

Sociology of the Family SOC 2310-80
William Paterson University, Winter 2013

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Course Description:

This course focuses on current social changes affecting American families, with particular emphasis on the intersections of families with other social institutions and social inequality. 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 examine how macro forces and systems of social inequality shape family life. Then, we will analyze four current major transformations in American family life: the changing relationship between work and family life; new trends in dating, intimacy, and marriage; new patterns of parenting; and the increasing diversity of families. 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 Objectives: This course will:

1. Introduce students to basic concepts, theories, and research methods used in sociology to study the family
2. Analyze the impact of broader social, cultural, economic, and political changes on marriage, parenting, and the family
3. Enhance understanding of how the diversity of family life is shaped by gender roles and expectations, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and sexuality
4. Raise awareness of current family issues and challenges.

Student Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- **Area 3: Ways of Knowing, Social and Behavioral Sciences:**
 - Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of sociological approaches and methodologies for studying the family. (3.c.1.)
 - Identify ethical dimensions (i.e. anonymity, informed consent) of various approaches to studying the family. (3.c.2.)
 - Ask meaning questions regarding human behavior (i.e., parenting, the construction of gender, sexuality) and social problems (i.e. domestic violence) in the context of the family/family life. (3.c.3.)
 - Understand and employ social science theories, evidence and data to address complex social problems and their impact on the family/family life (i.e. poverty, racism and ageism). (3.c.4.)
- **Other course-specific outcomes:**
 - Communicate effectively orally and in writing (Meets Program Outcome 1).
 - Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in addressing social, philosophical, and historical issues affecting families (Meets Program Outcome 3).
 - Demonstrate understanding of scientific principles and methods used to study the family (Meets Meets Program Outcome 4).
 - Formulate strategies to locate, evaluate, and apply information relevant to the study of the family (Meets Program Outcome 5).

Required Texts:

- Baca Zinn, Eitzen, and Wells. *Diversity in Families*. Ninth Edition. Allyn & Bacon Publishers. 2011.
- Other assigned newspaper articles and blog posts will be available online.

Course Policies:

- As this is a short, online course, **no late postings or assignments will be accepted**. This is non-negotiable. If you fall even a day behind in this course, your grade will suffer.
- **Grammar and spelling count!** Be sure to carefully edit each assignment and posting to the online discussion. Spelling and grammar errors will significantly reduce your grade.
- **Citing your work:** You are required to follow proper citation procedures for all assignments and online posting. If something is not your own original idea, it needs a citation. See the online Course Resources for more information on proper citation.
Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

Grades: Your final grade will be made up of the following:

- 20%: 10 Free Choice Posts
- 20%: 5 Assigned Posts
- 20%: 2 Open-Book Exams
- 40%: 2 Analytic Papers

Assignments:

- **Free Choice Posts:** Over the duration of the course, you are required to post 10 times to the discussion board. You may spread out your posts however you would like.
 - **What counts as a post?**
 - A question, informed by the class material that you would like to pose to the class.
 - An answer, informed by the class material, to another student's question.
 - A link to a news article, blog post, image, video etc. that is related to that class material, and a description of how it is related.
 - **What does not count as a post?**
 - Anything that is too brief ("I agree" or "good question" etc.). Your posts should be 50-100 words.
 - Anything that is not explicitly tied to course material.
- **Assigned Posts:** During the course there are 5 assignments that you must complete and post to the discussion board. Assignment details are listed in the course schedule.
- **Exams:** During the course you will take 2 open-book exams. These will be posted at 8am on the day of the exam, and must be submitted on Lore by 12 Midnight the same day.
 - **Exam 1:** Thursday, January 3
 - **Exam 2:** Sunday, January 13

- **Analysis Papers:** There are two 4-5 page analysis papers due. The assignments are posted online.
 - **Friday, January 4:** *Work/Life Choices Paper* due
 - **Monday, January 14:** *Helping American Families* due

LORE.COM

For this course we are using Lore.com instead of Blackboard. You'll like Lore. It is a much easier to use website, with a more up-to-date interface and improved interaction among the professor and other classmates. Your discussion assignments and posts will all be submitted on Lore.

- **Lore signup:** To join Lore, enter the code **CWLG9S** at www.lore.com. You will be asked to sign up for an account and create a password. Please make sure to create a profile and upload a picture.
- **A quick guide to Lore:** All content can only be seen by members of our course.
 - **Discussion:** When you login into our course on Lore, you're greeted with the course discussion page. Here is where you will post to the course discussion. Much like Facebook, you can post images, links, and video directly to the stream. *This is essentially our classroom space.*
 - **Calendar:** The course calendar will provide you with the required textbook reading, and links to external required readings.
 - **Library:** Here you will find links and information related to the course. This is a great place to find material about families that you might want to share with the class.
 - **Syllabus:** This syllabus is also available online.
 - **People:** Get to know your classmates! You may also chat live with Professor Christensen or any classmates that are also online (see "Chat" on the right of every Lore page).
 - **Submissions:** This is where you will submit your papers, and where you will retrieve your grades and comments for each paper.

SCHEDULE:

Wednesday, December 26:

- **Read:** The syllabus.
- Register for Lore. Create a profile and upload a picture so that we can get to know one another.
- Introduce yourself and post any questions you have about the syllabus to the Discussion board..

Thursday, December 27:

- **Read:** Chapter 1 "Images, Ideals, and Myths"

Friday, December 28:

- **Assigned Post 1: *What is a Family?*** Complete all 3 steps:
 1. Find an image of a family (any family).
 2. Post the image to the discussion board. Include with your image a brief description of how you identified this family.
 3. Examine other students' family images. Post to the discussion board the kinds of things these families have in common. Consider these questions:
 - a. How do we know what a family is? How do we know a family when we see one?
 - b. Who counts as a family and who doesn't?
 - c. How is ***family*** defined in our textbook, and how do these images compare?

Saturday, December 29:

- **Read:** Chapter 2 "Preindustrial Families and the Emergence of a Modern Family Form"

Sunday, December 30:

- **Read:** Chapter 3 "The Historical Making of Family Diversity"

Monday, December 31:

- **Read:** Chapter 4: "Macro Forces Affecting Families: The Economy, Immigration, and Aging"

Wednesday, January 2:

- **Read:** Chapter 5: "Class, Race, and Gender"
- **Read:** Konigsberg, Ruth D. "Chore Wars" *Time Magazine*. Aug. 8, 2011. [link online]
- **Read and watch video:** Saulny, Susan. "In Strangers' Glances at Family, Tensions Linger." *New York Times*. Oct. 10, 2011. [link online]
- **Assigned Post 2: *Dividing Household Chores***
 - How did your family divide household chores?
 - How were these decisions made?
 - What external factors (gender ideas, economic factors etc.) influenced the division of housework in your family?

Thursday, January 3:

- **Exam 1:** Exam will be distributed online at 8am Thursday morning, and will be due by 12 Midnight Thursday night.

Friday, January 4:

- **Read:** Chapter 6: "Meshing the Worlds of Work and Family"
- **Analysis Paper 1 Due:** *Work/Life Choices*

Saturday, January 5:

- **Read:** Chapter 7: "The Social Construction of Intimacy"

- **Read and watch lecture:** Wade, Lisa. "The Promise and Perils of Hook-Up Culture." *Sociological Images*. June 21, 2011. [link online]
- **Assigned Post 3: Whatever Happened to Dating?**
 - Watch Dr. Wade's video on hook up culture.
 - What kinds of dating patterns do you see around you?
 - How do current dating patterns impact men and women differently?

Sunday, January 6:

- **Read:** Chapter 8: "Contemporary Marriages"
- **Read:** Coontz, Stephanie "Economic disparity takes toll on marriage" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Jan. 9, 2011. [link online]
- **Examine:** Infographic: The New American Family. GOOD: Culture. [link online]

Monday, January 7:

- **Read:** Chapter 9: "Parents and Children"
- **Read:** Belkin, Lisa. "The Evolution of Dad." *The New York Times Motherlode Blog* June 16, 2010. [link online]

Tuesday, January 8:

- **Read:** Brasted, Monica. "Care Bears vs. Transformers: Gender Stereotypes in Advertisements." *The Socjournal*. Feb. 17, 2010. [link online]
- **Watch:** "Consuming Kids" on *Sociological Images* [link online]
- **Assigned Post 4: Parenting and Consumerism**
 - Find an example of a commercial that targets children to sell a product and post it to the discussion board.
 - How do ads appeal to children?
 - Is it alright to think of children as consumers?
 - How does class affect parenting?

Wednesday, January 9:

- **Read:** Chapter 10: "Violence in Families"
- **Read:** Hernandez, Daisy. "The Violence of a Recession." *Colorlines*. March 31, 2010. [link online]

Thursday, January 10:

- **Read:** Chapter 11: "Divorce and Remarriage"
- **Read:** Thomas, Susan G. "The Good Divorce." *The New York Times*. Oct. 28, 2011. [link online]

Friday, January 11:

- **Read:** Chapter 12: "Emergent Families in the Global Era"

- **Read:** Sayare, S. and La Baume, Maia D. "In France, Civil Unions Gain Favor Over Marriage." *New York Times*. Dec. 15, 2010. [link online]
- **Read:** Belkin, L. "What's Good for the Kids." *New York Times*. Nov. 5, 2009. [link online]

Saturday, January 12:

- **Read:** Chapter 13: "Family Policy for the Twenty-First Century"
- **Watch:** Up with Chris Hayes: "Working Families Surviving on Welfare." [link online]
- **Assigned Post 5:** Play the online simulation www.PlaySpent.org
 - Did you make it through the month?
 - What were some of the hardest choices you had to make? How did you make them?
 - How does poverty limit a family's options?

Sunday, January 13:

- **Exam 1:** Exam will be distributed online at 8am Sunday morning, and will be due by 12 Midnight Sunday night.

Monday, January 14:

- **Analysis Paper 2 Due:** *Helping American Families*