

## BOSTON COLLEGE

## SC 008.01 Marriage and the Family

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Description: This course analyzes sociological theories and research on the family with particular attention to a) the family and historical eras; b) changes in gendered expectations and behavior; c) comparisons of family life by gender, social class, and race; d) the family and the life cycle; e) contemporary alternatives to the "good provider/cult of domesticity family" common between 1830 and 1980; and f) policy.

Goal: To learn the sociological perspective and its related methods, thus adding to your repertoire of analytical skills and enabling you to better understand the family as an institution.

Core Course Characteristics. SC 008 is a core course and as such includes the required characteristics of core courses at Boston College:

1. Discussion of Perennial Questions. The course looks at some fundamental sociological questions: What is universal and what is variable about the family through history and across cultures? How is continuity possible, and how is change possible? What is the interaction between biological processes and social forces? What is the relationship between individual needs, family needs, and those of large scale institutions (e.g., government, the corporation)?
2. Culturally Diverse Perspectives. The course incorporates two types of culturally diverse materials: a) Cross-cultural anthropological information (e.g., the family lives of hunters and gatherers who have been studied in modern times), and b) Multicultural views of family life in our own society, as well as how race/ethnicity, social class, and gender intertwine.
3. Historical View of the Subject. The course incorporates two types of historical information: a) Anthropological information on the family in prehistory (e.g., tools and homesites of prehistoric humans and proto-humans), and b) Family life during various historical eras in our own society and effects on family life of macro level events and policies (e.g., the institution of slavery and its abolition; industrialization; World War II; suburbanization and the Baby Boom; the Vietnam era and the second wave of the women's movement; the 1980's era with its governmental policies leading to an increase in hunger and homelessness; and the 1990's and the new millennium with increasing globalization. The course also discusses how myths about past family life lead to distorted perceptions of current family life.
4. Methodology of the Discipline. The readings and the lecture materials illustrate a range of types of sociological methods. There is a disproportionate amount of indepth-interview studies, but other approaches are represented as well; e.g., large scale statistical studies (especially in the demographic articles), and participant observation (Thorne's work in schools on gender socialization). There are no separate lectures on methodology, but relevant methodological issues are discussed in connection with selected readings.

5. Strong Writing Component. The course requires two types of writing: a) A substantial term paper combining library research and personal observation. The topic must relate to the student's own family--either his or her (1) family history (collecting information on several generations), (2) family of orientation (parental family), or (3) current family (e.g., some students are engaged, married, have a child). Students are required to make a double type of comparison in the paper. They must compare what various sociological authors have to say on their topic and they must also compare their own situation to what the literature says, noting in what ways it is like the literature and in what ways it is different from the literature. b) Essay exams. The essay midterm and the comprehensive essay final stress knowledge of the readings and require the students to write answers that show that they have understood the readings and can utilize them in an organized fashion. Exam study sheets (as defined and specified in class) often are allowed.

6. Creating a Philosophy of Life. The course asks students to consider two general issues related to developing a philosophy of life. One issue is to come to terms (especially in the term paper) with some aspect of their own family. Often this also is connected to the question of what kind of family they might wish to create. The second issue is to think about what responsibilities one has regarding other peoples' families especially by means of influencing family policy (government, corporate, school policy). What these two issues have in common is that they raise questions about a) what is a family, b) what are the pros and cons of different forms of family life, and c) what kind of families should we strive for--either personally or at the policy level. Family is what gets us from one generation to the next. Without the production, rearing, and socialization of children, a society ceases to exist. The question for each student then is, what are one's own responsibilities--either in private, occupational, or public life--in this endeavor of our society to reproduce itself and thereby to continue to exist.

Specific Requirements:

1. Knowledge of material presented in class, including announcements.  
Attendance is expected; a pattern of absences may result in a lower grade. Electronic devices are to be turned off in class and put away.
2. Reading list.
3. Term paper based on a combination of a) library research and b) personal experience/observation + analysis. 10 pages typewritten. Must get topic approved, follow approved format, and keep back-up copy for your files. Keep working notes, articles, etc. until paper is graded. Follow instructions, including instructions on what types of references are acceptable.
4. Midterm (essay exam on lectures, films, & reading). (Attendance mandatory)
5. Final (comprehensive essay exam on lectures, films, & reading).  
(Attendance mandatory.)

Due Dates: (Note: It is important to begin work on the term paper early. It is not the kind of assignment that you can do at the last minute.)

Midterm: . Friday Oct. 13, 2006

Term paper: Mon. Nov.13, 2006

Final exam: on the date announced by the university

[If this date is a problem, please arrange to take a different course.]

Note: Papers more than two weeks late will not be accepted for even partial credit unless there is an emergency sufficiently serious to require the intervention of the Dean of the College of A & S.

Grading: midterm 20%; term paper 35%; final exam 45%. Must have a passing grade on the final exam to pass the course.

Definition of letter grades (as stated in the BC Bulletin):

A Excellent; B Good; C Satisfactory; D Passing but unsatisfactory; F Failure.

Paperback for purchase:

Arlene S. Skolnick and Jerome H. Skolnick (eds.) Family In Transition  
14th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, © 2007.

All other readings are available on electronic reserve.

### Overview of Topics

- I. Introduction
- II. Stratification--Class, Race, and Gender
- III. The Changing Family
  - A. Historical Trends
  - B. Demographic Trends
- IV. Gender and Inequality
- V. Couples
  - A. Sexuality and Love
  - B. Dating, Relationships, and Courtship
  - C. Marriage
- VI. Pregnancy, Birth, and the Reproductive Revolution
- VII. Parents and Children
  - A. The Meaning of Children and Parenthood
  - B. Child Care
  - C. Complexities and Varieties of Family Relationships
- VIII. Divorce and Remarriage
- IX. Politics, Policy, and the Future of The Family

### Readings Available as Follows:

SS = Skolnick and Skolnick reader.

The other readings are available through BC electronic reserves.

- Go to BC home page,
- Use "Quick Links" to reach Library home page
- Under Resources, click on "Course Reserves"
- Sign in (With Username and Password)
- Search for course (e.g., by Professor's name)
- Locate specific reading
- Open it (Go to "Click here to view article")
- Print

Sessions 1, 2, 3, 4: MODELS, CHANGES AND ORIGINS (9/6; 9/8; 9/11; 9/13)

Introduction, p. 1 SS

Giddens, *The Global Revolution in Family and Personal Life*, p. 26 SS

Sessions 5, 6, 7: STRATIFICATION: CLASS, RACE, & GENDER (9/15; 9/18; 9/20)

Graham, *Our Kind of People* (Jack & Jill, and other excerpts)

Brief articles on social class:

Blanton, Soaring Rents Squeezing Hub Families

Beam, Of Service and Privilege, Now and Then

Troy, Financial Gap Grows for College-Bound

Smith, Asthma Tops Childhood Illnesses

Ely, An Ola May for My Daughter

Gilbert, *The American Class Structure in Age of Growing Inequality*

Bailey, Harvard's Fund Salaries May Hit \$40m

Thomas, Harvard Education:...Lives of School Service Workers...

Ehrenreich *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America*.

Chapter Two: "Scrubbing in Maine" (Excerpt), pp. 70-111. Also

"Evaluation," (brief excerpt) pp. 196-97.

Kozol, *Rachel and Her Children* "Overview," "Mood of Resignation"

Brief articles on homelessness/housing

Blanton, Soaring Rents... (review)

Parvensky, "Tent Flap: Adequate, Affordable Housing Would Be

Preferable to a Tent City

Anon. Builder: High Housing Costs Are Self-Inflicted

Rubin, Families on the Fault Line, p 360, SS

Newman, Family Values against the Odds, p. 329 SS

Sessions 8,9,10 THE CHANGING FAMILY: MYTHS & HISTORICAL TRENDS (9/22;9/25;9/27)

Genovese, The Myth of the Absent Family (during slavery)

Cowan, 20th Century Changes in Household Technology

Session 11 THE CHANGING FAMILY: DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS (9/29)

Uhlenberg, Death and the Family

Skolnick, The Life Course Revolution, p 32, SS

Bowles and Meade, New Rules of Retirement Savings

Hernandez, Changes in Demographics of Families, p. 40 SS

Sessions 12, 13, 14, 15 GENDER AND INEQUALITY (10/2; 10/4; 10/6; 10/11)

Bernard, The Good-Provider Role: Its Rise & Fall

Kowalchuk, U.S.Army Air Corps, Nurse, 1942-45

WGBH, American Experience, Fly Girls

Kahn, Spirit of the Letter

Olson, "When Women Were Supposed to Stay Home"

Evans, *Born For Liberty*, "Decade of Discovery," pp.263-85. Also

"Politicization of Personal Life"(excerpt, pp.,287-290).

Kimmel, *Manhood In America*, Preface, Intro, The Masculine Mystique

Session 16: Friday Oct 13, 2006 MIDTERM EXAM

Session 17: Gender continued. (10/16)

Session 18: SEXUALITY AND LOVE (10/18)

Schalet, Raging Hormones, Regulated Love: Adolescent Sexuality in the United States and the Netherlands, p. 129 SS.  
Bailey, Sexual Revolution(s), p. 134 SS

Session 19: GENDER IDENTITY, COURTSHIP, MATE SELECTION & THE WEDDING (10/20)

England & Thomas, Decline of Date & Rise of College Hook Up, p 151 SS  
Casper and Bianchi, Cohabitation, p. 172 SS

Session 20 MARRIAGE CONTRACT (10/23)

Assignment: Bring to this class meeting a list of issues for possible inclusion in a marriage contract.

Session 21: MARRIAGE: INFERTILITY; ADOPTION (10/25)

Friedman, Who Are Our Children?: Adoption, Past & Present, p 272 SS.

Session 22: TYPES OF MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS; COMMUNICATION (10/27)

Skolnick, Grounds for Marriage: How Relationships Succeed/Fail p 162 SS  
Furstenberg, Can Marriage Be Saved? p. 182, SS  
Newman, Family Values against the Odds, p 329 SS (review)  
Chauncey, Why Do Gays Want to Marry? p 95 SS  
Goodman, All the Love That's Fit  
Anon., Excerpts from Decision: Petitioners Entitled To Respect  
Monan, "Equal" Does Not Mean "Same"  
Alexander, Romney Insults Same-Sex Couples

Sessions 23-24: CAREERS, PAID EMPLOYMENT, DIVISION OF LABOR (10/30;11/1)

Hochschild, with Machung, The Second Shift Three excerpts:  
"The Second Shift..."(the case of Nancy and Evan Holt), p 343 in SS;  
"Marriage in the Stalled Revolution" and "The Family Myth of the Traditional: Frank and Carmen Delacorte." pp. 11-21 and 59-74 (electronic reserve)  
Gerson & Jacobs, The Work-Home Crunch, p 350 SS  
Presser, The Economy That Never Sleeps, p. 377 SS  
Warren & Tyagi, "Why Middle-Class Mothers & Fathers Are Going Broke. Read especially pp. 387-97 SS

(Note: The comparative articles on Asian, Hispanic, and African-American families are also relevant, as are various articles on parenting and children.)

Session 25: MARRIAGE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WIVES (11/3)

Hines & Malley-Morrison, Issues in Definiton of Family Violence & Abuse, p. 512 SS

Sessions 26, 27, 28: PREGNANCY, BIRTH, & MEDICALIZATION (11/6; 11/8; 11/10)

Lectures and video cover this material.  
Tayler, A Baby Factory for Rich Countries

Sessions 29, 30, 31: THE MEANING OF CHILDREN & PARENTHOOD  
(11/13;11/15;11/17)

Mintz, *Beyond Sentimentality: American Childhood*, p. 291 SS  
 Cowan & Cowan, *New Families: Modern Couples as New Pioneers*, p. 244 SS  
 Tench, *With Help, 17-year-old Growing into Role of Single Father*  
 Lyon, *Uncommon Sensitivity*

Schor, *Born to Buy*. Chap.10: "Decommercializing Childhood: Beyond  
 Big Bird, Bratz Dolls, & the Back Street Boys." (Excerpt) pp.  
 200-11.

Meltz, "When You Give A Toy, You Endorse Values."

Jackson, "Diabetes & the Trash Food Industry"

Leslie, "For Kids, Reducing TV Viewing May Be A Key To Preventing  
 Obesity"

Conger, "Watch Not, Want Not? Kids' TV Time Tied to Consumerism"

Conger "TV in Bedrooms Linked to Lower Test Scores."

Collins, *The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture*

Hays, *The Mommy Wars*, p 59, SS

Townsend, *Four Facets of Fatherhood*, p. 282 SS

Gerson, *Children of the Gender Revolution*, p. 117 SS

Galinsky, *What Children Think about Their Working Parents*, p 304 SS

Bengston, Biblarz, & Roberts, *How Families Still Matter*, p 315 SS

Session 32: CHILD CARE: PAID AND UNPAID (11/20)

Clawson & Gerstel, *Caring For Our Young: Child Care in Europe and the  
 United States*, p. 264 SS

Sessions 33, 34: VARIETIES OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS (11/27; 11/29)

Baca Zinn and Wells, *Diversity within Latino Families*, p. 422 SS

Shon and Ja, *Asian Families*

Pyke, "'The Normal American Family' as an Interpretive Structure of  
 Family Life among Grown Children of Korean and Vietnamese  
 Immigrants," p. 469 SS

Taylor, *Diversity within African American Families*, p. 398 SS

Stacey, *Gay & Lesbian Families: Queer Like Us*, p 448

Wen, *Youngsters Speak Up, Loud and Clear*

Thomas, *Not Better, Not Worse, Just Different*

Sessions 35, 36: DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE (12/1; 12/4)

Hackstaff, *Divorce Culture: Quest for Relational Equality*" p. 188 SS

Kelly & Emery, *Children's Adjustment Following Divorce: Risk and  
 Resilience Perspectives*, p. 200 SS

Mason, *Modern American Stepfamily: Problems and Possibilities*, p. 223

SS

Sessions 37, 38: POLITICS, POLICY, & FUTURE OF THE FAMILY (12/6; 12/8)

MacDonald, *All Souls: A Family Story from Southie* Chap.1: "All Souls  
 Night: (Excerpt) pp. 1-12.

Travis: *Prisoners' Families and Children* p 491 SS

Kozol, Rachel And Her Children (review)

Furstenberg, *Can Marriage Be Saved* (review) p 182 SS