

Blueprints of Justice Vol. 2: Human Rights. The Weaponization of Space Against the Body.

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In memory of co-creator Virgil Abloh

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“The birth of the body in the 17th century also marked its end, as the concept of the body would cease to define a specific organic reality, and become instead a political signifier of class relations, and of the shifting, continuously redrawn boundaries which these relations produce in the map of human exploitation.”

Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*

“When a State severely limits access to safe and legal procedures, women in desperate circumstances may resort to unlicensed rogue practitioners. ... Laws like H. B. 2 that 'do little or nothing for health, but rather strew impediments to abortion' cannot survive judicial inspection.”

Ruth Bader Ginsberg, *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*

Half a century ago the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution of the United States protects a pregnant woman's liberty to choose to have an abortion, a landmark decision known as *Roe v. Wade*. Throughout the past 50 years the decision has been challenged continuously, a tug o' war between different actors, instead of being firmly cemented as a human right and health care issue, culminating in the last decade in a particularly effective political tool. Today Texas, the second largest state and home to 30 million people (a size equaling half the population of Italy), succeeded in banning abortion. There are six additional bans that have been signed into law but are not currently in effect in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio. Yet According to the WHO (World Health Organization) restricting legal access to abortion does not decrease the need, but increases the number of womxn seeking illegal and unsafe abortion. Nearly a fourth of womxn in America will have an abortion by age 45, yet 6 states have only one abortion-care provider, an emergency situation which falls especially hard on people with low incomes.

What does Space have to do with it?

Given *Roe v. Wade*, politicians have been seeking round-about ways of banning abortion, as they were unable to do so directly. Space became a primary weapon in the Texas Omnibus Abortion Bill, known as HB 2, signed into law in 2013, which required all abortions to be done in ambulatory surgical centers. Essentially mini-hospitals, these spaces have very specific code requirements regarding width and size of spaces, mechanical equipment and others. This automatically disqualified most if not all Planned Parenthood and other clinics. The entire established medical profession, both in Texas and nationally, disagreed that such provisions were necessary. The law faced immediate legal scrutiny, and in July 2016, the United States Supreme Court held some parts of the law to be unconstitutional in its decision on *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*.

In addition to codes, the clinics have become a quite literal battle ground and both people seeking healthcare services, as well as healthcare providers are harassed and attacked by protesters who disagree with one's choice over their own body. What should be a routine gesture in any developed country, let alone the richest in the world, that of seeking medical care, is more dangerous before one makes it to the door of the clinic, than anything happening inside. Nobody should be persecuted for seeking medical care, and nobody providing care, either. This results in added costs, stress or outright inability to access medicare care to those most in need and with the least resources, as well as severely limiting the day-to-day activities of abortion clinics and in time require them to shut down.

The studio will be working in partnership with sexual health care clinics in the US that struggle to exist within the restrictions in order to examine how law and space interact, understanding the ways in which space is being weaponized against the body. More details on the collaboration will be added to the syllabus in the coming weeks.

Studio Schedule: Schedule Tuesday & Thursday 1- 5pm

Hybrid structure - most classes in person, with speakers joining in person or on zoom, on a case by case basis.

Note

While we are committed to a safe learning environment, we recognize the topic, with its violent implications, may contain triggering and/or offensive materials. The studio's safety is of primary concern, please know that we are here to support you. In addition there are the campus wide resources such as MIT's Mental Health and Counseling Services.

Background literature/links:

1. *Caliban and the Witch* - Silvia Federici
2. *Everybody: A Book About Freedom* by Olivia Laing
3. *Contested Spaces: Abortion Clinics, Women's Shelters and Hospital - Politicizing the Female Body* By Lori A. Brown ISBN 9781138271623 , Routledge
4. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals* Saidiya Hartman
5. *Jackson the Movie*: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/jacksonthemovie>
6. *4 months, 3 weeks, 2 days* Movie by Cristian Mungiu
7. *The History of Roe v. Wade, and the Texas Abortion Law: Texas Has Turned Citizen Against Citizen Over Abortion. How Did We Get Here?*
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/29/opinion/roe-v-wade-texas-abortion-law.html>
8. *"This is a dark day": For Texas abortion providers, U.S. Supreme Court ruling feels apocalyptic*
<https://www.texastribune.org/2021/12/10/Texas-abortion-providers-scotus-sb8/>
9. *Personal Stories Made Public* [The Atlantic](#)
10. *One Woman's Abortion - 1965*, [The Atlantic](#)
11. *World Population Policies 2017 Highlights Abortion laws and policies — A global assessment* - [UN](#)
12. [Planned Parenthood Abortion](#)
13. *The Rio Grande Valley's Abortion Desert* - [The New Yorker](#)
14. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/the-rio-grande-valleys-abortion-desert>
15. (News) article resource: <https://www.wholewomanshealth.com/press/>