



RETHINKING SURROGACY

PHILOSOPHICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND BIOMEDICAL INSIGHTS

Free Webinar
Conference



February 28, 2026
09:00 am - 02:00 pm



CASABLANCA
DECLARATION
For the universal abolition of surrogacy



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Presentation	2
Scientific Committee & Organizers	3
Program	6
Speaker 1: Ilaria MALAGRINÒ	7
Speaker 2: Anne SCHAUB-THOMAS	8
Speaker 3: Kallie FELL	9
Speaker 4: Michele BARBATO	10
Speaker 5: Laura TRAVAN	11
Contact Us	12



PRESENTATION

Surrogacy has become a major scientific, ethical, and social issue today. This online conference brings together experts from the philosophical, psychological, and medical fields to explore the many dimensions of this rapidly expanding practice.

Through five key presentations, it will address the nature of the bonds between mother and fetus, the question of intrauterine memory, the lived experiences of the women involved, as well as the biomedical consequences for the surrogate mother, the egg donor, and the newborn.

This event offers a cross-disciplinary and rigorous perspective on the latest scientific findings, while opening a space for reflection on the human and ethical implications of surrogacy.

While the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Reem Alsalem, presented her 2025 Special Report on surrogacy to the UN last October, this day is intended to be a time to understand, debate, and shed light on a global challenge in constant transformation.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE & ORGANIZERS



Maroun BADR holds a PhD in bioethics (summa cum laude/with highest honors) from the Faculty of Bioethics at the Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum (Rome). His thesis is published in French under the title: *L'autonomisation de la femme par l'avortement et la contraception dans les Objectifs de Développement Durable de l'ONU* (Women's empowerment through abortion and contraception in the UN Sustainable Development Goals), Ed. Les Études Hospitalières/LEH, June 2025.

Member of the Scientific Council of the Casablanca Declaration group of experts for the Universal Abolition of Surrogacy, he is a research scholar at the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights - Rome and an associate researcher at the Facultad de Bioética Universidad Anáhuac - México.

Lecturer in civil law at the Law faculty of The *Université Catholique de l'Ouest (Angers)* and author of three books, Maroun BADR has already published 14 peer-reviewed original articles in several international journals and regularly participates in regional and international bioethics conferences.

His main areas of interest are bioethics law, biolaw, biopolitics, fundamental rights, UN policy and sexual and reproductive rights, emerging life, women's and minors' rights and health, sustainable development and public health, reproductive technologies, end-of-life.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE & ORGANIZERS



Aude MIRKOVICH holds a doctorate in law and graduated from Paris II Panthéon-Assas University in 2001 with highest honors. Her thesis subject was: *La personne humaine. Étude visant à clarifier le statut juridique de l'enfant à naître* (The human person. A study aimed at clarifying the legal status of the unborn child), Ed. PUAM, 2003.

A lecturer in private law at Évry Paris-Saclay University since 2001, she obtained her habilitation to supervise research (HDR) in 2013.

President of the association “*Juristes pour l'enfance*” (Lawyers for Children), and president of the Scientific Council of the Casablanca Declaration group of experts for the Universal Abolition of Surrogacy, Aude MIRKOVIC works to raise awareness among French and European institutions about legal issues relating to parentage and the nature and consequences of assisted reproductive technology (ART) and surrogacy practices.

Regular contributor to the press and specialist legal journals, she is the author of several books, including one entitled *PMA, GPA: Quel respect pour les droits de l'enfant ?* (Assisted Reproductive Technology/ART, Surrogacy: What respect for child's rights?), Ed. Téqui, 2016.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE & ORGANIZERS



Fabiano NIGRIS is a paediatrician, neonatologist, and bioethicist. He graduated in Medicine and Surgery and specialized in Paediatrics at the University of Padua (Italy), where he also pursued further training in Bioethics.

He subsequently obtained a Canonical licenciate (Master) in bioethics at the Faculty of Bioethics of the Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum in Rome; he is currently pursuing a PhD in Bioethics.

Since 2021, he has been a member of the Ethics Committee of the Children's hospital "Burlo Garofolo" in Trieste (Italy), of which he's currently the Chairman. He has had training and work experience in London (United Kingdom) and at the University of Munich (Germany), dealing with chronic pain therapy in children through complementary therapies.

Fabiano NIGRIS was recently appointed Bioethicist at the Regional Ethics Committee for Research in Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy).

He is involved in embryo rights, assisted reproductive technology and parental responsibility, the rights of sick children and pediatric end-of-life care. He works in clinical ethics, studies the impact of research on children. He is also an associate researcher at the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights.

PROGRAM

09:00	OPENING <i>Maroun BADR, Aude MIRKOVIC, Fabiano NIGRIS</i>
09:10	WELCOMING SPEECH <i>Prof. Alberto GARCIA-GOMEZ, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights</i>
09:20	THE CATEGORY OF RELATIONSHIP IN THE EXPERIENCE OF PREGNANCY. TOWARDS A HERMENEUTICS OF HUMAN PROCREATION <i>Ilaria MALAGRINÒ</i>
10:05	THE FETUS AND THE QUESTION OF MEMORY: ISSUES SURROUNDING INTRAUTERINE LIFE AND BIRTH <i>Anne SCHAUB-THOMAS</i>
10:50	A COMPARISON OF AMERICAN WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES WITH BOTH GESTATIONAL SURROGATE PREGNANCIES AND SPONTANEOUS PREGNANCIES <i>Kallie FELL</i>
11:35	PAUSE
12:00	THE BIOMEDICAL ISSUES OF SURROGACY FOR WOMEN (SURROGATE MOTHER AND EGG DONOR) <i>Michele BARBATO</i>
12:45	THE NEONATAL BIOMEDICAL CONSEQUENCES IN SURROGACY PREGNANCIES <i>Laura TRAVAN</i>
13:30	CONCLUSION <i>Maroun BADR, Aude MIRKOVIC, Fabiano NIGRIS</i>
13:45	FINAL REMARKS <i>Prof. Alberto GARCIA-GOMEZ, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights</i>
14:00	END OF THE CONFERENCE



Ilaria MALAGRINÒ

Assistant Professor in Moral
Philosophy & Bioethics
University of Messina (Italy)

THE CATEGORY OF RELATIONSHIP IN THE EXPERIENCE OF PREGNANCY. TOWARDS A HERMENEUTICS OF HUMAN PROCREATION

This presentation explores the relational dimension of pregnancy through an anthropological and ethical lens, proposing it as a foundational category of the human condition. The relationality inherent in pregnancy is examined as an original and radical phenomenon – one that not only binds individuals biologically and temporally to their progenitors but also shapes the development of personal faculties and identity. By critically reviewing existing literature on the maternal-fetal relationship, this presentation reveals the conceptual limitations of prevailing characterizations. It then seeks to identify the structural categories necessary for articulating a potential philosophy of pregnancy. Finally, it advances a hermeneutical hypothesis aimed at capturing the singularity of this complex human experience, while maintaining a balanced recognition of the subjects involved. This approach aspires to enrich philosophical and biomedical discourse on embodiment, dependence, and relationality.

Ilaria MALAGRINÒ is an assistant professor in moral philosophy and bioethics at the University of Messina (Italy). Ilaria holds a Ph.D. from the University Campus Bio-Medico of Rome, working on the relationship between mother and fetus, analyzing new technological advances in pregnancy. She has been visiting professor at the University of Navarra. She is a member of many national and international research projects. Her research topics are ethics of care, ethics of intimacy, and ethics of pregnancy and motherhood. She has collaborated actively with researchers in several other disciplines, particularly sociology, psychology, engineering and biology.



**Anne
SCHAUB-THOMAS**
Psychologist
Psychotherapist
(Belgium)

THE FETUS AND THE QUESTION OF MEMORY: ISSUES SURROUNDING INTRAUTERINE LIFE AND BIRTH

This presentation explores intrauterine life, highlighting the unique bond that develops between mother and child before birth. Can we talk about fetal memory? What traces does this period leave on the development of the child and the adult? What are the repercussions of maternal separation at birth? This reflection questions the invisible legacy of fetal life and the impact of the first moments on existence.

Psychologist-psychotherapist, **Anne SCHAUB-THOMAS** is specialized in the field of prenatal memories, birth trauma, and early childhood trauma. She has been practicing professionally since 2000. A trainer and lecturer, she is also the author of two books, including *Un cri secret d'enfant* (*A secret cry of a child*), Ed. Les acteurs du savoir, 2017 (revised and expanded edition in 2025; Translated into Italian by Prof. Attilio Stajano, Ed. Lindau, 2024). This book deals with mother-child attachment, early memories, and separation-abandonment. Anne SCHAUB-THOMAS has spoken at the European Parliament and the Belgian Senate as an expert on the issue of very early child-parent relationships, in the context of the debate on surrogacy.



Kallie FELL

Perinatal Nurse
*Executive Director of
the Center for Bioethics
and Culture (USA)*

A COMPARISON OF AMERICAN WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES WITH BOTH GESTATIONAL SURROGATE PREGNANCIES AND SPONTANEOUS PREGNANCIES

This study* compared spontaneous and gestational surrogate pregnancies experienced by the same American women. Based on 96 interviews, findings show surrogate pregnancies were more often high-risk regardless of age or pregnancy history, with higher rates of cesarean deliveries, earlier births, postpartum depression, and lasting health problems. The research confirms significant health disparities between surrogate and non-surrogate pregnancies, raising critical bioethical, social, and political concerns about surrogacy and its broader implications.

Kallie FELL has always been dedicated to women's health. With a Master's in Animal Sciences (reproductive physiology and molecular biology) from Purdue, she began her career as a researcher at Vanderbilt University Medical Center while earning a nursing degree. She has been a perinatal nurse for the past ten years. In 2018, she joined the Center for Bioethics and Culture (CBC), advancing from volunteer writer to Executive Director. Kallie FELL co-directed a documentary in 2021, co-authored a scientific article in 2022, hosted the podcast Venus Rising, and serves as Program Director at the Paul Ramsey Institute. In 2024, she released a film, *The Lost Boys: Searching for Manhood*, and co-authored with Jennifer Lahl, *The Detransition Diaries*.

* J. Lahl et al., « A Comparison of American Women's Experiences with Both Gestational Surrogate Pregnancies and Spontaneous Pregnancies », *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence* 7/3 (2022), in <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dignity/vol7/iss3/1>.



Michele BARBATO

Gynecologist

Director of the complex obstetrics and gynecology department at the hospital of Melegnano, Milan (Italy)

THE BIOMEDICAL ISSUES OF SURROGACY FOR WOMEN (SURROGATE MOTHER AND EGG DONOR)

Surrogacy involves the surrogate mother in her entirety: both physically and psycho-emotionally. The purpose of this paper is to describe the process of surrogacy, the diagnostic and therapeutic procedures that are implemented, the treatments that are prescribed, and the risks to her physical and psychological health, both during the process and in the long term. In most cases, surrogacy also involves an egg donor, who undergoes an egg retrieval procedure, the medical implications of which will also be analyzed.

After graduating from the University of Milano in 1978, **Michele BARBATO** specialized in obstetrics and gynecology at the Mangiagalli Clinic in Milano, Italy. After a 30-year career at the hospital in Vimercate, he became director of the obstetrics and gynecology department at the hospital of Melegnano. He is an expert in delivery room management and traditional and laparoscopic gynecological surgery. He has always been committed to helping infertile couples with the aid of NaProTechnology through RRM (Restorative Reproductive Medicine). He contributed to the founding of CAMEN (*Centro Ambrosiano Metodi Naturali* /Ambrosian Center for Natural Methods) in Milan in 1978 and CAV (*Centro di Aiuto alla Vita* / Center for Life Assistance) in Vimercate in 1987. He has participated as Principal Investigator in research projects with the WHO, Georgetown University in Washington, Universities of Milan, Lyon, Padua, and Naples, and in projects with public institutions such as the Lombardy Region, the European Union, and private companies.



Laura TRAVAN

Neonatologist
“Burlo Garofolo”
Children Hospital
University of Trieste (Italy)

THE NEONATAL BIOMEDICAL CONSEQUENCES IN SURROGACY PREGNANCIES

Surrogacy, with a global market projected at over USD 22 billion in 2024, is rapidly expanding and raises complex public health, social, and ethical questions. Although framed as a solution to infertility, it requires examination through the lens of the “first 1,000 days” framework and Barker’s hypothesis (Developmental Origins of Health and Disease/DOHaD), which emphasize how intrauterine and perinatal events shape long-term health. The aim of this study is to review recent evidence on neonatal outcomes in surrogacy pregnancies and to interpret them within the broader concepts of fetal programming and future health trajectories across the lifespan.

A specialist in pediatrics and neonatology, **Laura TRAVAN** heads the Neonatology and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at IRCCS Burlo Garofolo. A professor at the University of Trieste and holder of a PhD in maternal-child medicine and perinatology, she also teaches master’s degree courses for nurses and midwives. She was responsible for the Nido Rooming-in, with a strong institutional commitment to the protection and promotion of breastfeeding, where she acts as a regional reference and tutor for the Problem-Based Learning method. An expert in the monitoring of premature babies and the management of complex neonatal syndromes, Laura TRAVAN is the author of 70 original articles published in PubMed and 7 other articles cited in Scopus (H-index 15), co-author of pediatric books, and a speaker at more than 100 conferences. She chairs the regional section of the Italian Society of Neonatology, sits on several national committees, and is an active member of national committees on genetics and breastfeeding.

Contact Us

UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights



info@unescobiochair.org



www.unescobiochair.org



**Via degli Aldobrandeschi, 190
00163, Roma**

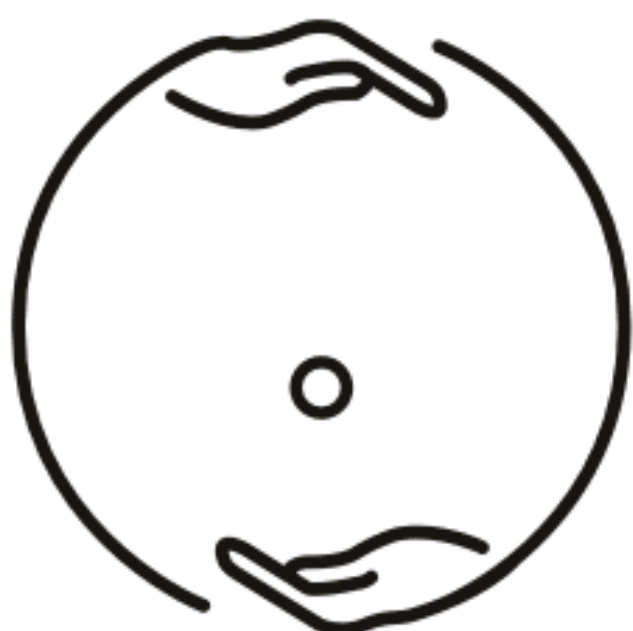
Scientific committee & organizers



Maroun BADR: mbadr@unescobiochair.org

Aude MIRKOVIC: aude.mirkovic@univ-evry.fr

Fabiano NIGRIS: fnigris@unescobiochair.org



CASABLANCA DECLARATION

For the universal **abolition of surrogacy**