

## Representations of Motherhood COMM 411-900/WGST 411-900

**Syllabus: Fall 2015**

**Stacy H. Aschenbeck**

**Course Description:** Examination of understandings of motherhood from a humanities perspective and over a variety of cultures and time periods, as reflected in written media and/or oral texts.

**Prerequisite:** Junior or senior classification or approval of instructor.

### **Learning outcomes:**

At the end of the course students will be able to

1. Explain the shifts in understanding of motherhood from the 1930's to today
2. Understand the relationship between representations of motherhood and the practice of mothering
3. Evaluate representations of motherhood
4. Construct an argument about representations of motherhood
5. Analyze in essay form representations of motherhood, drawing from primary texts and feminist theory.

TR 11:10-12:25

Blocker 135

Office: Bolton 202A

Office hours: TR 8:00-9:30 and T 1:00-2:30 and by appointment (if you know you are coming you may want to email just in case I have a meeting.)

Email: [stacy-h-aschenbeck@tamu.edu](mailto:stacy-h-aschenbeck@tamu.edu)

### Required Texts and Materials:

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*.

### Grade Distribution:

The course grade will be calculated from these assignments with these weights.

Moms in News Presentations: 5%

Survey Participation: 5%

Exam I: 10%

Music Presentation: 10%

Advertising Project: 10%

Moms on Television Project: 5%

Motherhood in Film Project: 10%

Novel Presentations: 20%

SMORE: 10%

Women's Magazine Project: 10%

Grandmother Interview: 5%

The final course grade will be assigned like this:

A=89.5-100

B=79.5-89.4

C=69.5-79.4

D=59.5-69.4

F=0-59.4

Students may rest assured that this scale will be applied uniformly. Please do not request that the scale be applied to your grade in a different manner.

Extra credit is never offered on an individual basis. If it is offered it will be made available to the entire class.

## Attendance

CLASS IS GOING TO BE SO GREAT THAT I THINK THAT YOU'LL WANT TO ATTEND EACH AND EVERY SESSION, HOWEVER, ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED AT EACH MEETING OF COMM 411.

STUDENTS SHALL ARRIVE ON TIME AND STAY FOR THE ENTIRE CLASS PERIOD. ATTENDANCE IS DOCUMENTED BY THE STUDENT'S FULL SIGNATURE ON THE DAILY SIGN-IN SHEET. STUDENTS MAY HAVE THREE UNEXCUSED ABSENCES HOWEVER NO MAKE-UP WORK IS AVAILABLE FOR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES ON THE DAY OF AN EXAM OR PRESENTATION.

THE COURSE GRADE WILL BE REDUCED BY ONE LETTER GRADE FOR EACH UNEXCUSED ABSENCE IN EXCESS OF THREE. THREE TARDIES EQUAL AN UNEXCUSED ABSENCE.

MAKE-UP WORK IS AVAILABLE FOR STUDENTS WITH EXCUSED ABSENCES IN ACCORDANCE WITH STUDENTS RULES. PLEASE SEE STUDENT RULE [HTTP://STUDENT-RULES.TAMU.EDU/RULE07](http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07) TO DOCUMENT AN EXCUSED ABSENCE. I WILL NOT ACCEPT THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY EXPLANATORY STATEMENT FOR ABSENCE FROM CLASS. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES, STUDENTS MUST PROVIDE WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXCUSED ABSENCE, FROM A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER FOR ILLNESSES OR INJURIES TOO SEVERE OR CONTAGIOUS FOR A STUDENT TO ATTEND CLASS, OR FROM THE APPROPRIATE OFFICIAL ABLE TO DOCUMENT OTHER UNIVERSITY EXCUSED ABSENCES.

### [Americans with Disabilities Act Policy Statement](#)

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

### [Academic Integrity Statement and Policy](#)

Do not cheat in this course. Do not commit scholastic dishonesty of any kind. Students who commit scholastic dishonesty will earn an F\* on the transcript for this course. See the Aggie Honor System website for additional information on Scholastic Dishonesty and the Honor Council Rules and Procedures <http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/>

**“An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.”**

# Assignments

## Survey Monkey Assignments (5%)

Students will each set up a pool of mothers who will agree to answer survey questions that the class will design at various times throughout the semester. By doing this the class can compare the feelings of real mothers with the image of motherhood being presented in various types of media and rhetoric. The results of their survey must be turned in on the assigned day in written format with the total number of responses to each answer written out.

## Moms in the News (5%)

At any time during the semester students are invited to bring excerpts/news clips from current events to class. The first thing we will do every class is present the current events. They can be supported with either a newspaper article or with a video from a news show. The clip must show something about the way a mother or mothers are portrayed. At any time during the semester each of you must present four stories. You must bring something in writing to support what you will present that day.

## Novel Presentations (20%)

Each student will choose a novel that discusses motherhood to read over the course of the semester (I'll give you a list of choices). After reading the novel, students will put together a SMORE with at least 500 words of writing explaining how motherhood has been portrayed in the novel. In addition pictures, videos, and other websites can be added to further support your points. This SMORE will serve as both your written assignment and your visual aid when presenting to the class in your four minute presentation about your novel and how it portrays mothers. You will each email me the url of your SMORE for grading purposes. Make sure to include the year the book was written and the time period it was set in.

## Magazine Project (10%)

Students will work in pairs to analyze the articles of a women's magazine in a particular year. Groups will be assigned a particular decade and they will then find all the articles in a chosen women's magazine during a year and analyze what the magazines published articles about. They will use a power point presentation to show the class what the magazine chose to focus on during that given year. You will look at each month of that year and chart the results.

### **Advertising Project (10%)**

You will find three advertisements in newspapers or magazines that portray mothers. Then, based on those advertisements you will come up with 10 survey questions including an open ended question at the end to ask real mothers how these particular advertisements portray real life mothers. You will then represent your findings from your survey in graphic format. You must turn in and present each of the advertisements, the questions, and the statistical findings of your survey in power point format.

### **Music Presentation (10%)**

Each student will select one song with lyrics about mothers. They will then analyze the lyrics and write a one page essay explaining how the song portrays mothers and supporting it with lyrics from the song. The student will then give a brief- 2 minute presentation to the class where they explain their interpretation to the class and play a brief excerpt from the song.

### **Mothers on Television (5%)**

Students will each design a web site using thinglink. They will have a picture of some sort that will have at least five places you click on that link to information about mothers on particular television shows. All five shows should have been aired on major networks, and have aired within the same year. Each link should connect to show a particular show and a summary of how that show portrays the mother in the show. Make sure you include the year that it was aired and the year it was supposed to depict. You will have two minutes to present your findings to the class.

### **Mothers in Film (10%)**

Each student will pick one of the movies listed to watch and analyze the mother figure. You need to tell both the year the movie was made and the year the movie portrayed. You will write a one page paper discussing how the mother figure was portrayed in the film. You will present this to the class in a two minute presentation.

### **SMORE (10%)**

Throughout the year each student will put together a SMORE showing the results of all the research they have done. Each section needs to be roughly 200 words and supported with pictures, videos, or web links. You must include a letter to your mother or future child discussing what you learned. You will each give a summary of your view of how mothers are portrayed in society on the last day of class and show your SMORE- around 2 minutes.

### **INTERVIEW A GRANDMOTHER (5%)**

Over Thanksgiving holidays, you will be responsible for interviewing your grandmother (if you do not have a grandmother talk to me and we will come up with an alternative). This interview will be recorded digitally, turned it to me, and uploaded to the library of congress database.