

EATING WOMEN: THE REGULATION OF MILK AND PLACENTA IN FRANCE AND THE US

A TALK BY MATHILDE COHEN



Wednesday, February 12, 2020 | 5:00 – 6:30 PM
Pardee School of Global Studies | 121 Bay State Road

Discussants:

- Ivana Isailovic / Visiting Scholar, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program, Northeastern University & Northeastern University School of Law
- Alya Guseva / Associate Professor of Sociology, Boston University

This talk by Mathilde Cohen, Professor of Law at the University of Connecticut, addresses the disenfranchisement of women from the perspective of French and American laws and regulations failing to protect their embodied reproductive labor in the form of placenta and milk. There is a long history across cultures of people consuming milk and placentas for nutritional, medicinal, or spiritual purposes, but today these substances are part of a gendered bioeconomy that fails to compensate and acknowledge their female producers. At the same time, milk and placenta consumption are sites of empowerment and relationality for those who may share or sell their milk peer-to-peer or consume their own placenta. Some feel that they regain control—they are now laborers and products and managers of their labors and sometimes consumers of themselves all at once. These self-consumption practices destabilize the existence of the individual, the person, one of our central categories of citizenship, as well as the market system whereby commodities, including bio-commodities are traded and regulated.

