

**Seminar: The Politics of Reproduction  
Politics 461**

Fall 2009

Dr. Susan Roberts

Chambers 1096

1:30 – 4:20

“It is too early to say whether the murder of Dr. Tiller will trigger a wave of violent terrorism targeting abortion providers similar to the one that took place during the mid-1990s. It is not too early to be struck by the parallels.”

Eyal Press

“George Tiller: Casualty of the Culture Wars?”

The Nation, June 1, 2009

“If I have something to add, it is primarily that the hour is late, the technology is closer, and the public debate has not been vigorous. Chekhov’s injunction about the gun on the wall simply tells us that it will be used, it does not say, or at whom it will be pointed. That is to be decided.”

Troy Duster, Backdoor to Eugenics, 2003

“After 33-year old Nadya Suleman, a mother of six, gave birth to octuplets on January 26, the California fertility specialist who treated her was summoned to appear before the Medical Board of California . . . The high-profile Suleman case has spurred calls for government regulation of fertility medicine – sometimes called assisted reproductive technologies , or ART.”

Marcia Clemmitt, “Reproductive Ethics”

CQ Researcher, May, 15, 2009

“There are many reasons for African Americans and poor people to mistrust the motives and ethics of the scientific and medical communities. The Tuskegee syphilis experiments (government studies in which African Americans were deliberately not treated for syphilis so that researchers could study the progress and effects of the disease). Involuntary sterilizations and sickle cell screening in the 1970s are but three examples of how this mistrust built up.”

Laura Woliver, The Political Geographies of Pregnancy  
2002, p. 53

“For all the debate in Washington, the battle over abortion is actually in the states, which are imposing more limits than ever.”

- Karen Tumulty, Newsweek

January 30, 2006

The agenda of issues associated with reproductive politics is growing at a rate which far outpaces policy solutions. While some may associate the politics of reproduction with the heated question of access to abortion, this is but one of the areas we will study. These topics are as varied as they are volatile.

Changing technology and scientific advances fuel the majority of controversies in reproductive politics. We will examine questions concerning contraception, access to abortion, eugenics, stem cell policies, surrogacy, and sex education among others. We will examine the issues surrounding assisted fertility. This area has been described by some as the “Wild West. . . a field populated by rogue scientists and multimillionaire doctors willing to stuff pretty much anything into a woman’s expensively prepped womb” (Liza Mundy, Everything Conceivable). In addition we will take into account what some scholars have seen as the undue burdens and even abuses of reproductive politics on the poor and on those of other races.

No branch of government is immune from the politics of reproduction. The public might be surprised to know that virtually all of the judicial and legislative action concerning access to abortion is designed and implemented at the state and not the federal level. Discussion of the Supreme Court ruling in Roe v. Wade seems to suggest that all of the decisions concerning access to abortion rest upon that one case. In reality, almost every political sphere includes these policies – chief among them the executive branch, federal and state legislatures, federal and state judicial branches, and regulatory and health agencies. Interest groups and their lobbying efforts also fuel what is more often a debate rather than a discussion.

The economic crisis in October far and away eclipsed the cultural issues such as access to abortion in the elections of 2008. Nevertheless, the candidates’ stances on access to abortion will be an issue for American voters in their evaluations. Few, if any, candidates for political office can escape without answering questions about reproductive issues such as access to abortion and stem cell research. Even the current debate on health care reform involves provisions on abortion funding.

One of the most troubling issues in reproductive dilemmas is the association of American research and the Nazi regime in Germany. It is shocking to most Americans is to learn that the Nazi regime in Germany appropriated many procedures used in the name of “science,” a “science” from the eugenics movement in the United States and Great Britain. Citizens would also find it amazing that the governors of both Virginia and North Carolina have recently issued public apologies for their state’s past participation in sterilization of poor women, particularly African-American women. The evaluation of eugenics is decidedly not just a look to history. Medical professionals and social scientists alike are raising the thorny issue of genetic testing and its potential impact on reproductive decisions.

The question of stem cell therapies is advancing perhaps faster than any realm of medical technology. Quite naturally, this has become a complicated political question,

involving both policy and electoral politics. President Bush cast the very first veto of his presidency against stem cell research. This research remains a major issue confronting Americans. In the absence of comprehensive federal policies on stem cell research and its application, many states considered ballot initiatives on stem cell policies and funding in the November 2008 elections.

**Essentials for the Seminar:**

- 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.

**This course fulfills the requirements of the Department of Political Science for a seminar and a major paper. As such we will spend class time throughout the semester to the writing of a major research paper, including the process of crafting a proposal and the development of a workable proposal. Our concentration will also include writing of a literature review and engaging in peer review.**

**Textbooks**

Patterson	PROTECT & DEFEND
Tone	DEVICES & DESIRES (latest edition)
Spar	THE BABY BUSINESS
Black	WAR AGAINST THE WEAK
Johnson	GRISWOLD V. CONNECTICUT
Hull & Hoffer	ROE V. WADE; ABORTION RIGHTS
Pan	PREPARING LITERATURE REVIEWS <b>2<sup>nd</sup> ed</b>
Rose	SAFE, LEGAL, AND UNAVAILABLE

**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. 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:

Students will receive a letter grade deduction from their final grade 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 **2 times** during the semester about their term paper.

- The students must schedule their conferences. The initial conference is designed to help you begin your research and to select a topic. They require approximately 20 to 30 minutes. They must be scheduled at the mutual convenience of both the professor and the student.
- Ad hoc discussions outside of the office generally 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 suffer in their participation grade.

Honor Code:

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.

After three or four years at Davidson, you may think that you are fully aware of the Honor Code and its essential nature to this college and the college community. I would remind you that there are nuances to this covenant. It requires more than just knowledge of its existence.

For the purposes of this class, there are several specifics relating to the Honor Code:

- You must not turn in subject/readings reviews or questions from students in prior classes.
- As you would expect, other obligations of the Honor Code apply in terms of research and plagiarism.

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. Non-majors, of course, are responsible for writing the major research paper.

In addition, students will be required to turn in a proposal, a literature review, and a rough draft for their thesis. The rough drafts are not graded, but they are assessed for further direction for the final paper.

Also, students will be required to make a presentation, preferably involving Power Point, to the entire class, with class and professor assessment of such a presentation.

Participation	15%
Reading Questions	05%
Proposal	10%
Literature Review	25%
Term Paper	35%
Presentation	10%

Reading Questions:

- Each student must submit reading questions (via e-mail attachments, clearly identified in the subject line) by 6pm the Sunday prior to the Monday seminar.
- A minimum of 2 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 4 paragraphs discussing the material assigned.
- Each student will receive one free “pass” during the semester. If students meet all of the requirements for reading questions (1. submission time. 2. submission of questions. 3. submission of paragraphs) the student will automatically receive the grade of “95” for the 5% of the total grade.
- Should students fail to meet any of these requirements, they will receive a 1 point deduction for each omission. Students will be cautioned once, and on the occasion of another omission, a deduction will be made from the “automatic” “95.” Students will be notified immediately of this deduction.
- I will select reading questions from the submissions. These will be copied and distributed at the beginning of the seminar. There will be additional discussion beyond the list. I do this because I want members of the seminar to have input into class discussion.
- If you do not have a question included in the distributed list, it does not mean that you will receive a lower grade. It may just be that your question was similar to that submitted by another student.
- Reviews/discussion questions will be graded with a letter grade and returned to the students. Since you do not submit these until right before the class, this will not occur until the next week.

#### Research Log:

Students are *strongly advised* to keep a research log. This is simply a diary of how you are conducting your research. What process are you using? What progress are you making? Where have you met dead ends? This can help follow your thinking and refining of your topic. There is no grade on such. It is a suggestion.

These will be most useful when you come in for your appointments with me. We can track where you have been and what problems you are having.

#### Proposal:

We will discuss in class the ingredients of a good proposal. In general this should state a question or problem you wish to research. You need to suggest what your research path should be (quantitative, case study, survey, more traditional). You should also identify where you might go for your research. Include any concepts you might find useful. If possible at this juncture, you might identify some hypotheses.

#### Literature Review:

We will read an entire book on the preparation of your literature review. This is an integral piece of your research. The literature review will be incorporated (with revisions from the graded literature review) into your term paper. The length of the literature will vary. In general, it should be 7 – 12 pages.\* The literature review may end up constituting up to 10 – 12 pages of your term paper.\*

#### Term Paper:

The term paper is expected to have between 20 – 25 pages of text.\* This page number excludes notation, documentation and bibliography

*\* These are only approximate page lengths. Each piece of research is different.*

#### Presentation:

Each student will present his/her findings in a 10 minute formal presentation to the class. Five more minutes will be devoted to question & answer.

Students may or may not distribute handouts.

Students may or may not use power point presentations. Power point presentations can often be superficial. Students uncomfortable with oral presentations are encouraged to seek advice from the Speaking Center.

#### Term Paper Ideas:

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:

- "Supporting the Petri Dish: Public Opinion on Stem Cell Research"
- "Ferguson v. City of Charleston: An Important Landmark Decision or Merely a Combination of Unique Factors?"
- "Abortion Policy & the States: Does Ideology Matter?"
- "When Legislation and Poverty Control Reproductive Rights"
- "From Motherhood to Machine: Gender Bias in Laws of Reproduction Technology"
- "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"
- "How Will Technological Advances Affect Wrongful Life and Wrongful Birth Claims?"
- "Unfavorable Directions In Contraception: A Step Towards Eugenics"
- "The Eugenics Movement: How the Past Will Shape America's Future"
- "Stem Selling: An Analysis of the Changing Rhetoric Used in the Discussion About Stem Cell Research"
- "The Pill: A Blessing in Disguise or a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing"
- "The Politization of Stem Cells; America's Failure in Science"
- "Abortion Politics and the Destruction of Advice & Consent: Robert Bork, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, and John Roberts Case Studies in Abortion Special Interest"
- "Dispelling the Pro-Life Myth: The Relationship between Abortion and Adoption in the United States"
- "The Art of ART: Balancing Rights and Responsibilities in Embryo Custody Disputes"
- "Political Propaganda & the Promotion of Eugenics in the U.S. & Germany, 1900 – 1945"

- “The Underlying Problems with Domestic Adoptions in the U.S.”
- “Funding Stem Cell Research: The Role of the Individual States”
- “Human Genome Project Yields Unanswered Questions”
- “Breaking the Cycle: Examining Solutions to the prenatal Substance Abuse Problem”
- “Can You Carry My Baby? A Look at Surrogacy Trends & Influences in the U.S.”
- “The Same-Sex Family: Options, Availability & Repercussions”
- “An Analysis of Sex Education in the U.S.: Which Method? Abstinence Only or Comprehensive Sex Education?”
- “The Mystery of the Disappearing Abortion Providers”
- “Embryos to the Rescue! A Prediction on the Future Politics of Embryonic Stem Cell Research”
- “A Defense of China’s One Child Policy: Exploring the Justifications”
- South African Business & AIDS: Balancing Incentives”

**Assignment Overview**

M	Aug 24	Overview and Introduction Discussion of Dynamics of Policymaking
M	Aug 31	<u>Protect &amp; Defend</u> Discussion of novel and its politics
M	Sept 7	The Cultural Politics of Contraception <u>Devices &amp; Desires</u>
M	Sept 14	Discussion of Access to Abortion: Court Cases Rose – Introduction & Chapters 1 & 2 Johnson – <u>Griswold v. Connecticut</u>
M	Sept 21	Discussion of Access to Abortion: Rose – Chapters 3 & 4 Johnson – <u>Roe v. Wade</u>
M	Sept 28	In Class Discussion of Proposals Informal presentation of research ideas
M	Oct 5	Discussion of Access to Abortion Rose – Chapters 5 & 6 Film: Frontline “The Last Abortion Clinic”
<i>Proposals – Due Wednesday, October 7</i>		
M	Oct 12	No class = Fall Break

- M Oct 19 Pan – Preparing Literature Reviews  
Peer evaluations of class participation
- M Oct 26 Eugenics  
War Against the Weak Part One
- M Nov 2 Eugenics  
War Against the Weak Parts Two & Three
- M Nov 9 Assisted Reproduction  
Spar The Baby Business  
Preface & Chapters 1,2,3,4

*Literature Reviews – Due Tuesday, November 10*

- M Nov 16 Spar The Baby Business  
Chapters 5,6,7
- M Nov 23 Stem Cell Politics  
Readings
- M Nov 30 Presentations
- M Dec 7 Presentations  
Peer evaluations of class participation

**Research papers due on Tuesday, December 8 by 6p.m.**

