Global Gametes: Reproductive “Tourism” and Islamic Bioethics in the High-tech Middle East

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The Department of Anthropology and co-sponsors are pleased to welcome to the University of Kentucky Professor Marcia Inhorn as part of its Annual Colloquium Series.

Abstract: Assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), including in vitro fertilization (IVF) and intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) to overcome infertility, are now widely available across the Middle East. Islamic fatwas emerging from the Sunni Islamic countries have permitted many ARTs, while prohibiting others. However, recent religious rulings emanating from Shia Muslim-dominant Iran have created interesting avenues for infertile Muslim couples in the new millennium. So-called reproductive “tourism”—or the search for ARTs and donor gametes across national and international borders—is one of these new Middle Eastern phenomena. So is the uptake of ARTs among Middle Eastern men, who suffer from particularly high rates of severe male infertility. Although the Middle East is rarely regarded as a “high-tech” setting, it is a key site for understanding the intersection of technoscience, Islamic bioethics, and modernity, all of which are deeply implicated in the brave new world of assisted reproduction.

This colloquium is co-sponsored by: The College of Arts & Sciences, The Department of Behavioral Science, The Department of Geography, The Department of Psychology, and The International Studies Program.