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. And 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): Registration in fourth year or above in a Department of Sociology module.

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.

Anti-requisite(s): None
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 is NO required text for this course.
However, there are weekly readings for each week posted on the OWL course site.

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (http://owl.uwo.ca) on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

Please feel free to speak to me after class or during class breaks. If you are not in class, the best way to contact me is to stop by during my office hours. Otherwise, I can be reached by email or by leaving a voice mail message.

Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

Class participation 10%
Weekly Reading Statements 40%
Seminar Facilitation 15%
Major Essay 35%

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.

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. In line with this, laptops are permitted in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. If you are bringing a cell phone to class, make sure that it is turned off before coming in to class.

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.

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 sociologic 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 three of the 11 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 responsible for facilitating a seminar for approximately half of one class, or more specifically, for about one hour and 10 minutes. The usual procedure is that we will start the class promptly at 1:30. I will make announcements and deal with administrative matters for up to 10 minutes. At 1:40, the first seminar will begin, and will go to 2:50. At this point, we will take a 10-minute break, with an eye to starting the second half of class by 3:05 sharp, with an eye to starting the second seminar by 3:05 sharp and ending at 4:15. This leaves 5 minutes for any questions and previewing the following week. If we have a fuller house (15 or so students), it is essential that we respect these timelines, including arriving a few minutes before 1:30, and settling in by 3:00 after the break.

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 (both the text and the supplementary) 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.

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 a little over 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+ page paper (at least 3000 words) which further develops a topic in the area of motherhood and mothering—perhaps in the same area as one’s facilitated seminar. 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 8th. All essays will be submitted to Turnitin.com on the OWL site for the course and submitted to me in hard copy format.

Late papers will be penalized 5% beginning at 1:30 p.m. on December 8th and 2% per day for each additional day of lateness. No assignments will be accepted after December 9th.
Student Absences:

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade:

For work totaling 10% or more of the final course grade, students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible.

**Note:** missed work can only be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is not sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty of Social Science Academic Counselling Office.

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning:

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Important Policies

**Academic Consideration for Missed Work:** Students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation in order to receive accommodation for missed work worth 10% or more of the final grade in the course. All required documentation for absences must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty. Individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds or for other reasons. Western’s policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf). The student medical certificate is available at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

**Religious Accommodation:** When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at [https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo](https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo).

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.
Accessibility Options: Students with disabilities or accessibility challenges should work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD [http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html]), which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar’s website: [www.registrar.uwo.ca/academics/examinations/accommodated_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/academics/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 website: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf).

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.

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 ([https://www.turnitin.com/](https://www.turnitin.com/)).

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

Please visit the Social Science Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters: [Academic Counselling - Western University (uwo.ca)](http://uwo.ca).

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.
## 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.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 14</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>No assigned readings.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Sophie Gilbert&lt;br&gt;2018&lt;br&gt;<em>The Handmaid’s Tale</em> and the Suffering of Women.” The Atlantic (April).</td>
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<td>Oct 5</td>
<td><strong>“Bad Mothers”</strong></td>
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<th>Oct 12</th>
<th><strong>First Nations’ Mothers and State Intervention</strong></th>
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<th>Oct 19</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>READING:</strong></td>
<td>Shelley M. Park</td>
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2019

Margaret F. Gibson
2014

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
2004

Audre Lorde
2007

Baba Copper
2007

Nancy D. Polikoff
2007

Oct 26
Working Moms
READING:
Shari L. Thurer
2007

Awish Aslam and Tracey L. Adams
2022

Sigrid Luhr
2020

Sarah Thébaud and Catherine J. Taylor
2021

Jennifer Borda
2019

Jenna Abetz and Julia Moore
2018

Nov 2
Fall Reading Week

Nov 9
Intensive Mothering
READING:
Sharon Hays

Tatjana Takševa

Kristen Abatis 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 16  Other Mothering
READING: Sara Ruddick

Andrea Doucet

Deirdre M. Condit

Joanne Frye

Gary Lee Pelletier

Arielle Kuperberg, Pamala Stone and Torie Lucas

Hallie Palladino

Nov 23  Migrating Mothers
READING: Cameron Lynne Macdonald
### Surrogate Mothers

**Nov 30**

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### African American Mothers

**Dec 7**

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Sinikka Elliott and Megan Reid