Course Description:
As Adrienne Rich (1976) indicates we are all of mothers born, making motherhood a universal construct. This course critically examines the institution of motherhood with emphasis on the location of the institution within the larger social structure. Thus, the course addresses some of the social, political and economic issues affecting mothers in a capitalist, patriarchal society. However, motherhood is also an experience and an identity. Also women experience motherhood differently depending on their race and ethnic background, their economic status, their sexual orientation, and their mental and physical health status. Attention to intersectionality will inform the course.

Prerequisite(s): Enrolment in fourth year of one of the Honors Specializations or Honors Double Major in Sociology.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.
Learning Outcomes:

When students have successfully completed this course, they should be able to:

- To develop a theoretical basis for studying motherhood as an institution as well as the act of mothering.
- To examine how the societal expectations of motherhood have changed over time.
- To compare and contrast the experiences of mothers from different social locations including lesbian mothers, racial and ethnic identities, differing class locations, and different mental and physical health statuses.
- To recognize the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability, age, etc. in the institution of motherhood and mothering.

Required Text(s):


There are many additional readings posted on the OWL course site.

Evaluation:

*Class participation* 10%

*Weekly Reading Statements* 40%

*Facilitated Seminar* 15%

*Major Essay* 35% December 9

**Class Participation**

Participation is an important facet in the learning process. It helps students digest new concepts, apply those concepts to real world situations, and interject their own perspectives on the topic under discussion. For this reason, a significant component of your evaluation is tied to class participation. Participation will be based on a combination of attendance and class participation. Attendance alone, however, is not enough to achieve an above average mark. You will also be evaluated on your level of participation in group and class discussions as well as the relevance and quality of your participation.
Even though this class is set up to be run on-line, there will be weekly classes held during the scheduled class time. These conversations will be conducted on the Zoom platform.

On those occasions in which you miss class because of illness or other valid reasons, you may still earn participation credit for those absences by writing a response to an instructor selected discussion question (one double spaced page per hour of class time missed). It is your responsibility to make arrangements with me on the first day you return to class after an absence or you forfeit the right to make up for your absence. The response will be due within one week of your return. If you miss more than 50% of class sessions without offsetting participation credits, your participation mark will be zero (0).

Because class participation is an important component of your evaluation it is important to create a safe environment for everyone to participate. So the first rule is: people are sacred, ideas are not. This means that we need to be respectful of each other and give each other space to participate. It also means that we should be attentive to each other when classes are going on.

**COURSE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

With the exception of legitimate medical/personal excuses (documentation required to be submitted) students are expected to attend at least 80% of the class meetings for this course. A passing grade in the course cannot be obtained without meeting this attendance requirement.

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**Weekly Reflections**

This is a seminar course. The expectation is that every student will attend and actively participate in each week's class. To encourage this, you will be expected to complete, almost every week, a discussion posting which reflects upon all of the readings for that week, and raises some key questions for discussion. I refer to these as ‘Reflections” as this terms most clearly captures what I want you to do each week. That is, I want you to read the assigned readings, and reflect on the key ideas presented; what was interesting and thought provoking; what you agreed or disagreed with; what other ideas, associations, or connections were made, including to other authors; what application or relevance these ideas have; and where they fit into a broader sociological picture.

In the context of your reflection essay you should highlight or bold three or four key questions that these readings lead you to ask.

I would expect that each week’s perspective would be between one and a half and two pages single spaced on OWL (about 800-1000 words). While these reflections are less formal than an essay, I still expect you to use a level of language appropriate to academic discourse. Spelling and grammar do matter, so please make sure that you use a word processor before cutting and pasting into the OWL window. **Please do not use attachments** within OWL. I want everyone to be able to access what others have written with a minimum of hassle.

You will be required to do eight (8) Reflections over the duration of the course, which basically means that there are four of the 12 weeks that you do not have to post (one of which is the week you facilitate your seminar). This is to give you some flexibility for other deadlines, sickness, and so on. On the other hand, if you do more than eight Reflections, your best 8 marks will be used. Each Reflection is worth 5 points, for a total of 40, so this is a significant component of your overall mark.

**Those who are facilitating seminars in a particular week are not required to complete the posting for that week.** Those who do post will need to post their Reflections on the OWL Discussion Forum **no later than 9:00 p.m. on Monday.** There will be an automatic 1 point deduction (out of 5) for posting later than 9:00 p.m. Monday, and a 2 point deduction for posting later than 9.00 a.m. on Tuesday. This lead time is to allow the students who will be facilitating the seminars each week to be able to draw upon and incorporate the Reflections into their seminar. In this way, you and everyone in the class will be more involved in the discussion. (You will appreciate these deadlines when it comes your turn to organize your seminar.) I would also encourage you to post an hour or so before the deadline in case you have problems with the OWL site.
Please review what others have written before class as the questions and ideas raised will be the basis for much of our discussion. Also, please be sure to bring a copy of your own Reflection to class, as it may be referred to, or even be a central point of the discussion.

**Facilitated Seminars**

Now that you are in 4th year, it is expected that you will take a more active role in leading class discussions. Hence, each of you will be asked to partner with another classmate and to take responsibility for facilitating a seminar for approximately one hour of class time. The usual class procedure is that we will start the class promptly at 1:30. At the beginning of class those facilitating the discussion will begin. At 2:30 pm, we will take a 10 minute break, with an eye to starting the second half of class by 2:40 pm. In the second part of the class, I will address any aspects of the course material that might be useful and take a few minutes for any questions and previewing the following week. Because we are meeting via Zoom which can cause fatigue and lead to a lack of focus, I will try to end class by 3:30 pm.

The seminar itself should be primarily focussed on facilitating discussion based on the Reflections above, and your own reading of the materials. As the facilitator, I would expect you to provide some context information not covered in the readings, but I want to stress that the seminar is not primarily about “presenting” information. It is instead, about discussing ideas. Exploring the various perspectives laid out in the readings through your own reflection, as well as drawing upon the posted reflections of others in the class is the key to a successful seminar. The point is to facilitate discussion.

You may, if you wish, develop and organize your seminar by putting it together as a PowerPoint presentation. Feel free to bring into play illustrative materials such as pictures, games, video or audio clips, etc. to enhance your seminar. But most importantly is making use of the questions and perspectives raised by the others in the class. When you review your classmates postings, you will undoubtedly find areas of agreement and disagreement. By bringing these together, or to a head, you will undoubtedly spark some conversation. Look for themes, or especially interesting or provocative questions. The more you can draw others into the conversation, the more successful your seminar will be judged. If you prepare a PowerPoint presentation to facilitate the class discussion please post it on the Forum Discussion by noon on the assigned date.

As a facilitator, you also have a responsibility to ensure that there is a free flow of ideas from everyone, if possible. By drawing on as many different people’s questions as possible, you invite broad based participation.

You also need to be aware of group dynamics. Do not permit the seminar to become a debate between two or three people to the exclusion of others. If this starts to happen, identify it, and move on to another point. Remember, you only have an hour, and it will go by awfully fast, and you will want to cover a reasonable amount of material.

As much as possible, this exercise should be students taking a leadership role in the classroom. Therefore, I try to stay somewhat low key. I will, however, participate in the proceedings from time to time, especially to clarify points and ideas which may have been misunderstood.

In the end, this seminar is designed to give you a glimpse of the independence you would experience as a graduate student and as an academic. It is also designed to be a very enriched learning experience.
The Essay

In addition to the seminar, each student will write a 12 to 15 page paper which further develops a topic in the area of motherhood and mothering. Here the student will be expected to read and research more widely on a specific topic drawing from various scholarly sources, and expand on that topic in an engaging and intellectually stimulating way. This paper will be due on the last day of classes, that is, Wednesday, December 9th. All essays will be submitted to Turnitin.com on the OWL site for the course.

Late papers will be penalized 5% beginning at 1:30 p.m. on December 9th and 2% per day for each additional day of lateness. No assignments will be accepted after December 11th.

How to Contact Me:
I can be reached by email. We can also arrange a phone conversation if email is not sufficient.

How to get important information:
Please check the announcements for the course and check the OWL site for the course regularly.

Important Policies

A Note on Plagiarism:
Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking:
All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (www.turnitin.com).

Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class:
Laptops are permitted in class at the discretion of the professor for note taking or any other purpose approved by the professor. If, however, they are used for personal purposes during class time (Facebook, e-mail, web surfing, gaming, etc.) the privilege of using laptops may be withdrawn. Using laptops is a privilege, not a right.

Cellphones, Blackberries, and similar devices, must be turned OFF (not just vibrate) during classes unless specific permission is sought for emergency purposes in a given class. Text messaging and Twittering are not permitted during class.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness
Western’s policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html
**Academic Consideration for Student Absences**

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the on-line Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less. Students will be able to use two self-reported absences between September and April.

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf

**Accessibility Options:**

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar’s website: [www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

**Scholastic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

**Mental Health**

Students who are in [emotional/mental distress](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options how to obtain help.
General Course Outline

PLEASE NOTE: Ideally, reading assignments must be done before you come to class. All readings for the course will be posted on the OWL site for the course, with the exception of the required text for the course.

Sept 9  
**Introduction**
READING:  
No assigned readings.

Sept 16  
**Patriarchy and the Institution of Motherhood**
READING:  
O’Reilly, Introduction and Ch. 1:1-101
Adrienne Rich
1986  

Sept 23  
**Our Bodies, Ourselves**
READING:  
Adrienne Rich
1986  
Ch. VI in Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution. New York: W.W. Norton & Company: 128-155.

Judith Mintz
2011  

Rosemarie Putnam Tong
2013  

Diana Ginn
2004  

Sophie Gilbert
2017  

Sophie Gilbert
2018  

Sept 30  
**“Bad Mothers”**
READING:  
Paula J. Caplan
2012  

Randall Hansen and Desmond King
2013  

Ann V. Bell
2019  
“I’m Not Really 100% A Woman If I Can’t Have A Kid”: Infertility and the Intersection of Gender, Identity, and the Body” Gender and Society 33(4):629-651.

Heidi Grundetjern
2018  
Oct 7  

**First Nations’ Mothers and State Intervention**

**READING:**
- **Jennifer Brant**
- **Dawn Memee Lavell-Harvard and Jeannette Corbiere Lavell**
- **Rosalind Ing**
- **Gordana Eljdupovic et al.**
- **Sinéad Charbonneau, Robina Thomas, Caitlin Janzen, Jeannine Carrière, Susan Strega and Leslie Brown**
- **Dawn Marsden**

Oct 14  

**Lesbian Mothers**

**READING:**
- **Shelley M. Park**
- **Margaret F. Gibson**
- **Elizabeth Bailey**
  2016 “Bumpy Road, Bumpy Road, Smooth(ing the) Road: Experiences in Lesbian Mothering.” Ch. 2 in “New Maternalisms”: Tales of Motherwork: Dislodging the Unthinkable edited by Roksana Badruddoja and Maki Motapanyane. Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press:36-56.
- **Dawn Comeau**
- **Audre Lorde**
Baba Copper

Nancy D. Polikoff

Oct 21

**Working Moms**

READING:

Shari L. Thurer

Muzhi Zhou

Joanna Motro and Reeve Vanneman

Jessica Looze

Margaret Gough and Mary Noonan

Jenna Abetz and Julia Moore

Oct 28

**Intensive Mothering**

READING:

Sharon Hays

Tatjana Takševa

Kristen Abatsis McHenry and Denise L. Schultz

Kit Myers
2017 “‘If I’m Going To Do It, I’m Going To Do It Right’: Intensive Mothering Ideologies among Childless Women Who Elect Egg Freezing.” Gender and Society 31(6):777-803.

Sinikka Elliott and Sarah Bowen

Jiyoung Chae

Nov 4

**Fall Reading Week**
**Nov 11**

**Other Mothering**

**READING:** O’Reilly, Ch. 3:133-184

Sara Ruddick


Andrea Doucet


Deirdre M. Condit


Joanne Frye


Gary Lee Pelletier


Hallie Palladino


**Nov 25**

**Surrogate Mothers**

**READING:**

April Hovav


Sharmila Rudrappa and Caitlyn Collins


Laurel Swerdlow and Wendy Chavkin


France Winddance Twine


Amrita Pande

### Dec 2

**African American Mothers**

**READING:**

### Dec 9

**Mothers As Agents of Change**

**READING:**
- O’Reilly, Ch. 2:102-132