

**ANTHROPOLOGY 4551/6551:**  
***CULTURE, HUMAN SEXUALITY AND CHILDBIRTH***  
**FALL 2012**

**Instructor:** Dr. Ruthbeth Finerman    **Office:** Manning 316    **Phone:** 678-3334 or 678-2080 (secretary)  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores cross-cultural constructions of gender, human sexuality, fertility, and childbearing. Lectures consider evolutionary, ecological, biological, and sociocultural factors shaping reproduction, and comparative responses to reproductive decision-making, STIs, pregnancy, birthing alternatives, and post-partum care. Cultural values, individual agency, and the political economy of social justice and disparity are evaluated for their impact on issues such as gender identity, sexual behavior, family organization, and global population growth. Implications for research and for policy are also examined.

**REQUIRED TEXT**

Jordan, Brigitte. Birth in Four Cultures (4th edition). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1993.

*All other required readings are on ECourseware; contact me if interested in other suggested readings.*

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS** (Please see instructions for preparing written course assignments)

Undergraduate students will be graded on the following:

- 1) Midterm examination (30% of course grade)
- 2) Final examination (30% of course grade)
- 3) Community-based mini-research paper; instructions follow (25% of course grade)
- 4) Attendance and participation in class discussion (5% of course grade)
- 5) Submitted questions on required readings (10% of course grade)

Graduate students will be graded on the following:

- 1) Midterm examination (25% of course grade)
- 2) Final examination (25% of course grade)
- 3) Community-based research project: annotated bibliography and research paper (35% of course grade)
- 4) Attendance and participation in class discussion (5% of course grade)
- 5) Submitted questions on required reading (10% of course grade)

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS:**

1. **Comportment:** Respectful discussion is both welcome and expected. Disruptions, tardiness, and unexcused absences are unacceptable; students should arrive on time and prepared to discuss readings. See university guidelines and regulations regarding classroom behavior and academic misconduct.
2. **Technology:** Cell phones and all other electronics must be off during class. Computer use is by permission only. Students may borrow departmental research equipment; visit MN 316 for details.
3. **Deadlines:** Late or incomplete assignments are unprofessional and will not be graded. No makeup exams or extra credit. No "Incomplete" grades are granted except in documented emergencies.
4. **Special Needs:** Students with disabilities are welcome; please provide paperwork outlining requests. All students should meet with me to address any concerns or special needs.
5. **Honors Credit Option:** Please see me if you would like to arrange for honors credit by contract.

# **4551/6551 CLASS MEETING SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS**

*(Note that dates may be subject to change by the instructor)*

## ***PART I: BIOCULTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF SEX AND REPRODUCTION***

### **August 28 COURSE INTRODUCTION**

Objective: outline key trends in research on human sexuality and reproduction in Anthropology.

### **September 4 EVOLUTION & SEXUAL STRATEGIES**

Objective: examine the roles of fitness and natural selection pressures in human reproduction.

**Read:** Trevathan & McKenna “Evolutionary Environments of Human Birth & Infancy” and Miller “Courtship in the Pleistocene”

### **September 11 THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SEX**

Objective: assess the impact of disparity and social justice on gender, sexuality, and reproductive status.

**Read:** Greenbaum “Competing Globalizing Influences on Local Muslim Women’s Reproductive Health,” Rose “Going Too Far?” and Leuchtag “Human Rights, Sex Trafficking, and Prostitution”

### **September 18 SEXUAL DISEASES & DYSFUNCTION**

Objective: review how cultural processes and disparities influence patterns of and responses to STIs.

**Read:** Persson, “HIV Negativity in Serodiscordant Relationships” and Lockhart “The Life and Death of a Street Boy in East Africa”

### **September 25 CULTURE & FERTILITY CONTROL**

Objective: consider how cultural values and practices effect global population and demographic trends.

**Read:** Sundhagen “Breastfeeding & Child Spacing;” Chen “Globalizing, Reproducing, and Civilizing Rural Subjects: Population Control Policy & Construction of Rural Identity in China”

**NOTE: GRADUATE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY & PRECISE DUE**

### **October 2 NEW REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES**

Objective: understand how cross-cultural advances in biotechnology are redefining infertility.

**Read:** Inhorn “Male Genital Cutting” and Greil & McQuillan “Trying Times”

### **October 9 EXAM I**

### **October 16 FALL BREAK**

## ***PART II: CULTURE AND CHILDBEARING***

### **October 23          PRENATAL CARE IN CULTURAL CONTEXT**

Objective: examine sociocultural perspectives on pregnancy and the medicalization of reproduction.

**Read:** Jordan, Chapter 2 and Sagrestano & Finerman “Pregnancy & Prenatal Care: Reproductive Justice”

### **October 30          TRADITIONAL BIRTH ATTENDANTS**

Objective: compare diverse models of midwifery and birthing practices in global context.

**Read:** Jordan, Chapter 3 and Cheyney “Reinscribing the Birthing Body: Homebirth as Ritual Performance”

### **November 6          BIOMEDICAL CHILDBIRTH**

Objective: contrast modes of hospital delivery and considerations in high risk delivery.

**Read:** Jordan, Chapters 5-6

### **November 13          CONTEMPORARY BIRTH ALTERNATIVES**

Objective: explore the development of complementary and alternative birthing options.

**Read:** Jordan, Chapter 7 and De Vris, et al “The Dutch Obstetrical System”

### **November 20          CULTURE & POST-PARTUM CARE**

Objective: review diverse cross-cultural rituals and practices shaping treatment and recovery from birth.

**Read:** Jordan, Chapter 8 and Manderson “Roasting, Smoking, and Dieting in Response to Birth”

**NOTE: UNDERGRADUATE PROJECT REPORTS DUE BY TODAY**

### **November 27          FAMILY FORMATION & CHILD SURVIVAL**

Objective: consider how post-partum practices influence maternal-child health and family structures.

**Read:** Rattner, et al “Humanizing Childbirth to Reduce Maternal and Neonatal Mortality” and Kamat “Dying under the Bird’s Shadow”

### **December 4          EXAM II**

### **December 11          RESEARCH FORUM**

**NOTE: GRADUATE AND HONORS PROJECT REPORTS DUE BY TODAY**