



New Reproductive Technologies and Politics of Choice

Kateryna Karpenko

Kharkiv National Medical University (Ukraine)

gez.2007@mail.ru

Abstract

The multidisciplinary character of the course “New Reproductive Technologies and Politics of Choice” determines its place and role in the curriculum of the second-year students at the Medical University. At this level students have some basic training in analytic philosophy and biomedical disciplines, and they have some acquaintance with new reproductive technologies and terminology used for their description. Besides, they have some knowledge and skills in ethics, political studies, law, and gender studies.

The aim of this course is to introduce students to some major theoretical approaches to studying of the new reproductive technologies. It helps to reveal the contradictions between the important scientific achievements and legal, moral and esthetical conditions of their implementation; to equip students with the theoretical tools necessary to realize that the politics of choice might be changing in response to newly emerging reproductive technologies; to enable students to develop their own standpoint with regard to gender context of the new reproductive technologies.

The course starts from mini-lecture constituted the aim and objectives of the course. It is followed by structured discussion on variations, changes and constraints in the choices people make about their own bodies, about their families, about if, when and how they have children. The goal is also to highlight how social inequalities – within couples- are being reinforced and occasionally challenged through these less than free choices.

Reproducing human being is a profoundly social act, articulated across nations, regions, races, sexes, cultures, and generations. Yet we tend to think mostly of the biological aspects of conceiving and birthing children when the term “reproduction” is mentioned. As it often happens, development of science leaves behind legal and formal regulations of the scientific achievements. Legal norms are far from being flawless and they always drag behind the development of society.

For example, who are the real parents in the case of surrogate motherhood? Our initial answers often reveal a lot about our most fundamental beliefs about what counts as “real.” Some see biology as constituting what is most real, and for them the “real” parents are either the genetic parents or, in some cases, the birth mother. Some see relationships and love as being the most “real,” and for them the “real” parents are often the nurturing parents.

The course centers on group discussions of texts from Reader. Some topics concerning the situations that students may meet in future professional practice have been discussed as case studies.

Weekly at the time of class, students have been required to submit a written, two-page response to the reading assignment.

Targeted discussion is dedicated to the problem of infertility in Ukraine”. One of the reasons for observed demographic crisis in Ukraine is high percentage of infertility - every fifth-sixth couple barren. And at the same time, as precisely the problem of infertility, unlike other components of this crisis is the most amenable to correction, thanks to the success of modern reproductive medicine.