

SEHE 163

Globalizing Roe: The Past, Present, and Future of Abortion Worldwide

Dr. Cassia Roth, Associate Professor

M/W 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM

Sproul Hall | Room 2360

Office Hours M 3:30–5pm (INTN 3030)



Course Description: 4 Lecture 3 hours; Extra reading 1 hour; Research 1 hour; Written work 1 hour. Surveys the modern history of abortion policy and provision from legal, medical, religious, and public health perspectives. Centers the lived experiences of different individuals in their need to access abortion from a global lens.

This course surveys the modern global history of abortion policy and provision from legal, medical, religious, and public health perspectives. It simultaneously centers the lived experiences of different individuals and communities in their need to access abortion. Based in the history of gender and sexuality, Science and Technology Studies (STS), legal studies, and public health, it emphasizes both historical context and modern-day praxis.

Themes will include abortion as an historical concept; the concepts of reproductive rights, reproductive justice, and abortion; disability rights and abortion rights; religious understandings of abortion; the global fight for abortion access; decriminalization and re-criminalization of abortion in Latin America; abortion and maternal mortality and morbidity in Sub-Saharan Africa; and collective action and grassroots organizing.

This course will demonstrate how studying the past, present, and future of abortion policy and access beyond the context of the United States can provide a blueprint into individual lives and collective action. Most importantly, it will provide a historical perspective from which we can consider the future of abortion access and care in the United States.

Learning Objectives: This course is for both SEHE students and students interested in understanding abortion in a global context from the lenses of public health, clinical medicine, law, religion, and politics. Thus, we will read both secondary literature in the fields of history, anthropology, epidemiology, statistics, and public health and primary sources related to abortion in history.

This course has two sets of learning objectives:

First, we will develop a broad knowledge of the main issues, themes, and debates surrounding the history of abortion, with emphasis on individuals' lived experience.

Second, we will learn to critically read and interpret a variety of primary and secondary sources from the perspective of a historian. For primary sources, we will learn to ask what perspectives the sources highlight or marginalize, to pinpoint authors' implicit understandings, and to acknowledge historical uncertainties.

Please see the section on assignments below and the assignments themselves for further detail.

Course Policies

Grading Scale:

100-98: A+	87-89: B+	77-79: C+	67-69: D+	<60: F
93-97: A	83-86: B	73-76: C	63-66: D	
90-92: A-	80-82: B-	70-72: C-	60-62: D-	

Attendance: Because our classroom time is mainly discussion-based, attendance is required for this course. To succeed in my class, you will need to attend all classes. You are allowed **3 total absences (excused or unexcused, including for health reasons)**. After that, **your entire grade will drop by 5 points per absence**. No one should come to class if they are sick, whether with COVID-19 or any other infectious disease. I would advise banking your sick days in case you really need to use them. Additionally, I know that we are in a period of heightened immigration enforcement. If you have concerns over coming to class, please see me during office hours, so we can come up with a plan together. The course schedule below includes several regular instruction days for which there is no in-person class.

Late Policy: I allow you to turn in *one* assignment *no longer than one week late*. For the policy to go into effect, please notify me of your intentions before the assignment is due. For all other late assignments, I will decide on a case-by-case basis.

Technology: You are welcome to use laptops, tablets, e-readers, and other technology in the classroom to assist with learning. Please refrain from using your cell phone in class.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism – taking credit for work that is not your own – will not be tolerated. Anyone who plagiarizes will receive an F in the class and will be referred to the Dean for disciplinary action. Students who take this course must abide by the [Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures](#) at UCR.

Email Policy: *I answer student emails M-F from 9am to 5pm.* Please ONLY email logistical questions/comments that I can respond to quickly. Come see me during office hours to discuss substantive questions/comments (about course material, your progress in the course, etc.). Remember, emails to your professors are a formal mode of communication. Write in complete sentences, use proper addresses (Professor or Dr. Roth), and check spelling. I do not respond to emails that do not address me respectfully or at all.

Content Notice: This class studies issues like race, class, gender, sexuality, and violence. You are required to attend all films and read all required texts. Our class aims to foster an atmosphere in which we all feel free to express our ideas without fear of judgment. Please feel free to see me in my office hours if you need to discuss class content.

Required Texts: There are no required texts in this class. All readings are available via the online learning platform.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) Policy: A full GenAI policy is available on the online learning platform. It is your responsibility to read it in its entirety. Here is a summary of my guidelines for using GenAI (programs such as ChatGPT) in your work in this class. Please note, these can change at any time during the semester.

The bottom line is that all work you submit must be your own. You should never include anything that was not written directly by you without proper citation (including quotation marks and CMS footnotes) in your assignment. Doing so will be treated as academic misconduct.

The use of GenAI is *permitted* for the following activities:

- Fine-tuning research questions;
- Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts;
- Checking grammar and style.

The use of GenAI is *forbidden* for the following activities:

- Producing any part of an assignment in its entirety including thesis statements;
- Finding and citing both primary and secondary sources;
- Copying and pasting directly from a GenAI program.

I have based these policies on ones created by [Dr. Noël Ingram](#) and [Dr. David Joyner](#).

If you use GenAI in an assignment, I require you to submit a short paragraph detailing how you used it, including but not limited to: what questions you asked of it and pinpointing specific sentences you edited in the program.

Campus Resources and Policies

Student Disability Resource Center: If you need accommodations because of a disability (permanent or temporary), please inform me as soon as possible. To request academic accommodations (for example, a note taker or special testing arrangements), you must register with the campus office called “Student Disability Resource Center” (951-827-3861). This office is responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting academic accommodations, and for accommodations planning in cooperation with students and instructors, as needed and consistent with course requirements.

Other Campus Resources for UCR Students:

Academic Resource Center (including reading & writing support): <https://arc.ucr.edu/>

Mental health resources: mentalhealth.ucr.edu

Student Health Center: campushealth.ucr.edu

Case management and crisis resources: casemanagement.ucr.edu

Counseling and Psychological Services: counseling.ucr.edu

Wellness Center, preventive health resources: well.ucr.edu

Food, shelter, clothing resources: basicneeds.ucr.edu

Campus advocacy, resource, and education (confidential interpersonal violence and sexual harassment resources): care.ucr.edu

Undocumented student services: usp.ucr.edu/

Coronavirus information and resources: <https://ehs.ucr.edu/coronavirus>

Learning resources: keeplearning.ucr.edu

Research resources: keepresearching.ucr.edu

Office of Diversity, Excellence, and Inclusion: <https://diversity.ucr.edu/>

Ombudsperson (confidential resource): <https://ombuds.ucr.edu/>

Office of Title IX, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action: <https://titleix.ucr.edu/>

Administrative Resolution: <https://administrativeresolution.ucr.edu/>

NOT SURE WHERE TO GO? THEN GO HERE: <https://help.ucr.edu/>

Personal disclosures of relationship violence or sexual harassment: You are welcome to talk to me about your concerns. Before you tell me specifics, you should know that in my teaching role, I have certain mandated reporting obligations. I want you to stay in control of the situation until you decide what you want to do. So, you're welcome to tell me about your situation, in general terms, without identifying anyone. There are other resource people with whom you can talk

who don't have the same reporting obligations as faculty and TAs – specifically, the Campus Advocacy, Resource and Education Program.

Assignments

All assignments are due *before class* via the online learning platform.

Keeping Up, Being There, Breaking the Silence (10%): In this upper-division course, we will engage each other, courteously and constructively, in a thoughtful and reflexive conversation about the impact of race, gender, and health on diasporic experiences. Your major assignment in this seminar is simply being there each Monday and Wednesday afternoon, with reading assignments and podcasts completed, in order to “break the silence,” individually and collectively, about the important issue of abortion. Everyone is expected to participate in these conversations, which are intended to be very friendly and welcoming, but nonetheless thought-provoking and rigorous. I understand that we all participate in different forms, and that some of you feel more comfortable with written participation. I will incorporate written forms of participation throughout the quarter. [Text adapted from Marcia Inhorn]

Assignment Calendar (5%): You will have to complete an assignment calendar on the online learning platform. This calendar is to help you map out their coursework for all their courses over the entire quarter. This assignment is a *completion grade only*.

Film Responses (10%): You will write two, 300-word responses to two of the four assigned films. These are open-ended responses. You can discuss the film’s content, whether you had questions, or if you saw connections between the films and the class readings or your abortion highlight (see below). These assignments are *completion grades only*.

Abortion Highlights (25%): You will write one, 400-word news reports on a current event related to abortion. The AH will address an aspect of the topic of abortion in a *specific* country during the past two years. In the first half of the essay, you will provide an overview of the issue. You will dedicate the second half to your own analysis of the issue at hand. You must base their synthesis and analysis on three news articles from reputable news sources. Please cite your sources in a bibliography using Chicago Manual of Style. You will submit all written assignments (including revisions) via the online learning platform as a word document.

Although the essay is worth 25% of your overall grade, the initial essay is only the first step in the writing process. I will read and provide feedback on the essay, which you will receive no later than one week after first turning it in. By the following week, you will have to resubmit your revised essay, *and* submit a 300-word response detailing how you have revised your essay. Thus, the AH essay is broken down into the following percentages: initial essay, 10%; revised essay, 10%, and written response, 5%. The revised essay grade depends on you effectively incorporating my feedback.

Midterm (25%): There is one in-class, multiple choice midterm exam, which is closed book.

Abortion Advocacy Assignment (25%): Based on the research for your Abortion Highlight essay, you will create an advocacy tool (i.e., infographic, fact, sheet, social media post) that communicates your policy proposal. Your advocacy tool should be a clear and visual representation of data and information, intended to convey knowledge quickly and in a visibly pleasing manner, while still including citations.

Course Schedule

All readings, videos, and podcasts should be completed *before* class unless noted otherwise.

Week 1

March 31: Introduction

- *Read: Syllabus*

April 2: The History of Abortion in the US

- *Listen: National Public Radio, [“Abortion Was Once Common Practice in America. A Small Group of Doctors Changed That,” All Things Considered](#) (June 6, 2022) (8min).*
- *Read (primary source): “French Lunar Pills,” Boston Daily Times, 1845.*

Week 2

April 7: Abortion as an Historical Concept

****DUE: Assignment Calendar****

- *Read (primary source): “Introduction” and “Translation” of “Notes on Reproductive Crimes,” [Advanced Topic: Reproductive Histories](#). In *History of Science in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 2022.*
- *Read (primary source): “Introduction” and look at the photograph of “Story of a Young Black Brazilian Woman,” [Advanced Topic: Reproductive Histories](#). In *History of Science in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 2022.*

April 9: Reproductive Justice

- *Read: Zakiya Luna and Kristin Luker, “Reproductive Justice,” *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 9 (November 2013): 327–52.*
- *Read (primary source): Women in World History, Maria Amélia Teles (Brazil), “A Feminist Perspective on Power and Population Control,” 1992.*

****Add/Drop ends April 11****

Week 3

April 14: Library Research

****Meet in Rivera Library Room 140****

April 16: Religious Understandings of Abortion

- *Read:* Reading varies depending on your group assignment. Please see the online learning platform for your reading.

Week 4

April 21: One Step Forward– The Decriminalization of Abortion in Latin America

****Due: Abortion Highlight****

- *Read:* Cassia Roth, “Abortion Access in the Americas: A Hemispheric and Historical Approach,” *Frontiers in Public Health* 11 (2023):
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1284737>.

April 23: Two Steps Back–The Re-criminalization of Abortion in Latin America

****No In-Person Class****

- *Watch:* [*A Quiet Inquisition*](#) (USA, 2014) (65min).
- *Read (primary source):* Women in World History, “Interview with Carmen,” (Chile).

Week 5

April 28: Abortion and Maternal Mortality and Morbidity in Sub-Saharan Africa

****No in-person class****

****Due: Film Response 1****

- *Watch:* [*Breaking the Silence: Abortion Rights in Kenya*](#) (Kenya, UK, 2023) (44:37min).
- *Read (primary source):* “Let’s Legalize Abortion,” *Sunday Standard*, May 28, 1978 and “Legalising Abortion? No! Thank You,” *Nigerian Tide*, August 12, 1981 (Nigeria).

April 30: Abortion on the Borderlands

****Due: Film Response 2****

- *Read:* Lina-Maria Murillo, "A View from Northern Mexico: Abortions Before *Roe v. Wade*," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 97, no. 1 (2023): 30–38.
- *Read (primary source):* "Mass Mailing for Dangerous Abortions," *Medical World News*, October 11, 1968.

Week 6

May 5: Midterm Review

****Due: Abortion Highlight R&R****

****In-class midterm review****

May 7

****Midterm****

Week 7

May 12: Personal Stories, Collective Action, and Grassroots Activism

- *Read:* "Abortion in America," <https://abortioninamerica.org/> and "Shout Your Abortion," <https://shoutyourabortion.com/stories/>. Story depends on group assignment. Please see online learning platform for your reading.

May 14: Disability Rights and Abortion Rights

- *Read:* Marsha Saxton, "Disability Rights and Selective Abortion," in *The Disability Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2017). Pp. 73–86.

Week 8

May 19: Crisis Pregnancy Centers and Abortion in the US

- *Watch (in-class):* *Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Always* (US, 101min).
- *Read:* Andrea Swartzendruber, et. al., "Crisis Pregnancy Centers in the United States: Lack of Adherence to Medical and Ethical Practice Standards," *Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology* 32, no. 6 (2019): 563–66.

May 21:

- Watch (in-class): *Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Always* (US, 101min).
- Read: "Proximity of Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs) to US Colleges & Universities, 2021," and "CPCs in California, 2023–24," from [Crisis Pregnancy Center Map](#).

Week 9

May 26 ****No class: Memorial Day****

****Due: Film Response 3****

May 28: *Abortion and Infectious Disease*

- Watch (in-class): [Zika](#) (Brazil, 2016) (29:30min)
- Rosamaria Carneiro and Soraya Resende Fleischer, "I Never Expected This, It Was a Big Shock: Conception, Pregnancy and Birth in Times of Zika Through the Eyes of Women in Recife, PE, Brazil," *Interface: Comunicação, Saúde e Educação* 22, no. 66 (2018): 709–19.

Week 10

June 2: *Advocacy Assignment Presentations*

****Due: Film Response 4****

****Due: Advocacy Assignment****

June 4: *Advocacy Assignment Presentations*

Disclaimer: The syllabus is a general plan for the course; I may announce deviations to the class when necessary.

If you've read this syllabus in its entirety, please send me your favorite picture/meme of a cute dog at cassia.roth@ucr.edu

Documentaries on Abortion in the US

PBS, [The Abortion Divide](#) (USA, 2019) (54min) [Free Online]

Penny Lane, [The Abortion Diaries](#) (USA, 2005) (30min) [Free on Youtube]

Tia Lessin, [The Janes](#) (USA, 2022) (104min) [HBO]

Jo Arding, [Personhood](#) (USA, 2019) (79min) [available via UCR Kanopy]

Rachel Grady and Heidi Ewing, *12th & Delaware* (USA, 2010) (80min) [HBO]

Lana Wilson and Martha Shane, [After Tiller](#) (USA, 2013) (90min)

Documentaries on Abortion in Latin America

Celina Escher, [Fly So Far](#) (El Salvador, 2021) (88min)

Juan Solanas, *Let it Be Law* (Argentina, 2019) (86min)

Nicolás Cuenca Rodríguez and Ángela Amaya Aguirre, [Abortion in Colombia](#) (Colombia, 2021) (16:38min) [Free on YouTube in Spanish]

Gustavo Montaña and Centro Las Libres, [Las Libres: The Story Continues](#) (Mexico, 2014) (94min) [Free on Youtube in Spanish]

Podcasts

[The Abortion Diary](#)

[Green Tide Rising](#)

[Access: A Podcast About Abortion](#)

[The 8th](#)

[The History of Abortion in America](#) (one episode)

[Throughline – Before Roe: The Physicians' Crusade](#)