Mediating Reproduction: Feminism, Art, Activism
MCM 0900, cross-listed in Gender & Sexuality Studies and Theatre & Performance Studies.

Instructor: Beth Capper  Office Hours: Tuesdays 1.30-3.30 PM, and by appt.
beth_capper@brown.edu  Location: 155 George Street, rm. 202
Seminar time: T/R 10.30-11.50 AM  Screenings: Mondays, 7-10 PM
Location: Production 2, 135 Thayer Street  Location: Henkle Room, 155 George Street

How have feminist cultural producers and activists imagined and transformed the politics of reproduction? This course explores the complex meanings of “reproduction” across media, performance, and public culture, with a focus on questions of sexuality, race, labor, and aesthetic practice. Situating reproduction in an expanded frame, we will consider the relationship between biological reproduction and the gendered labor of reproducing social life (e.g., domestic labor, sex work, care work). We will examine how ideas about reproduction have been central to the regeneration of race and nation; how the gendering of labor reproduces capitalist social relations; and how feminists have variously theorized and practiced alternative conceptions of reproduction in relation to the politics of labor, difference, and community. Throughout, we will pay special attention to the entanglements of artistic labor with women's reproductive labor. Topics include: eugenics, housework/welfare rights activism, art workers movements, biotechnologies, queer kinship, and feminist utopias. Artists include: Betye Saar, Mierle Ladermann Ukeles, Ursula Biemann, Andrea Fraser, Suzanne Lacy, SubRosa, and María Magdalena Campos-Pons.

Required Books:
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*.

Course Requirements

**Attendance and Participation:** Your attendance and participation are crucial to the success of this seminar. You are expected to come to class prepared to contribute meaningfully to our discussions with your own questions and critical commentaries on course materials. Participation, however, does not only require talking but also actively listening to your peers and respectfully engaging them in discussion. I also understand that students participate in different and unique ways. If you are concerned about your participation in seminar, it is your right and responsibility to meet with me.

**Readings:** You are responsible for completing all required readings. This means carefully reading course materials at least once before seminar. You must bring paper copies of all assigned readings with you to seminar. If you anticipate having trouble printing the readings due to financial concerns, please speak with me no later than **January 28th** to make alternative arrangements. Other than the required book, all readings are available on canvas. Please note that readings and screenings are subject to change based on the needs and interests of the class. Changes, if any, will be announced in seminar and through e-mail.

**Screenings:** Most films for this course will be made available via OCRA. In additions, there
will be public screenings for the course held on Mondays on weeks that films are discussed. You must come prepared to discuss these texts during either Tuesday or Thursday meetings, depending on the week’s readings.

**Blogs:** Each week you are required to post a brief (approx. 250 words) response to course materials on the course blog. The blog is intended to provide a forum for you to raise questions about course materials, pursue passages that you find confusing/compelling/problematic, test out arguments that may later develop into paper topics, and share your critiques with the class before we meet. While you are encouraged to draw on screenings and previous readings in your blog posts, you must engage at least one of the readings assigned for that day in your response. Blog posts are due at midnight the day of class. It is my hope that you will also read the discussion board before coming to seminar.

- **IMPORTANT:** The class will be divided into two groups (A and B). On weeks marked on the syllabus as “A” weeks, students in Group A will blog in response to Tuesday’s materials and students in Group B will blog in response to Thursday’s materials. On weeks marked on the syllabus as “B” weeks, students in Group B will blog in response to Tuesday’s materials and students in Group A will blog in response to Thursday’s materials. We will divide into groups on Tuesday 2/2. All students must blog for Thursday 2/4.

**Presentations:** You are required to present on class materials once during the course of the semester. These presentations will form part of your overall final grade for the course. This involves coming prepared with 4-5 questions about the week’s readings, two passages that the class might turn to for close reading and, if there is a screening the week you present, one short clip to be screened in class. On the week you choose to present you will not have to write a blog post but I would like you to post your presentation questions and passages on the blog after you have presented.

**Papers:** Students are expected to write two papers: a midterm (5-6 pp.) and a final (8-10 pp.). I will hand out suggested paper prompts for the midterm (drawing on readings, screenings, class discussions, and blog posts). The final paper will be on a topic of your own choosing so as to allow you to pursue your own interests within the framework of the seminar.

**Grading Breakdown:**

- Participation 20%
- Midterm 20%
- Blogs 15%
- Final 25%
- Presentation 20%

**Laptop Policy:** With the exception of students with a documented need for accommodations, laptop use is not permitted during either seminar or screenings.

**Communication:** My e-mail address is beth_capper@brown.edu. I will make every effort to respond to messages sent during the week (Monday to Friday) within 24 hours. I am also available to meet during my office hours on Tuesdays from 1.30-3.30PM in 155 George Street Room 202 and by appointment.
Accessibility: If you have or think you may have a disability, you may want to let me know. If you choose to do so, I encourage you to address any special needs or accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester so as to ensure your full participation in our seminar. To obtain proper documentation, contact the Office of Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401.863.9588. Also, if you wish to be called by a different name or addressed with a different pronoun than the one with which you are officially enrolled, do let me know and I will gladly oblige.

COURSE SCHEDULE

R 1/28: Introductions

WEEK 1. Feminist Utopias (I)
T 2/2 • Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Herland (London: Penguin Classics, 2009 [1915]).


Reminder: All students must blog for 2/4.

WEEK 2. Reproducing “Women,” Reproducing the Nation


WEEK 3. Sex Life / Sex Work
Screening: Performing the Border (Ursula Biemann, 1999), 42 min.
No blog posts for this week!
   • Elizabeth Bernstein, “The Privatization of Public Women,” Temporarily Yours: Intimacy,
Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 70-111.


PLEASE ALSO READ:

<< Please attend the “Seizing the Means of Reproduction” Conference on Friday 02/19.>>

WEEK 4. Mediating Reproductive Rights
No blog posts for this week!
T 2/23 No Class!


WEEK 5. Reproducing the Family
Screening: Paris is Burning (Jennie Livingstone, 1990), 71 min.


WEEK 6. Domestic Unrest (I): Movements
Screening: Bush Mama (Haile Gerima, 1979), 97 min; Born in Flames (Lizzie Borden, 1983) 80 min.


WEEK 7. Domestic Unrest (II): Media
Screening: Shorts program (tbd)


WEEK 8. Performing the Social Factory: Virtuosity and Biopolitics
Screening: Paper Dolls (Tomer Heymann, 2006), 80 min.
T 3/22 (A) • Paolo Virno, A Grammar of the Multitude: For An Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), 49-66; 81-84.


------> Spring Break!

WEEK 9. No Class! Instructor away.

Please try and attend Yvonne Rainer’s artist talk and screening on 4/6.
WEEK 10. Late Capitalist Aesthetics
Screening: Vessel (Diana Whitten, 2014), 90 min; I Love Lucy (episode tbd).
T 4/12 (B) • Sianne Ngai, “The Zany Science,” Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting


• Collected authors, “This Tweet Called My Back,” Model View Culture (2014).

WEEK 12. No Future? (Queer) Feminism and Anti-Reproduction


WEEK 13. Feminist Utopias (II)

Screening: Wildness (Wu Tsang, 2012), 74 min.


<<Final paper due by 5pm on Thursday 5/19.>>