

## **SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICAN FAMILIES**

Sociology 120  
TTh 2:30-3:45  
Social Science 6210  
Spring 2010

Professor Cameron Macdonald  
Social Science 8135  
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Office Hours: T-Th 1-2

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course focuses on current social changes affecting American families, with particular emphasis on the intersection of families and other social institutions, such as the economy, the law, and medicine. We will first explore common assumptions about the “traditional family,” comparing this image with a brief overview of historical facts about American family life over the past two centuries. We will then analyze the causes and effects of four radical transformations in contemporary American family life: the large-scale entrance of mothers into the paid labor force; welfare reform and its effects on poor families; changes in the laws affecting families, including intervention in violent families by legal authorities, and the revolution in divorce rates; and the rise of reproductive technologies and the possibilities of alternative family forms. In our discussions of all of these topics, we will explore the social and political implications of these changes for men, women, and children, and for society.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- You will be expected to do all of the assigned readings, attend all classes, and participate in class discussions. You are responsible for all material, and directions presented in class, and should make arrangements with classmates to pick up handouts and assignments if you are unable to attend.
- There will be two exams based on material from the assigned readings, class lectures and discussions, and videos. Since lectures frequently add material not covered in the readings, you will need to attend class in order to do well on tests and on the final exam. Each test covers one unit and the final exam is not comprehensive, but covers only the second half of the class. Each test will be worth 125 out of 500 total points for the class.
- Historical Analysis Paper – 100 points. You will write a short (5-7 page) paper analyzing the differences in the economic and domestic participation of family members of two generations (either a grandparent or a parent, or a parent and someone in their twenties). More specific instructions will be handed out when the paper assignment begins.
- Attendance and participation in discussion sections is mandatory and counts for a total of 100 points towards 500 total points for the final grade.
- Answering ‘clicker questions’ in lecture will be worth up to a total of 50 points.
- EXTRA CREDIT: You may perform extra credit assignments for up to a total of 25 additional points for the semester.

# SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICAN FAMILIES

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Andrew Cherlin, Public & Private Families: A Reader, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition  
Course Pack, Sociology 120 – at SSCC Copy Center or on Learn@UW  
I-Clicker

## RECOMMENDED TEXT

Andrew Cherlin: Public & Private Families: Textbook, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition

## COURSE GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

The goal of this course is to teach you *how* to think about families and about the family as a social institution, not *what* to think. You will be presented with varying perspectives on issues facing contemporary families, and you will be evaluated on how well you assess them and how well you back up your assessments with sociological reasoning and facts.

### Lectures:

I do not take attendance at lectures. However, lecture time is used to clarify the reading material, to present additional material related to the readings, and to present guest speakers and films. It is highly unlikely that anyone can pass the course without regular attendance at lectures. Tables, graphs, and outlines will be available on the course website; however lecture notes will not be posted. If you need to miss a lecture, be sure to get lecture notes from a classmate.

Record Contact Information from a classmate here:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Clicker Questions and Polling:

I will ask a reading question for you to answer via clicker at the beginning of each class, and a lecture question at the end of each class, (with the exception of the first class and the midterm). These questions will help me to assess how well you understand the readings and the lectures, and how much I need to adjust my lectures to help you succeed. You will also receive one point per correct answer, for up to a total of 50 points towards your final grade.

We will also use the clickers for polling in class. You will find that this enhances your experience of the class, as it gives you a sense of the experiences and views of other students in lecture. Unlike the lecture and reading questions, polling questions will be *completely confidential*. There is no right or wrong answer, and polling answers are anonymous.

### Buy and Register your clicker!

To participate in in-class clicker tests and polls, you will need to purchase a University-supported Iclicker at the University Bookstore. We chose this clicker because they are less expensive than other models and because you can use the same clicker throughout your time at UW, or sell it during buy-back.

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**Register** your clicker online at <http://comets.wisc.edu/clickers/register.html>.

You are responsible for making sure that your clicker is activated. Once it is registered, you can use it in any class that uses clickers (including this one) and your test scores will automatically be recorded. If your clicker is NOT registered, you will not score points for the clicker tests.

### **Sections:**

Active participation in discussion sections is mandatory and attendance will be taken regularly. Discussion sections are a forum for you to raise questions about material that you have not understood, to work on group projects that will deepen your understanding of the course material, and to get help with your papers and review for exams. Materials not covered in lecture on a given week will be covered in section. Sections are a resource for *you* – use them!

### **Discussion Section Grading:**

Your 100 discussion section points will be allocated by your TA based on your attendance and participation in class, your on-line posts (above), and two in-class group projects.

The point allocation is as follows:

Attendance:	50 Points
Participation & Group Projects:	50 points

**Total for Section: 100 points**

### **Exams:**

There are two exams in this course. They cover material from the readings, lectures, sections, and videos. The midterm and the final exam will each cover one-half of the course material. The final exam is *not* cumulative. The exams will be a combination of multiple-choice and short essay. Make-up exams will be permitted, at my discretion, in cases of severe (documented) illness or serious family emergencies. Students not excused from a missed exam will receive an F for that exam.

### **Socio-historical Analysis Paper:**

This paper allows you to explore work/family balance as it applies to two different generations. As part of the assignment you will need to do the following:

1. Interview two people of different generations. Someone of your grandparents' generation and someone of your parents' generation (these can be relatives if you like), or someone of your parents' generation and someone in their twenties. The assignment will be easier if you keep gender constant (i.e. interview two men or two women).
2. Use at least two academic sources for information for writing your paper. This can be a book or article.

In the second week of the semester you will get detailed instructions about the steps you should follow in working on this paper from your TA.

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### **Course Website:**

Be sure to check the website (Sociology 120 at Learn@UW) frequently for updates to the syllabus (i.e. some readings will be emphasized each week while others may be simply recommended), updates on films and speakers, additional resources for research and general interest, and updates from your TA. Any student who brings their syllabus to me with this sentence underlined in the first two weeks of class will receive two extra credit points. In addition to being available at the Social Science Copy Center, the coursepack readings will be posted on Learn@UW.

**Extra Credit:** You may gain extra credit point the following three ways:

1. Bring in a song that fits with the theme of that week's readings, and write 2-3 paragraphs stating how the song fits the readings (up to 1 pt.)
2. Bring in a newspaper or magazine article that fits with the theme of that week's readings and wrote 2-3 paragraphs explaining how the article relates. (up to 2 pts.)
3. Act as "fact-finder" for a particular question that comes up in lecture or section. Report back to the class (and in written form) – (up to 3 pts.)

Point limit: You may earn UP TO 25 total extra credit points per semester (out of a total of 500 course credit points). Extra credit projects should be turned in to Professor Macdonald at the end of lecture.

### **Plagiarism (cheating):**

Cheating of any kind is grounds for failure. Papers and tests are to be original work. Copying of phrases, sentences, or paragraphs without proper and appropriate citations, or copying of the overall presentation structure from textbooks, journal articles, newspaper articles, or the World Wide Web will be considered plagiarism and are grounds for removal from the class and/or University. A clear definition of plagiarism as well as information about disciplinary sanctions for academic misconduct may be found at the Dean of Students web site: <http://www.wisc.edu/students/UWS14.htm>. Knowledge of these rules is your responsibility, and lack of familiarity with the rules does not excuse misconduct.

### **Special Needs:**

If you would like help with your writing, contact the Writing Center (see course website). Students with disabilities should contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center (see course website).

### **Email Etiquette:**

If you have questions or concerns, always check the course website first. If you can't find what you need, contact your TA. If issues remain, email me or come to my office hours.

### **Lecture Etiquette:**

If you bring a laptop, do not use it to check e-mail, play solitaire, or update Facebook. You won't learn, AND you will be a distraction to those who are sitting around you. Please do not use cell phones to text, and make sure the sound is turned off. Finally, avoid disruptions such as arriving late, talking, eating, reading, or packing before I finish lecturing. Thanks!

# SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICAN FAMILIES

## COURSE OUTLINE

January 19: Introduction: How Do Sociologists Understand Families?

January 21: The Nostalgia Trap

*Readings:* *What's Love Got to Do with It?* Cherlin, pps 31-37

*Recommended: Textbook, pps. 9-16, 36-46*

### Part 1: FAMILIES AND THE ECONOMY

#### FAMILIES AND ECONOMY: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

January 26: Family and Work in Agrarian Society

*Readings:* Hareven: *American Families in Transition: Historical Perspectives on Change (Course Pack)*

*Recommended: Textbook 46-52*

January 28: The Legacy of Slavery

*Readings:* Burnham: *An Impossible Marriage: Slave Law and Family Law (Course Pack)*

*Recommended: Textbook 52-55"*

February 2: The Invention of the "Companionate" Family

*Readings:* Cancian "From Role to Self," Reader pps 16-30  
Bengston "Beyond the Nuclear Family" Reader pps. 225-235

*Recommended: Textbook pps. 58-68*

February 4: Contemporary Marriage

***Film: Married in America***

*Readings:* "Everything's There Except the Money," Reader, pps. 157-168

February 9: The New "Young Adulthood"

*Readings:* Furstenberg: "Growing Up is Harder to Do," Reader pps. 38-46

*Recommended: Textbook pps. 69-72*

## SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICAN FAMILIES

### FAMILIES AND ECONOMY: THE RISE OF THE DUAL-EARNER FAMILY

February 11: The Rise of the Dual-Earner Family

*Readings:* Gerson & Jacobs, "The Work-Home Crunch," Reader, pps. 176-185

February 16: Gender Ideology and Gender Strategy

*Readings:* West and Zimmerman "Doing Gender," Reader, pps. 47-59  
Hochschild, "Joey's Problem: Nancy and Evan Holt," Reader, pps. 186-199

*Recommended: Textbook pps. 94-96,*

February 18: Parents and Sharing the Second Shift

*Readings:* Hochschild, "The Second Shift" pps. 11,34-62-99 (Course Pack)

*Recommended: Textbook pps. 259-268*

#### ***Handout paper topics***

February 23: Economic Restructuring and New Fathers

*Readings:* Doucet, "Fathers and Emotional Responsibility," Reader, pps. 59-69

### FAMILIES AND THE ECONOMY: SOCIAL CLASS

February 25 *Film: 21 Up*

March 2: Social Class and Parenting Strategies

*Readings:* Lareau, *Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families*, reader, pps. 85-107

*Recommended: Textbook, pps. 134-139*

March 4: Welfare Reform and Families in Poverty

*Readings:* DeParle, Jason "American Dream" 317-327

*Recommended: Textbook, 479-485*

***Schedule Midterm exam review***

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March 9: Single Mothers in Poverty

*Readings:* Edin & Kefalis, *Unmarried with Children*, Reader, pps. 169-175

March 11: Men at the Margins

*Guest Speaker:* David Pate

Interview workshops in class

March 16: \*\*\*\*Midterm Exam\*\*\*\*

## PART II: FAMILIES AND THE LAW

### FAMILIES AND THE LAW: FAMILY VIOLENCE

March 18: Domestic Violence Today

*Readings:* Johnson, "Control and Violence In Intimate Relationships"  
Reader, pps. 261-274

*Recommended:* Textbook, pps. 368-376

Library workshops in Section

Interview workshops in class

March 23: Theories of Domestic Violence

*Readings:* Ptacek, *Why Do Men Batter Their Wives?* (Course Pack)

March 25: Domestic Violence Across Class

*Film:* "Terror at Home: Domestic Violence in America"

Library workshops in Section

\*\*\*\*Spring Break\*\*\*\*

April 6: Child Abuse, Family Violence, Alcoholism

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*Readings:* Black, *It Will Never Happen to Me*, ch. 3 (Course Pack)

April 8: Legal Responses to Domestic Violence

*Readings:* Leisenring, Amy “Controversies Surrounding Mandatory Arrest”  
*Reader*, pps. 375-381, 386-387

*Recommended:* Textbook, 394- 396

### FAMILIES AND THE LAW: THE DIVORCE REVOLUTION

April 13: Divorce Law Reform

*Readings:* Weitzman: *The Transformation of Legal Marriage Through No-Fault Divorce (Course Pack)*

April 15: Divorce Myths and Facts

*Readings:* Ahrons, “What Divorce is and is Not” (Course Pack)  
Arendell, “The Social Self as Gendered (Course Pack)

*Recommended:* Textbook 410-416

### Peer review in class

April 20: The Impact of Divorce: Children

*Readings:* McLanahan: “Life without Father,” *Reader*, pps. 283-287  
Kely & Emery: “Children’s Adjustment” *Reader*, pps. 287-294

*Recommended:* Textbook 424-432

### FAMILIES AND LAW: ALTERNATIVE FAMILY FORMS

April 22: Reproductive Technologies and the Law

*Readings:* Minow: *Redefining the Family: Who’s in and Who’s Out?*  
(Course Pack)  
Hill Kay: *Reproductive Technology and Child Custody (Course Pack)*  
Seccombe: P. 332 (Buzzanca case), pps. 348-354. (Course Pack)

April 27: Stepfamilies in the Law

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*Readings:* Mason, "The Modern American Stepfamily," *Reader*, pps. 297-308

*Recommended: Textbook 438-445*

### **Papers due in lecture**

April 29: Gay and Lesbian Adoption

*Readings:* Meezan and Rauch, "Gay Marriage, Same-Sex Parenting, and America's Children." *Reader*, pps. 327-338

"Taking Sides: Should Lesbian and Gay Individuals Be Allowed to Adopt Children?" (*Course Pack*)

May 4: Gay Marriage

*Readings:* "Taking Sides: Should Gay and Lesbian Individuals be Allowed to Marry?" (*Course Pack*)

May 6 Final Exam Review

**THE FINAL EXAM WILL TAKE PLACE ON 5/15 at 7:45 AM**