

Religion and Reproduction

563: 264 (Crosslisted with 840:263, 988:220, and 790:263)

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Religion plays a large role in shaping reproductive practices, norms, and policies. This course explores the intersection of religion and reproduction in the United States and Israel. During the semester we will focus primarily on pronatalism and abortion as two key aspects of reproduction. For each of these issues we will focus on how Jews and Christians, as well as Judaism and Christianity, in the US understand these issues, and wrestle with them internally. A few themes will continually arise: how religious ideas about kinship, women's sexuality, and concern for demographic continuance are applied through forms of reproduction and reproductive interruption. For comparison, this class will also explore how religion shapes reproductive norms and practices in another national context. Looking at these issues within Israel, students will come to appreciate that religious positions are not monolithic but rather arise from particular cultural contexts. Furthermore, they will see how religion and reproduction intersect differently elsewhere. The course will be centered around ethnographic case studies of reproduction while drawing occasionally on historical analyses and philosophical commentaries. Gender and religion will form the two primary modes of analysis for the study of reproduction. At the end of the semester we will also consider how class and race shape reproductive ideas and practices in the US.

Course Materials

The following books are required for the class. Please purchase print copies of the books.

- Peters, Rebecca Todd. *Trust Women: A Progressive Christian Argument for Reproductive Justice*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018)
ISBN: 978-0807041482
- Griffith, Marie. 2017. *Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics*. Basic Press. ISBN: 9780465094752
- Kahn, Susan Martha. 2000. *Reproducing Jews: A Cultural Account of Assisted Conception in Israel*. Duke University Press. ISBN: 0822325985
- Ross, Loretta and Ricki Solinger. *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*. University of California Press, 2017. ISBN: 9780520288201
- Additional readings will be available on Canvas. Please bring hard (not electronic) copies of all readings to class.

Learning goals:

1. **[Core CCD1]: Analyze the degree to which forms of human differences and stratifications among social groups shape individual and group experiences of and perspectives on contemporary issues.**

DRAFT SYLLABUS

- a. At the end of the semester, students will be able to analyze how religion has shaped the debate over these reproductive issues in Israel and America through ethnographic case studies.
 - b. At the end of the semester students will compare and contrast how Christians and Jews think about reproduction, gender, and sexuality differently.
 - c. At the end of the semester, students will gain a critical apparatus for thinking about the intersection of religion and reproduction.
2. At the end of the semester, students will be able to apply and interrogate themes of kinship, sexuality, and demographic concern, for thinking about religion and reproduction.
 3. At the end of the semester, students will compare how controversies over religion and reproductive issues vary in different contexts
 4. At the end of the semester, students will critically engage with their own perspectives with the goal of widening and expanding one's own perspective on these issues.

Academic Integrity

As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community. For the complete academic integrity policy, see: <https://policies.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/10.2.13%20-%20current.pdf> Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com (directly or via learning management system, i.e. Sakai, Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle) for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site. Students who do not agree should contact the course instructor immediately.

Creating a Safe Learning Environment

Rutgers faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. Rutgers has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The University strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the University. Please be aware that all Rutgers employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as advocates, counselors, clergy and healthcare providers as listed in Appendix A to Policy 10.3.12) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the University. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence, relationship violence, stalking or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the University's Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can find a list of resources in Appendix A to

University Policy 10.3.12. For more information about your options at Rutgers, please visit endsexualviolence.rutgers.edu

Student Support Services At Rutgers

If you are having personal or other problems, there are many options at Rutgers for assistance.

- When you *don't know where to start* looking for assistance, contact the [Dean of Students office](#).
- If you are in need of *mental health* services, please contact Rutgers Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): <http://rhscaps.rutgers.edu/>
- If you need some *temporary guidance*, there is “Lets Talk” – which is a CAPS service offering drop-in hours at a number of locations across campus. No appointment is necessary. <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/therapy/community-based-counseling/#runbhc>
- If you are in need of *physical health* services due to illness, please reach out to the Rutgers Health Services: <http://health.rutgers.edu/>
- If you do not have enough *food*, there is a Food Pantry on College Ave campus that is exclusively for Rutgers Students: <http://ruoffcampus.rutgers.edu/food/>
- If you need accommodation for a *disability*, obtain a Letter of Accommodation from the Office of Disability Services that provides student-centered and inclusive services: <https://ods.rutgers.edu>
- If you are a military *veteran* or are on active military duty, you can obtain support through the Office of Veteran and Military Programs and Services: <http://veterans.rutgers.edu/>
- If you are in need of *legal* services, please visit <http://rusls.rutgers.edu/>
- If you are in need of additional *academic assistance*, please contact the Rutgers University-New Brunswick Learning Center: <https://rlc.rutgers.edu/>
- If you or somebody you know has been victimized by a *crime or interpersonal violence* (e.g., stalking, sexual assault), support is available at the Rutgers Office for Violence Prevention and Victim assistance: <http://vpva.rutgers.edu>

Electronic Communications Policy

Electronic devices (computers, tablets, phones) are permitted in this class, but I request that they be used to the extent that they offer minimal distraction to you and your fellow classmates. This means muting all sounds, and keeping screens focused on course content, for instance. It is up to you to remain vigilant about using your electronic devices to enhance your learning experience and not detract from it.

Assessments and Grading Policy

Your grade is based on your preparation for class meetings, your participation in class discussion and activities, and your completion of tests and assignments. There are a variety of assessment methods in this class to ensure that you can demonstrate your mastery and application of the material in a way that is most fitting for you. Please talk to Professor Raucher if you are having trouble completing the assignments or keeping up in class.

Assignments and Evaluation

- Attendance and Class Participation: 25% of your final grade
 - Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.
 - Throughout the semester you will have many opportunities to demonstrate your engagement with the assigned reading material. In class, you should raise questions or express concern, debate with fellow students, and reflect on the material. It is your responsibility to stay up to date with the readings assigned so that you can adequately participate in these in-class activities. Your *informed* participation will be graded.
 - Our class sessions will include group work, activities, discussion, short writing exercises, and mini quizzes. Your performance and participation in these activities will contribute to your grade.
 - When assessing your participation in this course, I will use the following rubric:
 - A: You contribute to every class session. Your comments are the products of excellent preparation and demonstrate respect for your peers. You participate productively in the in-class activities, and your short writing exercises and mini quizzes demonstrate that you completed reading assignments fully.
 - B: You often contribute, and you are well-prepared. You often build and improve the quality of discussion. You mostly participate well in the class activities, and your quizzes and writing exercises demonstrate your adequate preparation.
 - C: You occasionally contribute, and your comments reflect some preparation. You also sometimes contribute without any preparation. You sometimes participate in class activities and group work. Your writing exercises and quizzes show that you often do not prepare ahead of class.
 - D: You rarely contribute, and you are unprepared for class. This is clear in your writing exercises and quizzes as well.
 - F: You do not show up to class.
- Weekly response memos: 25% of your final grade
 - In 200 words, summarize the main points of the day's reading. Draw connections between the multiple readings assigned for the day.
 - In another 200 words, offer your own reflections on the readings.
 - Memos are submitted on Canvas before class.
 - Unless you have a documented excuse, you can only submit memos for classes you attend.
- Media analysis: 25% of your final grade
 - Three times during the semester we'll be watching films/documentaries as part of our class discussions. You'll livetweet our viewings and submit 750-1000 word analyses of the films. Your analysis should explore how they correspond with class readings and discussions.
 - "The Handmaid's Tale" episodes
 - "Unplanned: What She Saw Changed Everything"

- Shtissel episodes or Unorthodox or “The Art of Waiting”
- Final project: You have options!!! 25% of your final grade
 - Reproductive interview: Be an ethnographer. Interview someone you know who has had a reproductive experience. Students often interview their mothers or another relative who has given birth, but it could also be someone who has had an abortion, hired a surrogate, donated eggs, donated sperm, or become a father. Interviewees must be selected in consultation with the professor.
 - You will submit a transcription of the interview and prepare a 10 minute presentation for the class that puts this interview in conversation with the other ethnographic accounts we have read.
 - Students will receive some training in interview methods.
 - Final paper that applies concepts and theoretical analysis from the course to the viewing and reading of *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Detailed instructions to follow (4-6 pages).
 - Write a blog for *Feminist Studies in Religion* that engages with the themes from class and a current event related to reproduction and religion. More details to follow. Blogs are academically researched but accessibly written. Approximately 1000 words.

Late Policy

Without prior discussion with Professor Raucher, you must submit all assignments on time. Failure to do so will result in a zero for the assignment. To be clear, if you have not discussed an extension with me and you did not submit an assignment on time, you will get a zero for that assignment. All that being said, I understand that “life happens” and certain times of the semester are busier than others. You are expected to anticipate this and take responsibility for your work. Be in touch with me if you think you will not be able to submit an assignment on time. I am happy to find a mutually-agreeable extension date. **You must discuss an extension request with me at least 24 hours before the assignment is due.** In the case of emergencies or sudden illness, I will accept a late assignment, but I expect you to communicate with me about the delay. This is your responsibility.

Schedule of Readings

all readings should be completed before attending class on that day.

Wednesday, January 19: Introductions

Monday, January 24: Introduction to main concepts

- Keeping it 101: a Killjoy’s introduction to Religion podcast. “Race, Gender, and Sexuality: What’s Religion Got to do with ‘Em?”
<https://keepingit101.buzzsprout.com/810974/5161405-race-gender-and-sexuality-what-s-religion-got-to-do-with-em>
- Code Switch, “Love and Blood Quantum”
<https://www.npr.org/2021/11/01/1051300480/love-and-blood-quantum>

Wednesday, January 26: Religion and Reproduction in the US

- Keeping it 101: a Killjoy's introduction to Religion podcast. "Gender, Sexuality, and Religion in the US." <https://keepingit101.buzzsprout.com/810974/5988004-gender-sexuality-and-religion-in-what-s-now-the-u-s>
- Solinger, 2007. *Pregnancy and Power: A Short History of Reproductive Politics in America*. NYU Press. (Selections)

Monday, January 31: Religion and Reproduction in the US

- Griffith, Marie. 2017. *Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics*. Basic Press. (Selections)

Wednesday, February 2: Religion and Reproduction in the US

- Griffith, Marie. 2017. *Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics*. Basic Press. (Selections)

Monday, February 7th: Religion and Reproduction in Israel

- Kahn, Susan Martha. 2000. *Reproducing Jews: A Cultural Account of Assisted Conception in Israel*. Duke University Press. Chapters 1, 2, 3
- Zubi, Him'mat. "Palestinian Fertility in the Israeli Sphere: Palestinian Women in Israel Undergoing Fertility Treatment." *Bioethics and Biopolitics in Israel*.

Wednesday, February 9th: Religion and Reproduction in Israel

- Kahn, Susan Martha. 2000. *Reproducing Jews: A Cultural Account of Assisted Conception in Israel*. Duke University Press. Chapter 4
- Taragin-Zeller. 2019. "Conceiving God's Children": Towards a Flexible Model of Reproductive Decision-Making." *Medical Anthropology*.

Monday, February 14 Christian family Planning

- Mehta, 2018. "Family Planning is a Christian Duty." In *Devotions and Desires: Histories of Sexuality and Religion in the Twentieth Century United States*. UNC Press.
- Dugan TBD
- Guest speaker: Dr. Kathryn Dugan's research on Catholics and Natural Family Planning

Wednesday, February 16: Jewish Pronatalism in the US

- Kravel-Tovi, "'Continuity Crisis' and its Instrumentalizing Effects." *American Jewish History* vol 104, number 2. Pp215-220.
- Bitton, "Is Jewish Continuity Sexist? On Jewish Values and Female Bodies." *Sources*
- Eisner, 2018. "Family Is a Jewish Value. Don't Let The Mistakes Of A Few Rob Us Of That Gift." *The Forward*
<https://forward.com/opinion/410346/family-values-are-jewish-values-dont-let-the-mistakes-of-the-few-rob-us-of/>
- Sirbu, 2018. "Fertility Is Not the Enemy Of Feminism. The Way the Jewish Community Pushes It Is."
<https://forward.com/opinion/letters/410441/fertility-is-not-the-enemy-of-feminism-the-way-the-jewish-community-pushes/>

- Stahl, 2013. “Single and Still Worthy”
<https://forward.com/sisterhood/169148/single-and-still-worthy/>

Monday, February 21: Anti-Abortion Christianity

- Dowland, 2015. “Abortion” in *Family Values and the Rise of the Christian Right*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- TBD

Wednesday, February 23: Racial politics and Anti-Abortion Christianity

- Sophie Bjork-James. “White Sexual Politics: The Patriarchal Family in White Nationalism and the Religious Right.” *Transforming Anthropology*
- Moultrie, Monique. “#BlackBabiesMatter: Analyzing Black Religious Media in CCconservative and Progressive Evangelical Communities.” *Religions* 2017.

Monday, February 28: No class

- Watch “Unplanned” film (2019)
- Dugan, 2019. “Unplanned and Contemporary Pro-Life Activism,” FSR Blog.
<https://www.fsrinc.org/unplanned-and-contemporary-pro-life-activism/>

Wednesday, March 2: Anti-Abortion Judaism

- Kranson, R. (2017) From women's rights to religious freedom: the women's League for conservative Judaism and the politics of abortion, 1970-1982. In: FrankMoreton, G.B. & White, H. (Eds.) *Devotions and desires: Histories of sexuality and religion in the twentieth century United States*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, pp. 170–192.
- Steinfeld, Rebecca. “War of the Wombs: Struggles over Abortion Policies in Israel.” *Israel Studies* 20(2): 1-26.
- Raucher, “The Cultural and Legal Reproduction of Poverty: Abortion Legislation in Israel.” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 30:1 (2014). 147-156. (Canvas)
- Efrat <https://www.efrat.info/>
- Be’ad Chaim (Pro-Life): <https://www.beadchaim.com/>
- Neusner, 1998. “Israel’s Holocaust.” *Christianity Today*
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1998/october26/8tc085.html>

Monday, March 7: Pro-Choice Christianity

- Peters, 2018. *Trust Women: A Progressive Christian Argument for Reproductive Justice*. Beacon Press, “One in Three”
- Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice www.rcrc.org
- Guest speaker: Toddie Peters

Wednesday, March 9: Pro-Choice Christianity

- Peters, 2018. *Trust Women: A Progressive Christian Argument for Reproductive Justice*. Beacon Press, “Why Misogyny and Patriarchy Matter,”

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Monday, March 21: Pro-Choice Christianity

- Peters, 2018. *Trust Women: A Progressive Christian Argument for Reproductive Justice*. Beacon Press, “Moving from Justification to Justice”
- Kamitsuka. “Unwanted Pregnancy, Abortion, and Maternal Authority: A Prochoice Theological Argument.” *JFSR* 2018 (41-57).
- Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice www.rcrc.org

Wednesday, March 23: Pro-Choice Judaism

- David Kraemer, 1999. “Jewish Ethics and Abortion,” in *Exploring Judaism: The Collected Essays of David Kraemer*. Scholars Press.
- Marla Brettshneider, 2009. “Jewish Feminism, Sexuality, and a Sexual Justice Agenda,” in *New Jewish Feminism*, ed. Elyse Goldstein. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing.

Monday, March 28: Pro-Choice Judaism

- NCJW “Rabbis for Repro” toolkit
- Avital Chizhik Goldshmidt, 2018. “‘My Dark Secret’; Orthodox women Reveal their Abortion Stories” *The Forward*. <https://forward.com/life/406674/orthodox-jewish-women-abortion-stories/>
- Jodi Rudoren: <https://forward.com/news/476361/my-abortion-story-because-its-true-and-we-should-not-be-afraid-to-talk/>
- <https://forward.com/opinion/476705/i-made-the-choice-9-readers-share-their-jewish-abortion-stories/>
- Guest speaker: Danya Ruttenberg/Sheila Katz

Wednesday, March 30: Abortion in Judaism

- Viewing Shtisel

Monday, April 4: Reproductive Injustice

- [Sgaier and Downey](#), “What we See in the Shameful Trends on Maternal Health.” *New York Times* November 17, 2021.
- Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*. Vintage, 1998. (Selections TBD)

Wednesday, April 6: Reproductive Injustice continued

- Dana Ain Davis, *Reproductive Injustice: Racism, Pregnancy, and Premature Birth*, Introduction and Part I (Selections TBD)

Monday, April 11: Beyond Pro-choice and Pro-Life: Reproductive Justice

- Ross and Solinger *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*, Intro and Chapter 1
- <http://religiousinstitute.org/time-to-embrace/>

Wednesday, April 13: Reproductive Justice

- Ross and Solinger, *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*, Chapter 2 and 3

Monday, April 18:

- Ross and Solinger, *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*, Chapter 4 and Epilogue

Wednesday, April 20:

- The Handmaid's Tale episode

Monday, April 25

- The Handmaid's Tale episode
- Latimer, Heather. 2009. Popular Culture and Reproductive Politics: Juno, Knocked up, and the Enduring Legacy of The Handmaid's Tale. *Feminist Theory* 10(2): 211-226.

Wednesday, April 27: Catch up?

- Churchill, 2003. "Reproductive Rights and Wrongs: Lessons from American Indian Religious Traditions, Historical Experience, and Contemporary Life." In *Sacred Rights*, edited by Daniel McGuire.
- Podcast on surrogacy for gay couples in Israel. <http://www.radiolab.org/story/birthstory/>

Monday, May 2: Catch up?