

Proposal for a book presentation & discussion at the Conference of the SAGS 2023

Relevant axis:

- Axis 1 – Gendered labour
- Axis 2 - The institutional, interactional and performative work of (un)doing gender

Book: Veronika Siegl (*forthcoming July 2023*): *Intimate Strangers*. Commercial Surrogacy in Russia and Ukraine and the Making of Truth. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Cover text: Zooming in on commercial surrogacy in Russia and Ukraine, *Intimate Strangers* addresses market expansion into the intimate spheres of life that play out on women's bodies as mothers and workers. Veronika Siegl follows the inner workings of a surrogacy market marked by secrecy, distrust, and anonymous business relationships. She explores intended mothers' anxious struggles for a child in light of stigmatized infertility and the aggressive biopolitics of motherhood; the uncertain but pragmatic pathways in and out of fertility clinics as surrogates navigate harsh economic realities and resist being objectified or morally judged; and the powerful role of agents and doctors who have found a profitable niche in nurturing and facilitating other people's existential hopes. *Intimate Strangers* discusses these issues against the backdrop of ultra-conservatism and moral governance in Russia, the rising international popularity of the Ukrainian surrogacy market, and the pervasiveness of neo-liberal ideologies and individualized notions of reproductive freedom.

Link: <https://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/9781501771316/intimate-strangers/#bookTabs=1>

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Book presentation (30') by **Veronika Siegl** (University of Bern), followed by commentaries (each 10') by **Carolin Schurr** (University of Bern) and **Nolwenn Bühler** (University of Lausanne).