



WEDNESDAY SEMINAR

25.05.2022, 17:00 Uhr, HS-C

IKSA, NIG, Universitätsstraße 7, 1010 Wien, 4. Stock

Veronika Siegl (University of Vienna)

When Birth and Death Coalesce: Prenatal Medicine, Pregnancy Termination and Un/Born Life.



Veronika Siegl is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Vienna and a Visiting Scholar at the University of Cologne. She is interested in questions of ethics, inequality and autonomy

in the context of medicine, technology, economy and the body. Her doctoral research focused on commercial surrogacy in Russia and Ukraine. In her Postdoc-project (funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation), Veronika explores how the category of “life” is negotiated in the context of prenatal testing and pregnancy terminations in Austria.

kommende Termine

01.06.2022 **Till Mostowlansky**

Road's End: Pathways and Spaces across a Divided High Asia.

08.06.2022 **Stefan Leins**

The Work of Financial Market Experts: A Cultural Approach.

When a baby is born, the so-called “life signs” are checked and evaluated. There is a clear definition of life signs, which include the heartbeat, pulsations of the umbilical cord or movements. While most mature babies show unambiguous life signs, these can be subtle, hardly palpable or even non-existent in the case of premature births and induced terminations. As a consequence, some practitioners in the field of gynaecology and obstetrics develop their own understandings of life signs. This presentation explores how this notion is situationally re-interpreted by and negotiated among different kinds of practitioners, such as doctors, midwives or nurses. It also scrutinizes how they evaluate the meanings of this notion and the legal rights and obligations that result from categorising a foetus or baby as “live birth”, “stillbirth” or “miscarriage”. The presentation mainly builds on on-going anthropological fieldwork in Austria, focusing on induced abortions due to a prenatal diagnosis. This context significantly influences the medical and moral evaluation of life signs, since the lives of the affected foetuses/ babies were deliberately ended. My findings reveal the porous boundaries between life and death and show how supposedly clear-cut and neutral legal categories are saturated with subjective and moral meaning.
