

# **FAMILIES AND SOCIETY**

## **Summer 2006**

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### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

“Family values” are central to contemporary political rhetoric. Thus, it is important to explore who is included in the term “family,” who is left out, and why. Where do our notions of “family” come from? How valid is our collective nostalgia for the glorified families of the past? How do the economy, ideologies of “the family,” and culture interact to produce different ways of “doing” family? How do different kinds of families negotiate external changes and constraints? How does the institution of the family shape inequalities, including those of gender, race, class, and sexuality? What do contemporary families really need?

This course will focus on families within the context of the United States. To gain a sense of the roots of our contemporary notions of family, we will begin with an historical overview of changes in the meanings and experiences of U.S. families. For the majority of the course, we will examine a range of significant issues facing contemporary U.S. families. Although I aim to cover as much of the life course as we can, the issues facing the family are too broad for a summer course. Instead of aiming to cover all issues thinly, this course ties a smaller range of issues together thematically.

This course is not a “how-to” course on doing families. Instead, it is a socio-historical analysis of families that examines and critiques the ways in which ideologies about family, social policies, and economic changes anchor inequalities of gender, race, class, and sexuality. In this course, we will deal with issues, situations, and choices that may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable for some of you. We may have guest speakers who talk about some of these topics. I expect the speakers and the topics to be treated respectfully.

Two things to keep in mind as you take this course: 1) Criticism of the family as an institution is not criticism of individual families, but rather a recognition of the ways in which the struggles of families are shaped by the expectations and constraints of the institution. 2) Your own experiences are not sociological evidence. While I will use anecdotes and examples to illustrate broader points, the points are grounded in much broader sociological analysis.

I hope this course will provide you with the resources you need to better make sense of both sociopolitical debates about “the family” and the complexities you will face as you make decisions about your own families.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

*All three books are required and available at the campus bookstore.*

Lareau, Annette. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life.*

Hochschild, Arlie with Anne Machung. *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home.*

Edin, Kathryn and Marta Kafalas. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage.*

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

This course is labor intensive. Be prepared to read extensively and to engage in a range of assignments. Do not expect that your personal opinions will adequately fulfill any of the written assignments. Assignments will be graded based on your understanding of the course material.

### **Participation (5%)**

*Class participation includes consistent attendance, thoughtful and respectful contributions to class discussions, active involvement in group work, and performance on in-class assignments, including unscheduled quizzes. Readings are due on the day listed in the syllabus. You are expected to come to class having read the material; participation should reflect your knowledge of the reading material.*

### **Weekly Papers (20%)**

*There will be 14 one page papers due the Thursday of every week. **There is no paper the first week (Sept. 25).** You are required to complete 12 of the 14 papers. Papers must be turned in at the beginning of the class in which they are due. They may not be turned in via email. Failure to do these will significantly impact your final grade.*

### **Media Assignment (25%)**

*Details to be announced.*

### **Exams (25% each X 2 = 50%)**

*There will be two exams for this class. Both exams will cover in-class material and reading material.*

## **COURSE POLICIES**

1. Habitual tardiness will result in a lowered participation grade. Coming to class late disrupts the class and results in missed information or needless repetition.
2. You are expected to be respectful of the professor, the TA, your classmates, and any guests who come to class. If you are unclear on what that means, please speak to the professor or the TA.
3. Assignments should be typed in a standard 12 point font, double-spaced, and stapled.
4. No late assignments will be accepted.
5. You cannot make up in-class work.
6. If you miss a class, please get notes from a classmate. Do not ask the TA for notes. **You are responsible for all information communicated in class, whether or not you are in attendance.**
7. I will not give incompletes except under (amply documented and amply dire) circumstances.
8. Cell phones should be set to vibrate during class. Do not leave class to take a phone call.
9. No lap tops are permitted in class. If you are required to use a lap top because of a disability, please provide documentation.
10. **Academic Dishonesty.** I take academic dishonesty very seriously. Academic dishonesty can result in probation or expulsion, even if the act was not intentionally dishonest. **If you are unclear about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, or collaboration, please consult me.**

**If you have questions or concerns about the course or the assignments, please take advantage of my office hours or make an appointment to talk with me. Clear and open communication can solve most problems.**

*If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me immediately. Please see me privately after class or at my office (325 Middlebush).*

*To request academic accommodations, students must register with Disability Services (AO38 Brady Commons, 882-4696). It is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting academic accommodations, and for accommodations planning in cooperation with students and instructors, as needed and consistent with course requirements. For other MU resources for students with disabilities, click on "Disability resources" on the MU homepage.*

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Articles in bold are from *Family in Transition*

Articles in regular font are located on ERes.

Chapters from monographs are designated by last name. Note that we are also reading a separate article by Hays later in the semester.

*Additions or changes to the schedule may be made with advance notice of the professor. I know many of you plan your semesters in advance but sometimes shifts in the schedule are unavoidable. We will not discuss all the reading material in class. Course lectures and discussions are meant to help you make sense of the material you read. However, you are responsible for the reading materials.*

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Week 1

**Theoretical overview**

8/23

8/25 Goode, "The Theoretical Importance of the Family"

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Week 2

**Sociohistorical Roots**

8/30 Giddens, "The Global Revolution in Family and Personal Life"

9/1 **Mintz, "Beyond Sentimentality: American Childhood as a Social and Cultural Construct"**

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Week 3

9/6 D'Emilio and Freedman, "Family Life and the Regulation of Deviance"

9/8 **Coontz, "What We Really Miss about the 1950s"**  
**Pyke, "'The Normal American Family' as an Interpretive Structure of Family Life among Grown Children of Korean and Vietnamese Immigrants"**

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Week 4

9/13 **Rubin, "Families on the Fault Line"**

***Inequality between families***

9/15 **Newman, "Family Values Against the Odds"**  
**Edin, "Few Good Men: Why Poor Mothers Stay Single"**

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Week 5

9/20 Hays, *Flat Broke with Children*, Chapters 1-2

9/22 Hays, Chpts 3-4

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Week 6

9/27 Hays, Chpts 5-6

9/29 Hays, Chptrs 7-8

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Week 7

10/4 **Luker, “Why Do they Do It?”**

***Coupling***

10/6 **Schalet, “Raging Hormones, Regulated Love: Adolescent Sexuality in the United States and the Netherlands”**  
**Bailey, “Sexual Revolution(s)”**

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Week 8

10/11 Schwartz, “Glass Ceilings at Altar as Well as Boardroom”

**Laner and Ventrone, “Dating Scripts Revisited”**

Chito Childs, “Looking Beyond the Stereotype of the Angry Black Woman”

10/13 **Casper and Bianchi, “Cohabitation”**

**Lewin, “‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’: Lesbian and Gay Weddings and the Authenticity of the Same-Sex Couple”**

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Week 9

10/18 **Exam 1**

***The Stalled Revolution: Gender in Contemporary Couples***

10/20 *The Second Shift*

Preface and Chapters 1-4

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Week 10

10/25 *The Second Shift*

Chapters 5-8

10/27 Chapters 9-11

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Week 11

11/1 *The Second Shift*

Chapters 12-13

11/3 Chapters 14-17

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Week 12

***Parents and children***

11/8 **Cowan and Cowan, “New Families: Modern Couples as New Pioneers”**

11/10 **Hays, “The Mommy Wars: Ambivalence, Ideological Work, and the Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood”**  
Douglas and Michaels, “The New Momism”

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Week 13

11/15 Crittenden, “The Mommy Tax”  
**Townsend, “The Four Facets of Fatherhood”**

11/17 **Clawson and Gerstel: “Caring for Our Young: Child Care in Europe and the United States”**

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Week 14

11/29 **Gerson, “Children of the Gender Revolution”**  
Lareau, “Invisible Inequality”

12/1 Roberts, excerpt from *Shattered Bonds: the Color of Child Welfare*

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Week 15

*Shifting family forms*

12/6 **Kelly and Emery, “Children’s Adjustment Following Divorce”**  
**Hackstaff, “Divorce Culture: A Quest for Relational Equality in Marriage”**

12/8 **Mason, “The Modern American Stepfamily”**