Course Overview

Carework is foundational to human survival and the social glue that keeps families and communities intact. But just how much do we, as a society, value care labor? Who should be responsible for family care and the needs of children, the sick, frail elderly, and other vulnerable people? Some call it love’s labor but does that mean it has no monetary value? When carework does become paid labor, why are wages so low?

In this course we will explore the tension between carework as private responsibility and carework as a “public good,” worthy of national investment. We begin the course by examining the “price” of caring, focusing particularly on the cost of motherhood. We will also take a comparative angle on care by considering other nations’ family policies as well as comparing the disparity in access to care across socioeconomic class in the US. We will continue to return to the question; should the larger society have responsibility to ensure people have decent care?

Throughout this course your personal reflections about career, family, and carework will be welcome in our class discussions.

Course Texts

Note: Books are available used online and in the BC Bookstore.


All other readings are available through: hyperlinks, Blackboard vista, and/or the library course reserve under my name.
September 6  What do we mean by “carework?”
- Roster & introductions
- Overview of course, syllabus, expectations, and assignments (other than term paper)
- Lecture: The meaning of carework
- Class discussion on meanings of care

September 13  History of carework

1. Student care stories
2. Discussion led by student reading responses

Readings:
- [Creating a caring society](#) Glenn
- *The Price of Motherhood*, Introduction through chapters 3 (inclusive)
- *Overview of nineteenth-century caregiving (Hearts of wisdom, chapter 2)*
  Abel

Class activity: Break into pairs and interview each other, using hand-out interview guide. (I will collect these).

Review of Term paper assignment and what your “abstract” (due October 18th) should cover.

September 20  Cost of care

1. Care stories
2. Discussion led by student reading responses

Readings:
- *The Price of Motherhood*, Chapters 4 & 5
- “To get out of this land ‘sufring’” Jones. "To get out of this land sufring": black women migrants to the north, 1900-1930

Discussion of Interview results

September 27  Cost of care (continued)

1. Care stories
2. Discussion led by student reading responses

Readings:
- “The History of Men’s Caring” Coltrane and Galt *History of men’s caring: evaluating precedents for fathers’ family involvement*
- *The Price of Motherhood*, Chapters 6 & 7

*Last half hour of class we will talk about the term paper.*

Note that for next week: **Half the class will be debating on care of children and the other half on care for the elderly**

**October 4**  Comparative policy approaches: Caring for young and old

1. Care stories  
2. Discussion led by student reading responses

Readings: Comparative policy approaches to reducing child poverty and providing care to elderly.

http://www.firstfocus.net/sites/default/files/TacklingPoverty.pdf


thrive in *Denmark* - thestar.com

One proposal for changes in public funding for the elderly in the US


**Class activity: Policy debate on care for children and care for elderly as public goods**

The next few weeks will compare care resources and strategies across socioeconomic class, in the US

**October 11**  
**Work/Family Choices**  
**Professional women and opting out**

1. Care stories  
2. Discussion led by student reading responses

Readings:

  Fast-track women and the "choice" to stay home
- Response to Belkin: http://reason.com/archives/2004/06/01/opting-out
- *Price of Motherhood*  Chapter 13

Hand out Activity: Who should opt for what?
*The scenario is a composite from actual case studies*

October 18   Low-income families: Family care crises

**NOTE: Pass in abstract of your term paper**

1. Care stories
2. Student-led discussion

The world of low wage work (PP)

Readings

- Dodson and Luttrell. “Families facing untenable choices” [Families facing untenable choices](#)
- Burton [Childhood adultification in economically disadvantaged families:a conceptual model](#)
- Folbre [Children as pets (Invisible heart, chapter 5)](#)

October 25   Work and Family: The “flexibility” solution

1. Care stories
2. Student-led discussion

Readings

- “Majority of voters support workplace flexibility, job quality, and family support policies”

In-Class Activity: Break into 5 groups and design an approach to work/family flexibility policy.
November 1  The national care dilemma: Race, class, and gender

Readings:
- Glenn. *From servitude to service work: historical continuities in the racial division of paid reproduct*
- *Global Woman* (does not have chapter numbers) “Invisible Labors” (page 70);
  “Maid to Order” (page 85 )
- Dodson & Zincavage. *"It’s like a family": caring labor, exploitation, and race in nursing homes*

November 8  Immigrants: The globalization of care labor

1. Care stories
2. Student- led discussion

Readings:
- *Global Woman*, “Love and Gold “ page 15
- “America’s Dirty Work” page 142
- “The Care Crisis in the Philippines: Children and Transnational Families” page 39
- “Global Cities and Survival Circuits” page 254

**In-Class activity: Case study, Dodson 2010**

November 15  Teaching and contemporary challenges caring about children & youth

**Speaker: Emily MacMillan, MA. Communications Instructor, Year Up Program**
(http://www.yearup.org/locations/boston.htm)

Emily MacMillan graduated from BC with a master degree in sociology in 2008. She worked in Teach for America in a public high school in St Louis, Kentucky, for two years before coming to BC. She is now an instructor in communications for *Year Up*, a program dedicated to promote the educational opportunity of urban youth.

1. Care story
2. Discussion led by student reading responses

Readings:
- Education and children’s need for care

November 22  No Class!!
November 29    Healing: Taking care of people in need of healthcare

Speaker: Ramona Flightner, NP. TITLE
Ramona Flightner works at the East Boston Neighborhood Health Ctr.  
http://www.ebnhc.org/ as a Nurse Practitioner and has to manage the  
balance between providing healthcare and dealing with the real world that  
her – often low-income immigrant clients – bring with them to her office.

1. Care story  
2. Discussion led by student reading responses

Readings:
The Moral Underground Part 3 & 4

December 6    Term Paper is due at start of class

1. Student care stories  
2. Discussion led by student reading responses  
3. Moral Underground: Final thoughts on “Care as disobedience”

For love nor money : the commodification of care (Rethinking commodification, chapter 2)

Class activity: Break into pairs and interview each other, using hand out interview guide.  
You should each note down responses for class discussion

General discussion

Course Requirements

1. Participation and attendance (30% of your grade)

Class attendance -- and participation in discussion -- is required. If you have a significant problem speaking in class, come see me early in the term.

Each student will be expected to contribute one “care story/history.” These are informal.  
No reading or other formal preparation is required, only forethought. I will start each  
class asking for 1-2 care stories and you decide when you want to share one. This can be  
based on any source, for example; a media account that is related to care, something you  
observed, or a personal situation relevant to care issues. Last year a student spoke of  
having a roommate who was experiencing a crisis and the student was trying to balance  
being a caring roommate/friend with the effect that her roommates crisis was having on  
her. Another student told about working in an afterschool program and realizing how  
much she was judging the moms who seemed so career-focused and “uncaring” with  
small children who seemed stressed and hurried. And another student told the class that  
she was a young mother and was running into conflicts fulfilling Boston College’s
academic expectations and caring for her baby. If you want to do your care story with another classmate that’s fine too.

*We will spend the first 20-30 minutes talking about care stories, each week*

2. **Weekly readings: written comments and questions (35%)**

Each week, students are required to send a response to the week’s readings, electronically, **by 12 noon the day of class** (for 9 of the 13 weeks of class). These response papers will be the basis for the class discussion. Thus, your *critical* reading of the material and thoughtful preparation of questions, comments, and critiques will be the basis of your grade. I am looking for no more than 2 pages of analytical comments and thoughtful questions and *not a reiteration of what you have read*. Note that you are expected to read weekly material whether or not you are passing in a paper.

I will keep a spreadsheet of all response papers that are graded as a check, check minus or check plus.

3. **One 10-page paper (35%).**

General topic areas

- Work and family conflicts in middle/upper income families
- Work and family conflicts in working-class/lower-income families
- Note: graduate students may propose their own topics

**There are two possible approaches to the paper.**

You can approach the topic by writing a traditional research paper relying on secondary sources but going well beyond those we have used in class (library sources, online information, professional journals, newspapers, etc.).

The alternative is that you can do some original research, for example, interviewing 2 people who do paid carework, or 2 people who employ careworkers, or 2 parents (not yours!) who “opted out.” This research must take you off campus. Those who choose the second approach are not expected to do literature review other than provide some background to frame the topic on which you are doing original research.

*If you are interested in this approach you should get in touch with me early in the term so I can advise on your data gathering.*

Whichever approach you choose, your essay should use APA standard format; be typed, double-spaced on standard-sized paper (8.5" x 11") with 1" margins on all sides. You should use 12 pt. Times New Roman font or a similar font. For first approach, your essay should follow standard format: Title Page, Abstract, Main Body, and References. All materials should be referenced using APA citation style. If you choose the second essay approach you should situate the research, summarize themes from interviews (using some quotes) and discuss what you are doing. *Style you don’t have to cite in the text but attach a bibliography.*
The paper should be no more than 10 pages (plus notes, references, etc.) and it is due on the date it is assigned. You have more than nine weeks to do this paper and should start planning now. Unless there is true emergency, the grade that you would have received will go down half a grade each day it is late. **On October 25th you will pass in an abstract of your term essay.** This should be a brief description of how you are examining the topic and the approach you have chosen. Graduate students are expected to produce a piece that is analytically of greater depth and evidence of more intensive primary or secondary research.