THE FAMILY

Grinnell College
Sociology 320
Fall, 2006
Time: 2:15-4:05 p.m., Mon./Wed.
Classroom: ARH 312

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Office Hours: 2:30 p.m. on T/TH and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides an overview of the family from a sociological perspective. The family is considered to be one of the most private and pervasive social institutions in society. All of us have had contact with at least one family, and many of us will be involved in several different families during our lifetime. Our personal understandings of family do not always match the scholarship on families. In fact, the institution of the family is undergoing numerous transformations. To obtain a better comprehension of these changes, recent sociological research and data on the family are utilized in this course.

The course is organized into seven thematic sections. After an introduction to the study of families and an examination of the historical origins of the family, we turn our attention to the contemporary family and its diversity. First, we examine traditional heterosexual marriage and alternative processes of mate selection and family formation. The next section of the course investigates the termination of family relationships via separation and divorce and the creation of stepfamilies and blended families. The second half of the course begins with an examination of the relationships between gender, power, and conflict. In this section, we study domestic and family violence. We then focus our lens on children and parents, including historical conceptions of childhood, parenting issues, motherhood, fatherhood, teen pregnancy, birth control, and abortion. The last sections of the course focus on families in poverty, and issues related to work, family, and public policy.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To introduce students to the essential concepts, theories, and research used in sociology to analyze the family.

2. To examine the socio-historical development of the family as a social institution, including the changing roles of women, men, and children.

3. To enhance the students' understanding of the complexity of family life and how family experience is shaped by race, ethnicity, social class, gender, and sexual preference.

4. To enable students to identify and examine sociologically relevant problems and issues within the contemporary family.

5. To encourage critical thinking and writing skills that demonstrate the students' abilities to understand and analyze social phenomena.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

A. Syllabus Assignment: Each student will locate a sociological article on the racial-ethnic diversity of families that they think should be included in the course syllabus. The goal of this assignment is to locate additional course materials that will bring in more diverse voices. You will be asked to summarize and evaluate the article for use in an advanced seminar on the sociology of the family. Assignment instructions will be handed out early in the semester. Assignments should be typed and reflect thoughtful writing skills. This assignment will count for 20% of your final grade.

B. Class Presentation: Each student will lead a course discussion and present material on a course-related topic. In addition to summarizing that day's readings, the student will present supplementary information, including the results of their research and a bibliography of sources. Specific guidelines for this presentation are on the next page. This class presentation counts for 20% of your final grade.

C. Discussion Papers: Students will write short discussion papers that are due at the beginning of each class. These papers should briefly summarize and extend the main arguments in the readings. Discussion papers should be typed with two copies ready to hand in. I will read one set of papers and the discussion leader for that day will read the second set of papers. Students are required to do 12 of the 24 papers. This set of discussion papers will count for 20% of your final grade.

D. Final Paper: Instead of a term paper or final exam, students will be asked to write a final paper that synthesizes the material learned during the semester. This paper can either be an extension of the student's earlier research or an essay answering a question generated by students at the end of the semester. This paper should be about 6 to 8 pages in length, and it will be due during final exam week. This paper will count for 20% of your final grade.

E. Attendance and Participation: Since this course is an upper-division sociology seminar, students are expected to take an active role in shaping their learning environment both within and outside the classroom. This role includes regular attendance, leading and participating in class discussions, and group work. In addition, students will team lead a discussion of a topic on a prearranged day. Oral participation, class discussions, and attendance will count for 20% of your final grade.

Please Note: There Will Be No Extra Credit Work.

Acknowledgments: I would like to acknowledge the intellectual contributions of Shelley Eriksen, Naomi Gerstel, and Gretchen Stiers in the creation of this syllabus. All three sociologists have influenced my thinking about the family. In particular, the "Suggested Protocol for Class Presentations" is adapted from a syllabus by Shelley Eriksen.
Class Presentation: A Suggested Protocol

“Contradiction is the stuff of revolutionary struggle. The point is not to deny the reality of contradiction, but to utilize this space of contradiction to come to a greater understanding.”

—bell hooks

1. Duplicate and distribute written summaries and bibliographies to class participants.

2. Spend the first ten minutes verbally summarizing the readings' main findings and conclusions. Offer your evaluation of the reading material as well as your thinking on the larger topic. Discuss the link between your selected topic and broader issues in the sociology of the family.

3. Identify the common theme(s) in the articles. Synthesize the findings by showing how the articles relate to each other. You also might note similarities between your topic and issues that were previously discussed in class.

4. In addition, each presenter is expected to read at least three additional readings on the topic and present this information to the class. Presenters may use a suggested reading or something they found during their literature search in the library.

5. Be prepared to identify a number of questions that the articles raise. Pose these questions to members of the class. In essence, these questions will serve as a guidepost for the remainder of the class time. The following questions are some examples:

   a. How might these issues vary by race, ethnicity, social class, gender, generational group, or sexual preference? Are these principles universal in nature or specific to a particular group?

   b. What are the historical roots of this process?

   c. Who cares? Why are these processes and issues germane to families?

   d. Why are we discussing this issue in a sociology course? Make links to broader concepts, principles, and debates in sociology.

   e. Does this apply exclusively to families in the United States or might it apply equally to families in other industrial or developing nations?

Additional Thoughts:
Each student should make every effort to make their presentation interesting and lively. Use outside resources whenever possible. For example, you may want to find current data on your topic and present this additional information in class. You might even devise a class exercise that illustrates an important concept or issue in the readings. Do not hesitate to use visual or literary material. These suggestions are not obligatory. They merely serve to remind you that you have some flexibility and creativity in this project.
**REQUIRED READINGS:** The following books are available in the College Bookstore and on reserve in the Burling Library.


**Supplemental Readings:**

In addition to using the readings listed above, I also will be supplementing the course reading list with several articles and handouts that help to address the diversity and complexity of the institution of the family. Plan on reading approximately three to five articles or chapters per class session. Please keep up with the syllabus by reading the assigned articles prior to the day that topic is discussed.

**Suggested Readings:**

Each week's description of readings also will contain suggested readings for those of you who want to read more or are especially interested in that topic. Several of the suggested readings come from two anthologies I have used previously. Both of these books have articles that will help you do more research on particular topics. I would suggest looking at the reference lists and bibliographies at the end of each article for more sources.


**Questions to Think About While You Are Reading:**

**Summary Questions:**
1. What are the author's main arguments or hypotheses?
2. What evidence does the author present in support of his or her arguments?
3. What are some implications of the author's findings or arguments?

**Evaluation Questions:**
4. What are the strength's and weaknesses of the author's arguments or research?
5. Do you agree with the author's conclusions? Why or why not?
6. Do you have any problems with this study or how it was conducted?
COURSE OUTLINE WITH READING ASSIGNMENTS

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF FAMILIES

Aug. 28 (M):  Introduction to Course

Aug. 30 (W):  Definitions of Family and Issues in the Study of Families

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


Sept. 4 (M):  Families and Gender

Required Readings:


Sept. 6 (W):  **Historical Origins of the Family**

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**


Sept. 11 (M):  **Historical Overview of Agrarian and Industrial Families**

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**


Gillis, John. “Myths of Family Past.” (Skolnick, pp. 21-34).

Coontz, Stephanie. “What We Really Miss About the 1950s." (Skolnick, pp. 43-52).
Sept. 13 (W): Racial Ethnic and Legal Variation in Family Forms

Required Readings:

Coontz, Stephanie. “Historical Perspectives on Family Diversity.” (Ferguson, pp. 63-80).


Suggested Readings:


—also see many readings in both the Hutter and Skolnick anthologies on reserve in library.
II. THE CONTEMPORARY FAMILY

Sept. 18 (M): Dating, Sex, and Courtship

**Required Readings:**

Whyte, Martin King. "Choosing Mates---The American Way." (Ferguson, pp. 139-149).


Raffaelli, Marcela and Lenna L. Ontai. “‘She’s 16 Years Old and There’s Boys Calling Over to the House’: An Exploratory Study of Sexual Socialization in Latino Families.” (Ferguson, pp. 149-162).

Savin-Williams, Ritch C. “Dating and Romantic Relationships Among Gays, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youths.” (Ferguson, pp. 163-175).

**Suggested Readings:**


Berkowitz, Alexandra & Irene Padavic. “Getting a Man or Getting Ahead.” (Hutter, pp.132-146).


Pasternak, Burton, Carol Ember, and Melvin Ember. “Culture Channels Sexuality.” (Skolnick, pp. 130-146).


Sept. 20 (W): Marriage

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


III. ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Sept. 25 (M): Cohabitation

Required Readings:


**Suggested Readings:**


**Sept. 27 (W): The Never Married**

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**


Oct. 2 (M): Gay and Lesbian Families

Required Readings:


Stiers, Gretchen A. “From This Day Forward: Commitment, Marriage, and Family in Lesbian and Gay Relationships.” (Ferguson, pp. 251-264).


Other handouts.

Suggested Readings:

Benkov, Laura. “Reinventing the Family.” (Hutter, pp.322-345). See her book by the same name.


Oct. 4 (W): Gay and Lesbian Families, continued

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


IV. DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND BLENDED FAMILIES

Oct. 9 (M): Divorce

Required Readings:

Ahrons, Constance. “No Easy Answers: Why the Popular View of Divorce is Wrong.” (Ferguson, pp. 523-534).


Amato, Paul R. “Life-Span Adjustment of Children to Their Parents’ Divorce.” (Ferguson, pp. 567-588).

Suggested Readings:


**Oct. 11 (W): Remarriage**

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**


**Week of October 15th:** FALL BREAK HURRAY!!!
V. GENDER, POWER, AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Oct. 23 (M): Family Violence

Required Readings:


Renzetti, Claire M. “Toward a Better Understanding of Lesbian Battering.” (Ferguson, pp. 635-647).

Suggested Readings:


Oct. 25 (W): Domestic Violence, continued

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**


VI. PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

Oct. 30 (M): Historical Construction of Childhood

**Required Readings:**


LeVine, Robert A. and Merry White. "The Social Transformation of Childhood." (Skolnick, pp. 273-293). (Copied Reading)

Zelizer, Viviana A. "From Baby Farms to Baby M." (Hutter, pp. 333-341). (Copied Reading)

**Suggested Readings:**


Zelizer, Viviana A. "Pricing the Priceless Child" (Look up Zelizer's research on childhood).

**Nov. 1 (W): Contemporary Childhood**

**Required Readings:**


**Nov. 6 (M): Becoming a Parent**

**Required Readings:**


Clawson, Dan and Naomi Gerstel. “Caring for Our Young: Child Care in Europe and the United States.” (Ferguson, pp. 726-734).

**Suggested Readings:**


Hertz, Rosanna. “A Typology of Approaches to Child Care.” (Skolnick, pp. 209-235).

**Nov. 8 (W): Parenting: Mothers and Motherhood**

**Required Readings:**

Collins, Patricia Hill. "Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood.” (Ferguson, pp. 371-389).

Salazar Parrenas, Rhacel. “Mothering from a Distance: Emotions, Gender, and Intergenerational Relations in Filipino Transnational Families.” (Ferguson, pp. 404-415).


**Suggested Readings:**


Pardo, Mary. "Mexican American Women Grassroots Community Activists: 'Mothers of East Los Angeles'." (Hutter, pp.72-82).


Nov. 13 (M): Parenting: Fathers and Fatherhood

**Required Readings:**

(Copied Reading)


Review stepfathering article by Marsiglio, read earlier in the semester.

**Suggested Readings:**


Nov. 15 (W):  Teen Pregnancy/Adolescent Sexuality

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**


Nov. 20 (M):  Birth Control and Abortion

**Required Readings:**


Kantrowitz, Barbara and Pat Wingert. "The Norplant Debate." (Skolnick, pp.521-526). (Copied Reading)

**Suggested Readings:**


**Nov. 22 (W): CLASS CANCELLED FOR THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**

Read Carol Stack’s book!!!

**VII. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF FAMILY LIFE**

**Nov. 27 (M): Families and Poverty**

**Required Readings:**

Stack, Carol B. *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community.* (pp. ix-129).

**Suggested Readings:**


**Nov. 29 (W): Families and Poverty, continued**

**Required Readings:**

Rank, Mark R. “As American as Apple Pie: Poverty and Welfare.” (Ferguson, pp. 739-745).


Kurz, Demie. “Poor Mothers and the Care of Teenage Children.” (Ferguson, pp. 754-770).


**Suggested Readings:**


**Dec. 4 (M): Gender, Work, and Family**

**Required Readings:**


Dec. 6 (W): Gender, Work, and Family, continued

Required Readings:


Carrington, Christopher. “No Place Like Home: The Division of Domestic Labor in Lesbigay Families.” (Ferguson, pp. 709-725).


Suggested Readings:


Rubin, Lillian B. “‘When You Get Laid Off, It’s Like You Lose a Part of Yourself’.” (Ferguson 2001:546-559).

Dec. 11th-15th (Final Exam Week):  **Course Summation: The Family and the Future**

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**


**FINAL PAPER DUE DURING FINAL EXAM WEEK**

**Winter Break**  Hurray! Have a wonderful break!