The Ethics of Reproductive Technologies

Elizabeth Reis, Macaulay Honors College
Fall, 2018

This is a tentative syllabus; the readings will inevitably change.

Tuesdays, 5:30 p.m. – 8:00 pm.

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 1:30-3:30 (call when you get to Macaulay: x2908) and by appointment

Should people be able to sell reproductive materials like sperm and eggs? Should female students who go to Harvard get paid $100,000 or more for their eggs while those who go to CUNY receive $8000? Should prenatal sex selection be encouraged? Should there be laws regarding pre-implantation genetic diagnosis? If some parents are able to avoid having a baby with certain disabilities or diseases, should others be allowed to select for certain disabilities? Is it wrong to have a child if there are known genetic risk factors? Is surrogate motherhood exploitative or empowering for women? How might the growth of surrogacy in developing nations change our understanding of reproductive technology?

This interdisciplinary seminar will explore the medical, legal, ethical, and gendered implications of assisted reproductive technologies. Topics will include egg and sperm donation, traditional and gestational surrogacy, transgender pregnancy, “designer” babies, the ethics of sex selection, disability and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, control and disposition of cryopreserved embryos, post-menopausal pregnancy, the ethics of reproductive globalization, and the use of reproductive technology in same-sex unions and non-traditional families.

Drawing on science and technology studies, feminist theory, and medical ethics, the class will focus on the dilemmas posed by various forms of concepitive technologies as they intersect with the personal and political meanings of creating human life.

Readings will include selections from these and other works:

* Vicki Forman, *This Lovely Life* (Mariner Books, 2009)
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class participation: This class will require active and sustained class participation, with open and honest discussion. We will be covering material that may challenge your beliefs and values. While you may not agree with everything said, you owe it to each other to listen carefully and respectfully to other people’s views.

Attendance: Because this will be a discussion-oriented class, you have to be here to benefit. I cannot recreate the class discussion for you if you have to miss class. Absences (as well as arriving late or leaving early) will negatively affect your final grade.

Rules: No computers, iPads, etc. are allowed in the class unless we are looking at the reading together. Please no texting either.

Academic Integrity
All work completed for this class must be your own. If you cheat (hand in your friend’s work or copy directly from the internet or a book, etc.) you will (at the very least) fail the class and your name will be registered with the University. For guidelines and the Macaulay Honors pledge, see: http://macaulay.cuny.edu/community/handbook/policies/honors-integrity/

Students with Disabilities
I will make every effort to accommodate students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible. Please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying your disability.

Weekly Journals should be uploaded to the “journals” section on Wednesday morning before 12:00 noon.

There are 13 weeks of Journal submissions, but you can take one week off (of writing, not reading!) If you do a beautiful job, incorporate all the reading, and thoroughly contemplate and address the study questions, you will get full credit. If you complete all the journal entries and receive full credit, you will get an A on this part of the course. If you only submit and get credit for 11 you will receive an A- for this part of the course; 10, a B+; 9, a B; 8, a B-; 7 a C+, 6 a C and less than that a D or lower. If you submit fewer than 5, you will not pass the class at all.

The quality of the submission counts too! In other words, this is your opportunity to grapple with the readings, to question, to connect one week to the next, and to raise issues that you’d like to see discussed in class. The journals aren’t formally graded, but I still want complete sentences, though you don’t have to worry about making an argument, having smooth transitions, and the like. If you only write about one of the readings or you write about your opinions with no reference to the readings at all, you won’t get credit that week (though I may award partial credit.) I don’t have a page limit, but I expect you’ll submit roughly 500-750 words. More is fine.

Fertility Clinic project/paper (to be explained: due during finals week)
Week 1:
Introduction to Ethical Debates about ART
Read:
• You do not have to write a journal entry this week.
• Diamond Sharp, “White Mother Sues Sperm Bank After Birth of Mixed Race Daughter.”
• In class film: Beholder

Week 2:
New Technologies vs. Religion, Race, Sexuality, and Gender Identity
• Laura Mamo, “Negotiating Conception: Lesbians’ Hybrid-Technological Practices,” Science, Technology Human Values 32:3 (May 2007), 369-93 (Online)
• First half of Lennard Davis, Go Ask Your Father
• In class film: Technostorks

Week 3:
Voluntary and Involuntary Sterilization
• Tracy Clark-Flory, “Is Forced Sterilization Ever OK?” Salon.com (February 16, 2011)
• On The Ashley Treatment: “Treatment Keeps Girl Child-Sized.”
• Arthur Kaplan, “Is Peter Pan Treatment a Moral Choice?”
• Kim Severson, “Thousands Sterilized: A State Weighs Restitution,” NYT (Dec. 9, 2011) (Online)
• J. Bryan Lowder, “Sterilize Me, Please: Why is it so difficult for young women to get their tubes tied?” Slate.com (July 9, 2012)
• First half of Lennard Davis, Go Ask Your Father
• In class film: La Operacion
Week 4:
The 20th-Century History of ART
- Finish Lennard Davis, *Go Ask Your Father*
- *In class film: Donor Unknown; Thank You For Coming by Sarah Lamm*

Week 5:
Sperm Donation
- Rachel Lehmann-Haupt, "Are Sperm Donors Really Anonymous Anymore?" *Slate* (March 1, 2010)
- Mary Ladd, "Maps of Beauty and Disease: Thoughts on Genetics, Confidentiality, and Biological Family," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 36 (2010), 479-482. (Online)
- *Guest Speaker: Lisa Brundage*

Week 6:
Egg Donation
- Rene Almeling, *Sex Cells: The Medical Market For Eggs and Sperm*, 111-178
- Julia Derek, *Confessions of a Serial Egg Donor*
- Elizabeth Reis, "Young Women’s Eggs: Elite and Ordinary" [Online]
- Rachel Warden, ‘Why Corporate Promotion of Egg Freezing Isn’t a ‘Benefit’ to All Women, [Online]
- *Guest Speaker: Katie O'Reilly*

Week 7:
Surrogacy: Who is a mother?
- Alex Kuczynski, "*Her Body, My Baby,*" *NYT* (November 28, 2008) (Online)
- Stephanie Saul, "Building a Baby with Few Ground Rules," Dec, 12, 2009
- Melanie Thernstrom, The Twibles article [Online]
- *Guest Speaker: Andrew Solomon*

Week 8:
International surrogacy and IVF

- Jason Burke, “India’s Surrogate Mothers Face New Rules to Restrict ‘Pot of Gold’” *The Guardian* (July 30, 2010)
- Emily Wax, “In India, age often doesn’t stop women from seeking help to become pregnant,” *Washington Post* (August 13, 2010)
- P. Jayaram, “OK to rent Womb in India,” *The Straits Times* (October 6, 2008),
- Stephanie Nolen, “Desperate Mothers Fuel India’s ‘Baby Factories,’” *Toronto Globe and Mail* (February 13, 2009)
- I. Glenn Cohen, *Patients With Passports, Medical Tourism, Law, and Ethics*, pp. 371-398 (Online)
- In class film: *Made in India*

Week 9:
International Concerns: The Middle East

- In class film: *Google Baby*

Week 10:
Embryo Disposition: Whose Babies are These?


Week 11:
Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis, Disability Rights

- Deborah Kent, “Somewhere a Mockingbird,” *PTDR*, 57-63
Week 12:
Premature Babies, Patients’ Rights, and Hospital Policies

- Read: Vicki Forman, This Lovely Life

Week 13:
Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis and “Designer Babies”

- Brandon Keim, “Designer Babies: A Right to Choose?” Wired Science, March 9, 2009
- Dorothy C. Wertz, “Drawing Lines: Notes for Policymakers,” PTDR, 261-287

Week 14:
Genomic and Stem Cell Technologies: Where Are We Headed?

- Read: Karen Rothenberg and Lynn Bush, The Drama of DNA: Narrative Genomics, Chapters 3 and 4 (Online)
- I. Glenn Cohen, Patients with Passports, pp. 421-443 (Online)