

SPRING 2018

**01:988:485 Motherhood: Nature and Culture, Policy and Politics**

Professor: Mary Trigg

This class will draw on memoirs, film, photography, magazines and journals, and historical literature to investigate the representations and realities of diverse mothers in the United States today, and in the past. We will consider historical contexts as well as contemporary policy and politics that shape the experiences of mothers and the ways we interpret and judge their lives and needs. The central issues this class will address include: (1) the maternal ideal and who does (and does not) exemplify it; (2) the emotional terrain of motherhood--diverse mothers' own feelings about pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood; (3) the ways that race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity inform the experiences of and resources available to mothers and the construction of motherhood in the United States; (4) the ways that mothers are represented (or represent themselves) in selected films, memoirs, photographs, and how we can "read" these in different historical contexts; (5) the labor of motherhood; and (6) the "value" of care work and motherhood. Together we will seek to understand the ways in which a complex and multifaceted cultural discourse about motherhood shapes diverse experiences of motherhood. Special attention will be paid to immigrant mothers, African American mothers, and low-income mothers in the twentieth-century and contemporary US.