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GWS 539

Gendered Labor: Pregnancy & Parenting in Social Context

Fall 2024

3 credits

Intermediate Social Science Credit

NOTE:

Based on the traditional “Carnegie unit” definition for credit hours in a college course, you should expect to spend an average of approximately 8 hours a week on readings and written assignments over ~14 weeks

Van Vleck B135

TR 1:00 – 2:15

Dr. Cabell Gathman (she/her)

“Cabell” rhymes with “Scrabble”

Office: 3328 Sterling Hall

Drop-In Office Hours: M 12-1pm; F 1-2pm; by appointment

Personal Zoom Meeting Room for online appointments:

<https://uwmadison.zoom.us/my/cabell>

Electronic materials and links available at:

<https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/427115>

Course Description

The physical, social, and emotional work of pregnancy, birth, and parenting is heavily gendered in the United States and elsewhere. Although not all pregnant, birthing, or parenting people are women, this work is frequently feminized and devalued in various ways linked to gender within **patriarchal** and **androcentric** social institutions. Within the **matrix of domination**, other identity categories also shape the experiences of parents, children, and families; for example, disabled parents, queer parents, and parents of color are also affected by ableism, hetero/cisnormativity, and white supremacy. In this course, we will cover a broad array of topics related to the ways in which pregnancy, birth, and parenting are socially understood, constructed, and controlled in the United States today.

Course Objectives

- 1) Understand and discuss how roles such as “pregnant person,” “mother,” “father,” “parent,” etc. are socially constructed and understood within larger social institutions such as healthcare, criminal justice, education, and “the family.”
- 2) Recognize and analyze mechanisms of social control that shape and in many cases restrict or coerce the choices made by pregnant and parenting people.
- 3) Discuss and critique mainstream cultural conceptions of “good” and “bad” parenting, with particular attention to the roles various social structures of oppression in these conceptions.
- 4) Analyze media representations of parenting and parent-child relationships, and the relationship between these representations and mainstream expectations and norms for individual parents and children in US society.
- 5) Consider your own individual experiences with parenting/being parented in larger social context in conversation with scholarly articles, personal accounts, and the experiences of your classmates.

Required Text

There is one required book for this course, along with articles available electronically via our course website in Canvas. The book is available in hard cover, ebook, & audio book formats.

Holding It Together: How Women Became America's Safety Net

By Jessica Calarco

ISBN-13: 978-0593538128

Communication with your instructor

See the first page of this document for all contact information including office location & drop-in office hours.

Drop-in office hours: Office hours are first come, first serve unless you have made a specific appointment during the block. When office hours are scheduled, I am in my office and available—feel free to just drop in for any reason, including general comments or questions! I may need to prioritize if other students are waiting with specific class-related concerns, but often office hours are pretty open (especially when we're not coming up on a deadline).

Email: I try to answer all emails within 48 weekday hours of receipt. This means that email sent on Friday, for example, may not receive a response until Tuesday of the following week. Please do NOT send follow-up emails less than 48 hours after your initial email; this does not make me respond faster, but it does make it more difficult for me to prioritize student communications effectively. If it has been more than 48 weekday hours and you have not received a reply, please DO email me to follow up, as unfortunately emails sometimes get lost in the shuffle, especially at “high volume” times (beginning/end of semester, around assignment deadlines, etc.).

Please check Canvas announcements for the course on a regular basis. I will only use the class list for important information at short notice. Announcements have the advantage of relative permanence, but I cannot push them to email. You can, however, configure your Canvas notifications so that you get email push notifications for announcements (and you can make other changes to your settings to ensure that you're not getting bombarded with notifications every day for things that you don't need email reminders for).

Although I will occasionally send Canvas messages regarding things like gradebook items, please do NOT contact me via Canvas messages. Although Canvas does forward messages to email, the system usually diverts them from Outlook's “Focused Inbox,” so it's likely that if you message me through Canvas, I won't see it.

Format

This class meets in-person as scheduled twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00 – 2:15. It will be a mixture of lecture and large and small group discussions. I will generally have a slide deck that I use in the week's class meetings, and I will post it in Canvas as a PDF by 12:30pm on Tuesday of the relevant week. We will conclude the semester with student final project presentations.

From Week 2 on, there is a short text submission assignment in Canvas for Attendance & Participation; there are drops in this category and a make-up assignment if you must miss more than three class sessions (see pp. 6-7 for more information). Please do NOT come to class sick!

Lectures will cover general concepts that are also addressed in the assigned readings, but they will NOT be a simple repetition of the readings; they will introduce new information and may also include related videos and other multimedia material. Throughout the semester, we may also have some guest lectures from researchers and activists doing related work.

Policy on Children in Class

Caregivers deserve access to education. Many people are adversely affected by both scheduled and unscheduled school closings and other gaps in childcare, and virtual participation is not always available or possible. (Please note that if local K-12 schools are canceled for weather, it is highly likely that we will move lecture online—keep an eye on Canvas Announcements!) **Children who are reasonably believed to be non-contagious are welcome in our classroom spaces.**

You may wish to provide them with a device (and headphones) to keep them entertained, but they are also welcome to listen and participate in class to the extent of their ability. If you anticipate that a child might become disruptive, please just try to sit near the door so that you can step out with them if necessary.

Accessibility

The policy of the Board of Regents of the UW System is to ensure that no qualified person shall, solely by reason of disability, be denied access to, participation in, or the benefits of, any program or activity operated in the UW System. Each qualified person shall receive reasonable accommodations needed to ensure access to educational opportunities, programs and activities in the most integrated setting appropriate.

If you have official accommodations through the McBurney Center, please contact me following our Week 1 class meeting if you still have questions or concerns about how they will be implemented.

If you do not have official accommodations, but there are conditions or life circumstances that interfere with your ability to fulfill your responsibilities for this course, I still encourage you to meet with me to discuss how best to accommodate you. In some cases, I may recommend that you consult with the McBurney Disability Resource Center (263-2742), but I recognize that official channels are not equally accessible to all students, and I still want to support you in doing your best work for this course.

“Disability” is a broad category that includes physical, cognitive, and psychological issues, including chronic or mental illness. **Disabled people have the right to an education.**

Course Intro Survey

To get to know you better as people, I ask that you fill out an introduction survey via Canvas **no later than 11:59pm on Friday, September 20th**. I have chosen to put this form online in order to allow you more privacy and flexibility in filling it out. It is also a bit longer than similar forms used in hard copy since you will be able to type responses and you will receive course credit for completion. **Note:** If have trouble accessing the survey at the link provided in Canvas, you may need to sign out of your personal Google account, as UW uses Google Apps to record your UW username.

You may decline to answer any questions that you like, but should go through the entire form and submit it to receive pass/fail credit. Your responses will be visible ONLY to me, your instructor. The completed survey counts for **2% of your final grade.**

Attendance & Participation

This course is heavily discussion-based, and your participation in class is necessary to develop a nuanced understanding of assigned materials and support your classmates' learning with your questions and contributions. In recognition of this fact, I have you submit a short participation assignment at the end of each class via Canvas. This assignment is graded pass/fail for thoughtful completion and should NOT be a long write-up; three sentences is fine! Via Canvas text entry, you will briefly list:

- 1) One thing that a classmate said (include their name if you can!) that helped you understand or think more deeply about course concepts/materials
- 2) One thing that YOU said or thought about during class that you want to think or learn more about
- 3) One thing I said that you found interesting, important, useful, confusing, or wrong

There is no attendance check in Week 1 or Week 13 (no live class the week of Thanksgiving)—you will use recorded presentations posted in Week 13 for make-up assignments in Weeks 14 & 15, as well as the final exam period. We will be using our scheduled “final exam” period for student presentations, and it will count as two “attendance dates” for the purposes of this assignment. (Note that the instructions will also be somewhat modified for presentation dates; we will discuss this further in class.)

Not counting Weeks 1 or 13 but counting our final exam period as two sessions, this makes a total of 27 class sessions for the semester. Your three (3) lowest scores including zeroes for absence will be automatically **dropped**; each of the remaining 24 will be worth 1.5 percentage points on your final grade, for a total of **36% of your final grade for the category.**

Participation Make-Ups

There are THREE (3) drops in the participation category (final exam period counts as two sessions). If you are unable to participate in a particular class session, you can either use a drop or complete a make-up no later than 11:59pm Friday of the following week. I encourage you to complete make-ups for absences early on in the semester if you are able, to preserve some of your drops as a buffer. There is no limit on the number of make-ups that you may complete, but because you are not able to participate in class discussion if you are not present, the maximum possible score on a make-up submission is 9/10.

To make up an absence, you should find an outside source (news articles, TV episodes, videos, etc. all would qualify) that connects to an assigned reading from the week. You should write up 250-500 words briefly summarizing the outside source and providing a link or bibliographic information for it, and then discussing in your own words how it connects to an assigned reading for the week--does it reflect a particular topic or theme or finding? Challenge or contradict a claim made in the assigned reading? Provide an example of some larger social phenomenon? You should pick something about which you feel you have interesting things to say that complicate or expand on the content of the assigned reading that you are connecting.

If you are submitting make-ups for both class dates in a week, you must find two separate outside sources and connect them to two separate assigned readings for the week. NOTE: You may wish to compose your make-up in a separate program and then copy/paste it into this assignment entry field if you have concerns about internet connectivity.

For absences during presentation sessions, you should view two (2) recorded presentations from Week 13 and write a reflection of at least 250 words for each.

Take-Home Exams

For this course, we will have two (2) take-home short answer exams. You will receive the complete instructions and a list of questions a week before the due date. The exams are **open materials**, meaning that you may refer to all course readings, posted slides, video content, etc. as you write your answers, but you should not consult outside sources such as web searches or other people, and you should write your answers alone. **This also means that you cannot use ChatGPT or other LLM tools at any point in the process**, but since our exams will require you to directly and specifically engage with course materials, this is really to your advantage anyway.

Our first exam will be due as a file upload to Canvas no later than 11:59pm on Sunday, October 20th; our second exam will be due as a file upload to Canvas no later than 11:59pm on Sunday, December 8th.

These exams are graded out of 50 points and each one is worth 16 percentage points on your final grade, for a total of **32% of your final grade for the category**. Note that due to the semester schedule and deadlines for the major project, we will NOT be dropping an exam score, since there are only two of them. However, you will be able to choose the specific questions that you answer on each section of the exams.

Major Project

For this course, you will complete a major project. We will cover detailed instructions, including multiple project options, in Week 3. Altogether, your project will count for 30% of your final grade, broken down as follows:

Major Project Topic	2%
Major Project Annotated Bibliography	8%
Major Project Write-Up	16%
Major Project Presentation	4%

You will submit a short description of your chosen project “type” and topic as a text submission to Canvas no later than 11:59pm on Friday, September 27th (Week 4). The topic is graded pass/fail for thoughtful completion and is worth two (2) percentage points on your final grade; make sure you take any feedback into consideration when completing the annotated bibliography!

You will upload your annotated bibliography as a single file to Canvas no later than 11:59pm on Friday, October 11th (Week 6). The annotated bibliography is graded out of 100 points and is worth eight (8) percentage points on your final grade; make sure to take any feedback into consideration when completing the write-up!

You will upload your complete major project to Canvas no later than 11:59pm on Friday, November 22nd (Week 12). (This should be a single file unless you are doing the Creative Project option, in which case you will have one file for the project and one file for the artist's statement.) By submitting the project before Thanksgiving break, I hope that you will be able to better divide your time and effort among classes at the end of the semester. The complete major project is worth **16% of your final grade**.

The last two weeks of the semester and our final exam period (10:05am – 12:05pm on Saturday, December 14th) will be devoted to short presentations on the major projects. Some students may also sign up for a virtual presentation date in Week 13; this means you must submit a recorded presentation that will be posted in Canvas for your classmates to view. You will sign up for a presentation time slot via a Google spreadsheet made available in Week 11; presentations should be between 5-7 minutes in length, and if you are presenting in person, you should be prepared to answer one or two audience questions following.

Students presenting virtually will submit a link to their recorded presentation by 11:59pm on Monday, November 25th. Students presenting in-person should upload any materials they plan to use (slides, visual aids, links to video clips, etc.) to the Canvas assignment for presentations no later than 11:59pm the night BEFORE their scheduled presentation. Your presentation will be graded for thoughtful effort and timing and is worth **4% of your final grade**.

Course Grading Scheme

Course Intro Survey	2%
Attendance & Participation	36%
Take-Home Exams	32%
Major Project Topic	2%
Major Project Annotated Bibliography	8%
Major Project	16%
Major Project Presentation	4%
TOTAL	100%

IMPORTANT NOTE: Grades in this course are not negotiable, but I am happy to discuss course content and strategies for improvement in the future. I do not discuss grades via email, or immediately before or after class. I do require a 24-hour waiting period between receipt of a grade and discussion thereof. If you have questions about graded work, please come to office hours or set up an alternate time to meet and discuss them with me.

Grading Scale

A	92.5+
AB	87.5 – 92.49
B	82.5 – 87.49
BC	77.5 – 82.49
C	67.5 – 77.49
D	57.5 – 67.49
F	<57.5

Statement on academic dishonesty

TL;DR: I want to know what YOU think about our course topics and materials. Please do your best to express your original ideas so that we can have conversations that interest and benefit everyone, and I will recognize your effort and engagement with the course in assessment.

I take academic dishonesty and plagiarism extremely seriously, and I will pursue all avenues allowed by the university in the event that I discover any student misrepresenting the words or ideas of another, published or unpublished, as their own. In addition to any grade penalties imposed for the course, any student caught engaging in any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will be reported to the office of the Dean of Students to prevent continuing patterns of such behavior. For the university's policy on academic dishonesty and misconduct, see:

<http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/misconduct.html>

Please note: A score of “0” received for academic dishonesty CANNOT BE DROPPED, regardless of the normal mechanisms for the grade category.

Semester Schedule

Please see Canvas Modules for assigned readings and specific assignment deadlines. Plan to complete all assigned readings for the week BEFORE our first class meeting on Tuesday, in order to participate fully in discussions and get the most out of lecture content!

Week 1 (9/5):	Course intro
Week 2 (9/10 & 9/12):	(Potential) pregnancy & fertility
Week 3 (9/17 & 9/19):	Conditions of pregnancy
Week 4 (9/24 & 9/26):	(Social) control of pregnancy
Week 5 (10/1 & 10/3):	Criminalization of pregnancy
Week 6 (10/8 & 10/10):	Birth
Week 7 (10/15 & 10/17):	Healthcare decision-making for children
Week 8 (10/22 & 10/24):	Children in families & communities
Week 9 (10/29 & 10/31):	“The Family” as US social institution

Week 10 (11/5 & 11/7): Intersecting institutions

Week 11 (11/12 & 11/14): Intensive mothering & the myth of the “Supermom”

Week 12 (11/19 & 11/21): “Fitness” redux: Who is a “bad parent” & why?

Week 13 (11/26): (Virtual) Presentations!

Week 14 (12/3 & 12/5): Presentations!!

Week 15 (12/10): Presentations!!

Final Period

Sat, 12/14, 10:05 – 12:05: Presentations!!!