woliver (sections tba)

PROPOSALS DUE—IN CLASS. WED. FEB 18
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W	Feb 25	Fertility & Assisted Reproduction Woliver (sections tba)
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Spring Break March 3

W Mar 10 Access to Abortion: Continued Controversies
Gorney (entire book)

W Mar 17 Literary Interpretations
Films & Selected Readings:
The Handmaid's Tale
Cider House Rules

LITERATURE REVIEWS DUE IN CLASS, W MAR 17

W Mar 24 Race & Reproduction: History & Current
D. Roberts – Killing The Black Body
Chapters 1 - 3

W Mar 31 Continued
D. Roberts – Killing The Black Body
Chapters 4 – 7
Ferguson v. City of Charleston

W Apr 7 Science & Human Breeding
Chesteron – Eugenics & Other Evils
(selections on electronic reserve)
Ordoover – American Eugenics

W Apr 14 Continued
Black – War Against The Weak

W Apr 21 Brave New Worlds
Bonnicksen – Crafting A Cloning Policy

TERM PAPERS DUE = MONDAY, NOON APRIL 26, 2003 OR BEFORE

W May 5 Presentations

READING DAY = Thursday, May 6