

FALL 2003
Tues & Thurs 8:30-9:50
Carnegie 304

FIRST-YEAR TUTORIAL

The Social Politics of Having Children

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Course Description

How do people decide whether or not to have children, when to have children, how many children to have? Are there some people who should have children and others who should not? How do other interested parties—family members, friends, religious leaders, politicians, government officials, healthcare professionals, marketers, professional advice-givers, and other writers and experts—seek to influence or regulate reproductive decisions and behavior? More broadly, how do social structures, cultural patterns, political arrangements, economic systems, and our evolutionary inheritance set the boundaries for what is possible and desirable when it comes to having children? This Tutorial will take an interdisciplinary approach to understanding some of the issues and controversies that surround childbearing and childrearing. At the same time, the Tutorial will help students to develop the skills and capacities needed for a successful college career.

As the only required course in the Grinnell College curriculum, Tutorial is unique. The purpose of this course is not just to learn more about an interesting interdisciplinary topic. The Tutorial helps to orient students to college-level academic work by examining methods of academic inquiry, the ways in which scholars in various disciplines have sought to enlarge our knowledge about the topic of interest. The course also helps students to polish skills that are crucial for success in college: fluency in writing, oral presentation, discussion, and critical reading. And finally, because your tutor is also your academic advisor, we will be working together in this course to plan an academic program for you which meets your individual needs while providing for a well-rounded liberal arts education.

Goals of the Tutorial

1. To appreciate some of the reasons—personal, social, religious, political, and biological—for public controversies over childbearing and childrearing.
2. To understand how differences in cultural background, social position, and political and economic arrangements may affect people's views about childbearing and childrearing.
3. To appreciate differences in methods of inquiry used by scholars in various disciplines.
4. To improve crucial academic skills, such as writing, critical reading and analysis of texts, oral presentation, and class discussion.
5. To appreciate standards of honesty in academic work and to know the proper procedures for avoiding plagiarism.
6. To become comfortable with using the College's library and computer facilities for academic research.
7. To envision for oneself a four-year plan for a well-rounded liberal arts education.

Course Format

Since many of the things to be learned in this class will come from listening to and talking with other students, this Tutorial is designed to be highly interactive. Typical class meetings will combine short

lectures with small-group activities and large-group discussions. Sometimes I will cancel class and meet with individuals or small groups to work on a paper or project. I will expect everyone to contribute to our class discussions, which will require you to prepare carefully for each class: not only doing the reading but really thinking about it. I also expect people to *listen* to each other, which will require patience, a sense of humor, and mutual respect.

Many things to be learned in this class will come from doing and writing, not just reading and talking. The course design calls for you to engage in a variety of activities outside of our regular class meetings: interviews or volunteer work, student-led discussion groups, email exchanges, personal or group journals, and daily reaction papers on the reading. By choosing from among these strategies the ones best suited to your own learning style, you can enhance your own process of learning.

By design, Tutorial is a special course. Smaller than most introductory-level classes, it provides an excellent opportunity for you to participate actively in class and really get to know your classmates. Enrolling only first-years, it eliminates the pressure of having to compete with older students. Focusing on things you need to know for success at Grinnell, it can help you do well in other courses. Thus, the course is designed to be useful, low-pressure, and enjoyable.

Course Requirements

1. **FOUR ACADEMIC PAPERS** (60 percent) Assignments will include an interpretative essay, an essay recounting personal experiences, an explanatory essay, and an argumentative essay, thus covering a variety of ways to organize papers.
2. **TWO CLASS PRESENTATIONS** (10 percent) In teams and individually, students will share in planning and conducting classes on several occasions, two of which will be graded.
3. **ACTIVE-LEARNING PORTFOLIO** (30 percent) Students will select at least three of the following activities for out-of-class learning. Portfolios documenting their participation in these activities will be turned in at mid-semester and again at the end of the course:
 - **VOLUNTEER WORK**—an average of about an hour a week of volunteer work relating to topics of this Tutorial, possibly babysitting for a family, helping at a childcare facility, or talking with elderly nursing-home residents about their family histories. Volunteers will keep a journal to record experiences and reflections. Options and requirements for volunteer work will be discussed in class.
 - **OUT-OF-CLASS DISCUSSION GROUPS**—a weekly meeting for discussion of course topics by groups of four students who then rotate the responsibility for sending reports on their discussions to the instructor.
 - **ON-LINE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS**—a weekly posting of one's reflections on course topics to the Blackboard Internet site for the class.
 - **JOURNALING**—a personal journal with weekly entries about reflections on assigned readings, class activities, and other course-related topics.
 - **DISCUSSION PAPERS**—short ungraded papers to be turned in each week. Papers contain a summary of key points from the assigned readings and reflections on

them, including a list of possible questions for use in class or in discussion groups.

4. No mid-semester or final examination will be given.

Required Books

TUT-100.21 Course Packet

Hays, Sharon. 2003. *Flat Broke with Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform*. New York: Oxford.

Hrdy, Sarah Blaffer. 1999. *Mother Nature: A History of Mothers, Infants, and Natural Selection*. New York: Pantheon.

Quindlen, Anna. 2002. *Blessings*. New York: Random House.

Vissing, Yvonne. 2002. *Women Without Children: Nurturing Lives*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.