WS 320-4: Special Topics: The Maternal Imaginary

Sonja Boon
smboon@sfu.ca

Class time: Wednesdays, 1:30-5:20 pm

This class explores the idea of the maternal life through a close examination and exploration of autobiographies of maternity and motherhood. The autobiographies considered include the life writings (correspondence, autobiographies, blogs, oral histories, short stories, essays) of feminists, noblewomen, hippies, novelists and even, missing mothers. We will critically engage with the ways in which women have chosen to write themselves into the public sphere as reproductive entities and examine the implications and consequences of such a writing. In particular, we will look at the ways in which maternal autobiographies both conform to and butt up against normative ideologies of motherhood and will look closely at the ways in which mothers deploy the maternal towards personal, creative and political ends. Of particular interest is the embodied, material experience of motherhood, which will be read through theoretical frameworks proposed by Adrienne Rich, Julia Kristeva, Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous and Iris Marion Young.

Required Readings:

Course Reader (with a selection of autobiographical and theoretical works)- will be available at the university bookstore

Assignments and Grading:
Interview/Oral History Project (two parts) 20%
1. written transcription/summary (10%)
2. oral presentation/discussion (10%)
Mothering Tree Project 20%
Mothering Portfolio 25%
Final Essay/Review 20%
Participation (in class and also mini-assignments) 15%

Prerequisites: 60 credit hours

THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN’S STUDIES ENCOURAGES CLARITY OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION AND GOOD WRITING. STUDENTS WILL BE EVALUATED ON THESE SKILLS IN ALL COURSES GIVEN BY THE DEPARTMENT.