

**SOAN 0212: FAMILIES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY
FALL 2012**

Ms. Nelson

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Office Hours: M/W 1:45-2:45; Thursday 3-4 (or by appointment)

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course provides a sociological perspective on family life in contemporary society. Course material includes theoretical issues relevant to understanding the concept and formation of families and specific topics of concern to families in contemporary society. In the theoretical overview we will start with biological and psychological perspectives and then move into more fully sociological perspectives; we will also shift from perspectives which assume social order and the "one best way" to organize family life to perspectives which take into account conflict and possibilities for change. Throughout the course students will be asked to challenge their own preconceptions and to distinguish between the ideological functions of the concept of the family and the reality of a vast variety of family forms.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Blair-Loy, *Competing Devotions: Career and Family Among Women Executives*

Hochschild, *The Second Shift*

Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods*

Vasquez, *Mexican Americans Across Generations*

(All books for the course are on reserve in the library)

E-Reserve

A number of the materials for the course will be on E-Reserve in the library; the password is 4216mn

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH ONE ANOTHER

The most reliable way to get in touch with me is by sending me an e-mail (I check at least once a day, although I do not generally respond over the weekend). **I will also occasionally send you e-mails – reminders or changes in the reading – not reading your e-mail is no excuse for not knowing what's happening (or, to put it in somewhat different terms: read your email from me so you know what's happening and when there have been changes).**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/ GRADING

Each class period will involve both lecture and discussion. Students are expected to attend all classes, to come prepared to discuss reading materials, and to develop their own ideas by means of written work as well as through active class participation.

Students will be asked to respond to the readings in a variety of ways: through response papers, developing discussion questions, and, class participation. The written component of these various assignments will be graded “√ +,” “√,” and “√ -.” Your informal writing grades will be averaged on the basis of completing **five** of the **eight** assignments. If you want, you can do more than five and I will count only the five highest grades. **Informal writing assignments are due on the day assigned and cannot be handed in after the assigned date; missing or late response papers will be assigned a “0.”** Late papers (not including informal assignments) will be marked down one third of a grade (e.g., from A to A-) for each day it is late unless there is a Dean’s excuse. **Anyone who does not complete the four major pieces of work will not pass the course.**

Course grades will be based on the following:

1. Five informal writing assignments *and* class participation (25%)
2. A take-home mid-term Exam due by 5:00 PM **10/26** (hard copy and e-mail) (25%)
3. Formal Paper: presentation on **11/13-15** written paper due **11/16** (25%)
4. A cumulative final Exam (Self-scheduled) (25%)

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL WRITTEN WORK (FORMAL AND INFORMAL)

All papers must be typed

Use at least a 12-point font (this is ten point and it is hard to read)

Make sure you double-space your paper:

These two lines are double-spaced one after the other following with adequate spacing

between them.

On the other hand, the spacing between this line and the next one has dropped down to
1.5 spaces and is not appropriate.

Leave at least one inch margins on both sides of the paper.

This has extended the margin beyond the requested inch on either side of the page and there is no room on either side left at all for me to write comments. I get very annoyed when this is the situation. It might even affect your grade on the paper.

Proofread and check the spelling and the grammar. You will be graded down for papers with lots of errors in them.

You may use footnotes with full citations. You may also use the style of in-text references (Name, Year:P#) as shown in the paragraph below. In this case, you need a bibliography at the end as shown below.

EXAMPLE OF TEXT: The recent growth in the proportion of families that are headed by women is a well documented phenomenon (Burns and Scott, 1994). The poverty status of single mothers has also been amply substantiated (Lino, 1995). Currently almost half of single-mothers live in poverty (Hao, 1995: 92).

EXAMPLE OF BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Aldous, J. and W. Dumont. 1990. "Family Policy." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52(4):1136-1151.

Bane, Mary Jo and David T. Ellwood. 1986. "Slipping Into and Out of Poverty: the Dynamics of Spells." *Journal of Human Resources* 21(Winter):1-23.

Duncan, Greg J. and Willard Rodgers. 1987. "Single-Parent Families: Are Their Economic Problems Transitory or Persistent?" *Family Planning Perspectives* 19(4, July/August):171-178. .

When in doubt, use references. It is better to have unnecessary citations to sources than it is to be suspected of plagiarism.

PLAGIARISM AND INTELLECTUAL HONESTY

The *College Handbook* defines plagiarism this way:

(<http://www.middlebury.edu/studentlife/dos/honorcode>)

Plagiarism is a violation of intellectual honesty. Plagiarism is passing off another person's work as one's own. It is taking and presenting as one's own the ideas, research, writings, creations, or inventions of another. It makes no difference whether the source is a student or a professional in some field. For example, in written work, whenever as much as a sentence or key phrase is taken from the work of another without specific citation of the source, the issue of plagiarism arises.

Paraphrasing is the close restatement of another's idea using approximately the language of the original. Paraphrasing without acknowledgment of authorship is also plagiarism and is as serious a violation as an unacknowledged quotation.

It defines cheating as well:

(<http://www.middlebury.edu/studentlife/dos/honorcode>)

Cheating is defined as giving or attempting to give or receive during an examination any aid unauthorized by the instructor. (An examination is any quiz, preannounced test, hourly examination, or final examination. Take-homes will ordinarily be considered as examinations.)

Finally, it reminds you *not* to duplicate work for two different courses:

(<http://www.middlebury.edu/studentlife/dos/honorcode>)

A paper submitted to meet the requirements of a particular course is assumed to be work completed for that course; the same paper, or substantially similar papers, may not be

used to meet the requirements of two different courses, in the same or different terms, without the prior consent of each faculty member involved. Students incorporating similar material in more than one paper are required to confirm each professor's expectations in advance.

It is my assumption that all students know and understand these rules. Any questions should be addressed to me.

Please check with the ADA Coordinator to discuss accommodations for disabilities:

<http://www.middlebury.edu/studentlife/doc/ada/about>

I will make every effort possible to accommodate special needs.

COURSE ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENTS

- 9/11 **Introduction**
 Thinking about Family Issues
- 9/13 The Way We Never Were/The Way We Are
- Reading:**
 Coontz, "The Evolution of American Families" (E-Reserve)
 Mintz, "American Childhood as a Social and Cultural Construct" (E-Reserve)
 Popenoe, "American Family Decline, 1960-1990" (E-Reserve)
 Stacey, "Good Riddance to 'The Family': A Response to David Popenoe
- 9/18 Functionalism
- Reading:**
 Parsons, "The American Family: Its Relations to Personality and to the Social
 Structure" (E-Reserve)
- 9/20 Exchange and power within Families
- Informal Writing Assignment #1:** What is the argument about exchange within
 families being developed in these readings? How does this perspective help you to
 understand what goes on within your own family? Be specific.
- Reading:**
 Stack and Burton, Kinscripts (E-Reserve)
 Hansen, *Not-so-Nuclear Families*, Chapters 6 and 7 (E-Reserve)
 Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, "The way we never...", Chapters 4 (E-Reserve)
- 9/25 Exchange and power among and between Families
- Ulrich, "Housewife and Gadder" (E-Reserve)
 Stack, *All Our Kin*, "Swapping," Ch. 3 (E-Reserve)

9/27

Creating and constructing families (symbolic Interaction)

Informal Writing Assignment #2: In the E-Reserve reading “A Member of the Funeral,” Nancy Naples writes (pp.33-34),

Family is not merely a natural constellation of individuals connected by biology and the state with some set of behaviors that everyone knows and willingly performs. Family must be achieved and constructed on a daily basis.... [We] must work to sustain these relationships.

In a brief (one page) essay, explain in your own words what Nancy Naples means. What aspects of your family are highlighted when you take this kind of perspective as a way of examining it? What aspects of your family are less visible from this perspective?

Reading:

Naples, “A Member of the Funeral” (E-Reserve)

LaRossa, “The Culture and Conduct of Fatherhood” (E-Reserve)

Garey, “Constructing Motherhood on the Night Shift” (E-Reserve)

Berger, and Kellner, “Marriage and the Construction of Reality,” (E-Reserve)

10/2

Class as Material Need

Reading:

Pugh, “Windfall Child rearing” (E-Reserve)

Edin, Nelson and Reed, “Daddy, Baby; Momma Maybe” (E-Reserve)

Additional Readings TBA

10/4

Class and Child Rearing

Informal Writing Assignment #3: What kind of argument is Lareau making about what influences child-rearing style? Is she arguing that the influence is that of material resources or cultural attitudes?

Reading:

Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods*, Chapters 1,2, Part I, Part II

Nelson and Schutz, “Day Care Differences (E-Reserve)

10/9-11

Race and Ethnicity

Informal Writing Assignment #4 (due 10/11): What is the major argument in Vasquez? Does her evidence (so far) support her argument? Why or why not?

Reading:

Hill, “The politics of Theorizing African American Families” (E-Reserve)

Pyke, ““The Normal American Family”” (E-Reserve)

Vasquez, *Mexican Americans*, Introduction, Part 1, Conclusion

10/16

Mid-Semester Break

10/18 Gender as Conflict

Readings

Engels, from *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State* (E-Reserve)
Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More
Progressive Union" (E-Reserve)

10/23 **Gender Continued: Who's Doing the Housework**

Informal Writing Assignment #5: Write a brief response paper in which you answer this question: Is housework really worth writing a whole book about (as Hochschild does)? Why or why not?

Reading:

Carrington, Domesticity and the Political Economy of Lesbian Families (E-Reserve)

Hochschild, *The Second Shift*: Chapters 1-3, 5, 8, 13-16

10/25 **NO CLASS (Take-Home Exam Due at noon 10/26 (and by email))**

10/30 Sexual Orientation

Informal Writing Assignment #6: Please write a discussion question (or two) on that would prompt some interesting reflection about these readings

Reading:

Gates, "Diversity Among Same-Sex Couples" (E-Reserve)

Green, "From Outlaws to In-Laws" (E-Reserve)

Stiers, "From This Day Forward" (E-Reserve)

Stacey and Biblarz, "How does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter" (E-Res)

11/1 Intersections

Zinn, "Feminist Rethinking from Racial-Ethnic Families" (E-Reserve)

Collins, "Shifting the Center" (E-Reserve)

Weber, "Case study 2" (E-Reserve)

11/6-8 Families and the Workplace

Informal Writing Assignment #7: Blair-Loy is writing about women with enormous privilege. Based on your reading so far, what do you think work/family conflict looks like from other positions in society? Do men experience work/family conflict? (Discuss)

Reading:

Blair-Loy, *Competing Devotions*

11/13-15 Families and the State

Oral Reports/Papers: See Paper Guideline Handout

Reading:

Rainwater and Smeeding, "Is there Hope" (E-Reserve)

11/20 Families Under/Engaging in Surveillance

Nelson, "I saw your Nanny" (E-Reserve)

Garey, "Nested Responsibility" (E-Reserve)

Staples, "Where are you and what are you doing?" (E-Reserve)

Thanksgiving Recess

11/27-29 Commodified Relationships/Purchasing the Family

Informal Writing Assignment #8: Drawing on these readings, as well as the reading you have done throughout the semester, write a response paper in which you discuss these questions:

1) What aspects of "family work" can (and cannot) be purchased in the market?

2) How does "family work" (and concerns about that work) change as it shifts to the market?

Lan, "Remaking Family through Subcontracting Care"

Ehrenreich, "Maid to Order" (E-Reserve)

Cheever, "The Nanny Dilemma" (E-Reserve)

Rudruppa, "From sweatshops to Surrogacy" (E-Reserve)

12/4 Global Families

Dreby, Negotiating work and Parenting over the Life Course (E-Reserve)

Parrenas, Mothering from a Distance (E-Reserve)

Hondagneu and Avila, "I'm Here but I'm There" (E-Reserve)

12/6 Conclusion