

## Reproductive Health/Politics/Justice

As feminist scholar Michelle Murphy points out, “reproduction is not self-evidently a capacity located in sexed bodies”; it is instead a site (or formation) that joins, “cells, protocols, bodies, nations, capital, economics, freedom, and affect as much as sex and women into its sprawl.” Thus, she reminds us, “how we constitute reproduction shapes how it can be imagined, altered and politicized.” In this seminar we will explore the changing contours of “reproductive politics” from the 1960s to the present through an in-depth investigation of a range of projects and organizations that conceptually reimagine what we mean by “reproduction,” the scope and content of “reproductive politics,” and the kinds of demands that can be made in the name of reproductive health, rights, freedom and justice. In addition to course materials, our collective research into this topic will be informed by (guided) archival research in Special Collections, discussion with class visitors, and two One Book One Northwestern (OBON) sponsored events—a keyword discussion by GSS faculty on “reproduction” and a panel featuring NU alumni working on issues of reproductive justice.

We begin with an in-depth investigation of the ‘culture wars’ of 1980s and the emergence of a reproductive politics (newly) figured in terms of a “pro-life” vs. a “pro-choice” position by organizations like Operation Rescue, the National Right-to-Life Committee, NOW and NARAL, and interrogate the extent to which this rendering of reproductive politics continues to shape how we think about reproduction in the present. We then turn to the pre-history of this moment to explore the very different terms, demands and imaginaries that shaped the reproductive politics of the late 1960s and 1970s by investigating several new-left identified projects – including feminist “self-help” clinics, community “survival” programs, and the establishment of a network of community health centers as a praxis of “direct democracy”—that critique the norms and policies governing the reproduction of individuals and communities for their contribution to the social reproduction of a patriarchal and white-supremacist capitalist social order and attempted to build counter-cultural institutions that pre-figured a more equitable social order committed to “reproductive freedom” for all. In the final unit, we investigate how the analysis and demands of a resurgent “reproductive justice movement” led by women of color reimagines reproduction in terms of systems and structures that produce the inequitable distribution of life chances and expands the terrain of reproductive politics to include demands for racial, economic and environmental justice as prerequisites for exercising the right to have or not have children and to parent the children we do have.

Each unit includes a research component and students will work in groups to produce a final research project which will be incorporated into a spring-quarter exhibition in the main library on the history of reproductive politics as part of OBON programming.

