

PHIL*4060xWMST*4010 PHILOSOPHY OF FEMINISM II [0.50]

Instructor: A. Robinson

Brief Course Synopsis:

This course will focus on the experience of maternity and its implications for ethics. We will read Amy Mullin's *Reconceiving Pregnancy and Childcare: Ethics, experience, and reproductive labor*, and Lisa Baraitser's *Maternal Encounters: The ethics of interruption*. These authors are concerned with a similar set of questions:

- What can we learn from women's experience of pregnancy, birth, and childrearing?
- What does pregnancy and motherhood mean for women?
- What can pregnancy, birth, and childrearing teach us about ethics?

Both authors argue that there is something unique to women's experience of pregnancy and childrearing. However, they take significantly different approaches to this topic. Mullin draws upon the work of phenomenologists, dependency theorists, and care ethicists. From this perspective, she claims that attending to women's experience will allow us to form a new understanding of pregnancy and childrearing. She then argues that women's experience can teach all of us something important about ethics. In contrast, Baraitser expands upon the insights of contemporary European philosophers and psychoanalytic theorists (Kristeva, Irigaray, Levinas, etc.). Her central claim is that the experience of mothering creates a 'maternal subjectivity', and that this radically de-centered subjectivity has important ethical implications.

In addition to those above, some of the questions we will explore during this course are:

- How do these approaches, which being from women's experience, allow us to answer ethical questions about abortion, custody rights, or gamete donation?
- What possibilities do these theories open up in relation to social policy and social work?
- What would it mean to create a feminine or maternal subjectivity? How might we do this?
- Is there a common 'maternal experience' that mothers share?
- Is there a risk or danger in privileging maternity in women's lives? Do these theories reduce women to their reproductive function?
- In what ways do these theories ask us to think differently about our own lives?

Prerequisite(s): 1.00 credits in Philosophy at the 3000 level or PHIL*2060

Required Texts

- Baraitser, Lisa. 2009. *Maternal Encounters: the ethics of interruption*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge.
- Mullin, Amy. 2005. *Reconceiving Pregnancy and Childcare: Ethics, experience, and reproductive labor*. Cambridge University Press.