

Centre for Continuing Education

A humanities perspective on being a mother in Australia today

Joan Garvan

According to Barbara Pocock our era is characterized by a 'work-family clash' and Anne Summers believes we have reached the 'end of equality'. In this context meanings associated with being-a-mother (or a father) have changed immeasurably over recent decades and there are high rates of depression for women after the birth of an infant. This course will provide snapshots in the form of Report Cards on developments and debates from within the humanities that explore this territory and provide for new perspectives. The course will be of interest to practitioners such as midwives, maternal and child health nurses, doctors or social workers who are working with women or families.

The course will begin with sociological work on the family and propositions on individualization and reflexivity. This is followed by work on equity and how this relates to the social structuring of care and women-as-mothers. We will turn to findings from studies on the Transition to Parenthood issues and debates. Then we move to work from within midwifery and the maternal and child health services and focus on sites of tension between continuity and change. After this the course introduces some emergent work from welfare economics, literature, philosophy and psychoanalysis to demonstrate the wealth of materials that can contribute to renewed understandings of what it is to be a mother in the context of change.

Required reading especially pre reading: There are numerous articles and texts set out on my internet site at: www.maternalhealthandwellbeing.com participants may like to dip into some of these resources.

Joan's research is in Sociology and Gender. She has been awarded a doctorate from the Australian National University and her thesis was titled: *Maternal Ambivalence in contemporary Australia: navigating equity and care* (available to view online). She has presented papers at a dozen conferences including: the Australian Institute for Family Studies, the Australian Sociology Association, and the Association for Research on Mothering at Queensland University, York University in Toronto, and in New York. Joan completed a Master of Arts in Women's Studies and Human Geography in the early 1990s and has worked with both the Asia Partnership for Human Development and Australian Council for Overseas Aid. Joan was both a mature aged student and a mature aged mum and her children have now blossomed into teenagers.

DATES/TIMES: 6-8pm on 8 Tuesdays from 7 February
FEE: \$195

COURSE LOCATION: The venue for this course can be found on your tax invoice/receipt enclosed under "Course Information". Please allow enough time to locate your course venue on the day.

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