

■ SPEAKER

From Page 1

available in some states while nearly impossible to obtain in others.

"Certainly, we are in the middle of a war about women's place in society, equality, sexuality and power," Reagan said, "and that is being fought over and in women's bodies and reproduction systems quite literally when we're going to have state-mandated vaginal ultrasounds.

"Women's health is being harmed, their autonomy violated and their lives put at risk," she said.

Much of Reagan's talk focused on her findings of when the nation's focus turned toward criminalizing abortion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Her search of court records, inquests, newspaper investigations and medical data reveals the consequences of that societal shift, and questionable methods used to enforce laws.

Reagan is associate professor of history at the University of Illinois,

Urbana-Champaign. Her fields of research include U.S. medicine and public

health, history of women and gender.

"Legal abortion was the never the only goal of the (women's) movement in the 1960s, or now," Reagan said.

She said women and some aspects of the medical community fought for equal access to safe abortions by race and income, but the Supreme Court focused on physician's rights, women's rights and privacy, not equality.

Reagan began her talk by asking her audience to consider this question: "Could it be that abortion is a crime today in the United States? I want to use tonight's talk as an occasion to think about that question with you."

She also said it is important that the Roe vs. Wade U.S. Supreme Court decision, which declares state laws banning abortions to be unconstitutional, should not be used as a definitive marker of when abortion was a crime in the United States.

"We could use other measures to determine whether or when abortion is a crime in the U.S. I want to suggest that we move away from the narrow legal question, to something like are the pre-Roe vs. Wade days here?" she said. "What were the conditions of the past before Roe vs. Wade that convinced so many people – starting in the early 1950s and growing to so many people by the late 1960s – that the criminal abortion laws had to be rewritten or completely thrown out?"

Early advocates of abortion in the United States didn't simply want the practice to be deemed legal.

"They wanted it to be safe," Reagan said. "They wanted it to be available to all women who needed it regardless of their status – whether or not she was poor or rich, no matter what her race or religion, where she lived or her age. They expected to see deaths and injuries due to abortions decline once safe abortions

became available.

"They wanted it be like any other medical procedure – a procedure that women could receive without shame, without receiving judgmental lectures from nurses and doctors, without sexual harassment and with humane treatment."

Abortion was not always a crime in America, nor was it always illegal.

"In colonial America, and through most of the 19th century, abortion had been a quiet, domestic and legal practice," Reagan said. "The states passed laws in the 1860s and the 1870s that criminalized early abortions from conception on. They aimed to stop abortion among married, middle-class, Yankee women in northern cities in particular."

The new laws also addressed population fears, with their authors reasoning that if abortions were prohibited, middle class white families would be larger and the men who held political power need not fear a shift in power because of a change in demographics.

"This is the reverse of how we think of population control today, for it aimed to control the reproduction of privileged Anglo-Saxon women in particular," Reagan said. "By making abortion illegal and difficult to obtain, Yankee women would be required to bear larger families."

In the 20th century, she said, the representation of abortion changed to emphasize death.

"The new emphasis on death came from the medical profession and the media," she said.

Anti-abortion physicians had been preaching that abortion was murder to their patients, but at that time, there were plenty of physicians who practiced abortions and women, if refused by one doctor, would simply find another.

"Preaching at them was not working," Reagan said. "Everyday Americans, at the turn of the century, still believed that early abortions were morally acceptable. So equating abortion with death became standard."

Despite the warnings of doctors and newspapers, the practice of abortion flourished and most women survived, she said. Public belief in the criminality of abortion was so weak that prosecutors discovered that when abortionists were tried, juries failed to convict.

Prosecutors shifted their focus to cases they knew they could win – cases in which women died because of an abortion. "Recognizing the impact of reproductive policies on women requires looking closely at the details of women's experiences," Reagan said, "and the interactions between women and their doctors, women and police, and women and lower-level government officials."

"In abortion cases, the investigative procedures themselves constituted a form

of control and punishment," she said, in which women were interrogated about sexual matters by male officials often when women were on their deathbeds. "Each interrogation was an attempt to get a legally valid dying declaration in which the woman admitted her abortion and named her abortionist."

These declarations would lead to arrests of doctors and were used in court as evidence.

In the 1950s and 1960s, despite being illegal, abortion remained prevalent. As more and more doctors were jailed for performing abortions, individuals who remained adopted new, secretive and unsafe practices.

"Growing numbers of women began self-inducing their own abortions, and it contributed to a rising number of deaths," Reagan said. "In a time when childbirth was becoming safer thanks to antibiotics, the number of women who died due to an abortion doubled in the 1950s."

"By the late 1960s, the majority of the medical profession came to support the legalization of abortion," she said. "In part, this is because what they were actually experiencing themselves, and seeing."

Criminal abortion laws always had exceptions for physicians to provide abortions for "bona fide" medical reasons, such as to save the life of the woman. When states began to try to erode those exceptions, public attitudes toward abortion shifted.

"The states' actions struck at the understanding between the state and medicine, and struck a chord among doctors," Reagan said. "It outraged doctors, it united them, and really developed a movement to change the law and reform it. The unprecedented investigations by the states contributed to remaking American political culture and energized the emerging pro-life and reproductive rights movements of the 1960s."

Several states legalized abortion in 1970, and in 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court's ruled that state criminal abortion laws are unconstitutional.

Women's history, at its beginning, is rooted in activism and a struggle for equality and justice, she said, and has reached a pivotal time today.

"We are at a historical moment when, knowing history not of great heroes but of ordinary women who through living their lives and through their actions asserted their right to bodily integrity ... to be of great importance," she said. "We owe it to ourselves and to future generations of girls, women and men, to pay attention to this history and to speak of it, and to speak with honesty about the meaning and value of legal abortion to all women and men, whether or not they ever had physically the need of or have had an abortion."

■ USD

From Page 1

(for example)," he said.

But, Abbott said some students say they are only after the degree itself, and not the interpersonal experience gained from in-class interactions.

"If that's the sentiment, it's going to be increasingly difficult to convince folks that they ought to be driving any place any distance to do anything in person," he said.

Abbott said USD already is doing something positive to protect itself – continuing its trend of increasing enrollment of first-time, full-time, on-campus freshmen.

For the year 2009 – the last year before the completion of the Muenster University Center – there were 971 first-time, full-time freshmen. In 2011, there were 1,034.

Last year, there were 1,127 first-time, full-time freshmen.

Abbott said that this year the number increased to 1,251.

"That's a great number ... and when the census is all done I think it will show that this year will reverse the slight decline in state support," he said. "I'm perfectly happy to have an increase in self-support, but we do not want the residential number declining. We have turned that around."

He said that if all current trends continue, USD could have a total of 5,369 full-time undergraduates at all levels by 2019.

"It's not a bad number," he said. "I think we can do that."

Brokaws to serve as marshals for 98th Dakota Days Parade

University of South Dakota alums Tom and Meredith (Auld) Brokaw will serve as Parade Marshals for the 98th Dakota Days Parade at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 6.

Tom Brokaw is a Yankton native who graduated from USD in 1964 while Meredith Brokaw, also a native of Yankton, graduated in 1962 from USD. In 2010, the Brokaws established the Tom and Meredith Brokaw Scholarship in Honor of America's Greatest Generation with the USD Foundation.

Regarded as one of the most trusted and respected figures in broadcast journalism today, Tom Brokaw is currently a special correspondent for NBC News reporting and producing long-form documentaries while also providing commentary during election coverage and breaking news events. He is the former anchor of "NBC Nightly News" and most recently served as a correspondent during the network's coverage of the 2012 Olympic Summer Games in London. He is also a best-selling author of several books, including "The Greatest Generation" (1998) and "A Long Way from Home" (2002).

Meredith Brokaw is the founder of Penny Whistle Toys in New York City where she also served as operator until 1999. She wrote eight Penny Whistle books for children and in 2006, she co-authored a cookbook titled "Big Sky Cooking." A director of the Gannett Company for 18 years, she was also vice-chair of Conservation International for 16 years and currently serves on the board of Maloto, Inc., whose mission is to transform the lives of children and women living in extreme poverty in northern Malawi. The Brokaws have three daughters and four granddaughters.

In addition to the parade, the USD Alumni Association has announced the calendar of events planned for the 98th Dakota Days celebration, "Celebrating USD: 150 Years of Legacy," Oct. 1-6, including the presentation of the Al Neuharth Award for Excellence in the Media at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 4 at Slagle Hall Auditorium; dedication of the USD Coyote statue, "Legacy" at 11:30 a.m. on Friday, Oct. 5; and a celebratory book launch for "Pride, Persistence and Progress" at 1:30 p.m. in the Muenster University Center concourse. Additional activities include the Royalty Reveal ceremony at 7 p.m. in Slagle Hall Auditorium on Tuesday, Oct. 2; the Dakota Days Alumni Dinner at 5:30 p.m. on Oct. 5 at the Muenster University Center; and the USD football game vs. Western Illinois at 2 p.m. at the DakotaDome.

For a complete list of Dakota Days events, including event and activity sponsors, please visit www.usd.edu/dakotadays or contact the committee directly at dakotadays@usd.edu.



Meredith and Tom Brokaw

Advertise in the Vermillion Plain Talk! Call 624-4429.

Subscribe Today! Call 624-4429

Have a nose for good health



Get your flu vaccination.

Mist or shots available.

Sanford Vermillion - Main Lobby
20 S Plum Street

October 1: 4 - 6 p.m.

October 4: 7:30 - 9:30 a.m.

Cost: Shot-\$15. Mist-\$25.
Please bring your insurance card.

SANFORD
HEALTH

