Sc. 590 Carework & Inequality
Thursday 4:30-6:50
McGuinn 415

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Course Overview

Carework is foundational to human survival and the social glue that keeps families and communities intact. Traditionally, caring work has been understood as women’s “natural” responsibility and maternal devotion to children and family a priceless contribution to society. But priceless can also mean uncompensated. Economic research indicates that while caring labor is critical to sustaining families, it is also very costly for those who do it – a cost that has risen over the last two decades. Even as carework has increasingly become part of the paid labor market, these workers’ wages are the lowest of any occupation. Whether done for pay or not, caring for children, elderly, and other vulnerable people is linked to economic hardship.

In this course we will explore debates about carework as gendered private responsibility and as a critical “public good,” worthy of national investment. We will explore the historical and contemporary role of race and immigration in the provision of carework in the US. Throughout the term we will consider attitudes and values underlying the debate about responsibility for the safety and decent care of families and vulnerable people. 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:
Blackboard vista and/or the library course reserve.
September 6  What do we mean by “carework?”

- Roster & introductions
- Overview of course, syllabus, expectations, and assignments
- Informal class discussion about meanings of care
- Lecture: The meaning of carework

September 13  History of carework

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

Readings:
- Himmelweit, Caring Labor  [http://ann.sagepub.com/content/561/1/27](http://ann.sagepub.com/content/561/1/27)
- Crittenden. The Price of Motherhood, Introduction through chapters 3 (inclusive)
- Discussion of the “mommy tax” from Crittenden’s online interview:  [http://life.familyeducation.com/working-parents/family-time/36305.html](http://life.familyeducation.com/working-parents/family-time/36305.html)

Class activity: Break into pairs and interview each other, using hand-out interview guide. (I will collect these for use later on in the term).

Review of Term paper assignment and what your “abstract” and outline (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 from previous class.

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

3. Discuss term paper

4. Choose/be assigned to topic for next week’s discussion. We will take 15 minutes or more this week at end of class to:
   
   - Decide how to do a little more research to deepen the topic for the class discussion.
   - Decide how you want to frame the topic (international comparison, a debate, etc.)
   - Plan to give the class a very brief overview on the issue and then come up with questions you want the class to discuss.

**October 4  Care issues across the globe: Differing challenges and policy approaches**

1. Care stories
2. Three groups - Each group leads an informal discussion. We will take 10 minutes for the groups to meet and discuss how you want to lead a discussion.

Readings

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

   
   http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/17/AR2006101701652.html

   
   http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2007-12-03/india-business/27993915_1_flexi-offer-various-options-hr-policies
   
   http://www.uwec.edu/cj/projects/Working/At-home-dads.html

If needed, we will leave 15 minutes at the end of class to check in about your term paper progress.
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
- Anne-Marie Slaughter’s Atlantic piece called “Why women still can’t have it all”  
  http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-can-8217-t-have-it-all/9020/3/
- Marissa Mayer public statement  
- If you are interested, do some online trolling for other responses to Slaughter’s and Mayer’s statements/arguments for class discussion.

Hand out Activity: Who should opt for what?
The scenario is a composite from actual case studies that we will read and break into groups and then discuss.

Any questions on term paper (abstract is due next week)?

October 18  Making Care Count: A Historical Perspective

Pass in abstract of your term paper

1. Care stories
2. Student-led discussion

Speaker:

Mignon Duffy, Associate Professor of Sociology,  
University of Massachusetts

Author of Making Care Count: A Century of Gender, Race, and Paid Care Work

Readings:
- Duffy “Conceptualizing Care” Chapter 1 in Making Care Count
- Moral Underground: Intro-Chapter 2 (inclusive)
October 25      Work and Family: The “flexibility” solution

1. Care stories
2. Student-led discussion

Readings
The world of low wage work (PP)
- www.worklifelaw.org/pubs/onesickchild.pdf Read pages 1-37
- “Majority of voters support workplace flexibility, job quality, and family support policies”
- Dodson, (Forthcoming article) posted on BB as “Final Dodson…”
  Stereotyping low-income mothers who have work and family conflicts

In-Class Activity: Break into 5 groups. Each group should discuss and then outline 3 principles for a policy proposal that will be presented to a bipartisan legislative committee on Work and Family in the US. In your proposal you should address the tension between children as a “public good” and business interests. Is it possible to reconcile these competing values?

November 1st   Carework: Race, immigration, and class

Readings:
- Glenn. From servitude to service work: historical continuities in the racial division of paid reproduction.
- Global Woman (does not have chapter numbers) “Invisible Labors” (page 70); “Maid to Order” (page 85 )
  Discussion about the potential effect of the election on care policy

November 8th      Immigrants: The globalization of care labor

1. Care stories
2. Student-led discussion

Readings:
- “Who are direct care workers?” Fact sheet by PHI: Quality Jobs for Quality Care, 2011
- 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

November 15  Care, Class, and Children’s Lives

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

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)

Speaker: Katherine Bright, MA

Katie holds a Masters degree in Sociology from Boston College and worked with young women who experience homelessness as a residential counselor for several years. Katie’s graduate thesis examines girls’ vulnerability when they do not have family care and protection: “THE SPECTRUM OF SLAVERY”: FROM HOUSING INSTABILITY AMONG YOUTH TO SEX TRAFFICKING.

November 22  Thanksgiving! No Class!

November 29  I have to Change date of class

Healing: Taking care of people in need of healthcare

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

Readings:

- Why and why not expand Medicaid
- Paid sick days
- 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. For example, one 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. Bear in mind your care story can be an observation, media account, or personal.

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 but no later (for 8 of the 13 weeks of class). These response papers will be the basis for the class discussion. Thus, your critical (not a reiteration of what you have read) questions and challenges 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 which are almost always marked as a check (and infrequently a check minus or check plus).

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

In this class we examine carework issues and an eye on inequality and how care labor intersects with socioeconomic status, race, immigration/citizenship status, and gender. For your term paper, choose from the list of four topics below and then narrow down to a manageable, interesting sliver of the topic.

Overall topics;
1. Childcare and working parents
2. Elder care needs and family versus societal responsibility
3. Balancing work and family among two-career couples
4. Paid care-workers as a growing solution to the care deficit in advanced industrial/post-industrial societies

There are endless possibilities in how you might address these topics. So – as you see on the syllabus – I am leaving time for discussion about narrowing your topic in our first month of classes. After you choose from the four topics, pull out a specific issue/debate that you are most interested in examining. In deciding on the narrow topic area make sure:
- The topic intrigues you;
- Through doing some preliminary research, you know that there is material available on the topic (research, policy debate, papers/books, etc.);
- The topic is narrow enough so your paper is analytical – not just a run-through of previous discussion.

Some examples from previous classes include:
- Hidden childcare issues/strategies among hard-pressed single mothers;
- Dual career couples and men opting out
- The hidden narrative behind the recent “having it all” debates;
- The “color of carework” and disproportionate percent of immigrants in the care workforce;
- The way policy is framing an intergenerational conflict of over care resources.

**Style:** Use APA standard format -- 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. Follow standard essay format: Introduction (briefly summarizing your paper), the main body of the paper using subtitles to keep on track, a closing section, and references. The paper should be no more than 10 pages of text for undergraduates, 12 pages for graduate students (plus notes, references, etc.)

*It is due on the date it is assigned.*

You have many weeks to do this paper after choosing your topic. 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 have narrowed the topic, a few sources that you know are available, and the critical approach you plan to take. Graduate students are expected to produce a piece that is analytically of greater depth and evidence of more intensive primary or secondary research.