



The University of Western Ontario  
**SOCIOLOGY 4484F**  
**Motherhood and Mothering**  
**Fall 2024**  
**In-person**

**Instructor: Dr. Helene A. Cummins**  
**Office Hours: By Appointment**  
**Department of Sociology**  
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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.

***Anti-requisite(s):*** Sociology 4487 F/G if taken in 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22.

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

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

- \*Distinguish between theoretical conceptions of motherhood and mothering.
- \*Understand how the social construction and embodiment of motherhood has changed over time and place.
- \*Critique the experiences of mothers from different socio-economic backgrounds, racialized and ethnic communities, age, ability/disability, sexual, geographic location, and various mental and physical ways of being.
- \*Understand the social variables, intersectionality and critical questions about the social and cultural meanings of race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality, ability/disability, and age etc. in understanding motherhood and mothering.
- \*Be able to critique, analyze and present course materials to the class and generate discussion and facilitate understanding.

\*Be able to write an academic paper and incorporate sociological theory and concepts with research and data to earn one's opinion.

### **Course Material:**

The course incorporates one text and additional readings on Brightspace.

Cummins, Helene A., Rodgers, Julie A., and Dunkelberger Wouk, Judith. 2021. The Truth About (M)Otherhood: Choosing to be Childfree. Bradford: Demeter Press.

### **Communication:**

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL Brightspace site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/login>) 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.

**Any questions or concerns you may have should be discussed with me after a class or at another convenient time. Face-to face communication is always best, outside of that you may connect via an email.**

### **Method of Evaluation:**

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

Class Participation	15%
Essay Outline	10%
Presentation	35%
Essay	40%

#### Class Participation

Participation in the course is an important part of the learning process and forms 15% of the final grade. It allows one to use their voice in questioning, discussing, and intersecting with your classmates' viewpoints and understanding. The quality of this interaction is paramount. That is, talking just for the sake of talking is of less value. Each student must attend each class and be on time and remain until the class is completed. In the case where a student does not attend at least 80% of the total number of classes they will forfeit a pass on the course apart from documentation provided to your academic advisor.

This means that we are respectful of each other and their viewpoints. The class is a place where we can safely articulate and share information. Each student should turn off cell phones and use their laptop solely to take notes for the course. There is to be NO recording or taping of lectures and presentations.

## Essay Outline

One assignment worth 10%, will be undertaken relative to developing an outline for the essay on a topic related to our course. The 3-page, double-spaced paper will address how the essay intersects with sociological theory, concepts, and comprehensive understanding of the topic. The assignment will be due in class on Wednesday, October 23, 2024, but will be accepted until Friday, October 25, 2024 via email until 5 P.M.

Please note that because the submission deadline for this essay outline already includes flexibility in the form of 48-hour submission window the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignment which are submitted following the end of the period of flexibility.

The essay outline will not include a bibliography. However, formal academic presentation is required to develop and synthesize the major components of the essay.

Each assignment must be presented with organization, appropriate academic language, accurate spelling, and grammar.

## Presentations

In a seminar course it is important to be able to share and present required materials and understanding to each other. Each student will undertake a 50-minute presentation on an assigned reading for the class. All students will undertake the presentation and all students must attend and support each of their classmates' presentations.

The presentation will be an overview of the assigned reading. What are the major points of the reading. How does it relate to sociological thinking and our course materials. What is remiss in the author's work? What might be included or undertaken to allow for other sociological viewpoints?

PowerPoint presentations are allowed, and any outside research and sociological conceptualization is encouraged. Also, engaging your classmates is important to the task.

This involves 35% of the final grade so it is an important undertaking to be done with precision and detail embedded in sociological discourse and focus.

Instructors are permitted to designate one assessment per course per term as requiring supporting documentation to receive academic consideration. For this course the presentation has been designated as requiring supporting documentation. Documentation from an academic counsellor is the only mechanism to which one can be afforded delaying this assignment for medical/personal reasons.

## Essay

Each student will write a 10-page, double-spaced paper of 2500 words, not including the bibliography on a topic related to the course on motherhood and mothering. Each student will research their topic that draws from scholarly sociological data, theory, and concepts. It will provide a critique and analysis and develop a sociological argument/viewpoint.

The paper must be referenced appropriately, one must earn their opinion through data and research, it should be well-written, documented and supported by sociological theory.

This assessment is worth 40% of the final course grade. Hence, considerable time and effort is required for successful completion.

It is due on the last class in December on December 4, 2024 in hard copy form. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their paper up to 48 hours (Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>) past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their paper beyond 48 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 5% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. No paper will be accepted after the final Friday of classes on December 6, 2024, as flexible deadlines are used in this course, requests for academic consideration will not be granted.

## Student Absences

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

University policy on academic considerations are described [here](#). The policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration may be found here. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#).

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate, or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is always required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in accordance with the academic advisors in your faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the [Student Medical Certificate](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam.

Course professor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test.

No re-weighting of grades nor extra marks for additional work will be allowed. Hence, take time to organize and focus on assignment details and avoid last minute rushed work/presentations.

## **Artificial Intelligence**

All assignments must be completed independently, without the aid of artificial intelligence (AI).

**Academic Policies:**

Please review the Department of Sociology “[Important Academic Policies](https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf)” 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
- Course selection
- Absence from Course Commitments
- Missed Tests and Exams
- Religious Accommodations
- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health
- Gender-Based and Sexual Violence statement

2024-2025