

Sociology 273: Families in Social Context

Fall 2006, Term 1
College Hall 13

Professor Erin Davis

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Office Hours: M 11:30-12:00; T, W, TH 3:00-3:30; and by appointment

Class Meeting: Generally we will meet Monday 9-11:30, Tuesday through Thursday 12:30-3:00, and Friday 9-11:30. Monday and Friday afternoons are typically reserved for group work. However not all days match this pattern, see the attached calendar for more specific details.

Course Description

To study the history of the family is to conduct a rescue mission into the dreamland of our national self-concept. No subject is more closely bound up with our sense of a difficult present—and our nostalgia for a happier past. ~ John Demos

Nobody has ever before asked the nuclear family to live all by itself in a box the way we do. With no relatives, no support, we've put it in an impossible situation.

~Margaret Mead

This course examines current debates on “The Family” from a sociological perspective, with an emphasis on the complex and diverse family experiences and patterns in the contemporary United States. The focus of this seminar will be on the family as an ideology and an institution. We will examine the archetype of the traditional family, as well as investigate the salience and continued impact of these family norms and ideals. Throughout the course we will explore the meanings, relationships, and institutions of the family, the role of the family in our private and public lives, and the ways that the larger social and cultural contexts impact family life.

This course is reading intensive, academically grounded, and may involve controversial readings. You should not take this class if you feel that you are unable to (1) complete the required reading, (2) examine course material from an analytic, sociological perspective, and (3) engage in productive, challenging discussions in a noncombative manner.

Course Requirements

Informed Participation (5%): The quality of your learning and of each class session is highly dependent on completing the reading and coming to class prepared to engage the material. Students will be evaluated based on the quality of their presence in the classroom. “Quality” here is defined as informed and respectful participation in class. “Quality” participation is impossible to obtain without carefully reading and thinking about the assigned reading before every class, attending class, and interacting respectfully with others in the classroom. A participation self-evaluation form is available via Moodle. There may also be occasional classroom assignments and unannounced quizzes that allow you to illustrate your comprehension and analysis of the readings.

You are responsible for all assignments and material covered in class, whether or not you attend and regardless of the reasons for any absence. I will encourage and support your participation in our classroom community, but the final responsibility is yours.

Discussion Questions (15%): A discussion question for **each** of the assigned readings is due each class day. Discussion questions must be submitted via Moodle at least 45 minutes prior to our first class session of the day. These discussion questions should illustrate your engagement with the

required articles for that day. These questions should be “true” discussion questions: questions which require serious reflection on the material and encourage analytical, engaged discussion. Your questions should not solicit either simple summaries of the reading or simple pronouncements of opinion. Developing these questions should push you to reflect on the personal, social, or intellectual context/grounding and on the social and political implications of the arguments and issues. We will use some of the questions generated in our class discussion. Discussion questions will be graded “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” and will not be returned. I will look for evidence that you have done the reading carefully and that you have put some thought into your questions. If questions do not reflect a thoughtful reading of course material or your questions do not require thoughtful reflection on the material, and therefore receive an “unsatisfactory” evaluation, I will let you know.

Domestic Partnership Contract (10%): Working with another person, you will negotiate and complete a domestic partner/marriage contract exploring partnership goals, work and family plans, childrearing and the division of domestic labor, household authority structures, the grounds for dissolution, etc. In addition to the negotiated contract, a written analysis of the contract and of the negotiation process is required. More details on this assignment will be provided in class. The domestic partnership contract is due September 15th, 9am.

Interview Project (25%): This project will entail completing in-depth interviews with three or four individuals concerning their experiences of family life. These interviews will also provide empirical information to complement our class discussions on family roles and patterns. More details on the interview process, the written analysis, and the potential connections with class discussion will be provided during the first week of classes. It is recommended that interviews be completed by September 13th at the latest. The final written analysis is due September 17th, 9am via Moodle.

Group Policy Project (20%): The project is an opportunity to gain a more in-depth understanding of the politics of the family and to examine or develop related family policy(s). For your project, your group should investigate some “problem” or “policy debate” relevant to the family. As in any course, we are never able to fully cover all aspects of the topic under examination. This project should either focus on an issue not covered in the course or should elaborate and explore in more depth an issue that has been discussed. In either case, this work should be clearly grounded in the study of the family and should draw on and incorporate insights and arguments from the course material. Moreover, the project must involve library research beyond class readings/discussions. In this project, your group should provide a critical assessment of the issue, any major competing perspectives, policy evaluations, and a policy proposal and assessment. A preliminary project proposal should be submitted (via Moodle) by September 12th. Groups will present their work during the week of September 25th. More specifics on this project will be discussed in class.

A list of possible but not exclusive topics include:

- Family Workplace Policies
- Reproductive Technology
- Adoption/Foster Care
- Child Care Policies
- Elder Care
- Family Violence
- Blended Families/Stepfamilies
- Divorce
- Custody/Alimony
- Domestic Outsourcing
- Marriage Amendments or Policies
- Family Poverty

Final Exam (25%): More specifics on the final essay exam will be discussed in class.

Other Relevant Information

Late Work: The final exam and group policy presentations will not be rescheduled without evidence of a serious emergency. Without either prior approval or an emergency situation, late discussion questions will not be accepted and other late work will be penalized 1 point for every hour period that the assignment is turned in late.

Evaluation and Grade Scale: Evaluation of your work is based on an assessment of the following elements: (1) demonstration of knowledge of material; (2) development of ideas and depth of argument; (3) level of sociological analysis; (4) use of course materials and empirical information; (5) organization, coherence, writing and/or presentation style.

For your final grade, I will use the following scale: **A** 93-100; **A-** 90-92; **B+** 87-89; **B** 83-86; **B-** 80-82; **C+** 77-79; **C** 73-76; **C-** 70-72; **D+** 67-69; **D** 63-66; **D-** 60-62; **F** Below 60

Moodle: A range of course information is available via moodle. The moodle address is: <https://secure.cornellcollege.edu/moodle/>

Course Accommodations: I would appreciate hearing from anyone in this class who has a special need. If you would like to request course accommodations for any reason, see me after class or during my office hours within the first 3 days of the course. While I am reasonably sure we can work out whatever arrangement is necessary, course accommodations should be requested before there is a failure to meet course requirements.

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any student in this course who is involved in academic dishonesty (portraying another person's work or ideas as their own, submitting the same or similar papers in more than one course without permission from the course instructors, intentionally facilitating plagiarism, etc.) will not earn credit for the relevant assignments and may be formally charged with academic dishonesty. See the Cornell student handbook, *the Compass*, for more information on academic dishonesty.

Additional Resources: There are a number of resources on campus to support your academic work. In developing and completing your assignments, I encourage you to utilize the support of Tonnie Haas, the social sciences consulting librarian; Jessica Johanningmeier, the Quantitative Reasoning Consultant; Nicole Jackson, Mariah Steele and the Writing Studio; and Annette Beck and the instructional media studio. These individuals and offices can provide both basic help as well as advanced guidance to help polish your research, writing, and presentation skills.

Cross-Listings: This course may also contribute to a Women's Studies major/minor.

Course Material:

- Required Course-pack is available in the Cornell College bookstore
- Moodle readings: A few articles will only be available on via Moodle

Course Schedule

Adjustments in readings and class schedules may be made if needed as we move through the course.

The Family: In Transition, In Crisis, In Decline? (September 5)

- Giele, Decline of the Family: Conservative, Liberal, and Feminist Views
- Coontz, Why We Miss the 50's
- Coontz, The Future of Marriage

What is a Family ? (September 6)

- Steinhoff, A Cultural Approach to Family in Japan and the United States
- Rapp, Family and Class in Contemporary America: Notes Toward an Understanding of an Ideology
- Minow, Redefining Families: Who's In and Who's Out
- Foote, Baby Makes One (Moodle)

Work versus Family Life: Dual Earner Families (September 7)

- Jacobs and Gerson, How Work Spills Over into Life
- Hochschild, The Emotional Geography of Work and Family Life
- Ehrensaft, The Kinderdult: The New Child Born to Conflict between Work and Family
- Galinsky, What Children Think About Their Working Parents

Domesticity: Gendered Divisions of Household Labor and Carework (September 8)

- Williams, Is Domesticity Dead?
- Coltrane, Family Man
- Carrington, The Division of Domestic Labor in Lesbian Families
- Gager, Cooney, and n Call, The Effects of Family Characteristics and Time Use on Teenager's Household Labor (Moodle)

Men in Families/Fatherhood (September 11)

- Mintz, From Patriarchy to Androgyny and Other Myths: Placing Men's Family Roles in Historical Perspective
- Lareau, My Wife Can Tell Me Who I Know: Methodological and Conceptual Problems in Studying Fatherhood (Moodle)
- Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner, Gender Displays and Men's Power: The "New Man" and the Mexican Immigrant Man
- Jones, Chivalry on Ice

Motherhood (September 12)

- Hays, The Mommy Wars: Ambivalence, Ideological Work and the Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood
- Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood (Moodle)
- Epstein Fuchs, Working Moms Under Attack (Moodle)
- Gillispie, Childfree and Feminine (Moodle)

Economic/Racial Hardship and Family Life (September 13)

- Rubin, When You Get Laid Off, It's Like You Lose a Part of Yourself
- Rubin, Families on the Fault Line
- Newman, Family Values Against the Odds

Family and the Reproduction of Inequality (September 14)

- Barrett and McIntosh, The Anti-Social Family
- Lareau, Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black and White Families (Moodle)

Modern Relationships (September 15)

- Coontz, The World Historical Transformation of Marriage (Moodle)
- Huston and Melz, The Case for (Promoting) Marriage (Moodle)
- Pasupathi, Arranged Marriages What's Love Got to Do with It?

Marriage Alternatives: Divorce, Cohabitation, and Unmarried Parenting (September 18)

- Ahrons, What Divorce is and Is Not
- Sanchez, Nock, Wright, and Gager, Setting the Clock Forward or Back: Covenant Marriage and the Divorce Revolution
- Smock, Cohabitation in the United States
- Jayakody and Cabrera, What are the Choices for Low Income Families? Cohabitation, Marriage, and Remaining Single
- Shoshana and Alexander, By Chance or By Choice

Implications of Divorce (September 19)

- Williams, Deconstructing the Ideal Worker Norm in Family Entitlements
- Kelly, Children's Adjustment Following Divorce (Moodle)
- Smart, Neale, and Wade, Doing Post-Divorce Childhood

Blended Families (September 20)

- Smart, Neale, and Wade, Children's Perspectives on Post-Divorce Life
- Mason, Stepparents: Defacto Parents or Legal Strangers
- Marsiglio, Overlooked Aspects of Stepfathering

Queer Families (September 22)

- Lewin, You'll Never Walk Alone, Lesbian and Gay Weddings and the Authenticity of the Same Sex Couple
- Walters, Take My Domestic Partner, Please: Gays and Marriage in the Era of the Visible
- Chambers, What If? The Legal Consequences of Marriage and the Needs of Lesbian and Gay Male Couples
- Stacey and Biblarz, (How) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?

Welfare Reform and the Push for Traditional Families (September 23)

- Hays, Work, The Family, and Welfare
- Selections from Hays, Flat Broke With Children: Chapter 3: "Promoting Family Values" & Chapter 6: "Invisibility and Inclusion"

Child Care Dilemmas and Policies (September 25)

- Anderson and Vail, Child Care Dilemmas in Contemporary Families (Moodle)
- Uttal, Racial Safety and Cultural Maintenance in Childcare
- Chaudry, Selection from Childcare Choices
- Clawston and Gertsel, Caring for Our Young: Childcare in Europe and the United States

SOC273: Families in Social Context
 Fall 2006, Term 1 Course Calendar

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
4 Studying the Family 9:00-11:30 <i>afternoon group meetings</i>	5 <u>In Transition, In Crisis, In Decline</u> 12:30-3:00 Preliminary Project Outline due 9am	6 <u>What is a Family</u> 12:30-3:00	7 <u>Work versus Family Life</u> 1:30-3:00	8 Domesticity 9:00-11:30 <i>afternoon group meetings</i>
11 Men in Families 9:00-11:30 <i>afternoon group meetings</i>	12 <u>Motherhood</u> 12:30-3:00 Preliminary Project Outline due 9am	13 <u>Economic/Racial Hardship</u> 12:30-3:00	14 <u>Reproduction of Inequality</u> 12:30-3:00	15 Modern Relationships 9:00-11:30 <u>Domestic Partner Contract due 9am</u> <i>Interview Project due Sunday, 9/17 at 9am</i>
18 Marriage Alternatives 9:00-11:30 <i>afternoon group meetings</i>	19 <u>Implications of Divorce</u> 12:30-3:00	20 <u>Blended Families</u> 12:30-3:00	21 <u>Queer Families</u> 12:30-3:00	22 Welfare Reform 9:00-11:30 <i>afternoon group meetings</i>
25 Child Care Group Presentations 9:00-11:00 1:00-3:00	26 Group Presentations 9:00-11:00 1:00-3:00	27 Final Exam		