



The Politics of Motherhood: Maternalism, Maternity and Mothering

Thursday 5 and Friday 6 February 2026

Organised by Ruth Davidson, Anna Muggeridge, Eve Pennington and Beckie Rutherford

Keynote address by Dr Sarah Crook, Swansea University.



**UNIVERSITY of
WORCESTER**

This conference is open to everyone and will take place via Zoom on Thursday 5 and Friday 6 February. This is our confirmed programme of speakers, and we will be running parallel sessions on both days. Please [follow this link](#) to register your interest and keep an eye on our [Bluesky profile](#) for further updates.

This conference is supported by a UKRI Future Leaders' Fellowship 'Voices of Motherhood' Project reference MR/Y018184/1 and the University of Worcester.

Thursday 5 February

9:00 - 9:15	Welcome and housekeeping	Ruth Davidson, Anna Muggeridge, Eve Pennington and Beckie Rutherford
--------------------	--------------------------	--

9:30 - 10:45 Panel 1A <i>'Other mothers' and care</i>	Non-mothers? Motherhood and the London Foundling Hospital, 1900–1950	Claire Phillips
	Other mothers: rights, responsibilities and experiences of mothering in (social) care histories	Claudia Soares
	Nurses or Substitute-Mothers? Mothering and Residential Nursery Care in Post-War England	Katharina Rowold
	Wet nursing: a radical act of care	Esther Freeman

9:30 - 10:45 Panel 1B <i>Motherhood in fiction and non-fiction</i>	Wife, Mother, Painter: exploring the defiant domestic lens of Joanna Mary Boyce through Symbolist Poetics	Ruth Stacey
	The Personal as Political: Women's Maternal Labours as Political Protest in <i>Maternity: Letters From Working Women</i> (1915)	Jessica Cox
	Diasporic Motherhood and the Politics of Home in Maureen Blackwood's film <i>Home Away from Home</i> (1993)	anna osarose
	'I'm a f**king mum!': Reclaiming Motherhood Behind and Beyond Prison Walls	Nicola Campbell and Monica Thomas

11:00 - 12:00 <i>Keynote lecture</i>	Cradles of Discontent: Motherhood as a pathway to activism in modern Britain	Sarah Crook
--	--	-------------

12:00 - 12:45	Lunch break
----------------------	--------------------

12:45 - 14:00 Panel 2A <i>Deviant or demonised?</i>	Idealizing and Demonizing Motherhood in Interwar Wales: Reforms, Campaigns and Silences	Stephanie Ward
	Sympathy and Scorn: Politics of British Lesbian Mothers in the 1970s	Ellen Hope Durban
	'Unfit' Mothers': Sex Work, AIDS and the Politics of Motherhood in 1975-1990s Britain	Lola Dickinson
	Motherhood, Magdalene Laundries and Memory in the South-East of Ireland	Mairéad Butler

12:45 - 14:00 Panel 2B <i>Expectations of motherhood</i>	The marriage bar and expectation of motherhood for professional women	Helen Glew
	Women's liberation and motherhood	Sue Bruley
	The work of motherhood in Ireland 1945-1974	Aviv Corrigan
	Defining Motherhood: Does Surrogacy Law Protect Women or Restrict Their Autonomy	Felicity Miles

14:15 - 15:45 Panel 3A <i>Cultural explorations of motherhood</i>	'Acting, Pregnant?': An Exploration of Motherhood in the Alternative Theatre of the Women's Liberation Movement	Georgia Dalton
	Thatcherism and Gothic Maternity in the Fiction of the 1980s	Lucy Arnold
	Motherhoods, Hegemonic Maternity, and Reproductive Stigma: Nollywood as a Site of Negotiation and Surveillance	Temitope Labinjo
	Ectogenesis and the Mother: the history of ectogenesis in literature, featuring motherless machines, feminist utopias, infertility dystopias, and capitalist nightmares	Eleanor McAdam

14:15 - 15:45 Panel 3B <i>Motherhood and social class</i>	'Minding the baby': Forward's Women's Column and Socialist Maternity	Anna Marie Hill
	'The momentarily alien and overwhelming domesticity of one's home!': Shared Motherhood and Domesticity in the Home of Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby	Tabitha Lambert-Bramwell
	Motherhood, class and struggles of social reproduction in reading and writing groups	Kate Wilson
	'Netmums is like ShoeZone, Mumsnet is like Clarks': Defining differences in online mothering cultures and the problematisation of social class	Charlie Bell

16:00 - 17:15 Panel 4A <i>Childbirth and becoming a mother</i>	I found the narratives around 'equality' with caring unhelpful. Letting go of current social pressure for equality has really freed us up': Exploring couples' articulations of gender equality while navigating the planning of care for their child's first year	Clare Matysova
	Tracing "Birth Rape": The Politics of Naming Sexual Violence in Childbirth	Caitlin Daly
	The Politics of Care in Childbirth: An Analysis of Milli Hill's Writings	Laura Lazzari

	50 years of becoming a mother	Kate Errington and Charlotte Faircloth
--	-------------------------------	--

16:00 - 17:15 Panel 4B <i>Motherhood, community and identity</i>	Mothers as the first teachers: the legacies of first-generation Muslim mothers who migrated to Postwar Britain	Muminah Hussain
	Motherhood Across Borders: The Ingiltere Türkiyeli Kadınlar Birliği (Union of Turkish Women in the United Kingdom, ITKB) and Turkish Migrant Women's Transnational Activism in the United Kingdom in the 1970s	Sercan Çınar
	Lesbian Information Activism and Lesbian Motherhood in the late twentieth century Britain	Katherine Wallace

Friday 6 February

9:30 - 9:45	Welcome and housekeeping reminders	Ruth Davidson, Anna Muggeridge, Eve Pennington and Beckie Rutherford
--------------------	------------------------------------	--

9:45 - 11:00 Panel 5A <i>Lone motherhood</i>	'Chicken-hearted fathers can strut about as if nothing had happened': single mothers, gender bias and child maintenance claims in Belfast, Northern Ireland, during the 1920s	Caitlín Smith
	Single Motherhood as an Act of Feminist Resistance: Illegitimacy, Equality, and the Unsent 1944 Letter from Claire Madden	Kelly Bosomworth
	False Desertion and Fancy Men: Lone Mothers as Benefit Fraudsters, 1950-1970	Charlotte Wildman

	Lone Motherhood in Place and Time: Exploring the Impact of Social and Spatial Inequalities upon Lone Mother Life Course Trajectories in Easterhouse, Glasgow 1980-2021	Mhairi-Jean Ross
--	--	------------------

9:45 - 11:00 Panel 5B <i>Motherhood, war and peace</i>	Maternalism and Peace in Inter-war Britain, 1918-1939	Emily Calcraft
	'She Was An Excellent Mother To All Her Children': Infanticide in England and Wales during the Second World War	Daniel Grey
	Women, Needlecraft and Kids: the value of needlecraft and maintenance activities in the home during the Second World War in Britain	Esther Dobson
	'She, too, is a soldier on the home front': Women, Motherhood, and American Identity in Japanese American incarceration camp newspapers, 1942-1945.	Maddie Hale

11:15 - 12:30 Panel 6A <i>Motherhood as a claim to authority</i>	Motherhood, religion, politics and citizenship in the life and writings of Louise Donaldson, 1880-1950	Mary Clare Martin
	Mothers at the forefront: Labour women and motherhood in south Wales, c.1920s – 1969	Micaela Panes
	Respirator Mother Hackers	Coreen McGuire
	Motherhood in the campaign for women's ordination, 1978-1994	Grace Heaton

11:15 - 12:30 Panel 6B	Maternity following uterine surgery in the mid-Victorian period: Tracing patient case notes and genealogical records'	Hannah Palmer
	Opening the conversation: Examining the value and challenges of representing pregnancy loss within a national museum collection	Harriet Jackson

<p>(In)Fertility: conception, pregnancy and loss</p>	<p>Historicising “the Choice”: finding histories of (not) becoming a mother in modern Britain</p>	<p>Anna Muggeridge</p>
	<p>Feminist understandings of surrogacy and motherhood</p>	<p>Laura Beers</p>

<p>12:30 - 13:30</p>	<p>Lunch break</p>
-----------------------------	---------------------------

<p>13:30 - 15:00</p> <p>Panel 7A</p> <p><i>Faithful mothers</i></p>	<p>Race science and the dangers of ‘marrying out’: communal purity and assimilation anxiety in 20th century Jewish Britain</p>	<p>Aleph Ross</p>
	<p>Deciding to become mothers, or choosing childlessness, Christian women in modern Britain</p>	<p>Dawn Llewellyn</p>
	<p>Motherhood and identity transformation: a coaching perspective</p>	<p>Fatima Adam</p>
	<p>‘In my case it would be so fatal’: Pregnancy and Zionism in a letter to Marie Stopes</p>	<p>Sydni Zastre</p>
	<p>Faith, Motherhood, and the Politics of Belonging in Digital Britain</p>	<p>Angela Davis</p>

<p>13:30 - 15:00</p> <p>Panel 7B</p>	<p>Mothers against the ‘Red Menace’: The Politicization of Motherhood in Anti-Communist Activism in Interwar Britain and Ireland</p>	<p>Anna Lively</p>
	<p>‘Kill Bill 1776’: The Mothers’ Movement, Maternalism, and the ‘Defense of the United States’, 1940-1941</p>	<p>Wendy Toon</p>
	<p>‘Too many women living in shoes’ – motherhood as a motivation for childcare activism, 1970 - 1990</p>	<p>Rosa Schling</p>

<i>Motherhood as a catalyst for activism</i>	The educational activism of Black mothers and othermothers in the late 20th century	Jess White
	'Women with children ... were our equivalent to the Marxist Proletariat' (Sheila Rowbotham): Maternal activism in second-wave feminism	Krista Cowman

15:15 - 16:00 <i>Plenary session</i>	Concluding comments and discussion of next steps	Ruth Davidson, Anna Muggeridge, Eve Pennington and Beckie Rutherford
--	--	--