



The University of Western Ontario
Department of Sociology
SOCIOLOGY 4484F 001
Motherhood and Mothering
Fall 2025

Delivery Method – In-person

Instructor: Dr. Helene A. Cummins

Email: hcummins@uwo.ca

Office Hours: By Appointment

This is a DRAFT copy 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 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. This 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, 2020-2021, 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, ages, abilities/disabilities, sexualities, geographies, 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 textbook 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.

\$35.65

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course [OWL Brightspace](#) site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students enrolled in the course.

Any questions or concerns you may have should be directed to me before/after a class, or at another convenient time. Face-to-face communication is always the best, outside of that simple questions can be addressed via email.

Course Schedule and Readings:

The reading list and weekly schedule is available on the course Brightspace site.

Method of Evaluation:

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

Class Participation	15% Ongoing
Essay Outline	10% Due: Monday, October 20, 2025 In-class hard copy
Presentation	35% Due as assigned, week by week, as determined in first class in September. For this course this assignment must be presented when assigned as we have a tight week to week schedule, otherwise supporting documentation must be given.
Essay	40% Due: Monday, December 8 th , 2025 In-class hard copy

Class Participation/Attendance

Participation in the course is an important part of the learning process and forms 15% of the final grade. It requires one to use their voice in questioning, discussing and intersecting with your classmates' and Professor's viewpoints and understanding. The quality of this interaction is paramount. That is, it is required to come to class having read the materials for that week. Talking just for the sake of talking is less valuable for this task. It requires you to engage in the materials and the process of each class discussion and lecture.

This also requires that we are respectful of each other and their viewpoints. This class is a place where we can safely articulate and share information in meaningful ways.

All cell phones should be turned off in class. Laptops are to be used solely to take notes for the course.

Attendance requires you to come to class on time, stay for the whole class, and not remove yourself from the class to get breakfast, coffee, etc. for extended periods of time. There will be a class break through the 3-hour time frame to undertake those tasks.

Essay Outline

This assignment worth 10% will be undertaken relative to developing an outline for the essay on a topic related to the 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 Monday, December 8th, 2025.

The essay outline will NOT include a bibliography. However, formal academic presentation is required to synthesize and develop 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. Each student will undertake a 50-minute presentation as assigned at our first class in September. All students will undertake a presentation on the assigned reading for that week. All students will attend and support their classmates' presentations.

The presentation will be an overview of the assigned reading. What are the major points of 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?

Power Point presentations are allowed, and any outside research and sociological conceptualization is encouraged. Engagement of your classmates is important to the task.

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

Essay

Each student will write a 10-page, double-spaced paper of 2500 words, not including the bibliography, on a topic related to our course. You shall draw from sociological theory, use scholarly sociological data and concepts to earn your opinion. You will critique, analyze, and develop a sociological argument/viewpoint.

The paper must be referenced accurately using APA style. It should be well-written, documented and supported by sociological theory.

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

It is due in-class on our final class day in December, 8th, 2025. No paper will be accepted after Wednesday, December, 10th, 2025. As flexible deadlines are used in this course, requests for academic accommodation will not be granted.

Student Absences

[Academic Consideration Policy](#) regarding student absence requests and flexible deadlines.

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

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI):

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

Academic 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

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.

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/>).

Students are expected to retain all research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, your instructor may ask you to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against you.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Copyright: Students may not record or distribute any class activity, including conversations during office hours, without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student's own private use.

Absence from Course Commitments: Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration](#) – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request using the Student Absence Portal (SAP) https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html . Students are permitted one academic consideration request 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 in the course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness must include the completed Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf> or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner. Students must request academic consideration as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

Once the request and supporting documentation have been received and reviewed, appropriate academic consideration, if granted, shall be determined by the instructor in consultation with the academic advisor, in a manner consistent with the course outline. Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam, unless otherwise specified in the course outline. The course instructor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup text/exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test/exam will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test/exam.

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 Academic Counselling Office.

Students who fail to write a make-up test or special examination will receive a grade of zero on that assessment. No other make-up opportunities will be provided unless further academic consideration is granted by the student's Home Faculty Academic Counselling office.

Religious Accommodation: Students should review the policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf. Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning: In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence or University approved emergency 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 Brightspace 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.

Code of Student Conduct: It is the responsibility of every student to read the Code and familiarize him or herself with its contents. The Code is available at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/code_of_conduct.pdf. Sanctions for non-compliance range from a warning or reprimand to expulsion from the University.

Student Responsibility: Students in a degree program must select courses in accordance with the published requirements. Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded, that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and

that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) they may have taken. Students must familiarize themselves with the Student Responsibility for Course Selection policy https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/general/academic_counselling.pdf and the Registration and Progression policy https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/registration_progression.pdf. Students are responsible for the successful completion of the Graduation Requirements for their degree program https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/graduation.pdf.

Support Services:

Office of the Registrar Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

[Faculty Academic Advising](#) - Please visit your Home Faculty Academic advising webpage for information regarding adding/dropping courses, important dates, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html.

[USC services](#) offers information about student the health/dental plan, Bus Pass, food support services, Peer support Centre etc <http://westernusc.ca/services/>.

[Mental health](#) – Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

[Health & Wellness Services](#) – Registered part-time and full-time students can book a physical health appointment at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/shs/index.html>. Additional on-campus services are also available <https://www.uwo.ca/health/shs/services/index.html>.

[Accessible Education](#) provides supports and services to students with disabilities at Western, in all programs and faculties. 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.

[Gender-Based and Sexual Violence](#) – Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experience GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: http://uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

[Western Libraries](#) – Visit the many library locations on campus. Western Libraries provide access to material in physical and digital formats <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/catalogue/index.html>. Research support is available <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/research/index.html>.

[Writing support](#) – Online writing resources, writing support and writing modules are available <https://writing.uwo.ca/undergrads/>

Bookstore: Search for Textbook availability and cost <https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search>