

My body, my choice? History and current issues of reproductive politics in Japan (ASP)

Section 1

Instructor 時限	Isabel Fassbender
Office/Building	1417
Office Hours	

【Course Outline / Description】

This course analyzes and discusses the politics of reproduction in Japan from multilayered perspectives and approaches. Human reproduction, the 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 in contemporary Japan.

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

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each topic. Students might also work on a group research projects throughout the 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.
- ※Contents are subject to change and/or revision.

Course Introduction

Session 1.1

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

Theoretical Frameworks

Session 1.2 *Theory: Politics of Reproduction and Feminism*

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

GROUP WORK Pilcher, J., & Whelehan, I. (2004). 50 key concepts in gender studies. SAGE.

Session 2.1 *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 2.2 *Interlude: Writing and Presenting in Academic Contexts*

History of Population Control in Japan

Session 3.1 Overview

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.

Session 3.2 From Pronatalism to Family Planning

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.

Session 4.1 Forced Sterilizations in Post-War Japan

Tsuchiya, Takashi (1997). Eugenic sterilizations in Japan and recent demands for apology: A report. *Newsletter of the Network on Ethics and Intellectual Disability*, 3(1), pp.1-4.

Session 4.2 Pronatalism in Contemporary 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

Session 5.1 Cultural Norms of Childbearing

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.

Session 5.2 Motherhood

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

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

Session 6.1 Pregnancy and Birth

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.

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

The Politics of Contraception and Abortion

Session 6.2 Historical Overview

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.

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

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

Session 7.1 Contraception in Contemporary Japan

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.

Session 7.2 Abortion in Contemporary Japan

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.

News Articles

Menstruation and Menopause in Japan

Session 8.1 Contested Meanings

Lock, M. (1991). Contested meanings of the menopause. *The Lancet*, 337(8752), 1270-1272. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0140-6736\(91\)92931-q](https://doi.org/10.1016/0140-6736(91)92931-q)

Newspaper articles

Midterm (ca. 70 min.) + Review Session

Session 8.2 Written Exam

Write an overview of the class contents so far in ca. 400-500 words.

Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) in Context: Reproductive Disruption and Risk Management

Session 9.1 Overview

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.

Session 9.2 ARTs in Japan 1

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

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

Session 10.1 ARTs in Japan 2

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.

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.

Neoliberalism and the Politics of Reproduction

Session 10.2 Overview

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.

Session 11.1 Ninkatsu, Postfeminism and Neoliberalism

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>

Session 11.2 Discourses of Ageing Ova

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

Session 12.1 Sex Education in Japan 1

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>

Session 12.2 Sex Education in Japan 2

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

Adoption in Japan

Session 13.1 Overview and Contemporary Issues

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

Session 14.1 In-Class Preparation

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Session 14.2 ***Presentations 1***

Session 15.1 ***Presentations 1***

Details TBA

Wrap-Up

Session 15.2 ***Connecting the Dots***

※ 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】

Midterm 25%

Final Presentation 25%

Weekly Feedback Papers, Text Presentations and Participation 50%

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, friendly and respectful classroom for all participants.
4. 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.