

Intimate Politics: Fertility Control in a Global Historical Perspective

We invite proposals for 20-minute papers for a conference on the intimacies of fertility control politics to be held at the University of Edinburgh, 23-24 May 2018.

Across the globe, women have always controlled their fertility through intimate efforts ultimately tied to larger political processes and gendered power dynamics. Women's biological reproductive capabilities have been contested sites of power struggles, shaping the formation, rule, and dissolution of nation-states and political regimes throughout history. From the concept of *partus sequitur ventrum*, in which slavery was passed on through the mother's womb, to settler colonial projects that supported 'desirable' reproduction while restricting 'undesirable' migration in Australia and the United States, to abortion as the most common form of birth control in some communist regimes, the politics of the state have played out on the bodies of women. Current debates over nationhood, globalization, and inequality continue to be mapped onto women's bodies. Yet the intersection of larger political, economic, and social processes with women's intimate and embodied experience of fertility control remains understudied in the historical literature. This conference aims to put the intimate experience of fertility control at the heart of political and social approaches towards women's bodies. We seek proposals for papers that will:

- Explore how women's individual or social practices of fertility control, including contraception, abortion, and infanticide, intersected with larger political, economic, and cultural trends including but not limited to immigration, health policy, economic recessions, and political regime change;
- Problematize the idea of "control" and "agency" in the history of reproduction. What did it mean to "control one's fertility" in different historical periods and geographical regions? Are we engaging in a presentist understanding of the past by emphasizing individual control?;
- Expand conventional definitions of fertility control to interrogate ideas of infertility, menstruation, and heteronormativity. How did historical actors understand, define, and practice what we now call fertility control?;
- Demonstrate how race, ethnicity, and class intersected with gender to shape if, and how, women approached fertility control;
- Explore how both men and women understood and practiced fertility control and what that tells us about gender relations.

Please email your abstract (in English) of no more than 400 words plus a brief CV of no more than one page to the conference organizer, Cassia Roth (cassia.roth@ed.ac.uk) by January 31, 2018. This conference is part of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship in the school of History, Classics, and Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh.