In this course we will examine how maternal feminisms in the past and present have sought to redefine and influence politics and public life based on values and strategies traditionally situated in the home. The ideals of maternal feminism are rooted in the re-evaluation of traditional gender differences and it is here that they intersect with many feminist psychoanalytic theories. Where maternal feminisms go beyond most feminist psychoanalytic theories is in their demand that the public world be restructured to reflect different values, in particular those associated with traditional female roles. The course will begin with an analysis of the origins of psychoanalysis. Topics will include the founding myth of psychoanalysis and its links with maternal feminisms through Bertha Pappenheim; Sigmund Freud’s proposal and retraction of his seduction theory; and the debate between Karen Horney and Sigmund Freud about the origins of femininity. The middle section of the course will consist of a brief historical overview of the development of feminist theories of motherhood in second wave feminism. Brief original works by several feminist theorists will provide the focus for this section, e.g., Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, Adrienne Rich, Nancy Chodorow. The final section of the course will focus on feminist political action carried out by women acting as mothers or in the name of mothers. Topics in this section include women’s environmental activism; women’s resistance against militarism in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East; women’s peace movements in Canada, the US, and the Middle East; motherhood and the politics of the right; and women’s political struggles to feed their own and everyone’s children.

Required readings:

A required reprint package is available from the bookstore and a few readings are on reserve.

Assignments: WS 411-4

*Thought Papers.* These papers will count for 25% of the final grade. Each paper will be based on one week’s readings and should be 2-3 pages long. Students will be required to hand in five thought papers throughout the term. Students may hand in more than five thought papers and the five highest grades will be recorded. Students may, but are not required to, read one or more of their thought papers aloud as part of their class participation.

*Critical Analysis of a Maternal Feminist Political Action.* This paper will count for 35% of the final grade and will be due the last week of classes with the option of handing in a draft in week 9 or 10 for feedback before doing the final paper. The paper should be 10-12 pages long and students should check their topic with the instructor before they begin. This paper may be based on library research, interviews with women involved in political action, or both. The paper may be based on historical or contemporary political action.
Take-Home Essay Exam. The exam will cover material from the whole term and will be handed out in week 11 and will be due during the exam period. Four or five essay questions will be included, of which students may choose one or two questions. Each answer will be 2-3 pages long. The exam will count for 30% of the final grade.

Class Participation. Class participation will count for 10% of the final grade. This will be based on the student's general participation during class.

Assignments WS 821-5

Thought papers. This assignment will be the same as for WS 411.

Critical Analysis of a Maternal Feminist Political Action. This assignment will be the same as for WS 411.

Class Participation. This assignment will be the same as for WS 411.

Conference Paper. During one of the last weeks of class, graduate students will make a short critical presentation to the class (20 minutes maximum). This presentation will take the form of a position paper and will draw on course readings. Students will be encouraged but not required to explore some aspect of their thesis topic in relation to the course readings. The assignment is designed to give graduate students experience in presenting their work in a format similar to conference papers. Students will prepare an abstract (200 words) of their paper which will be handed out to the class the week before their presentation. A written version of the conference paper (8-10 papers) will be handed in at the time of the presentation in class. This assignment will count for 30% of the final grade.

Note: In addition to the regularly scheduled class time for WS 411, graduate students will meet as a group with the instructor for a short seminar (2 hours) every other week to discuss the class readings and prepare for the Conference Paper Assignment.

Designated credit: This course may be designated as 4 upper division credits towards a Psychology Major or Honors for students who obtain permission for this from the Psychology Department before taking the course.