San José State University  
Department of Sociology and Interdisciplinary Social Science  
WOMS 114 (01): Politics of Mothering and Reproduction ~ Spring 2015

Instructor: Dr. Amy Leisenring  
Office Location: DMH 224  
Telephone: 408-924-5756  
Email: Via Canvas: https://sjsu.instructure.com

Office Hours: Tues 2:30 – 4:00 p.m., Thurs 9:45 – 10:15 a.m., By appointment  
Class Days/Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30 to 11:45 a.m.  
Classroom: DMH 161

Course Description

Using a feminist lens, in this course we will draw from a variety of disciplines (biology, anthropology, history, sociology, journalism, cultural studies, law, and women’s studies) to examine issues surrounding reproduction and mothering. While reproduction and mothering are often assumed to be “natural” processes, dominant understandings of both issues--along with women’s experiences of them--are actually strongly influenced by historical, economic, and cultural factors. We will explore the ways in which these forces have shaped ideology surrounding issues such as who has the right to reproduce, whose rights to reproduce should be restricted, who deserves to be a mother, and who should control women’s decision-making regarding reproduction, birth control, and parenting practices. Throughout the semester, we will examine topics such as contraception, abortion, reproductive technology, pregnancy and birth, adoption, and women’s varied experiences with motherhood. Further, we will explore how gender, race, class, and sexuality impact women’s experiences with these issues.

Required Readings


3. Readings Posted on Canvas Course Website.
Canvas
There is a Canvas site for this class and you will be automatically added. You will submit all of your reading responses via Canvas and turn your assignments and exams there. I will also use Canvas to post important notices and announcements, readings, handouts and assignments, and additional information about assignments and send group email messages should the need arise. Canvas will also be a place for you to ask questions to other students in the class for which everyone might want the answer. I highly recommend that you either check Canvas regularly for important messages and announcements and/or that you link your Canvas email to your regular email.

Classroom Protocol and Course Organization
This course is premised on the notion that active learning is the most effective and engaging way to learn. This means that we will go beyond the traditional mode of lecture-based education where I (the “knower”) pass on information for you (the “learner”) to simply memorize and reproduce for a later examination. Instead, I view the classroom as a space where we, together, can explore and grapple with questions and issues central to the course. Thus, while I will do some lecturing, the course is also structured upon the use of films, in-class activities, group work, and discussions. It is my hope that students will learn to approach the issues of reproduction and mothering with a more critical eye.

For an active learning model to be successful, it is important for each student to make the commitment to:

1. **Attend class regularly.** During most classes I will spend some time presenting new material that relates to the readings. Further, films, in-class activities and discussions will enhance understanding of course material. If you miss class on a regular basis, not only are you depriving yourself of these learning experiences, but you are depriving the rest of the class of your voice, experiences, and input. If you do miss a class, it is up to you to obtain any notes from someone else in the class, as I do not make my notes available to students.

2. **Complete the readings assigned for each day.** There is a fair amount of reading in this course. Engaged discussion of the readings cannot happen unless students read. If you can, please bring the readings to class as we will often refer to them during our discussions.

3. **Participate in class discussions and activities and give full attention to the material.** I understand that it is sometimes uncomfortable or even painful for some people to speak publicly. I will do my best to create an environment where people feel comfortable speaking. I expect you to help create a positive classroom atmosphere by refraining from engaging in any rude or disruptive behavior. If you disrupt the class, I will take whatever action that I believe necessary to address your behavior.

4. **Respect others in the classroom.** Due to the nature of the material we are exploring, there is bound to be some lively discussion and some disagreement. In addition, some
people may feel uncomfortable with portions of the course material. This is OK and is even to be expected; we do not all have to agree with one another. However, we need to be able to talk about our differences in a respectful and supportive manner. It is imperative for our classroom to be a space where no one is made to feel embarrassed or ashamed. I will not tolerate disrespectful behavior. This includes rude interruptions, yelling, insults, and personal attacks. Please try to have an open mind.

5. Keep in touch with me if you are struggling or having problems. If you are having personal or academic problems impacting your success in the class, please let me know as soon as possible. Please don’t wait until the end of the course because at that point it is too late. You cannot disappear for weeks and expect that you will be able to make up everything you have missed. I follow SJSU policy for incomplete grades: I only give incompletes in cases of extreme and documented emergencies.

The best way to reach me is via Canvas, as I check my email there every weekday. I will usually respond to all emails that require a response within 48 hours (excluding weekends). Please note that I do not answer my phone during office hours if I am meeting with another student.

By following these five principles you give yourself the best opportunity to both learn and succeed in this course.

Assignments and Grading Policy

The assignments and activities for this course are designed to enhance understanding of course material. Your final grade in this class will be based on the following:

1. **Online Reading Responses**: Almost every Tuesday there will be several questions posted online via Canvas that cover issues from that week’s reading. The questions will be posted the prior Thursday. (There are exceptions to this for one or two weeks.) The reading responses must be completed by the time class begins (questions will close 5 minutes prior to class starting). You will be given an hour to complete each response. There are 14 reading responses and I will count your 10 highest scores (thus you can drop or miss 4 responses). There will be no make-up questions for ANY reason and late responses will be given a grade of 0.

   Grading of the reading response questions will be as follows:

   3 = Reflects strong effort, excellent writing, and thorough understanding of reading(s)
   2 = Reflects moderate effort, fair writing, and/or somewhat vague understanding of reading(s)
   1 = Reflects weak effort, poor writing, and/or insufficient understanding of readings(s)
   0 = Late or not completed
2. **Exams:** There will be two take-home essay exams, including the final.

3. **Research Project:** You will pick a topic from a list that I provide at a later point and conduct your own empirical research. You will then write a paper, connecting your findings to both course and outside materials. You will receive additional details about this assignment at a later point.

4. **Class Participation and Activities:** Student participation is vital for the success of the class. I will evaluate your class participation based on the following:
   
a. Participation in course discussions
   b. Successful completion of various in-class activities.

   **Please note:** You cannot make up in-class activities and exercises. However, when I calculate your final participation grade I will allow for a bit of “cushion room” which means if you miss a day of in-class activities it will not adversely impact your grade.

Information and specific details about each assignment will be provided at a later date. (All handouts will always be posted to Canvas, as well).

The breakdown of your final grade looks like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Reading Responses:</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams (25% Each):</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Project:</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation:</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final letter grades for the course will be assigned based on the following scale:

- **A** = 93 – 100%
- **B** = 83 – 87%
- **C** = 73 – 77%
- **D** = 63 – 67%
- **A-** = 90 – 92%
- **B-** = 80 – 82%
- **C-** = 70 – 72%
- **D-** = 60 – 62%
- **B+** = 88 – 89%
- **C+** = 78 – 79%
- **D+** = 68 – 69%
- **F** = 59% or less

**University Policies**

**Dropping and Adding**

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. Information on add/drops are available at [http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-324.html](http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-324.html). Information about late drop is available at [http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/](http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/). Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.
**Academic integrity**

Students should know that the University’s Academic Integrity Policy is available at [http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf). Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University’s integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The website for Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at [http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html).

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person’s ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU’s Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

**Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note that I reserve the right to make changes to the schedule, as needed, with fair notice.

Week 1: Introduction

Thursday, 1/22
Introduction to Course

Week 2: Feminism, History, Reproductive Politics, and Mothering
Tuesday, 1/27
Read: Solinger: Preface, CH 1-3, CH 23; Canvas: Reading #1 (Adrienne Rich); O’Reilly: Introduction & CH 8

Thursday, 1/29

Week 3: Contraception
Tuesday, 2/3
Read: Solinger: CH 10; Canvas: Reading #3 (Linda Gordon), Reading #4 (Russell Shorto)
Canvas Reading Response #1

Thursday, 2/5

Week 4: Abortion
Tuesday, 2/10
Read: Solinger: CH 4, 9-14; Canvas: Reading #5 (Lori Freedman)
Canvas Reading Response #2

Thursday, 2/12

Week 5: Pregnancy
Tuesday, 2/17
Read: Solinger: CH 17; Canvas: Reading #6 (Carol Gardner), Reading #7 (Lisa Miller), Reading #8 (Linda Layne)
Canvas Reading Response #3

Thursday, 2/19
NO CLASS

Week 6: Reproductive Technology
Tuesday, 2/24
Read: Solinger: CH 15; Canvas: Reading #9 (Alex Kuczynski); Reading #10 (Joshua Gamson), Reading #11 (Renee Almaling)
Canvas Reading Response #4
Thursday, 2/26

Week 7: Delivery and Birth
Tuesday, 3/3
Read: Solinger: CH 19; Canvas: Reading #12 (Morris), Reading #13 (Coeytaux et al.), Reading #14 (Lisa Phillips); Reading #15 (Brubaker and Dillaway); Reading #16 (Hillary Brenhouse)
Canvas Reading Response #5

Thursday, 3/5
Discuss Take-Home Exam #1

Week 8: Constructions of Motherhood
Tuesday, 3/10
Take-Home Exam Due

Thursday, 3/12
Read: Read; Canvas: Reading #17 (Solinger), Reading #18 (Hill Collins), Reading #19 (Molly Ladd-Taylor)
Canvas Reading Response #6

Week 9: Expectations of Mothers
Tuesday, 3/17
Read: Canvas: Reading #20 (Chris Bobel); Reading #21 (Sharon Hays), Reading #22 (Susan Maushart), Reading #23 (Cameron McDonald); Reading #24 (Tracy Moore)
Canvas Reading Response #7

Thursday, 3/19

Week 10: SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS

Week 11: Immigrant Mothers
Tuesday, 3/31: Cesar Chavez Holiday: NO CLASS

Thursday, 4/2:
Read: O’Reilly: CH 9, CH 11
Canvas Reading Response #8

Week 12: Mothering and Race
Tuesday, 4/7
Read: O’Reilly: CH 4, CH 7, 10, CH 18
Canvas Reading Response #9

Thursday, 4/9

Week 13: Adoption
Tuesday, 4/14  
**Read:** Solinger: CH 14; O’Reilly: CH 2, CH 5; Canvas: Reading #25 (Emily Noonan)  
**Canvas Reading Response #10**

Thursday, 4/6  
**Research Project Due**

Week 14: Work/Family Balance  
Tuesday, 4/21  
**Read:** O’Reilly: CH 19, CH 21; Canvas: Reading #26 (Ann Crittenden), Reading #27 (Judith Warner)  
**Canvas Reading Response #11**

Thursday, 4/23

Week 15: Mothering in Challenging Circumstances  
Tuesday, 4/28  
**Read:** Solinger: CH 8; O’Reilly: CH 12, 14, 17, 22  
**Canvas Reading Response #12**

Thursday, 4/30

Week 16: “Nontraditional” Mothers  
Tuesday, 5/5  
**Read:** O’Reilly: CH 13, 15, 20; Canvas: Reading #28 (Hequemborg and Farrell)  
**Canvas Reading Response #13**

Thursday, 5/7

Week 17: Conclusions  
Tuesday, 5/12  
**Read:** Canvas: Reading #29 (Anna Quindlen), Reading #30 (bell hooks)  
**Canvas Reading Response #14**

FINAL EXAM:  
Wednesday May 20th—Upload Exam to Canvas by 12:00 p.m.