**The Culture and Politics of Mothering**

**ENGL 4340—001**

**Instructor:** Dr. P. Ingram **Semester:** Spring 2010

**Office** 410 Carlisle **Class Time:** T/R 9:30-10:50

**Office Hours:** T/R: 11-12:30 and by appointment

C**lassroom:** PH 300

**Email:** pingram@uta.edu



From Mary to Medea, Angelina Jolie to the Octomom, mothers can be seen as a screen onto which a society’s anxieties are projected. Deified and vilified, feared and revered, competing images of her pervade history, mythology, and religion. This course will examine the legacy of these ideas in popular and theoretical texts and analyze the ideological work that such conceptions of women do. How do these ideas shape societal expectations about mothering and mothers? How do they impinge upon women’s legal and political freedoms? How do they frame debates about reproductive technologies? How do they shape ideas about race, ethnicity, and class?

Our **texts** will be drawn from a variety of genres, including fiction, memoir, film, and art.

**Books:**

Atwood, Margaret, *The Handmaid’s Tale*

Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*

Morrison, Toni, *Beloved*

Patchett, Ann. *The Patron Saint of Liars*

Rich, Adrienne, *Of Woman Born*

**Films:**

Cholodneko (dir), *The Kids Are All Right* (2010)

Daldry (dir), Stephen, *The Hours* (2002)

Gyllenhaal (dir), *Losing Isaiah* (1995)

Epstein*, The Business of Being Born* (2007)—We will watch this in class

**PDF Articles:**

Longhurst, “Bad Mothers”

Roberts, *Killing the Black Body* (Intro and Ch. 1)

Roberts, ch.6 “Race and the New Reproduction”

Sawicki, “Disciplining Mothers”

Mullin, “What about birth?”

Brakman and Scholz, “Adoption, ART, and a Re-Conception of the Maternal Body”

Longhurst, “Pregnant and Disabled”

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

**By the end of the course you will have learned how cultural ideologies of motherhood**

* shape societal expectations about mothering by setting up strict definitions of “good” mothers and “bad” mothers and policing their boundaries
* limit the rights of racial, sexual, and economic minorities to full personhood as mothers
* frame debates about reproductive technologies and corporatize pregnancy and birth

**Your Grade:** This course requires active and consistent participation from all members of the class. The breakdown of your final grade is as follows.

* Active class participation **10%**
* Critical Analysis Papers (1 page, 10 of a possible 13) **25%**

## Group Presentation and Report **15%**

* Midterm Research Paper (8-10) **20% Due 10/25**
* Final Research Paper (1-12 pages) **30% Due 12/6**

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Class Participation**

Active and consistent class participation is an essential part of this course. I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the material, to answer questions, and to ask questions. If you do not participate you will receive 0 for participation. **Attendance in itself is not participation.**

**Critical Analysis Papers** **25%**

Several of your reading assignments require a written response in the form of a one-page paper. You are required to write **10** of these. There are 13 possible opportunities for writing analysis papers, but you are only required to do **10.** Sometimes you will be writing on a section of a novel and sometimes on a critical article. You must write on the readings for that day only. You need to check your syllabus to determine which days these papers are due and then select 10 of them to write on.

**Points to keep in mind when writing your analysis**

* Try to engage with and respond to the themes of the class in your response. How does the reading for the day extend our understanding of the issues related to motherhood and mothering. You might want to start by focusing on an issue that is interesting or disturbing to you in the text. Use this as a springboard to an analysis of the text.
* This is a formal piece of writing. It is **NOT a journal or diary entry.** **Do not** just explain why you do or don’t like the film/article/novel. Personal anecdotes and reflections on subjective experience are not suitable here.
* You are required to write 10 papers
* **These should be one-page long, typed in Times New Roman 12pt. font, and single-spaced.**
* They will be collected during the class period on the day they are due.
* **No** **late papers, except in the case of documented illness, will be accepted.** If you cannot make it to class you should email your response paper to me **before class.**

**Group Presentation and Report 15%**

**Presentation guidelines**

The object of the presentation is to expand upon the knowledge we have learned in the unit. You should introduce other aspects of the topic through multi-media sources—tv, blogs, etc., articles, or films. A power-point presentation will probably work best. Because there will be at least 5-6 of you in each group, you should be able to cover different aspects of a topic. You might want to expand upon the topics we’ve been discussing in that unit, but you should not simply repeat what we have already learned. The idea is to introduce **new material by focusing on other aspects of the topic.**

The formal part of the presentation should last approximately **60** minutes and should involve each member of the group equally (approximately 10 mins each). The rest of the class period will be devoted to Q&A, so be sure to prepare discussion questions for the class.

**Each presenter will hand in a two-page formal report summarizing the findings of his/her portion of the presentation.** You will be graded on the content of the presentation, your ability to involve the class in discussion, and your ability to work together as a group. You will receive individual grades. The use of multimedia sources is required.

**Research Papers**

Assignments will be distributed during the semester.

**General Policies**

**Attendance:**

I will take roll every day. During the semester you are permitted **FOUR** absences. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so use your time wisely. Doctor’s visits, surgeries, meetings with advisors, sports trips, etc all will be taken from your absence total. You do not need to provide me with documentation for your absence. **Each absence after the fourth one will result in a 2 point penalty off your final grade.** Only in exceptional cases will I accept documentation excusing you after the fourth absence. If you are absent from class you are responsible for getting notes from a classmate, completing the work you have missed, and for being on schedule when you return. **If you are sick for the day of your group presentation you MUST CONTACT YOUR GROUP MEMBERS AND ME BEFORE THE CLASS BEGINS.** Failure to do so will result in a zero for that assignment.

**Tardiness:**

You must arrive to class on time. Tardiness to class may result in your being counted as absent.

**Classroom/email etiquette:**

I expect each member of the class to behave respectfully towards each other and towards me. Some of you may find the material we will discuss in class to be controversial, but not everyone will share your opinion. Please be mindful of this fact during discussions and in email correspondence.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged borrowing of another person’s work and passing it off as your own. *It includes direct lifting of another’s words or ideas as well as PARAPHRASING another’s words or ideas.* Please complete the online tutorial offered by the library: **<<library.uta.edu/tutorials/Plagiarism.>>** This tutorial will teach you when you need to cite a source and how to do it correctly. Plagiarism is a serious offense and carries serious consequences, including failure and/or expulsion from the University. Faculty members are required to report incidences of plagiarism and cheating to Student Judicial Affairs.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

Students who need accommodations are asked to arrange a meeting during office hours the first weekof classes, or earlier if accommodations are needed immediately. Please bring a copy of all relevant paperwork to the meeting. If you do not have a notification for accommodations but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Office of Students with Disabilities, 102 University Hall, 2-3364.

**Student Support Services Available:** The University of Texas at Arlington has established a variety of programs to help students meet the challenges of college life. Support to students includes advising, counseling, mentoring, tutoring, supplemental instruction, and writing assistance. For a complete list of academic support services, visit the Academic Assistance resource page of the Office of Student Success Programs, [www.uta.edu/uac/studentsuccess/academic-assistance](http://www.uta.edu/uac/studentsuccess/academic-assistance). To help students address personal, academic and career concerns, individual counseling is also available. For more information, students are encouraged to contact Counseling Services [www.counseling.uta.edu](http://www.counseling.uta.edu/) at (817) 272-3671 or visit a counselor in 216 Davis Hall.

**Electronic Communication Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University “MavMail” address as the sole official means of communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and activities, and permit the University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. ***Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.*** Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/>. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains active even after they graduate from UT Arlington.

**Tentative Assignment Schedule (subject to change)**

Readings/viewings are due on the date recorded and should therefore be completed BEFORE the corresponding class day. Though we might devote more than one class period to discussion of a particular text you should COMPLETE the reading by the date noted below. Assignments may change at my discretion.

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| **DATE** | **CLASS DISCUSSION/ READINGS DUE** |
| Week 1 **R 8/25** | Introduction to the class Fairy tale mothers and contemporary “mother monsters” |
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| **Weeks 2,3,4** | **Social and Political Ideologies of Motherhood** |
| **T 8/30** | Rich, *Of Woman Born* chs. 1-4 (pp.21-84) |
| **R 9/1** | Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* chs. 1, 2, 6 Critical Analysis Due |
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| Week 3 **T 9/6** | *The Hours*. Dir. Stephen Daldry (2002)  (watch outside of class)  Critical Analysis Due |
| **R 9/8** | *The Hours* discussion continued |
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| Week 4 **T 9/13** | *The Patron Saint of Liars* 3-144  Critical Analysis Due |
| **R 9/15** | *The Patron Saint of Liars* 147-269 |
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| **Week 5**  **T 9/20** | *The Patron Saint of Liars* 273-end  Critical Analysis Due |
| **R 9/22** | Longhurst, “Bad Mothers” (pdf) |

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| **Week 6**  **T 9/27** | **Group Presentation**  **Mothers in the Media** |
| **R 9/29** | **Racialized Reproduction**  Roberts, *Killing the Black Body* (Intro and Ch. 1) pdf.  Critical Analysis Due |
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| **Week 7**  **T 10/4** | *Beloved* 1-106 Critical Analysis Due |
| **R 10/6** | *Beloved* 107-157 |
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| **Week 8**  **T 10/11** | *Beloved* 161-260 |
| **R 10/13** | *Losing Isaiah*  (This is available through Amazon instant video. You can watch it on your computer for $2.99)  Critical Analysis Due |
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| **Week 9**  **T 10/18** | Roberts, ch.6 “Race and the New Reproduction” (pdf) |
| **R 10/20** | **Group Presentation**  **Racialized Reproduction** |
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| **Week 10**  **T 10/25** | Paper One Due  **Medicalized Mothering**  *The Business of Being Born* (watch in class) |
| **R 10/27** | Critical Analysis Due on *The Business of Being Born*  Rich, ch. 6 “Hands of Flesh, Hands of Iron” |
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| **Week 11**  **T 11/1** | Sawicki, “Disciplining Mothers” (pdf)  Mullin, “What about birth?” (pdf)  Critical Analysis Due |
| **R 11/3** | Group Presentation **Medicalized Mothering** |
| ***F 11/4*** | *\*\*Last Day to Drop\*\** |
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| **Week 12**  **T 11/8** | **Other Mothers**  Brakman and Scholz, “Adoption, ART, and a Re-Conception of the Maternal Body: Toward Embodied Maternity” (pdf) |
| **R 11/10** | *The Kids Are All Right*  Critical Analysis Due |
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| **Week 13**  **T 11/15** | *Handmaid’s Tale* chs. 1-18  Critical Analysis Due |
| **R 11/17** | *Handmaid’s Tale* chs. 18-31 |
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| **Week 14**  **T 11/22** | *Handmaid’s Tale* chs 31-end Critical Analysis Due |
| **R 11/24** | Thanksgiving Holiday |
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| **Week 15**  **T 11/29** | Longhurst, “Pregnant and Disabled”  Critical Analysis Due |
| **R 12/1** | **Group Presentation**  **Other Mothers** |
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| **Week 16**  **T 12/6** | **Research Paper Due** |
| **R 12/8** |  |