Sociology 210 Families and Society
Spring 2018

Class Time: Mondays & Wednesdays 3:30-4:50 pm  Location: Lutkin Hall
Office Hours: Monday & Tuesday 2-3pm, 1812 Chicago Avenue, Rm. 208

Course Overview
This course is designed to provide an overview of the changes, continuities, and variations in family experiences in industrialized countries over the past century. We will explore explanations for these trends and discuss the implications for individuals and society. Although the course covers a great deal of valuable material about family life, it is not a self-help course or an instruction manual for mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, or children. Rather, the course is an introduction into the sociological study of families.

We will start by considering the extent of family change in the U.S. and other industrialized countries in recent decades. We will discuss how social scientists study families and what types of theories and evidence they use to explain family change.

The second section of the course will focus on changes in dating, romantic relationships, and marriage. We will begin by examining how dating and courtship patterns have changed over time and vary across social groups. Next, we will look at the rise of pre-marital cohabitation and how cohabitation is similar to and different from marriage. We will then consider the extent to which marriage has undergone redefinition, and we will discuss why intimate unions dissolve.

Next, we will consider changes in some activities of families: raising children and interacting across generations. 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. We will consider the implications of changes in marital status and living arrangements for adults and children. Finally, we will turn our focus to intergenerational ties and how family members interact across generations and households.

Course Goals and Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to do the following:

1) Understand how social scientists study families and the limitations of our research methods;
2) Describe in broad terms how families in the U.S. and other industrialized countries have changed over the last century;
3) Describe trends in marriage, divorce, and fertility for the population of the U.S. and for population subgroups defined by race/ethnicity and social class;
4) Explain and evaluate possible causes of these changes;
This course will also emphasize understanding graphs, figures, and tables relevant to course material. No prior statistics courses are required, but students will be expected to know how to understand 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 expected. Grades will be calculated as follows:

- Class participation: 15%
- Midterm Quizzes: 25%
- Family Histories Project: 25%
- Final exam: 35%

**Required Books:**


Students struggling with the cost of books and course materials are encouraged to visit NU’s *Student Enrichment Services* online ([http://www.northwestern.edu/enrichment/](http://www.northwestern.edu/enrichment/)) or in person at Foster Walker, House 6, Room 5101.

**Class participation:** To fully participate, students should complete all readings in advance of class. There will be occasional short writing assignments in class, and completion of these assignments will contribute to the participation grade.

Students are also required to participate via clickers. Students who participate in 80% or more of the clicks will get full participation points for this component of class participation. Students who participate in less than 50% of the clicks will get 0 participation points for this component.

**Family Histories Project:** This project is an opportunity for students to conduct interviews and relate the interview data to the relevant course material. Directions will be posted on Canvas. Papers are due **June 4** in class. Late papers will lose 5 points a day and will not be accepted after the final exam.

**Midterm Quizzes:** There will be 3 short (~20 minute) midterm quizzes. Your two highest grades will be averaged. Make-up quizzes are only available under exceptional circumstances (e.g. a student or a member of her immediate family is hospitalized). Students who will miss a quiz because of athletic team obligations or other NU obligations must discuss the situation with me by **April 10**.

**Final Exam:** The final exam will take place as scheduled by the Registrar on Thursday, **June 14 from 9-11am**. Students are NOT permitted to take the exam at a different time. All University policies regarding final exams apply.
Core Topics and Reading Assignments

April 3, Class 1: Overview

April 4, Class 2: Perspectives on Family Change
2. Excerpt from Powell, B. et al. 2010. Counted Out: Same-Sex Relations and Americans’ Definitions of Family.

April 9, Class 3: Methods for Studying Families

April 11, Class 4: Changes in Dating and Courtship, Part 1

April 16, Class 5: Changes in Dating and Courtship, Part 2

April 18, Class 6: Living Alone & Cohabitation
Midterm Quiz #1
1. Families in America, bottom of page 37 - top of page 40 & bottom of page 51- top of page 59

April 23, Class 7: Marriage, Part 1

April 25, Class 8: Marriage, Part 2
April 30, Class 9: Marriage, Part 3
1. Majority opinion from the Obergefell v. Hodges Supreme Court case

May 2, Class 10: Divorce & Separation

May 7, Class 11: Widowhood & Repartnering
Midterm Quiz #2

May 9, Class 12: Fertility & Parenthood, Part 1

May 14, Class 13: Fertility & Parenthood, Part 2

May 16, Class 14: Fertility & Parenthood, Part 3

May 21, Class 15: Family Living Arrangements & Adult Wellbeing
Midterm Quiz #3
1. *Families in America,* pages 108-120

May 23, Class 16: Family Living Arrangements & Child Wellbeing
1. *Families in America,* page 120-136

May 30, Class 17: Intergenerational Ties

June 4, Class 18: Public Policy
1. *Families in America,* Chapter 5.

June 6, Final Exam Review (Optional)
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

**Absences:** Please let me know by the second week of class about anticipated absences for religious holiday observances. Students who are absent for an extended period (more than two classes) because of illness or serious family emergency and would like accommodation are required to contact me as soon as the situation arises.

**Accommodations:** Per university policy, any student with a documented need for accommodations is requested to register with AccessibleNU and let me know as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first two weeks of class) how we can best facilitate your full participation in the course. All discussions will remain confidential.

**Communication:** The best way to contact me is through email. Please include an informative subject line such as “Soc 210 Assignment Question” and sign your full name.

**Plagiarism and 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.). Additionally, **you may not reuse papers** or portions of papers (anything longer than one paragraph) from a previous class for an assignment for this class. 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. 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 Sheldon.**

**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 their **cellphones** to silent and not use their **computers or digital devices** for non-course related purposes during class. If your use of digital devices for non-course related purposes disrupts the learning environment, you will be barred from bringing them to class.

If you have to leave early or arrive late, please do so quietly.