

SPRING 2021 - U69 ANTHRO 4022

TRANSNATIONAL  
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH  
ISSUES: MEANINGS,  
TECHNOLOGIES,  
PRACTICES

## Class Meetings

Thursdays, 5:30-8:00pm CST

## Office Hours

Thursdays, 3:00-5:00pm CST

**Dick Powis, Ph.D. (he/him)**

richard.powis@wustl.edu



## Course Summary

This is a remote course about global reproductive justice. The course is oriented toward surveying a broad spectrum of anthropological work at the intersection of cross-cultural concepts of health, kinship, gender, technologies, and rights. These works look at how reproductive health is practiced or challenged under various historical, political, and economic conditions. Topics include state surveillance, biotechnology, migration, medical landscapes, and more. The course materials feature predominantly Black, Indigenous, Feminist, and Queer scholarship within and on the edges of Medical Anthropology.

## Course Objectives

1. Overall, students should walk away with a sense of how to see reproductive health issues as a lens for looking at broader cultural politics of gender, sexuality, and power.
2. Students will be familiarized with and critically engaged with historical and ongoing conversations within the anthropology of reproduction and reproductive justice.
3. Students will develop a strong sense of counterhegemonic citation praxis.



## Course Evaluation

**Weekly Discussion (10%):** Class session will consist of discussions based on assigned readings and media for the corresponding class date. The course is designed around thinking deeply with the assigned material, so while there isn't a lot to read for each class, you will be expected to demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the materials in class.

**Weekly Response/Check-In (10%):** One-page response to the assigned readings posted to the Canvas Discussion for that week. I want to know what you think about the readings and how (or if) you can relate them to previous discussions. Please include a question you'd like to ask or discuss in class. At the beginning of each class, you'll be asked to "check in," which means to take less than two minutes to talk about what you thought or didn't

understand about the readings and one thing you'd like to talk about during that class meeting. You can "pass" twice.

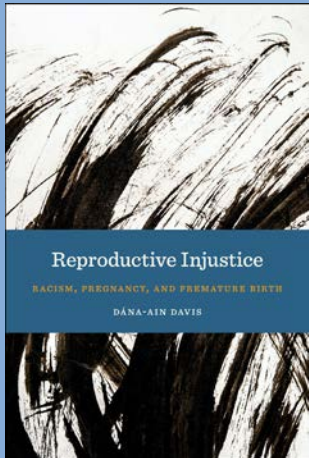
**Leading Discussion (10%):** At the beginning of the semester, you'll need to sign up to lead the discussion — probably with one other person — at some date in the semester. [The sign-up sheet is here.](#) The day you lead, you'll need to begin with a short (15-20 minute) presentation that summarizes the readings, and then have some discussion points or questions prepared for the class. It helps to draw on the "check ins" for those points as well.

**Midterm Essay (30%):** The midterm essay is an 8-10 page paper that draws themes and discussions from the

class into a cohesive synthesis on the topic of your choice. You may use this midterm essay as an opportunity to workshop an idea for your final.

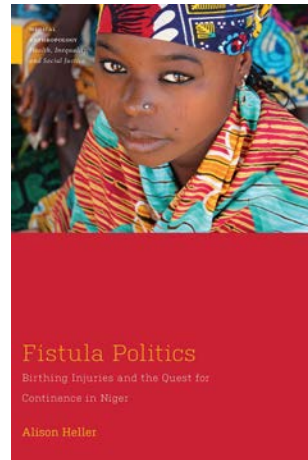
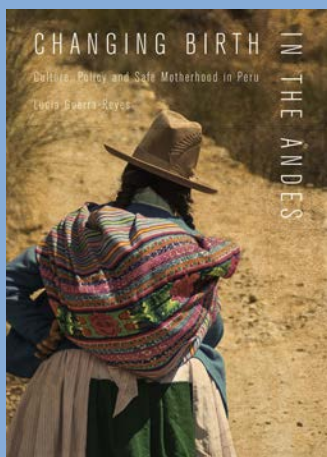
**Final Project (40%):** The final project will be a 10-15 page research-oriented paper that synthesizes themes from the class with an ongoing current event in reproductive health or your own thesis research. The page count does not include the Works Cited page. Please cite at least two materials from this course (which can include outside materials that Discussion Leaders have brought in). Anthropology students should use Chicago Manual of Style, everyone else is free to use a style appropriate to their discipline, but please be consistent. We'll discuss this, as well as a grading rubric (which is on Canvas), later in the semester.

## Course Materials



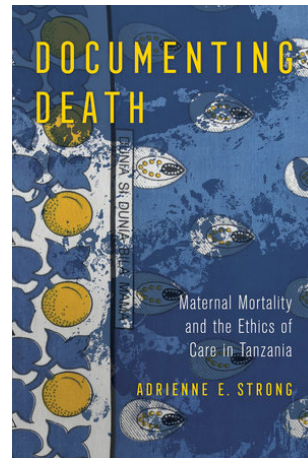
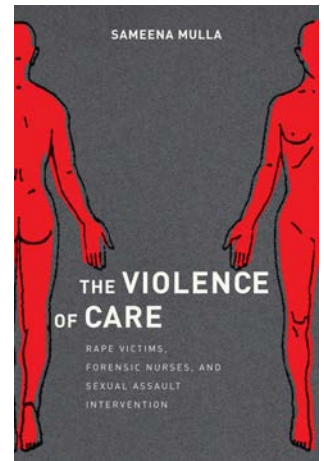
Davis, Dána-Ain. 2019. *Reproductive Injustice: Racism, Pregnancy, and Premature Birth*. New York City: New York University Press.

Guerra-Reyes, Lucia. 2019. *Changing Birth in the Andes: Culture, Policy and Safe Motherhood in Peru*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.



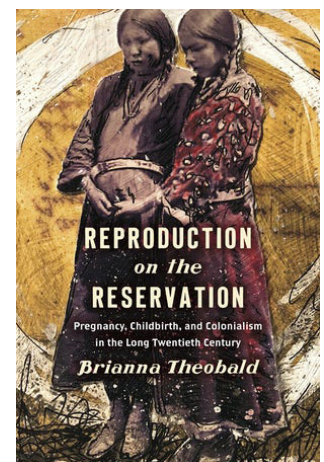
Heller, Alison. 2019. *Fistula Politics: Birthing Injuries and the Quest for Continence in Niger*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Mulla, Sameena. 2014. *The Violence of Care: Rape Victims, Forensic Nurses, and Sexual Assault Intervention*. New York: NYU Press.

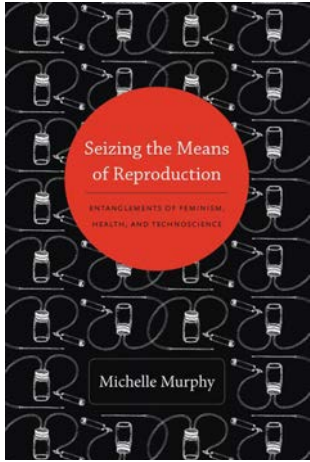


Strong, Adrienne. 2020. *Documenting Death: Maternal Mortality and the Ethics of Care in Tanzania*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. ([Free on Luminosa](#))

Theobald, Brianna. 2019. *Reproduction on the Reservation: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Colonialism in the Long Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

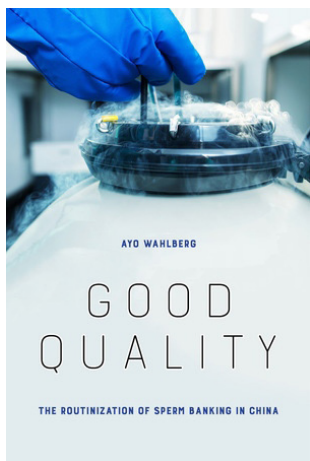
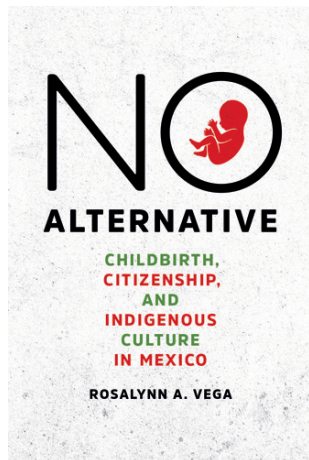


## Optional Course Materials



Murphy, Michelle. 2013. *Seizing the Means of Reproduction: Entanglements of Feminism, Health, and Technoscience*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Vega, Rosalynn A. 2018. *No Alternative: Childbirth, Citizenship, and Indigenous Culture in Mexico*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.



Wahlberg, Ayo. 2018. *Good Quality: The Routinization of Sperm Banking in China*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

All other course materials are available on Canvas

## Course Policies

**Attendance:** If you come to class and participate in the discussion, you have a better chance of getting a good grade. I also understand that life (and non-life, like viruses) can get in the way and that everyone has

different situations. If you need to miss class, please come talk to me so we can schedule supplementary one-on-one discussions, if possible. In addition to institutionally recognized holidays, absences are excused for all other religious or political holidays.

**Accommodations:** This course is intended for all Washington University students, including those with mental, physical, or cognitive disabilities, illness, injuries, impairments, or any other condition that tends to negatively affect one's equal access to education. If, at any point in the term, you find yourself not able to fully access the space, content, and experience of this course, you are welcome (and not required) to contact me by email, phone, or during office hours to discuss your specific needs. I also encourage you to contact [Disability Resources](#). If you have a diagnosis, they can help you document your needs and create an accommodation plan. By making a plan with them, you can ensure appropriate accommodations without disclosing your condition or diagnosis to course instructors.

**Academic Integrity:** All students are expected to adhere to standards of academic integrity listed on the [Academic Integrity Policy website](#). Just don't cheat.

**Children** are always welcome in class.

**Basic Needs and Security:** Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the [Division of Student Affairs](#) for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess.

**A note on course materials:** The first six books above are on the following Course Agenda. I intend for you to read them when they are assigned but I also understand that they engage with some challenging topics, so I also want to give you some flexibility. For any reason whatsoever, at any time, no questions asked, you may decide against reading one of the assigned books and choose one of the three backup books instead. If you do choose to read a backup book instead of an intended book, I assume you won't be a part of the in-class discussion of the intended book and so you'll need to make up for that with a 5 page summary-response for the backup book and a brief presentation and discussion on the last day of class.

## Course Agenda

### **Week 1 (January 28) – Introductions, Syllabus Overview, and Discussion**

- Browner, Carole. 2016. "Reproduction: From Rights to Justice?" *In* The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory. Pp. 803-832. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Davis, Dána-Ain. 2020. "Reproducing while Black: The Crisis of Black Maternal, Obstetric Racism, and Assisted Reproductive Technology". *Reproductive Medicine and Society Online* 11:56-64.
- Davis-Floyd, Robbie. 1994. "The Technocratic Body: American Childbirth as Cultural Expression". *Social Science & Medicine* 38(8):1125-1140.
- Jordan, Brigitte. 1997. "Authoritative Knowledge and Its Construction". *In* Childbirth and Authoritative Knowledge: Cross-Cultural Perspectives, Robbie E. Davis-Floyd and Carolyn F. Sargent, eds. Pp. 55-79. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Martin, Emily. 1991. "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on the Stereotypical Male-Female Roles". *Signs* 16(3): 485-501.
- Pigg, Stacy Leigh. 1997. "Authority in Translation: Finding, Knowing, Naming, and training 'Traditional Childbirth Attendants' in Nepal". *In* Childbirth and Authoritative Knowledge: Cross-Cultural Perspectives, Robbie E. Davis-Floyd and Carolyn F. Sargent, eds. Pp. 233-62. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

### **Week 2 (February 4) – Changing Birth in the Andes**

- Guerra-Reyes, pg. 1-138

### **Week 3 (February 11) – Changing Birth in the Andes**

- Guerra-Reyes, pg. 139-229

### **Week 4 (February 18) – Reproductive Injustice**

- Davis, pg. ix-114



***Week 5 (February 25) – Reproductive Injustice***

- Davis, pg. 115-206

***Week 6 (March 4) – Documenting Death [no assignments due]***

- Strong, pg. 1-109

***Week 7 (March 11) – Documenting Death***

- Strong, pg. 110-206
- Midterm Essay Due

***Week 8 (March 18) – The Violence of Care***

- Mulla, pg. 1-129

***Week 9 (March 25) – The Violence of Care***

- Mulla, pg. 130-229

***Week 10 (April 1) – Reproduction on the Reservation***

- Theobald, pg. 1-98

***Week 11 (April 8) – Reproduction on the Reservation***

- Theobald, pg. 99-183

***Week 12 (April 15) – Fistula Politics***

- Heller, pg. 1-120

***Week 13 (April 22) – Fistula Politics***

- Heller, pg. 121-200

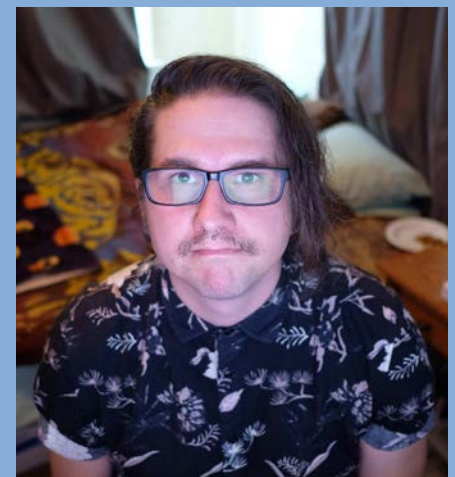
***Week 14 (April 28) – Last Day! Make-up Presentations and Final Check-In***

***Week 15 (May 6) – Reading Day [no class]***

***Week 16 (May 13) – Final Project Due [no class]***

**Course Instructor**

I am a medical anthropologist and ethnographic photographer. I finished my PhD in Sociocultural Anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis in May 2020, as well as a Graduate Certificate



in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. My dissertation research was on men's prenatal care roles and responsibilities in Dakar, Senegal. My next project in Senegal is on how reproductive health-focused care providers are trained by the state and shaped by global health discourse. In addition to teaching this course, I am a Postdoctoral Fellow of Maternal and Child Health at the University of South Florida College of Public Health.