

SC008 Spring 2007
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MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore the family from a sociological perspective. Using lectures, readings, movies, and discussions, we will shatter common myths about our past and our present. We will discuss how we define family, get a historical overview of the transformations American families underwent, analyze the ways we construct families, and address the relationship between our families and larger social forces. After an overview of the family and kinship, as well as a discussion of different approaches to studying and theorizing families, we will study the family “across the life course” (even though we will recognize that contemporary families do not evolve following a predictable trajectory). We will focus on the contemporary families but also attempt to situate them in a broader historical context. Throughout the course, we will stay tuned to the issues of race/ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexuality. We will also explore the relationship of families to social policies and social change.

We will begin by discussing the social forces that affect the choice of mate (and whether we choose one; or more than one). Then we will turn to marriages and partnerships in all their modern diversity. We will focus on the social forces that shape relationships and on power dynamics within relationships. We will discuss love, sex, communication, work (at home and in the labor force), and family violence. Next, we will examine parenting and socialization. We will look at the ways people make decisions about parenting (or not), and examine various experiences of mothering, fathering, and childhood. Finally, we will conclude by looking at “uncoupling” and “recoupling” – separation, divorce, widowhood, and remarriage, and explore family experiences of older adults.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Class Participation

15% of your final grade will be based on class attendance and participation. Please come to class ready to engage with the material and participate in class discussion.

2. Weekly Blogs

30% of your grade will be based on the quality of your weekly blog entries. In the beginning of the semester, you should create a blog using a blog hosting service of your choice (e.g., <http://www.blogger.com/>) and let me know the URL for your blog. Your blog should be public so that other students in the course can read it and comment on it. Throughout the semester, you will post your blog entries each week by noon on Monday. The entries should be brief statements commenting on each of the assigned readings for that week. Be analytic and critical, but also let me know what you’ve learned. And, most importantly, ask questions! If something is unclear, please let me know in your blog, and I will address the issue in class. You should make sure to accomplish the following three goals in each of your blog entries: (1) summarize the assigned readings; (2) critically evaluate the reading and state your opinion; and (3) answer the questions that I will post on the website by Thursday night. Each blog entry will be worth 3 points; if your blog is not meeting my standards and not receiving full credit, I will notify you by email. There are 13 weeks in the course; that means that if you get full credit for all of your blog entries, you can get three “freebies.”

3. Debate Teams

25% of your grade will be based on your performance as a member of a debate team. In the second week of classes, we will decide on debate topics and divide into debate teams. Each team will participate in one debate by defending a certain position regarding a controversial issue. To prepare for the debate, each team

will collect the evidence for its position AND against the position of its opponents. Each team will have to submit their evidence to me one week before their debate is scheduled. To ensure equal participation of all team members, I will ask that team members evaluate each other's participation after their debate is over. You will receive more detailed instructions on the debate team exercise during the second week of classes.

4. Group Projects.

30% of your grade will be based on your performance conducting a research project in collaboration with other students. During the second week of the class, you will break into research teams. Each team will select one of the topics covered by the course. Then, under my guidance, you will plan and execute a small research project. By the end of the semester, you will write a paper presenting the results of your research. You will submit three drafts of your research project paper: The first one will lay out your research plan and include Introduction, Literature Review, and Data and Methods sections; the second draft will be a complete preliminary draft of the research paper; and the third draft will be your final research paper. We will address the group project requirement in detail during the third week of classes.

YOUR GRADE

Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

1. Class participation – 15%
2. Weekly blog – 30%
3. Debate team performance – 25%
4. Group projects – 30% (first draft 5%, second draft 5%, final draft 20%)

COURSE POLICIES

The course is based on an interactive relationship between the instructor and students, as well as on collaboration among the students. You are strongly encouraged to ask questions in class, and to come and see me with additional questions. Email is the best way to get in touch with me outside of the classroom – I check my email very often. Email is the best way to get a quick question answered or to set up an appointment to discuss something at length.

Throughout the course, you are expected to do all your course work on time. Unless you have a valid (and documented) excuse, I will not give credit for late blog entries or group project submissions.

Finally, a note on feedback. I would like to know how I could make this course experience as useful and interesting as possible. Therefore, in the end of every week of classes I will ask you to submit a sheet of paper with your name, the date, and at least one sentence of reaction to that week of classes, indicating what you learned, or something you liked or did not like, found interesting or controversial, found clear or too simplistic, or found confusing and in need of further (or better) explanation. You may also submit comments on the course in general.

REQUIRED READINGS

The readings for this course will be placed on the electronic reserve in the library: <http://www.bc.edu/libraries/services/reserves/>. You can easily access these readings by logging in (using your BC login and password) and searching by instructor name, course number, article author name, etc. Make sure to print out these readings and bring them to class.

Most assigned readings in this class differ from the usual textbook readings in that they often reflect the position and opinions of their authors. I want you to approach them critically and analytically – pay attention to authors' arguments as well as the evidence they use to substantiate them.

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

I. What is Family?

January 16-18: Introduction.

January 23-25: What is Family?

- David Popenoe. 1993. "American Family Decline, 1960-1990: A Review and Appraisal." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, v.55: 527-542.
- Judith Stacey. 1993. "Good Riddance to "The Family": A Response to David Popenoe." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, v.55: 545-547.
- Philip Cowan. 1993. "The Sky Is Falling, But Popenoe's Analysis Won't Help Us Do Anything About It." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, v.55: 548-553.

January 31-February 1: Theory and Methods

- "Reading Research" exercise -- TBA

February 6-8: History of the Family.

- John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman. 1997. "Family Life and the Regulation of Deviance." Pp. 15-38 in *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, 2nd edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- John D'Emilio. 1983. "Capitalism and Gay Identity." Pp. 100-113 in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*. Edited by Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Tompson. New York: Monthly Review Press.

II. Relationships.

February 13-15: Dating and Mating.

- Barbara Risman and Pepper Schwartz. 2002. "After the Sexual Revolution: Gender Politics in Teen Dating." *Contexts*, 1, Spring, pp. 16-24.
- England, Paula, and Reuben Thomas. 2007. The Decline of the Date and the Rise of the College Hook Up. Pp.151-162 in Arlene S. Skolnick & Jerome H. Skolnick (Eds.), *Family in Transition* (14th ed.). New York: Allyn & Bacon.

February 20-22: Marriage, cohabitation, partnership.

*****First draft of the Group Project due February 20*****

- Stephanie Coontz. 1997. "The Future of Marriage." Pp. 77-95 (Chapter 4) in *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms With America's Changing Families*. New York: Basic Books.
- Elise Harris. 2000. "Can Marriage Be Saved? An Unsentimental Case for Matrimony." *Lingua Franca*, November.
- Gerstel, Naomi, and Natalia Sarkisian. 2006. "Marriage: The Good, the Bad, and the Greedy." *Contexts*, 5, 4, 16-21.
- Brown, Susan I. 2005. "How Cohabitation Is Reshaping American Families." *Contexts*, 4, 3, 33-27.

February 27-March 1: Family and Work.

- Arlie Russell Hochschild. 1990. "Joey's Problem: Nancy and Evan Holt." Pp. 33-58 (Chapter 4) in *The Second Shift*. Avon Books.
- Joan Williams. 2000. "Introduction" and "Is Domesticity Dead? (Chapter 1)." Pp. 1-39 in *Unbending Gender: Why Family and Work Conflict and What to Do About It*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Christopher Carrington. 2002. "Domesticity and the Political Economy of Lesbian and Gay Families." Pp. 82-107 in *Families at Work: Expanding the Boundaries*. Edited by Naomi Gerstel, Dan Clawson, and Robert Zussman. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

March 6-8: No classes, Spring Break!

March 13-15: Family Violence.

- Ann Jones. 1994. "Why Doesn't She Leave?" Pp. 129-139, 152-166 in *Next Time, She'll Be Dead: Battering and How to Stop It*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- James Ptacek. 1988. "Why Do Men Batter Their Wives?" Pp. 133-157 in *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*. Edited by Kerti Yllö and Michele Bogrod. Sage Publications.
- Felson, Richard. 2006. Is Violence Against Women About Women or About Violence? *Contexts*, 5, 2, 21-25.

III. Parenting.

March 20-22: Childbearing and childrearing.

- Chris Hafner-Eaton and Laurie K. Pearce. 1994. "Balancing Individual Freedoms and Protection of the Public Health." *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, v. 19: pp. 813-820.
- Friedman, Lawrence. 2007. Who Are Our Children? Adoption, Past and Present. P.. 272-281 in Arlene S. Skolnick & Jerome H. Skolnick (Eds.), *Family in Transition* (14th ed.). New York: Allyn & Bacon.
- Sharon Hays. 2003. "Money and Morality." Pp. 9-24 in *Flat Broke with Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Block, Fred, Anna C. Korteweg, and Kerry Woodward, with Zach Schiller and Imrul Mazid. 2006. The Compassion Gap in American Poverty Policy. *Contexts*, 5, 2, 14-20.
- Dan Clawson and Naomi Gerstel. 2002. "Caring For Young Children: What the U.S. Can Learn from Some European Examples." *Contexts*, v. 4: pp. 28-35.

March 27- 29: Motherhood.

- Sharon Hays. 1996. "From Rods to Reasoning." Pp. 19-50 in *The Cultural Contradictions of Mothering*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Ann Crittenden. 2001. "Introduction." Pp. 1-12 in *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World Is Still the Least Valued*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Patricia Hill Collins. 2000. "Black Women and Motherhood." Pp. 173-200 in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge.
- Edin, Kathryn, and Maria Kefalas. 2005. Unmarried with Children. *Contexts*, 4, 2, 16-22.

April 3: "Analyzing My Family" exercise -- TBA

April 5: No class, Easter Break.

April 10-12: Fatherhood.

- Joseph H. Pleck. 1987. "American Fathering in Historical Perspective." Pp. 83-97 in *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity*. Edited by Michael S. Kimmel. Sage Publications.
- Francine Deutsch. 2002. "Halving It All: The Mother and Mr. Mom." *Families at Work: Expanding the Boundaries*. Edited by Naomi Gerstel, Dan Clawson, and Robert Zussman. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Dorothy Roberts. 1998. "The Absent Black Father." Pp. 145-161 in *Lost Fathers: The Politics of Fatherlessness in America*. Edited by Cynthia R. Daniels. St. Martin's Press.

April 17-19: *Childhood.*

*****Second draft of the Group Project due April 19*****

- Barrie Thorne and Zella Luria. 1997. "Sexuality and Gender in Children's Daily Worlds." Pp. 141-152 in *Down to Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings*. Edited by James M. Henslin. New York: The Free Press.
- Annette Lareau. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review*, v. 67 (5): 747-776.
- Frances K. Goldschneider and Linda J. Waite. 2001. "Children's Share in Household Tasks." In *Shifting the Center: Understanding Contemporary Families, 2nd ed.* Edited by Susan J. Ferguson. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Juliet Schor. 2004. "America's Most Wanted: Inside the World of Young Consumers." *Boston College Magazine*, 54, 4 (Fall), pp.30-37.

IV. Transitions and Endings.

April 24-26: *Family Transitions.*

- Stephanie Coontz. 1997. "Putting Divorce in Perspective." Pp. 97-108 in *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms With America's Changing Families*. NY: Basic Books.
- Frank F. Furstenberg and Andrew J. Cherlin. 2001. "Children's Adjustment to Divorce." Pp. 491-499 in *Family Patterns, Gender Relations*. Edited by Bonnie J. Fox. Ontario, Canada: Oxford University Press.
- Carr, Deborah. 2006. Good Grief: Bouncing Back from a Spouse's Death in Later Life. *Contexts*, 5, 4, 22-27.

May 1-3: *Extended Families.*

- Hansen, Karen V. 2005. Chapter 1, pp. 1-24, in *Not-So-Nuclear Families: Class, Gender, and Networks of Care*. Rutgers University Press.
- Sarkisian, Natalia, Mariana Gerena, and Naomi Gerstel. 2006. "Extended Family Ties among Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Whites: Superintegration or Disintegration?" *Family Relations*, 55, 3 (July), 331-344.

*****Final draft of the Group Project due May 8*****