

# Population Control and the Politics of Reproduction in Japan

## Section 1

Instructor 時限	Isabel Fassbender
Office/Building	
Office Hours	

### 【Course Outline / Description】

This course analyzes and discusses the politics of reproduction in Japan from multilayered perspectives and approaches. Human reproduction, one object of a broad range of (feminist) anthropological and sociological scholarship since the 1980s, is situated at the intersection of the private/intimate and the public realm with all its "political, symbolic, economic, and ideological connotations" (Roy & Thompson, 2019, p. 8) and embedded in ideologies of the gendered "normal" family with its mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

We will connect theoretical accounts of reproduction as an object of demographic management and control in modern nation-states with those of reproduction as a personal and physical experience, nevertheless deeply entrenched with social and cultural frameworks. Specifically, we will discuss historical and contemporary issues in the context of population control in Japan, such as pronatalist, antinatalist, or eugenic policies in various eras, as well as topics surrounding reproductive rights, pregnancy, birth, parenthood, infertility, contraception, abortion, and assisted reproductive technologies.

## Section 2

### 【Course Objectives/Goals/Learning Outcomes】

Students will improve their ability to analyze and discuss issues and theories in the context of the politics of reproduction and link theory with lived experiences.

This course aims to provide students with the theoretical tools, analytical abilities, and knowledge to understand the constructedness and highly political aspects of human reproduction. A broad range of knowledge about historical and contemporary issues in the context of reproduction and population control will be acquired.

The class takes an interactive approach, and students are expected to participate actively and contribute to discussions. To be able to do so, assigned texts have to be carefully read and annotated before class. As for class structure, short text presentations in pre-assigned groups will be followed by discussions and/or a lecture on each topic. Students might also work on individual research projects throughout the

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semester. There will be some time allocated in class for these projects, however necessary fieldwork, interviews or surveys will be conducted outside of class. Feedback papers will help to check understanding and identify issues or the need for further discussion. A guest speaker session and/or field trip can be organized if desired. Depending on the number of students, organizational changes might be necessary. Students are invited to contribute to the continuous revision of the course syllabus with their ideas and suggestions throughout the semester.

### Section 3

【Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials】

- ※Texts will be provided online.
- ※Mandatory readings will be assigned weekly.
- ※Contents are subject to change and/or revision.

## Course Introduction

### Session 1

Course introduction, assignments, self-introduction of members, determination of presentation schedule and basic rules/terms

## Theoretical Frameworks

### Session 2

#### ***Politics of Reproduction and Feminism***

Ginsburg, Faye, and Rapp, Rayna. (1991). The politics of reproduction. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 20: 311–343.

O'Brien, Mary (1981). The dialectics of reproduction. In *The Politics of Reproduction* (pp. 19-64). Routledge & Kegan Paul.

### Session 3

#### ***State Control of Reproduction***

Riley, N. E. & Chatterjee, N. (2023). Direct state control of reproduction. In *Controlling Reproduction: Women, Society and State Power* (pp. 30-53). Polity.

### Session 4

#### ***Politics of Reproduction and Neoliberalism***

Roy, M. & Thompson, M. (2019). Introduction. In M. Roy & M. Thompson (eds.), *The Politics of Reproduction: Adoption, Abortion, and Surrogacy in the Age of Neoliberalism* (pp. 1-24). Ohio State Press.

Riley, N. E. & Chatterjee, N. (2023). Control of reproduction in a neoliberal world. In *Controlling Reproduction: Women, Society and State Power* (pp. 136-161). Polity.

## Past and Current Issues of Population Control in Japan

### Sessions 5+6+7+8

Fassbender, Isabel (2021). *Active Pursuit of Pregnancy: Neoliberalism, Postfeminism and the Politics of Reproduction in Contemporary Japan*. Brill. (Chapter 3)

Frühstück, Sabine. (2003). *Colonizing sex: Sexology and social control in modern Japan*. University of California Press.

Ogino, Miho. (2008a). Jinkō seisaku no sutoratejī: “Umeyō fuyaseyō” kara “kazoku keikaku” e [The strategies behind population policies: From “beget and multiply” to “family planning”]. In Kaoru Tachi (Ed.), *Tekuno/baio poritikusu: Kagaku, iryō, kagaku no ima* [Techno/Bio-Politics: Science, medicine and technology in the present] (pp. 145–159). Sakuhinsha. (荻野美穂「人口政策のストラテジー—『産めよ殖せよ』から『家族計画』へ」館かおる編『テクノ／バイオ・ポリティクス 科学・医療・科学のいま (ジェンダー研究のフロンティア4)』作品社、145-159頁、2008)

Homei, A. (2016). The science of population and birth-control in post-war Japan. In D. G. Wittner & P.C. Brown (eds.), *Science, Technology and Medicine in the Modern Japanese Empire*. Routledge.

Takeshita, J. Y. (1963). Population control in Japan: A miracle or secular trend. *Marriage and Family Living* (Family Planning in Modernizing Societies), 25(1), pp. 44-52.

Kuroda, T. (1972). Population policies in Japan. *English Pamphlet Series*, September 30, Institute of Population Problems. Ministry of Health and Welfare Tokyo, Japan.

Coulmas, F. (2007). Facts and discourses. In *Population Decline and Ageing in Japan: The Social Consequences* (pp. 1-16). Routledge.

## **Pregnancy, Birth, and the Ideology of Motherhood**

*Sessions 9+10+11*

Castro-Vázquez, Genaro. (2017). *Intimacy and reproduction in contemporary Japan*. Routledge.

Hertog, E. (2020). Attitudes to marriage and childbearing. In J. Coates, L. Fraser & M. Pendleton (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Japanese Culture* (pp. 92-105). Routledge.

Yasui, M. (2020). Changing folk cultures of pregnancy and childbirth (Translated by Lucy Fraser and Madelein Shimizu). In J. Coates, L. Fraser & M. Pendleton (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Japanese Culture* (pp. 135-145). Routledge.

Frühstück, Sabine (2022). Controlling reproduction and motherhood. In *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Japan* (pp. 47-69). Cambridge University Press.

Ivry, Tsipy. (2010). *Embodying culture: Pregnancy in Japan and Israel*. Rutgers University Press.

## **The politics of contraception**

*Sessions 12+13*

Norgren, Tiana (1998). Abortion before birth control: The interest group politics behind postwar Japanese reproduction policy. *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 24(1), 59-94.

Jitsukawa, M. (1997). In accordance with nature: What Japanese women mean by being in control. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 4(2), pp. 177-201.

Takeuchi-Demirci, A. (2018). Contraceptive diplomacy: Reproductive politics and imperial ambitions in the United States and Japan. *Asian America*.

Sandberg, Shana F. (2018). Resisting intervention, (en)trusting my partner: Unmarried women's narratives about contraceptive use in Tokyo. In Allison Alexy and Emma E. Cook (eds.), *Intimate Japan: Ethnographies of Closeness and Conflict* (pp. 54-72). University of Hawai'i Press.

Coleman, Samuel (1983). *Family planning in Japanese society: Traditional birth control in a modern urban culture*. Princeton University Press.

## **The politics of Abortion**

### **Sessions 14 + 15**

LaFleur, W. R. (1992). *Liquid life: Abortion and Buddhism in Japan*. Princeton University Press.

Hardacre, H. (1999). *Marketing the menacing fetus in Japan*. University of California Press.

Norgren, T. (2001). *Abortion before birth control: The politics of reproduction in postwar Japan*. Princeton University Press.

### *News Articles*

## **Midterm Exam (ca. 60 min.) + Review Session**

### **Session 16**

*Midterm Exam*: Choose two questions (out of the six provided) in the context of our class contents and answer in ca. 300 words each, using texts and class materials.

## **Reproductive Disruption and Risk Management**

### **Sessions 17+18**

Loughran, T. & Davis, G. (2017). Introduction: Defining the ‘problem’: Perspectives on infertility. In G. Davis & T. Loughran (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Infertility in History* (pp. 29-35). Palgrave Macmillan.

Cattapan, Alana, Hammond, Kathleen, Haw, Jennie, and Tarasoff, Lesley A. (2014). Breaking the ice: Young feminist scholars of reproductive politics reflect on egg freezing. *IJFAB: International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* 7(2): 236–247.

## **Assisted Reproductive Technologies in Japan**

### **Sessions 19+20**

Fassbender, Isabel (2021). *Active pursuit of pregnancy: Neoliberalism, postfeminism and the politics of reproduction in contemporary Japan*. Brill. (Chapter 3)

Kokado, M. (2015). A new phase in the regulation of assisted reproductive technology in Japan. *Zeitschrift für Japanisches Recht/Journal of Japanese Law*, 40, pp. 211-232.

Katagiri, Y., Jwa, S. C., Kuwahara, A., Iwasa, T., Ono, M., Kato, K., Kishi, H., Kuwabara, Y., Harada, M., Hamatani, T., & Osuga, Y. (2023). Assisted reproductive technology in Japan: A summary report for 2020 by the ethics committee of the Japan society of obstetrics and gynecology. *Reproductive Medicine and Biology*, 22(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/rmb2.12494>

Castro-Vázquez, Genaro. (2015). Assisted reproductive technologies in contemporary Japan: Experiences and perceptions of some Japanese mothers. *Gender, Technology and Development* 19(3): 271–291.

Croydon, S. (2023). Reluctant Rulers: Policy, Politics, and Assisted Reproduction Technology in Japan. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, 32(2), 289-299. doi:10.1017/S0963180122000603

### **Neoliberalism and the Politics of Reproduction in Japan** **Sessions 21+22**

Mann, E. (2020). ‘A woman’s happiness is decided by her uterus!’ Post-Feminism, neoliberalism and the politics of the female body in Japanese ‘uterus-type’ and ‘vagina-type’ spirituality. In B. Steger, A. Koch & C. Tso (eds.), *Beyond Kawaii: Studying Japanese Femininities at Cambridge* (pp. 35-86). Lit.

Fassbender, I. (2022). Family planning and life planning in contemporary Japan: The “active pursuit of pregnancy” (ninkatsu) phenomenon and its stakeholders. *Contemporary Japan*, 34(2), 228-244.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/18692729.2022.2095783>

Tanaka, S. (2017). Another science war: Fictitious evidence on women’s fertility and the ‘egg aging’ panic in 2010s Japan. In V. Demos and M. Texler Segal (eds.), *Gender Panic, Gender Policy* (Advances in Gender Research, Volume 24) (pp. 67–92). Emerald Publishing Limited.

### **Teaching reproduction** **Sessions 23+24**

Fu, H. (2011). The bumpy road to socialise nature: Sex education in Japan. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 13(8), 903-915.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2011.587894>

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Castro-Vázquez, Genaro. (2007). *In the Shadows: Sexuality, pedagogy, and gender in Japanese teenagers*. Lexington Books.

### **Adoption in Japan**

Sessions 25+26

Hayes, P., & Habu, T. (2006). *Adoption in Japan: Comparing policies for children in need*. Routledge.

Paulson, J. L. (2010). *Family law reform in postwar Japan: Succession and adoption*. Xlibris Corporation.

Goldfarb, Kathryn. (2018). Beyond blood ties: Intimate kinships in Japanese foster and adoptive care. In Allison Alexy and Emma E. Cook (eds.), *Intimate Japan: Ethnographies of Closeness and Conflict* (pp. 181–198). University of Hawai'i Press.

### **Final Group Project**

Sessions 27+ 28 + 29

Details TBA

### **Wrap-Up**

Session 30

※ Course contents are subject to further change or revision, as needed, to best realize the educational goals of the course.

**【Textbooks/Reading Materials】**

Mandatory and additional readings will be provided online.

#### Section 4

【Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric】

*Mid Term Exam 25%*

*Final Report 25%*

*Weekly Feedback Papers, Presentation(s) and Participation 50%*

※all three evaluation criteria have to be fulfilled (e.g., you cannot pass the course without submitting the final report)

#### Section 5

【Additional Information】

#### Classroom policies

1. Please come to class prepared and on time.
2. You are required to actively take part in discussions and group projects.
3. Please help create a safe and respectful classroom.
4. During class, it is inappropriate to go outside to make calls, send/read text messages, buy drinks or food, or smoke. You are not allowed to make sound or video recordings or to take pictures in class.
5. Plagiarism will not be accepted and will result in final grade F.

※ If possible, I would like to invite a guest speaker for one of our sessions. Details TBA.