



Politics of Morality: The Church, the State, and Reproductive Rights in Postsocialist Poland (Polish and Polish American Studies)

By Joanna Mishtal

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"...A compelling and horrifying account of how Polish institutions intervened and gained command over women's lives."

—Joanna Regulska, coeditor of *Women and Gender in Postwar Europe: From Cold War to European Union*

After the hope and enthusiasm that followed the collapse of Poland's state socialism in 1989, political forces that had lain concealed emerged and established a new religious-nationalist orthodoxy. As the Catholic Church emerged as a political force in the Polish government, it precipitated a rapid erosion of reproductive rights, especially the right to abortion, which had been relatively well established.

In *The Politics of Morality*, Joanna Mishtal explores this expansion of power by the religious right, along with the little-studied implications of the new reproductive governance for women. She examines the contradiction between an emerging democracy on one hand, and a declining tolerance for reproductive rights, women's rights, and political and religious pluralism on the other. At the same time, women resist these strictures by pursuing abortion illegally, defying religious prohibitions on contraception, and forming advocacy groups. Surveillance, control, and abuse of power are persistent themes in this revealing ethnography, which will speak to scholars of women's rights, political history, and Eastern Europe.

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Editorial Review

Review

“One of Mishtal’s most important contributions is her analysis of the gendering of biopolitics in Poland and the ways the Catholic Church has undertaken a politics of morality based on individual surveillance and political intimidation. Methodologically sophisticated, innovative, and refreshingly free of jargon, this is an important work.”

—Michele Rivkin-Fish, author of *Women’s Health in Post-Soviet Russia: The Politics of Intervention*

“Mishtal’s book is a compelling and horrifying account of how Polish institutions intervened and gained command over women’s lives, and how women have been losing control over who will have access to their bodies and the circumstances that warrant that access. A must-read for all who are interested in one of the most contested aspects of transformational politics in Poland—reproductive rights.”

—Joanna Regulska, coeditor of *Women and Gender in Postwar Europe: From Cold War to European Union*

“One of the many strengths of Mishtal’s study is that she doesn’t just describe a top-down model of power—she also focuses on everyday women of different economic classes and how they negotiated the legal and cultural restrictions on abortion and contraceptives. ... I have been raving about this book to anyone who will listen.” —*Cosmopolitan Review*

About the Author

Joanna Mishtal is an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Central Florida. Her research examines the politics of gender, focusing on reproductive rights, health, and social policies in Poland, her native country.

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