

Revised on 10/11/10

Sociology 310 Family and Social Learning

Class Time: 4:00-5:20pm Mondays and Wednesdays **Class Location:** Kresge 2-415

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Office Hours: 1812 Chicago Avenue, Rm. 208, Wed. 10am-noon or by appointment

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Course Overview

This course is designed to provide an overview of the changes, continuities, and variations in American family experiences over the past century, explanations for these trends, and the implications for individuals, social inequality, and public policy.

We will start by considering the extent of family change in the U.S. and other Western industrialized countries in recent decades with a critical consideration of which changes and trends are really new as well as what the best comparison period should be. In particular, we will focus on changes in marriage, cohabitation, divorce, and childbearing.

The second section of the course will focus on why families have changed. We will begin by examining how the prevalence, stability, and timing in the life course of marriage and cohabitation have changed. We will then consider the extent to which marriage has undergone redefinition, and we will devote considerable time to thinking about why intimate unions form and dissolve.

Next, we will look at some functions or activities of the family: having and raising children and interacting across generations and with kin. We will start by considering the factors contributing to declines in the average number of children per family and the rise in non-marital fertility as well as how parenting and childrearing have changed. Next, we will turn our focus to intergenerational ties and how extended families and kin support one another.

In the last section of the course, we will consider the implications of family change for gender, ethnic/racial, and class inequalities.

Section I. How have families in industrialized countries changed in recent decades? How can we make sense of changes in families?

Section II. How and why have intimate unions (including marriage and cohabitation) changed?

Section III. How and why have (selected) functions or activities of the family changed? Fertility, Childrearing, Intergenerational Ties, & Kin Support.

Section IV. How do changes in families and family functioning affect gender, class, and racial/ethnic inequalities? How should public policy address these changes and variations?

Course Goals and Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to 1) describe in broad terms how American families have changed throughout the twentieth century; 2) describe trends in marriage, divorce, and fertility for the whole population of the United States and for population subgroups defined by race/ethnicity and social class; 3) explain and evaluate possible causes of these changes; 4) understand how social scientists study families and the limitations of our research methods; 5) identify key scholars in the field of American family research and their contributions; and 6) understand the relevant public policy issues involving families and how social science research can inform them.

Additionally, students are expected to demonstrate competency in understanding social science research and writing a focused literature review. This course will also emphasize understanding quantitative data relevant to the course topic. No prior statistics courses are required, but students will be expected to know how to read and describe figures and graphs by the final exam.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to do all required reading and engage deeply with the subject material. Class attendance is strongly encouraged. Grades will be calculated as follows:

In-class quizzes	33%	
Writing assignment #1	5%	
Writing assignment #2	5%	
Writing assignment #3	17%	
Research paper OR Final exam	40%	(Dec. 9, 7pm)

Required Books:

Andrew Cherlin, ed. 2009. Public and Private Families: A Reader, 6th edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rosenfeld, Michael. 2007. The Age of Independence: Interracial Unions, Same-Sex Unions, and the Changing American Family. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

In-class quizzes: Instead of a midterm exam, there will be eight short, in-class quizzes. These quizzes may be on either Monday or Wednesday. If you miss a quiz for any reason, there is one make-up opportunity. If you miss more than one quiz or do not take advantage of the make-up opportunity, you will get a zero for the missed quiz. The best seven of eight quiz grades will be used in calculating your final course grade.

Make-up Opportunity: Listen to the following NPR podcast, write a 2 page critical reaction paper, and submit it in class on **November 29**.

NPR, OnPoint, July 14, 2010. "The Debate over Sperm Donors."

<http://www.onpointradio.org/2010/07/the-debate-over-sperm-donors>

Final Exam: The final exam will take place as scheduled by the Registrar. All University policies regarding final exams apply.

Written Assignments:

Specifics: Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Assignments should be uploaded onto Blackboard **AND** handed in on paper in class. (**Do not submit assignments via email!**) For all writing assignments, please use Times New Roman 12 point font with 1 inch margins on all sides and double-space. Use APA citation style. Include your name, the course number, and the date in the top left corner. Written work is expected to be grammatically correct and without typos. **Always proofread!** Students are encouraged to visit the Writing Place and to seek and give editing help to classmates. Please include a note at the end of the text and before the references if you received editing or writing assistance from anyone. Example: "Note: I acknowledge writing advice and feedback from Sue Jones at the Writing Place and from classmate Jose Hernandez."

Writing Assignment #1: *Portrayals of Family in Cultural Media.* Please choose two TV shows or films and examine the content for the portrayals of family life and assumptions about families. Draw on course readings and lecture material to situate the family/families portrayed in their historical and cultural context. The paper should be 2 pages (double-spaced). *Due September 29*

Writing Assignment #2: *Assessing Changes in Marriage.* Family sociologists are actively engaged in puzzling over questions related to changes in marriage in the United States and other countries. Based on the course reading and lecture material, write a two page paper (double-spaced) answering one of the questions listed below. Be sure to include a thesis statement and to build an argument with supporting evidence.

Questions: 1) Has the meaning of marriage changed? How strong is the evidence for the case that marriage today is fundamentally different than it was in the past? 2) Does it make sense to still consider marriage an institution? 3) Is cohabitation an institution in the same way marriage is? In what sense is it and is it not? 4) Does it make sense to use the single term "cohabitation" to cover the variety of unions that Hueveline & Timberlake describe as comprising cohabitation across different countries? *Due October 20.*

Writing Assignment #3: *Book Review.* Choose one of the following books related to fathers, fathering, and fatherhood. Write a critical book review (suggested length: 4 pages). The review should include 1) a summary of the author's argument or thesis and the supporting evidence; and 2) your critique of the argument or thesis. In the critique, you may want to pose questions that you thought the author did not address, point out contradictions between this reading and other course readings, question the merits of the supporting evidence, argue against the author's logic, or point out the strengths of the argument and evidence presented. *Due November 10*

Book Choices:

LaRossa, Ralph. 1997. *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Waller, Maureen. 2002. *My Baby's Father: Unmarried Parents and Paternal Responsibility*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

W. Bradford Wilcox. 2004. *Soft Patriarch's, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Research Paper: Students have a choice between writing a research paper and taking the final exam. Students who choose the research paper option will write an 8-10 page research paper on a topic of their choosing using at least 12 scholarly references. These papers should be a focused critical literature review. For students choosing this option, the selected topic (one paragraph) and list of possible sources is due **October 25**. *You may not switch topics after October 25 without discussing it with me during office hours.* Papers are due **December 9** by 7pm. Students may turn papers in early at my office but may not turn in papers late!

Core Topics and Reading Assignments

Watch the website for changes and for notes on what to focus on in the readings.

Introduction: What is a Family? How are Families Changing?

9/22 First Class: No assigned reading

9/27

1. Meadow & Stacey. 2006. "Families." *Contexts*, pg.55-57.
2. Fischer & Hout. "The Family in Trouble: Since When? For Whom?" (**Reader 5-15**)
3. Furstenberg. 2010. "On a New Schedule: Transitions to Adulthood and Family Change." *Future of Children* 20(1): 67-87.

9/29

1. Ruggles. 1994. "The Transformation of American Family Structure." *American Historical Review* 99 (1): 103-128.
2. Rosenfeld. Chpts. 1 & 2 of The Age of Independence (pg. 1-41)

DUE: ASSIGNMENT #1

How Sociologists Study and Understand Family Changes and Variations

10/4

1. Usdansky. 2009. "A Weak Embrace: Popular and Scholarly Depictions of Single-Parent Families, 1900-1998." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 71: 209-225.
2. Thorton & Young-DeMarco. 2001. "Four Decades of Trends in Attitudes Toward Family Issues in the United States: The 1960s Through the 1990s." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63: 1009-1037.
3. Rosenfeld. Chpt. 3 of The Age of Independence (pg. 42-65)

Intimate Relationships, Love, and Sex

10/6

1. Hull, Meier, & Ortyl. 2010. "The Changing Landscape of Love and Marriage." *Contexts* 9(2): 32-37.
2. Schwartz & Rutter. "Sexual Desire and Gender." (**Reader 134-142**)

3. Rothman. 1982. "Sex and Self-Control: Middle-Class Courtship in America, 1770-1870." *Journal of Social History* 15(3): 409-425.

10/11

1. Excerpt from Bailey. From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America. *OPTIONAL*
2. Hamilton & Armstrong. 2009. "Gendered Sexuality in Young Adulthood: Double Binds and Flawed Options." *Gender & Society* 23(5): 589-616.
3. McClintock. 2010. "When Does Race Matter? Race, Sex and Dating at an Elite University." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72(1): 45-72.
4. England, Shafer, & Fogarty. 2008. Excerpt from "Hooking Up and Forming Romantic Relationships on Today's College Campuses." in *The Gendered Society Reader*, edited by Michael Kimmel. New York: Oxford University Press.

Marriage, Cohabitation, & Divorce

10/13

1. Coontz. "What's Love Got to Do With It? A Brief History of Marriage" (**Reader** 32-8)
2. Rosenfeld. Chpts. 4 & 5 of The Age of Independence (pg. 66-123)
3. Uecker & Stokes. 2008. "Early Marriage in the United States." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70: 835-46.

10/18

1. Smock & Manning. 2004. "Living Together Unmarried in the United States: Demographic Perspectives and Implications for Family Policy." *Law & Policy* 26(1): 87-117.
2. Smock et al. 2005. "'Everything's There Except Money': How Money Shapes Decisions to Marry among Cohabitators." (**Reader** 157-169).
3. Hueveline & Timberlake. "The Role of Cohabitation in Family Formation: The United States in Comparative Perspective." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66:1214-30.
4. "Husbands, Wives and Hard Times," *The New York Times*, April 8, 2009
<http://roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/04/08/husbands-wives-and-hard-times>

10/20

1. Qian. "Breaking the Last Taboo: Interracial Marriage in America." (**Reader** 124-132)
2. Lundquist. "When Race Makes No Difference: Marriage and the Military." *Social Forces* 83(2): 731-757.
3. Ledger. 2009. "The Moynihan Report, a Retrospective." *Contexts* 8(4): 48-52.

DUE: ASSIGNMENT #2

Context of Fertility & Childrearing

10/25

1. McLanahan. "Life without Father: What Happens to the Children?" (**Reader** 283-287)
2. Kelly & Emery. "Children's Adjustment Following Divorce: Risk and Resilience Perspectives." (**Reader** 287-294)
3. Nelson, et al. "Beyond the Two-Parent Family: How Teenagers Fare in Cohabiting Couple and Blended Families." (**Reader** 308-316)

DUE: RESEARCH TOPIC & LIST OF SOURCES for research paper for students choosing the research paper option

10/27

1. Edin & Kefalas. "Unmarried with Children." (**Reader** 169-173)
2. National Vital Statistics Reports. 2002. "Mean Age of Mother, 1970-2000." 51(1).
3. Furstenberg. 2007. "Teenage Mothers in Later Life." *Contexts* 6(3): 78-79.
4. Bachu 1999. "Trends in Premarital Childbearing: 1930 to 1994." *Current Population Reports* P23-197. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.
5. Ventura. 2009. "Changing patterns of nonmarital childbearing in the United States." NCHS Data Brief 18, National Center for Health Statistics, Hyattsville, MD.
6. Biddlecom & Martin. 2006. "Childless in America." *Contexts* 5(4): 54.

Parenting & Childhood

11/1

1. Lareau. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." (**Reader** 85-108)
2. Cohen. 2009. "The Myth of the Over-Scheduled Child." *Contexts* 8(2): 58-59.
3. Artis. 2009. "Breastfeed at Your Own Risk." *Contexts* 8(4): 28-34.
4. Marsiglio. 2010. "Healthy Dads, Healthy Kids." *Contexts* 8(4): 22-27.

11/3

1. Bianchi. 2000. "Maternal Employment and Time with Children: Dramatic Change or Surprising Continuity?" *Demography* 37:401-414.
2. Simon. 2008. "The Joys of Parenthood, Reconsidered." *Contexts* 7(2): 40-45.
3. Barth. 2009. "Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect with Parent Training: Evidence and Opportunities." *Future of Children* 19(2): 95-118.
4. Rosenfeld. Chapter 6 of The Age of Independence (pg. 124-137)

Work & Family

11/8

1. Gerson & Jacobs. "The Work-Home Crunch." (**Reader** 178-186).
2. Belkin. 2003. "The Opt-Out Revolution." *New York Times Magazine*, October 26.
3. Percheski. 2008. "Opting Out? Cohort Differences in Professional Women's Employment Rates from 1960 to 2005." *American Sociological Review* 73: 497-517.
4. Stone. 2007. "The Rhetoric and Reality of Opting Out." *Contexts* 6(4): 14-19.

11/10

1. Hondragneu-Sotelo & Avila. "I'm Here, but I'm There': The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood." (**Reader** 110-124)
2. Hochschild. "Joey's Problem: Nancy and Evan Holt." (**Reader** 186-203)
3. Roos. 2009. "Interconnecting Work and Family: Race and Class Differences in Women's Work Status and Attitudes." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 37(3/4): 103-120.

DUE: ASSIGNMENT #3

Intergenerational Ties & Family Lives of the Elderly

11/15

1. Bengston. "Beyond the Nuclear Family." (**Reader** 225-236)
2. Newman. "Men and Women: Together and Apart in Later Years." (**Reader** 236-260)
3. Carr. 2010. "Golden Years? Poverty among Older Americans." *Contexts* 9(1): 62-63
4. Carr. 2006. "Good Grief: Bouncing Back from a Spouse's Death in Later Life." *Contexts* 5(4):22-27.
5. Umberson. 2006. "Parents, Adult Children, and Immortality." *Contexts* 5(5):48-53.
6. Curran, McLanahan, and Knab. 2003. "Does Remarriage Expand Perceptions of Kinship Support Among the Elderly?" *Social Science Research*. 32(2): 171-190.

Inequality Implications, Public Policy

11/17

1. Meezan & Rauch. "Gay-Marriage, Same-Sex Parenting, and America's Children." (**Reader** 327-338)
2. Mason. "The Modern American Stepfamily: Problems and Possibilities." (**Reader** 297-308)
3. Cherlin. 1999. "Going to Extremes: Family Structure, Children's Wellbeing, and Social Science." *Demography* 36(4): 421-428.
4. Excerpts from *Perry vs. Schwarzenegger*, *Varnum vs. Brien*, and related materials

11/22

1. Cherlin. 2003. "Should the Government Promote Marriage?" *Contexts* 2(4): 22-29.
2. England, 2000. "Marriage, the Costs of Children, and Gender Inequality." in The Ties that Bind.
3. Gerstel & Sarkisian. 2006. "Marriage: The Good, the Bad, and the Greedy." *Contexts* 5(4): 16-21.
4. Strach. Chapter Five: "Taxing the Family." in All in the Family
5. Conley, "Spread the Wealth of Spousal Rights." *The New York Times* May 20, 2007

11/24

NO CLASS: Happy Thanksgiving!

1. Jackson. 2007. "Inequalities." *Contexts* 6(1): 59-61.
2. Foster & Hogan. 2009. "The Mass Incarceration of Parents in America: Issues of Race/Ethnicity, Collateral Damage to Children, and Prisoner Reentry." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 623:179-194.
3. Clawson & Gerstel. 2002. "Caring for Our Young: Child Care in Europe and the United States." *Contexts* 1(4): 28-35.

4. Esping-Andersen. 2007. "Equal Opportunities and the Welfare State." *Contexts* 6(1): 23-27.
5. Carr. 2007. "The Cost of Kids." *Contexts* 6(4): 62
6. McLanahan & Percheski. 2008. "Family Structure and the Reproduction of Inequalities." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34: 257-76. (*optional but encouraged!*)

11/29

Reading Period: We will meet on this day because we do not meet on 11/24.

12/1 *Review for Final Exam* (optional)

Additional Information:

Respectful Dialogue: Some of the topics that we discuss in this course may resonate closely with our own personal experiences, may challenge closely-held personal, moral, or political beliefs, or may be controversial. I will do my best to create an intellectually vibrant and respectful atmosphere. I request that you contribute to this by acknowledging the diversity of experiences and opinions related to the course topics, refraining from the use of slang or pejorative terms, treating others with respect and civility, and honestly communicating with me and your classmates if you feel that we are not treating a particular perspective with respect. Please make me aware of any concerns that you may have, and I will do my best to address them.

Additionally, students are requested to turn off their **CELLPHONES** and not use their **COMPUTERS** for non-course related purposes during class (i.e. no surfing the web or email!). If you have to leave early or arrive late, please do so quietly!

Communication: The best way to contact me is through email. Please include an informative subject line such as "Soc 310 Assignment Question" or "Anticipated Absence from Soc 310" and sign your full name.

Academic Integrity: Northwestern has strict policies regarding plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Examples of academic dishonesty include passing off other people's work as your own, cheating on exams or other in-class assignments, collaborating with other students on assignments where collaboration is prohibited, and not giving others (students, faculty, writers, and scholars) credit for their ideas or words. Respecting the academic integrity of yourself and others means always citing sources correctly and never contributing to or benefiting from any activities that further academic dishonesty (e.g. selling or buying term papers, contributing exam copies to exam banks without the instructor's permission, etc.). If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please ask me.

Students should be advised that they may be required to submit their work electronically in addition to or in place of printed form. All student work may be analyzed electronically for violations of the university's academic integrity policy and may also be included in a database for the purpose of testing for plagiarized content.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated! All suspected violations of academic integrity will be referred to Dean Mark Sheldon.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Per university policy, any student with a documented disability needing accommodations is requested to speak to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD; 847-467-5530) and to me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first two weeks of class). All discussions will remain confidential.

Absences: Students will occasionally need to miss class because of religious holidays, illness, or family emergencies. Please let me know by the second week of class about anticipated absences for religious holiday observances. Students who are absent for illness or family emergencies may be referred to the appropriate dean.