MOTHERING IN AMERICAN LITERATURE:  
A STUDY OF IDENTITY, CULTURE, HISTORY, GENDER AND CLASS  
ENGLISH 3133/Women's Studies 3953

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Office Hours: T 2:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
and by appt.

Course Description
This course will use the theme of motherhood as an entrance into the many themes that inform the American literature. What is a mother? What actions/responsibilities inform the act of mothering? Is there an ideal mother? What constitutes a good or bad mother? How has mothering changed over time? How is mothering defined amongst the different cultures? How are they similar/different? What do the differing cultural expectations of motherhood say about gender, class, and/or identity? In our exploration of this topic, we will read and think critically the different texts and even theory (yes, THEORY!) from the 20th century. We are interested not only in what these writers have to say about American motherhood, but how they say it and in what context.

Course Goals
1. Identify and analyze major themes in 20th century American literature through the purview of the maternal.
2. Identify and synthesize how the historical and cultural context of motherhood informs American literature.
3. Critically analyze a literary work using multiple secondary sources in the MLA format.
4. Research and evaluate the quality of literary criticism.
5. Compare the works of two American authors from different cultural and historical backgrounds.
6. Identify and analyze the different types of mothering.

Course Texts
The Awakening, Kate Chopin
Dreaming in Cuban, Cristina Garcia
Beloved, Toni Morrison
Mama Day, Gloria
The Joy Luck, Amy Tan
Long Day’s Journey Into Night, Eugene O’Neill
Maud Martha, Gwendolyn Brooks
Stigmata, Phyllis Alesia Perry
Kindred, Octavia Butler
Reflection Papers

Too often, when we read the words on a page we do not fully integrate that new information into our existing knowledge structure, and so we fail to gain new understanding of the world around us. Research in cognitive science and learning tells us that "deep learning" requires that the learner reflect on new knowledge and create personal meaning from it.

To help us reflect more deeply on readings in this course, we will use reading reflections. These reading reflections are designed to help the reader engage with the material in a deeper way, and to construct new meaning from it. The reflections also have the advantage of providing me with detailed information about your learning in this course. This not only helps guide my daily preparation of course activities, but also helps connect us as a community of learners.

You will write six (6) reading reflection papers. These papers should be 2-3 pages in length and must be turned in electronically via Blackboard Assignment Box by 10 a.m. the morning of class. You decide which six classes you wish to write responses for, but they must be days in which readings/film are due. It is your responsibility to keep track of your responses. This is meant to be an activity that allows you to digest and process everything you have read over the past week. This also prepares you for group and class discussion.

Your response must clearly indicate careful reading and thoughtful reflection. After completing the reading/viewing assignment, respond to the following questions:

1. What is the main point of this reading?
2. What information did you find surprising? Why?
3. What did you find confusing? Why?

What is the Main Point?
Reading assignments often contain a lot of information. What is the main concept that the author is trying to get across? This may, or may not, have been explicitly stated in the reading. Why did the author choose to emphasize this point, and not some other? Your response is not a summary of the chapter, but an analysis of it in a way that creates new meaning for you.
What is Surprising?
Your response to this question should be reflective. Did you learn something that is in conflict with your previous notions of the world? Did something make you feel uncomfortable? Did you learn something that fascinates you in a way that you didn’t expect? How does this new knowledge connect with material in other courses, or with other parts of your life? Responses must also clearly explain “why.”

What is Confusing?
Responses to this question require careful reading and reflection; it is only through the process of reconciling new information within our existing knowledge structure that we become aware of inconsistencies, or “gaps” in our understanding. Responses to this question should be specific and actionable—that is, they should outline a clear path to understanding. Responses must also clearly explain “why.”

Rubric for Evaluation
10 points Responses to the questions are labeled and clearly indicate careful reading and deep reflection. Responses submitted by 10 a.m.
5 points Responses are not specific, do not clearly indicate reflection, or are submitted soon after (by 12 p.m.) deadline.
0 points No response, or response submitted more than one class period late.

Class Organization
Please come to class on time and prepared, having read all assignments and viewed the films listed as due for the day. Also, come to class ready to speak and move around the classroom! We will do lots of small and large group discussion and everyone is expected to enthusiastically participate!

Participation
Being an active participant is an important component of the grade for this course. A literature classroom is not a place where one simply sits passively and takes notes; you will be sorely disappointed if you expect that. I expect everyone to engage enthusiastically with the readings/viewings (even the ones you don’t like!) This means: coming to class having carefully read or viewed the assigned material and being ready and willing to talk about it, in class and in small groups. You will get so much more out of this course, and it will be a lot more fun if you are fully here with us.

Final Paper Abstract
You will turn in an abstract or proposal of your ideas for your final paper. You must also include thesis statement. This does not lock you into this idea, but it establishes a topic of research for your annotated bibliography and, later, your final paper. This will also provide me with a solid idea of how to guide you through the process of writing your final paper.
Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography is a bibliography that includes brief explanations or notes for each reference. This is to aid in your research for your final paper ensuring you are on the right track before you turn in your finished final paper. This also aids in your assessment of the adequacy of your research materials. Each entry will be in MLA format and contain a summary and evaluation of the worth of the article/chapter/book to your paper’s stated thesis. You will research and compile a four to five (4-5) page annotated bibliography. I will provide more specific information at a later date.

Final Exam

The final exam will take place on Wednesday, December 12 at 10:30 a.m. My exams are composed of any mixture of three question types: identification, short answer and essay. Please note that my exams are rigorous but there are no tricks involved. I want you to do well on this exam, but it will take hard work. There will be an in-depth review session before the exam. Course exams are taken individually and they are not open book. Please bring a Blue Book to the exam. YOU MUST BE PRESENT TO TAKE THIS EXAM. YOU MAY NOT MAKE UP THIS EXAM BECAUSE OF ABSENCE. I urge you to consider these dates before making travel plans.

Final Paper

You will critically analyze two different texts class in an 10-12 page paper. I will provide more specific information at a later date.

Late Paper Policy

I prefer to have all papers turned in to me on time. Unfortunately, I do realize that life happens. I have instituted a strict policy for turning in a paper past its due date. I must have 24 hours notice if your paper will be late. Your grade will decrease by one letter grade each day it is late. I will not accept a paper after three (3) days. You may only use this service once during the semester, so choose wisely.

Absence Policy

Class attendance is mandatory. You are expected to arrive promptly and there are no early departures. Three tardy arrivals count as one absence. If you decide to leave class early, it will count as an absence. If you miss more than three classes, your final grade will be drop one whole letter grade (e.g. your final grade of a B will drop to a C). If you miss more than four classes, you will receive an F as your final grade. All absences count towards this number, both excused and unexcused. I do not distinguish between the two. Yes, I am anal about this.
Classroom Policies
To be decided by the class on the first day. What policies should we have toward the following:
- Classroom Decorum
- Group Work
- Good Citizenship in Class
- Discussing Complicated Topics

University Academic Dishonesty Policy
Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or part to another person. Plagiarism is using someone else’s words or ideas without acknowledging the source. It is essentially stealing. Don’t do it. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Unpleasant, painful, and potentially embarrassing happenings shall ensue. Outside sources you consult for assignments in this course (including your papers and your discussion leading material) must be properly cited in MLA style. If at any time you have any question whatsoever about how to attribute something, or even when to attribute something, please, please, ask! Which leads me to...

Office Hours/Email
My office hours are listed above. During those times, you will find me in my office waiting to help you. Please do not hesitate to come by with concerns about your writing or the class, or if you just want to discuss the readings. You won’t need an appointment during that time; however, if you’d like to make one I’d be glad to do so. Remember, I’m here to help you, so don’t be shy about stopping by!

Everyone will have a conference with me in early October to discuss the final paper project.

You are also welcome to email me with concerns or questions, with one condition: do not expect a same-day response after 9 PM. Late night inquiries will be handled sometime the next day.
**Course Schedule**

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<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>August 30</td>
<td>First Day of Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 4</td>
<td>Theory Readings – Collins and Chodorow</td>
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<td>September 6</td>
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<td>September 11</td>
<td><em>The Awakening</em></td>
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<td>October 2</td>
<td><em>Dreaming in Cuban</em></td>
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<td>October 9</td>
<td><em>The Joy Luck Club</em></td>
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<td>October 11</td>
<td><em>The Joy Luck Club</em></td>
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<td>October 16</td>
<td><em>Kindred</em> Theory Readings – Rich and TBA</td>
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<td>October 18</td>
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<td>October 23</td>
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<td><em>Stigmata</em></td>
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<td>October 30</td>
<td><em>A Mercy</em> / <strong>FINAL PAPER ABSTRACTS DUE</strong></td>
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<td>November 1</td>
<td><em>A Mercy</em></td>
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<td>November 6</td>
<td>Revising Your Abstract/ <strong>ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE</strong></td>
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<td>November 8</td>
<td><em>Maud Martha</em></td>
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<td><strong>DRAFT WORKSHOP</strong></td>
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<td>December 4</td>
<td><strong>FINAL PAPER DUE (hard copy form only)</strong></td>
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<td>December 6</td>
<td><strong>FINAL EXAM REVIEW</strong> – Last Day of Class</td>
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December 12	FINAL EXAM at 10:30 a.m.

*Schedule is subject to change