

Second call for papers

Valuations of Life: Birth defects, prenatal diagnosis, and disability

International workshop at Uppsala University, Sweden, 25-26 September 2018.

Definitions of what counts as a valuable life implicitly and explicitly saturate both historical and contemporary narratives about birth defects, prenatal diagnosis, and disability. The aim of this workshop is to contribute knowledge of how life has been valued and by what means. We are interested in both historical and contemporary studies.

We are particularly interested in how different technologies, historically and currently, have guided, aided, or informed the valuation process. How, for example, have methods such as amniocentesis, ultrasound, new abortion methods, blood marker tests, but also prosthesis-technologies, bio-engineering methods, and economic calculation models, influenced the valuations? Which value scales, old or new, have collided in the processes, and with which consequences? How has the valuing and evaluation of life and its relation to different technologies been discussed and negotiated by scientists, medical professionals, lobbyists, policy makers, media, economists, pregnant women, individuals, parents, families, interest groups, or political and religious organizations?

We welcome proposals for papers or presentations of work-in-progress that analyze these questions from different perspectives.

Of special interest may be, for example, studies of:

- Concepts of life value and evaluation in history, law, science and medicine.
- Biopolitics and the making of life value as measurable and objective.
- Technologies that help, change or in other way affect the definition of value of life, or the evaluation of it.
- Mathematical methods to calculate life value in economic terms, and their implementation.
- Conflicts and negotiations around life value between different actors and/or interest groups, such as the medical professions, patient organizations, religious organizations, private/corporate actors, and nation states or the equivalent.
- Visual cultures of a life worth living.
- Birth defects and the value of life.
- Normalization and medicalization.

Keynote lecture:

Susanne M. Klausen¹

Contesting Eugenic Abortion: Transnational Feminism, Eugenics and the Legacy of the Thalidomide Tragedy in the Ongoing Struggle for Women's Reproductive Freedom

For much of the twentieth century feminist movements in numerous Western countries advocated eugenic abortion and in doing so helped win public and state support for accessible abortion services. For many decades feminists' insistence on the right to terminate foetuses deemed somehow damaged or "abnormal" went largely unchallenged but today the morality of that stance is in question. As the disability rights movement wins increasing recognition from social justice organizations and governments, the demand for respect for the rights of people with disabilities has increasingly been framed in opposition to feminists' position that women have the absolute right to control their fertility. The ostensible conflict between disability rights and women's rights in public policy debates about abortion provokes numerous pressing political and ethical questions including, does the feminist demand for accessible abortion necessarily conflict with the rights of people with disabilities? And, to what extent has criticism of abortion on grounds of disability become instrumentalized by social conservatives opposing women's social autonomy? Susanne M. Klausen seeks to historicize this tension by examining Western feminisms' advocacy of eugenic abortion during the twentieth century. Themes will include feminists' transnational approach to activism on the issue and the disparate ideas motivating them, ranging from the troubling belief that the lives of people with disabilities were not worth living to the conviction that women should have the option to avoid raising disabled children for social reasons such as financial hardship. The lecture's focus will be the British Abortion Law Reform Association's (ALRA) campaign to win political support for inclusion of a eugenic clause in the UK's Abortion Act (1967) and the international impact of their success. The presentation will emphasize the profound importance of the thalidomide catastrophe to ALRA's achievement and scrutinize the transnational nature of their campaign; the rapidity with which the eugenic clause was adopted, often verbatim, in abortion legislation passed in many other countries after 1967; and the support ALRA provided to movements for abortion law reform around the world inspired by the UK's passage of the 1967 Abortion Act.

¹ Susanne M. Klausen is Professor of History at Carleton University, Ottawa, and Senior Research Associate in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg. She has published numerous essays and two monographs pertaining to the history and politics of fertility control in South Africa, Canada and New Zealand. Her most recent book is the multi-prize-winning study of abortion in modern South Africa, *Abortion Under Apartheid: Nationalism, Sexuality, and Women's Reproductive Rights in South Africa* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

Practicalities

Abstracts for papers *or* for work-in-progress presentations, of a maximum of 250 words, should be submitted **no later than June 1, 2018**, to helena.franzen@idehist.uu.se.

Please provide your full name, institutional affiliation, and contact details. The format of the workshop will not allow for more than c. 15 papers. We will evaluate the abstracts based on the originality of the research and the relevance to the theme of the workshop. Applicants will be notified if their papers have been accepted or not by June 17, 2018. The workshop language is English.

The workshop is two full days, i.e. morning to late afternoon, September 25–26, 2018. Registration, lunches, workshop dinner and accommodation (two nights at the conference hotel) are free of charge for participants presenting papers. It may also be possible to obtain limited economic support for travel expenses. Please indicate in the application if such support is required for attendance and what level of support is needed.

If you would like to attend without a paper, or a presentation, the deadline for application is also June 1, 2018. Please indicate your reasons for wanting to take part in the workshop, and please note that only attendees who present a paper are eligible for economic support.

The workshop is organized by Maria Björkman, Ph.D., and Annika Berg, Ph.D., both working within the research program "Medicine at the Borders of Life: Fetal Research and the Emergence of Ethical Controversy" which is funded by the Swedish Research Council and hosted by the Department of History of Science and Ideas at Uppsala University, Sweden (<http://medicalborders.se/>).