

Birth in the Nation: A History of Reproduction in the United States

HIS359W/459

TR 2-4:40pm

Location: Frederick Douglass 302

Instructor: Brianna Theobald

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454 Rush Rhees Library

Office Hours: T 1:30-3:00pm and by appointment [via Zoom until further notice]

Course Description:

Why did fertility rates decline over the nineteenth century? Why did women begin choosing hospital rather than home births in the twentieth century? What difference have the Pill and other reproductive technologies made in shaping how Americans think about pregnancy and childbirth? How have reproductive experiences differed along lines of race and class? How have movements for trans rights altered cultural attitudes regarding and medical approaches toward reproduction? We will consider these questions and more as we explore how and why reproductive experiences and the meanings attached to such experiences have changed over time. This is a research seminar, so students will further explore these issues through their own research and writing on some aspect of the history of reproduction. Readings and discussions will focus on the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but students may explore the location and period of their choice in their papers.

Required Reading:

Students are responsible for acquiring the following books:

Jennifer Holland, *Tiny You: A Western History of the Anti-Abortion Movement* (University of California Press, 2020).

Margaret Jacobs, *A Generation Removed: The Fostering and Adoption of Indigenous Children in the Postwar World* (University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750-1950* (University of Oxford Press, 1986). [A later edition is fine!]

Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (University of Georgia Press, 2017).

**Additional readings—book chapters, articles, and primary sources—will be available as PDFs or links on Blackboard.

Grade Breakdown:

94-100% = A	87-89% = B+	77-79% = C+	67-69% = D+
90-93% = A-	83-86% = B	73-76% = C	63-66% = D
	80-82% = B-	70-72% = C-	60-62% = D-

Assessment:

Participation:	25%
Research Prospectus:	10%
Historiography Paper:	15%
Written Critique:	5%
Final Research Paper:	45%

Participation: This is a seminar-style course, and the success of the course depends on active student participation. Students are expected to attend each class session, having carefully read the assigned reading for the week. That said, I understand that we are still far from business as usual, and the first priority is always your health and well-being. Whenever possible, please let me know if you need to miss a class session for any reason, so that we can work together to make sure that you stay on track.

When completing each week's reading, be prepared to discuss the following questions: What topic or topics is each author addressing? How, in your own words, would you summarize each author's main arguments? What forms of evidence are presented in each reading? What are the advantages and/or limitations of this source base? How might we put the assigned readings in dialogue with one another? How do they compare—in terms of argument, methodology, and/or style? Does the assigned reading relate in any way to your own chosen research topic? If so, how? I reserve the right to assign written work as a component of your participation grade if I conclude that students are not adequately prepared for class discussions.

Students will also be expected to discuss their research progress each class session, and this will factor into participation grades. See the below schedule for more details about research benchmarks.

Written Work: An overwhelming majority of your grade will be derived from *writing*. We will spend time discussing what constitutes good academic writing in class, but I encourage anyone who would like extra writing assistance to reach out to the U of R Writing and Speaking Center. They're fantastic! Learn more about this resource here:
<http://writing.rochester.edu/tutoring/index.html>.

Students will research a topic in the history of reproduction, chosen in consultation with me. This research will culminate in a **final paper** that asks a significant historical question, situates it within a body of scholarship, answers it with a clear thesis and a logical argument, supports it with both primary and secondary sources documented according to the standards of *Chicago Manual of Style*, and articulates its points in clear and artful prose with the grammar and spelling associated with formal composition. Undergraduate papers should be approximately 20 pages in length; graduate papers should be of publishable (25-35 pages) length.

Two shorter assignments are designed to assist students in working toward the above goal. The **research prospectus** (5-7 pages) consists of a brief discussion of your chosen topic and working research questions and a preliminary list of primary and secondary sources. See the assignment sheet on Blackboard for further instructions. The **historiography paper** (4-5 pages) discusses the historiography of your topic: How have scholars approached the topic? What arguments have others made? What scholarly debates or conversations present themselves in the secondary literature?

The final piece of assigned writing is a short (2-3 page) **critique** of another student's rough draft. Your critique should be respectful and constructive; disrespectful or mean-spirited reviews will not be tolerated. This written critique should: 1) offer a brief summary of the author's topic and argument, as you understand it; 2) address the draft's strengths and weaknesses; and 3) make one or two concrete suggestions for improvement.

Each of the above assignments should be submitted via Blackboard in size 12 Times New Roman font (or comparable), double-spaced, with standard margins. See below schedule for all deadlines.

Course Policies and Expectations:

Credit Hours: The College's credit hour policy on undergraduate courses is to award 4 credit hours for courses that meet for the equivalent of 3 periods of 50 minutes each week. Students enrolled in HIST 289/289W are expected to devote at least one hour each week outside of class to analyzing the course readings, working alone or in groups, and to researching in depth their topics for the final paper.

Late Assignments: Late papers will incur a 10-point penalty for every 24-hour period or portion thereof that passes from the deadline until the assignment is submitted. If an assignment is due at the start of class on February 13 and it is not turned in until the evening of February 13, ten points will be automatically deducted. If it is not turned in until the afternoon of February 14, twenty points will be deducted.

Accommodation Policies: I'm happy to make accommodations as recommended by UR Disability Services. Should you need accommodations, I encourage you to make these arrangements sooner rather than later.

Academic Integrity: Academic honesty is at the core of the historical discipline, and you'll find that it is something I care deeply about. All work submitted must be your own, prepared especially for this course. I will report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty to the University's Board on Academic Honesty. That said, I am happy to discuss any questions you

may have about what does and does not constitute plagiarism, provided this conversation occurs *before* you submit the assignment. For helpful discussions of plagiarism (including subtle instances), see the American Historical Association’s “Defining Plagiarism,” <https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/teaching-resources-for-historians/plagiarism-curricular-materials-for-history-instructors/defining-plagiarism>.

Schedule:

Week 1: Jan. 13

Reading: Reagan, “Medicine, Law, and the State” (PDF on Blackboard)

Week 2: Jan. 20

Reading: Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*, chpts. 1-4
Briggs, “The Race of Hysteria”

Research: Research topics and primary sources. Visit from Autumn Haag, UR Rare Books and Special Collections.

Week 3: Jan. 27

Reading: Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*, ch. 5-epilogue

Research: Using library and digital resources.

Week 4: Feb. 3

Reading: Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage*

Research: Getting a handle on historiography and formulating research questions.

Week 5: Feb. 10

NO CLASS: Research Week. Students should arrange to meet with me individually this week.

Week 6: Feb. 17

Reading: Jacobs, *A Generation Removed*, introduction, prologue, part 1, & part 2

Research: Research strategies. Students should be prepared to discuss early research progress. Challenges? Exciting finds?

Week 7: Feb. 24

Reading: Jacobs, *A Generation Removed*, part 3 & afterword
Theobald, *Reproduction on the Reservation*, ch. 6

Research: Prospectus due at the beginning of class.

Week 8: Mar. 3

NO CLASS: Research Week.

Week 9: Mar. 10

NO CLASS: Spring Break.

Week 10: Mar. 17

Reading: May, *Barren in the Promised Land*, ch. 5
 Jacobson, *Labor of Love*, ch. 2
 Rivers, *Radical Relations*, ch. 7

Research: Building scholarly arguments.

Week 11: Mar. 24

Reading: Holland, *Tiny You*

Research: Each student will make a brief presentation that outlines the historiography on their chosen topic and suggests how their research builds on or challenges previous interpretations.

***Historiography paper is due via Blackboard by Friday 3/25 at 5pm.**

Week 12: Mar. 31

NO CLASS: Students should arrange to meet with me individually sometime this week.

Week 13: Apr. 7

NO CLASS: Rough drafts are due via email to me and your assigned peer reader by **Friday, April 8 at 5pm**. The draft you submit should be at least 2/3 complete and **MUST** include a clear thesis statement and argument.

Week 14: Apr. 14

Reading: your partner's draft

Research: Bring two copies of your **written critique** to class—one for me and one for the author of the draft you reviewed. Be prepared to discuss your rough draft, as well as the draft you reviewed.

Week 15: Apr. 21

Reading: Hempel, "My Brother's Pregnancy and the Making of a New American Family"

Optional but recommended: Stryker, *Transgender History*, ch. 1

Research: Informal presentations regarding students' topic, argument, and evidence.

Final paper due via Blackboard Monday, May 2 at 8am.