

Philosophies of Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering

PHIL/WST459—Spring 2013

M 4-6:50

2010 Swenson

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Course Description

This course will explore pregnancy, childbirth, and mothering from two perspectives—the embodied experience of women and its political-social context. That is, we will consider how women’s first-hand experiences of motherhood are responses to a broader social milieu. This approach will enable us to think about a variety of philosophical themes and questions with regard to our topic including: philosophical method, embodiment, sex & gender, the origins of ethics, moral obligation, virtue, moral luck, intersubjectivity, and oppression. Yet our approach will also be cross-disciplinary. Students going into a variety of careers will find this course immediately relevant. For example, nursing/pre-med students will consider the manner in which they can assist women to have an empowering rather than traumatizing childbirth experience, as well as how to foster bonding after birth. Psychology students will reflect on woman’s psychological development as we consider how motherhood provides new opportunities to develop one’s emotional and intellectual capacities.

Learning Outcomes

- Engage philosophically with interdisciplinary texts
- Understand the dual influences of embodiment, and material/political/social context on women’s lives
- Ability to explain philosophical concepts in written and oral form
- Ability to conduct a phenomenological research project

Required Texts (available in the bookstore)

- *Coming to Life: Philosophies of Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering*, Eds. Sarah LaChance Adams & Caroline Lundquist (Also available in the UWS library)
- Course Reader or D2L



This syllabus is subject to change at any time. Notification of any changes will be made with a minimum of 24 hours notice via UWS email. You will be held accountable for being aware of any changes.

Policies

The University of Wisconsin-Superior is dedicated to a safe, supportive and nondiscriminatory learning environment. It is the responsibility of all undergraduate and graduate students to familiarize themselves with University policies regarding special accommodations, academic misconduct, religious beliefs accommodation, discrimination and absence for University-sponsored events.

A comprehensive set of course policies can be found on D2L in "Content."

For details refer to the appropriate sections in the UW-Superior Class Schedule or the UW-Superior General Catalog and the "Student Disciplinary Procedure" (UWS Chapter 14) and the "Student Nonacademic Disciplinary Procedures (UWS Chapter 17)."

- **CLASSROOM CONDUCT**

Classroom is a public space for serious work. Everybody in the classroom is thus expected to behave as a mature, respectful, thoughtful, and responsible person. The instructor reserves the right to take appropriate measures should this general rule be violated.

- **DISABILITIES**

Individuals who have any disabilities, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this course are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester. (Contact also the Office for Disability Support Services.) Adaptations of methods, materials or testing may be made as requested to provide for equitable participation.

- **NO IN-CLASS ELECTRONIC DEVICE USE**

All cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off or silenced AND stored out of sight. (Discuss with the instructor in advance if there is a reason to violate this rule.)

Any student using such a device in class will be considered absent for the day.

- **TIMELY SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

Late papers or assignments will typically not be accepted. If you have a significant reason to do so, you may request an extension at least 24 hours before an assignment is due. In the case of illness or emergency, students should contact the instructor as soon as possible. It will be expected that you demonstrate proof of the illness or emergency. It is fully at the professor's discretion whether or not late assignments will be accepted.

- **RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS**

The UW-System Board of the Regents rules that students' sincerely held religious beliefs shall be reasonably accommodated with respect to scheduling all examinations and other academic requirements. Students are responsible, however, for contacting the instructor in advance, so as to make an accommodation.

- **COMMUNICATE!**

Communicating to the instructor any issue that may affect your learning is very important for your success. Visit the instructor during the office hours, e-mail the instructor with specific questions, or call the instructor particularly at the time of emergency. The instructor will do her best to accommodate the needs of the students. In the case of emergency, students should contact the instructor as soon as possible

- **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

All work for this course must be your own, produced exclusively for this class.

Assignments/Evaluation

Attendance 5%

Attendance grade will be calculated based on percentage of class sessions you attend. Absences will not be excused without proof of illness or emergency. It is fully at the professor's discretion whether or not absences will be excused. In order to be considered fully in attendance, you must bring the reading with you to class and have completely read it before class. You must demonstrate mental, as well as physical, presence. **Every student must attend at least 70% of class sessions in order to pass the course.**

Participation 5%

Participation will be graded based on the rubric below and will include any work done in class.

Level	Criteria
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Present, not disruptive.▪ Tries to respond when called on but does not offer much.▪ Demonstrates sporadic involvement in discussion.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrates adequate preparation.▪ Offers straightforward information (e.g., straight from the reading).▪ Regularly contributes to discussion
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrates good preparation▪ Offers interpretations and analysis▪ Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion.▪ Demonstrates consistent ongoing involvement.
A+	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrates excellent preparation.▪ Contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to the cooperative argument-building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc.▪ Demonstrates ongoing very active involvement.

Précis Presentation 10%

For one class session, you will prepare a précis presentation. For your presentation, you will provide everyone in the class with a copy of your summary of the reading. This can be in the form of bullets or narrative. The purpose is to anchor our initial discussion of one of the texts for that day. You will go over the central points in the reading for 10-15 minutes, but do not simply read a paper. Then propose a topic of conversation or a question with regard to the reading that you would like the class to consider further.

Due Date: Various

Weekly Response Graded based on % pass or not pass 30%

At the beginning of each class (except the class in which you do a précis presentation), you will turn in a **1-2 page** double spaced, typed response to the reading due on that day. Please proofread your paper for spelling, grammar, and clarity. Address a **minimum** of one assigned essay. **Complete both A & B:**

- A) Imagine that you are explaining to college student who is not taking the course and has not done this reading, what are the most significant aspects of the reading.
- B) Answer a minimum of **one** of the following:

- 1) What confused you in today's reading and what is your best attempt at understanding it?
- 2) What is the most significant thing you learned from the reading? Why did you find it significant?
- 3) What effect did the reading have on your beliefs, assumptions, and/or values?
- 4) How does the reading relate to another reading from this class (a reading that was due on another day)?
- 5) What issues were left unexplored by the author(s) that you feel are important? Why are they important?

Phenomenological Research Project **50% of final grade**

Exploratory Phase—Assignments due @ beginning of class Weeks 4-15

Graded based on % pass or not pass

Must be turned in at the beginning of class in hard copy

Please proofread your assignments for spelling, grammar, and clarity.

25% of final grade

12-15 page paper— Turned in on D2L

25% of final grade

Due Week 4:

(graded)

- 1) Select a topic of relevance to this course and use your preferred method to brainstorm ideas for your research project. Some options include: talk & listen, then write about it; list; cluster; free write. (See <http://www.writing.ku.edu/guides/prewriting.shtml>, Hacker pages 4-10 and/or Bean page 140 in Reader).
- 2) As a result of your brainstorm, decide on a phenomenon of interest that you would like to investigate.
- 3) Turn in one page typed stating what method you used for brainstorming, some of the ideas you came up with, and why you decided on your idea.

Due Week 5:

(graded)

- 1) Create a set of 5-10 questions related to your topic for your interviews. These questions should be designed to help subjects uncover their lived experience of the phenomenon in question (See Polkinghorne pages 48-50)

Due Week 7:

(ungraded)

- 1) Conduct and record interviews with 2-3 subjects
- 2) Nothing turned in

Due Week 8:

(graded)

- 1) Free write about the interviews. Ask yourself:
 - a. What themes arise in common between the interviews?
 - b. What contradictions are there between the experiences of your subjects?
 - c. Are there internal contradictions in the accounts given by a subject?
 - d. How has the subject's embodiment impacted her experience?
 - e. How has the subject's material/political/social context impacted her experience?
 - f. What questions remain that you would like to ask your subjects?

Note: Paradoxes and contradictions are especially fruitful places for investigations.

- 2) Turn in minimum 3 pages typed with the most salient insights gained from this free writing.

Due Week 9: (ungraded)

- 1) Ask follow-up questions of subjects (if necessary)
- 2) Record additional insights gained.
- 3) Nothing turned in

Due Week 10: (graded)

- 1) Write a succinct formulation of the essential structures you found (about 1 page). (See Polkinghorne page 51. You may or may not want to use the method described by Polkinghorne on pages 50- 56). Turn this in.
- 2) Write 4-5 philosophical questions you have regarding this phenomenon.
- 3) Select one or two central philosophical questions for your project.
- 4) Turn in about 1 page stating why you selected and rejected the questions you did.

Due Week 11: (graded)

- 1) Draft 4-5 possible thesis statements for your paper. (See Hacker pages 16-19 in Reader)
- 2) Select a thesis that you can support with evidence. (It is understood that your thesis might change later.)
- 3) Turn in about 1 page stating the thesis you chose and why.

Due Week 12: (graded)

- 1) Write a rapid rough draft
- 2) Write an informal outline (See Hacker page 12 in Reader)
- 3) Turn in outline only

Due Week 13: (graded)

Write a 5-6 page prospectus that includes the following:

- 1) A description of the essential structures of the phenomenon you investigated.
- 2) The philosophical question(s) that you investigated and why you chose this question(s).
- 3) Your thesis
- 4) Support for your thesis:
 - i. evidence from your interviews
 - ii. 2-3 philosophers read in this class. On each author you will give a 3-4 sentence description of her/his view on the subject.
 - iii. Any additional appropriate support. See Hacker pages 82-86 in Reader.
- 5) Reflections on your experience of working on this project (your phenomenology of phenomenological research)

Due Week 15: (graded)

- 1) 5-10 minute presentation of your prospectus for the class
- 2) 5-10 minute discussion of your project (Q+A and other feedback from class)

Due Finals Week:

12-15 page paper including all the elements required of your prospectus. Due: TBA

AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH DESIGN:

If your study can be done by only interviewing students/faculty/staff at UWS, and if the data will not be published or presented outside the campus, you may be able to qualify for a “classroom project” category. However, this will limit your creativity to some extent and would prevent any dissemination of knowledge gained. If you would like to work outside of these restrictions, you will need to submit an IRB (Internal Review Board) project proposal before the February or March IRB meeting. Any projects that involved subjects who are pregnant at the time would need to have full board review.

Here’s a link to the page in the IRB site that addresses whether a project needs review:

<http://www.uwsuper.edu/irb/upload/IRBtree1.pdf>

Contact Jim Miller 715/394-8396 (or any member of the IRB) if you have questions.

You will be fully responsible for making certain that your project meets these University-wide requirements.

Course Calendar

Readings should be complete before the date listed on syllabus.

Week 1: No Class

Week 2, January 28: Course Introduction

Guest: Deborah Schlacks (Writing Across the Curriculum)

Readings:

- LaChance Adams and Lundquist, “Introduction: The Philosophical Significance of Pregnancy, Childbirth and Mothering” *Coming to Life* pages 1-28
- Lintott & Sander-Staudt, “Introduction” (Reader) (pages 1-17 of *Philosophical Inquiry into Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering*)
- John Rudisill, “The Transition from Studying Philosophy to Doing Philosophy” (Reader) (pages 241-244 of *Teaching Philosophy*)
- Seidman, “Technique Isn’t Everything, But it is a Lot” (Reader) (pages 56-71 of *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*)

Week 3, February 4: Phenomenological Research

Guest: Eleni Pinnow (Internal Review Board)

Readings:

- Valle, King & Halling, “An Introduction to Existential Phenomenological Thought in Psychology” (Reader) (pages 3-16 of *Existential-Phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology*)
- Donald Polkinghorne, “Phenomenological Research Methods” (Reader) (pages 41-60 of *Existential-Phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology*)
- Louise Levesque-Lopman, “Listen and You will Hear” (Reader) (pages 103-132 of *Feminist Phenomenology*)
- ***Optional:*** William Fischer, “An Empirical-Phenomenological Investigation of Being Anxious” (Reader) (pages 127-136 of *Existential-Phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology*)

Week 4, February 11: “Natural” Mothers

Assignment Due

Readings:

- Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, “A New View of Mothers,” “Underlying Mysteries of Development” “From Here to Maternity” (Reader) (pages 27-78, 146-174 from *Mother Nature*)
- Overall and Bernard, “Into the Mouths of Babes,” (Reader) (pages 49-63 of *Philosophical Inquiry into Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering*)
- Sherri Irvin, “Motherhood and the Workings of Disgust” (Reader) (pages of 79-90 of *Philosophical Inquiry into Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering*)
- Deb Augsberger, “Interviewing Tips”

Week 5, February 18: Maternal Ambivalence

Assignment Due

Readings:

- Sarah LaChance Adams, “Motherhood’s Janus Head,” (Reader) (excerpt from book manuscript *The Ethics of Ambivalence: Mad Mothers, Bad Mothers, and What a Good Mother Would Do*)
- Adrienne Rich, “Anger and Tenderness,” (Reader) (pages 21-40 from *Of Woman Born*)
- Adrienne Jones, “Love with Teeth,” (Reader) (pages 36-41 of *Brain Child*)
- Sandra Blaffer Hrdy, “Unnatural Mothers” (Reader) (pages 288-317 of *Mother Nature*)

Week 6, February 25: Unwanted Pregnancy

Viewing: No Easy Decision

Readings:

- Caroline Lundquist, “Being Torn: Toward a Phenomenology of Unwanted Pregnancy,” (Reader) (pages 136- 155 of *Hypatia*)
- Judith Arcana, “Abortion is a Motherhood Issue,” (Reader) (pages 225-227 of *Women’s Lives*)
- Bertha Alvarez Manninen, “The Pro-Choice Pro-Lifer: Battling the False Dichotomy,” *Coming to Life* pages 171-192

Week 7, March 4: “Unnatural” Mothers

Assignment Due

Readings:

- Jean Keller, “Sarah Ruddick, Transracial Adoption and the Goals of Maternal Practice” (Reader) (pages 21-33 of *Philosophical Inquiry into Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering*)
- Beckey Sukovaty, “On Stepmothers as Hybrid Beings and World Travelers” (Reader) (pages 151-161 of *Philosophical Inquiry into Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering*)
- Dorothy Rogers, “Birthmothers and Maternal Identity” *Coming to Life* pages 120-137

Week 8, March 11: Mr. Mom

Assignment Due

Readings:

- Sandra Blaffer Hrdy, “Three Men and a Baby” (Reader) (pages 205-234 of *Mother Nature*)
- Sara Ruddick “Talking about ‘Mothers’” (Reader) (pages 28-57 of *Maternal Thinking*)

- Jeremy Adam Smith, “The Astonishing Science of Fatherhood” (Reader) (pages 120-145 of *The Daddy Shift*)

SPRING BREAK

Week 9, March 25: Experiences of Pregnancy **Assignment Due**

Readings:

- Simone de Beauvoir, “The Mother,” (Reader) (pages 524-570 of *The Second Sex*)
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Family Relations” (Reader) (pages 78-83 of *Child Psychology and Pedagogy*)
- Iris Marion Young, “Pregnant Embodiment” (Reader) (pages 46-61 of *On Female Body Experience*)
- Florentien Verhage, “The Vision of the Artist/Mother” *Coming to Life* pages 300-319

Week 10, April 1 : Experiences of Breastfeeding **Assignment Due**

Readings:

- Iris Marion Young, “Breasted Experience,” (Reader) (pages 75-96 of *On Female Body Experience*)
- Eva Simms, “Milk and Flesh: Infancy and Coexistence” (Reader) (pages 11-25 of *The Child in the World*)
- Sandra Steingraber, “Loaves and Fishes,” (Reader) (pages 224-248 of *Having Faith: An Ecologist’s Journey to Motherhood*)

Week 11, April 8: The Breastfeeding Context **Assignment Due**

- Sandra Blaffer Hrdy, “The Milky Way” (Reader) (pages 121-145 of *Mother Nature*)
- Rebecca Tuvell, “Exposing the Breast: The Animal and the Abject in American Attitudes Toward Breastfeeding,” *Coming to Life* pages 263-279
- Lissa Skitolsky, “Tales from the Tit” (Reader) (pages 64-78 of *Philosophical Inquiry into Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering*)

Week 12, April 15: The Politics of Childbirth **Assignment Due**

Viewing: “The Business of Being Born”

Readings:

- American Congress of Obstetrics & Gynecologists, “Statement on Home Births” (Reader)
- Sonya Charles, “Disempowered Women? The Midwifery Model and Medical Intervention,” *Coming to Life* pages 215-239
- Candace Johnson, “The Political ‘Nature’ of Pregnancy and Childbirth,” *Coming to Life* pages 193-214

Week 13, April 22: Experiences of Childbirth **Assignment Due**

Guest: Midwife

Readings

- Rahina Reiko Rizzuto, “What my Mother Never Told Me, or How I Was Blindsided by Childbirth and Survived” (Reader) (pages 8-21)

- Naomi Wolf, “Giving Birth” (Reader) (pages 135-143 of *Misconceptions*)
- Brand and Granger, “The Aesthetics of Childbirth,” (Reader) (pages 215-236 of *Philosophical Inquiry into Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering*)
- Shelia Lintott “The Sublimity of Gestating and Giving Birth,” (Reader) (237-250 of *Philosophical Inquiry into Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering*)
- Kayley Varnallis, “Of Courage Born: Reflections on Childbirth and Manly Courage,” *Coming to Life* pages 47-70

Week 14, April 29 : The Ethical Significance of Pregnancy & Birth

Readings:

- Gail Weiss, “Birthing Responsibility: A Phenomenological Perspective on the Moral Significance of Birth,” *Coming to Life* pages 109-119
- Frances Gray, “Original Habitation,” *Coming to Life* pages 71-87
- Lisa Guenther, “Welcome the Stranger” (Reader) (pages 49-73 of *The Gift of the Other*)

Week 15, May 6 : Prospectus Presentations

Assignment Due

Readings: None!