The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 4484F
Motherhood and Mothering
Fall 2023
In-Person

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This is a DRAFT only. Please see the course site for the final version.

Course Description:

This course critically examines the meaning of motherhood, addressing some of the social, political and economic issues affecting mothers: power, equity and inequality, the obstacles mothers face in the job market, in gender relations, and across the life course. It also looks at motherhood as an experience and intersectional identity.

Prerequisite(s): Enrolment in third year or above in any program.

Unless you have either the prerequisites or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in the course, 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.


Course Objectives and 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.
Course Material:
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.

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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 into 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 term 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 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 6:00 p.m. on Sunday. There will be an automatic 1-point deduction (out of 5) for posting later than 6:00 p.m. Sunday, and a 2-point deduction for posting later than 9.00 a.m. on Monday. 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 9:30. I will make announcements and deal with administrative matters for up to 10 minutes. At 9:40, the first seminar will begin, and will go to 10:50. At this point, we will take a 10-minute break, with an eye to starting the second half of class by 11:05 sharp, with an eye to starting the second seminar by 11:05 sharp and ending at 12:15. 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 9:30, and settling in by 11:00 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 that the class meets, that is, Tuesday, December 5th. 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 9:30 a.m. on December 5th and 2% per day for each additional day of lateness. No assignments will be accepted after December 8th.
**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.

Extensions will be granted in accord with recommendations for accommodation from the student’s Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office and new due dates for submission will be set.

**Academic Policies:**

Please review the Department of Sociology “Important Academic Policies” document [https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf](https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf) for additional information regarding:

- Scholastic Offences
- Plagiarism
- Copyright
- Academic Accommodation
- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health
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.

Sept 12  Introduction
Reading: No assigned readings.

Sept 19  Patriarchy and the Institution of Motherhood
Reading:
Andrea O'Reilly

Fiona Joy Green

Andrea O’Reilly

Adrienne Rich

Sept 26  Our Bodies, Ourselves
Reading:
Sarah Polley

Judith Mintz

Rosemarie Putnam Tong

Diana Ginn

Sophie Gilbert

Sophie Gilbert

Optional:
Adrienne Rich
Oct 3

**“Bad Mothers”**

**READING:**  
Paula J. Caplan  
2012  

Jessica Winter  
2023  
“What We Still Don’t Understand About PostPartum Psychosis.” *The New Yorker*, 14 March.

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.

Jackie Krasas  
2021  

Emilie Lewis  
2019  

Oct 10

**First Nations’ Mothers and State Intervention**

**READING:**  
Jennifer Brant  
2019  

Dawn Memee Lavell-Harvard and Jeannette Corbiere Lavell  
2012  

Rosalind Ing  
2011  

Gordana Eljdupovic et al.  
2013  

Sinéad Charbonneau, Robina Thomas, Caitlin Janzen, Jeannine Carriére, Susan Strega and Leslie Brown  
2014  

Dawn Marsden  
2014  
Oct 17  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 24  Working Moms
READING:

Shari L. Thurer

Awish Aslam and Tracey L. Adams

Sigrid Luhr

Sarah Thébaud and Catherine J. Taylor

Jennifer Borda

Jenna Abetz and Julia Moore
**Fall Reading Week**

**Nov 7**  
**Intensive Mothering**  
**READING:**  
Sharon Hays  
1996  
Tatjana Takševa  
2014  
Kristen Abatsis McHenry and Denise L. Schultz  
2014  
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  
2018  
Jiyoung Chae  
2015  

**Nov 14**  
**Other Mothering**  
**READING:**  
Sara Ruddick  
2007  
Andrea Doucet  
2010  
Deirdre M. Condit  
2010  
Joanne Frye  
2015  
Gary Lee Pelletier  
2015  
Arielle Kuperberg, Pamala Stone and Torie Lucas  
2022  
Hallie Palladino  
2014  
**Nov 21**  | **Migrating Mothers**  
READING:  | Cameron Lynne Macdonald  

**Nov 28**  | **Surrogate Mothers**  
READING:  | April Hovav  

|  | Sharmila Rudrappa and Caitlyn Collins  

|  | Laurel Swerdlow and Wendy Chavkin  

|  | France Winddance Twine  

|  | Amrita Pande  

**Dec 5**  | **African American Mothers**  
READING:  | Judith Lorber  

|  | bell hooks  

|  | bell hooks  

|  | Patricia Hill Collins  

|  | Patricia Hill Collins  

|  | Dawn Marie Dow  

|  | Marva L. Lewis and Karen T. Craddock  
Sinikka Elliott, Rachel Powell and Joslyn Brenton

Courtney Thornton and Jennifer A. Reich

Sinikka Elliott and Megan Reid