Sc. 590 Carework & Inequality
Tuesday 12-2:50
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” duty and devotion to children and family understood a “priceless” contribution to society – also an uncompensated one. Economic research indicates that, while caring labor is critical to sustaining humankind, it is 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 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 a 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 3  What do we mean by “carework?”

- Roster & introductions
- Overview of course & syllabus
- Expectations, participation, and assignments: Note reflection papers are due at noon on Mondays – the day before class.
- Care story calendar (2 students scheduled for next week should remain today)
- Informal class discussion about care in our lives
- Lecture: The meaning of carework

September 10  History of carework

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

Readings:
- Himmelweit, Caring Labor  The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 1999 (BB)
- Crittenden. The Price of Motherhood, Introduction through chapters 3 (inclusive)

Class activity: Break into pairs, go over questions together and then interview each other. When you are done, exchange papers and add to your interview. Each paper is numbered; remember your interview number. I will collect these and then pass them back out to you later, for discussion.

Review of term paper assignment and what your outline (due October 15th) should cover.

September 17  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’: Black women migrants to the North” Jones. (Course Reserve)

Discussion of care interviews from previous class.

September 24  Cost of care (continued)

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

Readings:
3. **Planning for next week class activity**

We will use last part of the class to plan for next week. We will divide the class into three groups, each one concentrating on a topic for a comparative international/inter-racial care policy discussion. The topics include: Child poverty policy; Eldercare trends/policy; and Parental leave policy. When you meet in your group you will review the materials already on BB pertaining to your topic. You will also:

- **Plan** how you want to do present the topic. Remember, the rest of the class will **not** have read the materials on your topic so you must start with an overview (trends, issues, policy debates if they are happening…etc.)
- **Decide amongst you** what direction/subtopics you’d like to pursue, to do a little more research to deepen the topic for the class discussion.
- **Develop one or two questions** that the class will discuss.

Each person in each group will be responsible for reading material on BB as below (**but not the material for the other groups**). Then you can divide up any additional material searches. You will be in groups of 6-7 and should share the tasks equitably. Note: 2-3 of you should plan to present and the others to facilitate the questions/discussion.

1. **Eldercare trends/policies:** *A Good Life in Old Age? Monitoring and Improving Quality in Long-Term Care* and *The Importance of Social Security in the Incomes of Older Americans Differences by Gender, Age, Race/Ethnicity, and Marital Status*
2. **Child poverty policy:** UNICEF *Child Wellbeing in Rich Countries: A comparative overview*
3. **Parental Leave Policy:** *Failing Its Families: Lack of Paid Leave…*

**October 1** Care issues across the globe: Differing challenges and policy approaches

1. Care stories
2. As planned during class last week - Each group has 30-35 minutes to present their topic and raise 1-2 questions for class discussion.

Readings: As above, each group has a reading or two on BB and whatever other readings you/your group read for the presentation.

**October 8** Work/Family Choices: Professional women and opting out

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

Readings: First reading is in Folbre text; Stone and Lovejoy on BB and the other one you should be able to use hyperlink or if that doesn’t work, just do a google search.
- *The Invisible Heart*. Introduction- Chapter 2 (inclusive)
- 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’t-have-it-all/9020/3/

3. **Class activity: October 8th scenario --Who should opt for what?**
The scenario is a composite from actual cases; class will read and break into groups and then discuss.

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

**October 15  Measuring the Value of Care**

*Pass in description of your term paper*

1. Care stories
2. Student-led discussion

Readings:
- Counting on care work: Human infrastructure in Massachusetts (BB)
- *The Moral Underground*: Intro-Chapter 2 (inclusive)

**October 22  Work and Family: The “flexibility” solution**

1. Care stories
2. Student-led discussion

Readings
*The world of low wage work* (PP)
- The Invisible Heart. Introduction- Chapter 3

*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 the care needs of individuals and the society and how we understand business interests. Can we reframe this dichotomy?

**October 29th  No Class**
November 5th  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 12th  Care, Class, and Children’s Lives

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

Readings

- The Moral Underground: Chapter 3-5
- The Invisible Heart Chapter 5

November 19th  Fragile families and public responsibility

Speaker

Katherine Bright -- Young Parent Policy Fellows Engagement Specialist and Research Associate at Northeastern University (MA in Sociology from BC 2010). Katie works with young people who have not known the protections and advantages that higher-income youth enjoy. While young parents – some of whom have been sexually exploited -- are often accused of making “bad choices,” Katie seeks to challenge those narratives, working with young people to develop policy approaches that reflect the structural conditions low-income youth face every day.

1. Care story
2. Speaker

Readings:

The Moral Underground: Chapters 6-8

November 26th – NO CLASS
December 3rd
1. Care story
2. No readings

Speakers
Rebecca Gutman Vice President of Homecare, 1199SEIU Massachusetts Division accompanied by Personal Care Attendants who are currently providing homecare services.

December 10th  Care that doesn’t count
and the debate about the companionship exemption

Term Paper is due at start of class
1. Student care stories
2. Discussion led by student reading responses
3. Companionship exemption
4. Moral Underground: Final thoughts on “Care as disobedience”

Course Requirements

1. Participation: Care stories and discussion questions (30% of your grade)

Class attendance -- and participation in discussion -- is required. This is a small class and most students find it a comfortable setting to talk.

A. Each week I will start class with an open forum, on the topic of carework and social care issues. If you have read something, want to follow up on a previous topic, or raise an event or topic, this will be the time to talk about it. This is not a requirement but I welcome your reflections!

B. Each student will be expected to contribute one “care story/history.” These do not require background research – though you can if you choose to -- but they do require forethought. I will distribute a calendar of care story schedule on first day of class. This assignment has 2 parts and you should assume that it will take you about 25-30 minutes. Part 1: Your care story can be based on any source such as a media account that is related to care, something you observed, or a personal situation relevant to care issues. Examples: A student read an anti-health care policy (Obama care) essay that pit universal health care against personal freedom, which she critiqued. 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 roommate’s crisis was having on her ability to do her work. Another student told about working in an afterschool program and realizing how much she was judging the moms who seemed so career-focused and small children 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. **Part 2:** Prepare 2 questions, based on your care story, to engage the class in discussion. Avoid questions like “What do you think about that?” Develop questions that will get at the larger issue, for examples, referring to above care accounts: Are values of taking care of vulnerable people and freedom in conflict, in the US? Do we judge mothers in ways that we do not judge fathers, relative to care for children? Why? Or, if you are caring for a baby and also trying to meet demands of college; should you get any leeway? Your questions/stimulating discussion is as important as your care story.

2. **Weekly readings: Reflection Papers and discussion (35%)**

Each week, students are required to send a reflective response to the week’s readings electronically, **by noon on Mondays, the day before class** (for 8 of the 13 weeks of class). Please number each reflection paper (RPs) to make sure we have the same record. These RPs will be the basis for every class discussion thus your *critical* (not just a reiteration of what you have read) questions and challenges will affect the grade. I am looking for no more than 2-3 pages of analytical comments and thoughtful questions about the readings. These response papers are graded as check, check minus, and check plus. **Most RPs receive a check.** Check plus is reserved for papers that clearly include all the readings and have integrated ideas/themes, across them. Your *Weekly Readings* grade is based on the RPs but also how you engage with/participate in class.

Note that you are expected to read weekly material whether or not you are passing in a paper.

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

In this class we examine carework issues with concern about inequality and how care labor intersects with socioeconomic status, race, immigration/citizenship status, and gender. I will pass out a term paper topic list 3rd week of class. **You will hand in a brief description of your topic and list a few references you will use on October 15th.**

What I am looking for, overall, is that:
- 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 wide summary.

Some examples from previous classes include:
- Hidden childcare strategies among hard-pressed single mothers;
- Women lawyers opting out of their profession;
- The hidden narrative behind the recent “having it all” debates;
- The “color of carework” and how historically and now, women of color/immigrants are the US 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 (this does not count 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 medical emergency, the grade that you would have received will go down half a grade each day it is late. On October 15th 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 (12- page) piece that is analytically of greater depth and show evidence of more intensive primary or secondary research.

If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, dugganka@bc.edu, at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities and ADHD, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, paulette.durrett@bc.edu, in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities, including temporary disabilities. Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.