

Due Wednesday, November 27 at 11:59pm

- 1) Explain how scientists used the reference man to approximate risk at the Hanford site (Cram 2015). What are the implications for risk measurements for those who are different than the ‘reference man’? Cite Cram and at least one other course reading in explaining your answer. (100 – 200 words; 5 points possible)

Post nuclear health is defined not by complete renewal, but by minimizing *risk*. Risk is understood via a statistical collection known as the *reference man*. The ICRP cautions against the word “average”, stating the reference man should serve as a mere starting point (Cram 2015, 14). Despite this caveat, such an acutely defined being poses problems. Every physical and social characteristic is used to identify risk. For example, if the reference man breathes X liters per day - each containing Y amounts of radioactive elements - Y needs to be reduced so that X\*Y falls below a safe threshold. Thus, *improper* definition of such characteristics as X make cleanup efforts inadequate in protecting the actual people living in areas Reference Man can occupy with ease. Similarly, our wider social structures are completely based around the *assumed* birth clock – childbirth occurs more safely in young to middle aged adulthood. “There was a Time magazine cover...that said...all social problems stem from teen childbearing” (Code Switch, 2018), yet, it turns out, that teen childbearing promises the best outcomes for black women. White women are used as a sort of “reference man” with birth, and our social structures reflect this narrow view. (198 words)

- 2) What are the limits of the narratives of choice in reproductive rights? Draw on Roberts and one other reading to explain your answer. (100-200 words, 5 points possible)

Mainstream definitions of ‘choice’ have “eroded the argument for state support, because women without sufficient resources are simply held responsible for making ‘bad’ choices (Roberts 2015).” This very neoliberal framework confuses the *allowance* of rights with their *accessibility*. *If nobody bans a woman from aborting, then she can if she desires* (despite geographic and economic hurdles) – *if nobody disallows a poor woman from childbirth, then she is free to pursue it* (despite lack of provided resources) - *if a queer couple is allowed to marry, they can adopt* (despite the significant time and money it takes to do so), and so on. To allow these choices is easily palatable, but to support them is economically *unwise* and *unfeasible*. The neoliberal fetishization of choice ignores the frequent *false* choices people are forced to contend with, as well as factors that are still out of individuals’ control. An example of the former, inmates in Tennessee were offered reduced sentences if they agreed to undergo sterilization (Hawkins, 2017). An example to the latter, an individual might not live in a place where their child has access to quality education, and they may not have the resources to move to one that does. (199 words)

- 3) Apply Spade and Willse’s (2016) concept of normalization to one of the following examples: affirmative action, DACA, or Indigenous land acknowledgements. Your answer should cite at least two course readings (200-300 words, 10 points possible)

Every society is built upon some sort of norms and structures - social movements must make choices about the norms that they choose to uphold or reject. While norms and structures, by their very nature and role in human interaction, can never be fully eliminated, critical examination and careful navigation can work towards a “bold vision of an alternative society that does not exile ‘dangerous others’ (Spade

and Willse 2016, 11)”. This idea ties closely to Gilmore’s (2002) fatal coupling of power and difference. She describes FDR’s New Deal, stating the program was meant to “both to restore general health to the economy and to disarm radical alternatives such as communism (18)”. Gilmore goes on to describe how the program preferred men, white people, and laborers of ‘higher status’. The New Deal is often characterized as a bold and progressive policy, and while that can still be true, it was created to largely preserve the capitalist, patriarchal, white supremacist structures that preceded it. Affirmative action somewhat falls into this framework as well. It exists to allow more people into the capitalist system, which by its very nature demands winners and losers. Those who have been previously sacrificed more readily to the status of losers, are now given a greater chance at being winners via affirmative action, either through direct economic opportunities, or indirectly through things like education (often sold as being primarily a way to become a more productive member of the capitalist economy). These programs aim to provide more people with a similar life and structure to that of the preceding white male capitalist. This is not to say that the equality AA strives for is wrong— only that it cannot be so easily divorced from the norms of the society it takes part in. **(295 words)**

**4) Use Gilmore’s (2002) fatal coupling of power and difference to explain either weathering or oil politics in *Crude*. (100–200 words, 10 points possible)**

Gilmore discusses a cycle: power has the ability to define and regulate difference, and this difference then defines how power materializes in the future – where it’s located, who is allowed to have it, and the ways in which it is able to be exerted. Violence and premature deaths are often a part of this cycle. We can see this in the higher maternal mortality rate of black women compared to white women. This is the product of weathering. “It’s the experience of having to work harder than anybody else just to get equal pay and equal respect. It’s being followed around...being stopped by the police... Those types of experiences create the kind of chronic stress...which over time create the wear and tear on your body...(Code Switching, 2018).” Power has been used to mark difference between white and black by creating the system in which these stressors are perpetrated, which then drives further difference via the fatal birth phenomenon. This difference then affects how power will come to exist in the future – a community/geography deprived of its ability to have or parent children is deprived of its voice in the future, and thus its future power to navigate future differences. **(199 words)**

**5) Apply Pulido’s (2015) concepts of White supremacy and White privilege to an example related to climate justice. Cite Pulido and at least one other course reading in your answer. (150–250 words, 10 points possible)**

Pulido defines white supremacy as the structural prioritization of certain lives over others. White privilege is a set of individual choices, of varying levels of animosity (it’s not required), that navigate through and reproduce the inequalities of “a highly racialized society” (Pulido 2015, 2). We can see this play out in Ranganathan’s (2019) critique of the term “resilience” and how it dictates climate policy. White supremacy upholds geographies that expose African Americans to greater climate risks. Living in flood plains, along highways, in heat islands, or in places like Flint, Michigan puts you at greater risk of ecological damage on a daily basis, which only threaten to worsen in our escalating climate crisis. Simply being able to choose to not live in one of these places is an example of privilege. It’s not a choice that requires bearing any sort of hatred. Other choices, however, leading to current resiliency-based programs, do nothing to change these racist structures. While they do attempt to stave off damage from large, external ecological threats, they do so while upholding the current status quo, which is responsible for the extent of these and other threats in the first place. So long as this structure

and racist norms go unchallenged, white supremacy remains intact, in relation to climate justice. (213 words)

Hawkins, Derek. 2017. "Tenn. Judge Reprimanded for Offering Reduced Jail Time in Exchange for Sterilization." Washington Post. November 21, 2017.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2017/11/21/tenn-judge-reprimanded-for-offering-reduced-jail-time-in-exchange-for-sterilization/>.