

Sociology 247: Family and Modern Society

Fall 2017

Class Location: Arts W-120

Class Meeting Times: 1:35 - 2:25 p.m. Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays

Professor: Elaine Weiner

Office Address: LEA 732

Office Hours: 11:30 – 1:00 p.m. Thursdays or by appointment

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“A family is the nucleus of civilization.” – William James Durant

“Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one.” – Jane Howard

Course Description

By definition, sociology involves the systematic study of human social behavior, interaction and organization. Sociologists are particularly interested in understanding *how* human social life is shaped by social forces (e.g., globalization) and social structures (e.g., class). This is a survey course designed to introduce you to the study of one particular institution of human social life – the *family*. In this class, we will explore a variety of concepts, methodologies, theoretical perspectives and empirical findings pertaining to the sociological study of family, with particular reference to Canadian and American families.

Course Materials

- Textbook: Risman, Barbara and Virginia Rutter, eds. 2015. *Families as They Really Are* (second edition). New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Coursepack
- Various Articles (you may access *on your own* via the library and/or Internet)

The textbook and coursepack are available for purchase at the *Le James* McGill Bookstore. Slide presentations, exam review sheets, etc... will be made available via *myCourses*, so please check the site on a regular basis.

Course Organization and Requirements

Class Format:

Lectures (*held on Tuesdays and Thursdays*) are intended to build upon material present in the assigned readings. So, while attendance is not mandatory, it is in your interest to attend lecture. Additionally, in order to be best-prepared, you should do the readings as scheduled. This will enable you to better follow my lectures and to most effectively synthesize lecture and reading materials.

CONFERENCES: Conferences will be held every Friday, **except** September 8th and October 13th (no lecture or conference will be held on either date). No sign-up for conferences is necessary. You must attend at least six conferences, of your choosing, in order to receive credit (i.e., = 5% of your final grade). Should you attend any less than six you will receive **no** credit.

Reading

These are the kinds of questions you should be thinking about as you are doing your reading for this course in order to best process the materials:

1. What point/argument is the author trying to make?
2. How does the author go about supporting his/her point/argument? What kind of evidence is s/he relying on? What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of his/her point/argument?
3. What are the implications of the author's point/argument?

Course Requirements:

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Mid-term Exam = 30% (to be held Thursday, October 12th, *in class*)

Speech (Parliamentary/Congressional Address) = 30% (due Tuesday, November 21, *in class, hardcopy*) – **proposal page due Tuesday, October 24th** (by 5 p.m., *online via 'Assignments' on myCourses*)

Final Exam = 35% (to be scheduled during the final exam period)

Conference Attendance = 5%

Note: If you have a disability and require any special accommodations, please let me know.

Exams

I consider all materials in this course including readings, lectures and videos/documentaries to be 'fair game' for the exams. Exams are typically comprised of a mix of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. The final exam is *not* cumulative.

Note: *The Midterm exam CANNOT be made up, except in instances of a doctor-verified illness, family emergency/death or a natural disaster. Also, according to Senate regulations, instructors are not permitted to make special arrangements for final exams. Please consult the Calendar, section 4.7.2.1., General University Information and Regulations at www.mcgill.ca.*

Speech

You are required to write a speech (~8-10 pages, double-spaced + bibliography) in which you address either the Canadian Parliament or the United States Congress as an 'expert/advocate' on a pressing family issue. *Detailed guidelines with regard to the speech's content are provided on myCourses.* This assignment is due Tuesday, November 21st, **in class (hard copy)**.

You must submit a 'proposal' page (available on *myCourses* for download) regarding your speech topic, the pertinent piece of legislation or program (or lack of) to be reformed about which you will 'speak' and potential bibliographic sources. This is due, Tuesday, October 24th (late submissions will not be accepted without a valid excuse) – please upload the file via 'Assignments' on *myCourses*. Submission of the 'proposal' page is **mandatory**. Speeches, without a proposal submission prior, will automatically receive a grade of zero (F).

Note: Please proofread your speech, spelling errors/typos are not acceptable. You will lose 1% of your assignment grade for any such errors (=1% *per error*).

LATE PAPER SUBMISSION POLICY: For each day that a paper is late, the paper grade will be lowered by half a grade (e.g., if your initial grade is a B- and you submit the paper a day late, your final paper grade will be a C+).

Distraction-Free Zone

Student use of mobile computing (e.g., laptops) and communication devices (e.g., cell phones, recorders) are not permitted in the classroom (whether during lectures and conferences) without my explicit permission.

General Academic Policies

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand offenses under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Course Schedule

SECTION I : SOCIOLOGY OF THE FAMILY: THE FOUNDATIONS

Topics: Defining "Family"; How We Know What We Know about Families
September 5, 7 and 12

TEXTBOOK:

- Chapters 2, 3, 4, 10 and "In the News: When Numbers Mislead"

COURSEPACK

- Luxton, Meg and Bonnie Fox. 2014. "Analyzing the Familiar: Definitions, Approaches, and Issues at the Heart of Studying Families." Pp. 2-30 in *Family Patterns, Gender Relations* (fourth edition), edited by Bonnie Fox. New York: Oxford University Press.

SECTION II: FAMILIES IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: CRISIS, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Topic: Canadian and American Families in Historical Perspective
September 14, 19 and 21

TEXTBOOK:

- Chapters 5, 6 and "In The News: A 'Golden Age' of Childhood"

COURSEPACK

- Fiske, Joanne and Rose Jonny. 2014. "The Lake Babine First Nation Family: Yesterday and Today." Pp. 413-28 in *Family Patterns, Gender Relations* (fourth edition), edited by Bonnie Fox. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mintz, Steven. 1998. "From Patriarchy to Androgyny and Other Myths: Placing Men's Family Roles in Historical Perspective." Pp. 3-30 in *Men in Families: When Do They Get Involved? What Difference Does It Make?* edited by Alan Booth and Ann Crouter. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

SECTION III: INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Topic: Dating
September 26 and October 3

TEXTBOOK

- Chapters 17, 19, "In Other Words: the Coolest Thing About Online Dating Sites" and "In Other Words: Hooking Up as College Culture"

Library/Internet:

- Klinkenberg, Dean and Suzanna Rose. 1994. "Dating Scripts of Gay Men and Lesbians." *Journal of Homosexuality* 26(4) 23-35.
- Lamont, Ellen. 2013. "Negotiating Courtship: Reconciling Egalitarian Ideals with Traditional Gender Norms." *Gender & Society* 28(2): 189-211.
- Reid, Julie, Sinikka Elliott and Gretchen Webber. 2011. "Casual Hookups to Formal Dates: Refining the Boundaries of the Sexual Double Standard." *Gender & Society* 25(5): 545-68.
- Masters, Tatiana et al. 2013. "Sexual Scripts among Young Heterosexually Active Men and Women: Continuity and Change." *Journal of Sex Research* 50(5): 409-20.

Thursday, September 28th
In-Class Presentation on Library Resources

Topic: Cohabitation
October 5 and 10

TEXTBOOK:

- Chapter 12 and "CCF Brief: Does Premarital Cohabitation Raise Your Risk of Divorce?"

COURSEPACK:

- Kroeger, Rhiannon and Pamela Smock. 2014. "Cohabitation: Recent Research and Implications" in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Family*, edited by Judith Treas, Jacqueline Scott and Martin Richards. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

Library/Internet

- Huang, PM et. al. 2011. “He Says, She Says: Gender and Cohabitation.” *Journal of Family Issues* 32(7): 876-905.

Thursday, October 12th

MIDTERM EXAM

Exam Time: During our regularly scheduled class time

Exam Locations:

Students with SURNAMES beginning with A-L are in our regular classroom

Students with SURNAMES beginning with M-Z should go to (location TBD, will be announced in class and on *myCourses*)

Topic: Marriage

October 17, 19 and 24

TEXTBOOK:

- Chapter 15, 20, 35, “In the News: How to Stay Married,” “CCF Facts: Women’s Education and Their Likelihood of Marriage: A Historic Reversal” and “In the News: Women Say ‘I Do’ to Education, Then Marriage”

COURSEPACK

- Kamen, Paula. 2000. “Modern Marriage: From Meal Ticket to Best Friend.” Pp. 113-30 in *Her Way: Young Women Remake the Sexual Revolution* by Paula Kamen. New York: New York University Press.

Library/Internet

- Bolick, Kate. 2011. “All the Single Ladies.” *The Atlantic*. November.
- Kefalas, Maria et al. 2011. “‘Marriage is More Than Being Together’: The Meaning of Marriage for Young Adults.” *Journal of Family Issues* 20(10): 1-31.
- Wolkomir, Michelle. 2011. “Making Heteronormative Reconciliations: The Story of Romantic Love, Sexuality and Gender in Mixed-Orientation Marriages.” *Gender & Society* 23(4): 494-519.

SECTION IV: HOUSEWORK AND PARENTING

Topic: Reproductive Labor

October 26, 31, November 2 and 7

TEXTBOOK:

- Chapter 14, 30, 36, 37, “In Other Words: Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex and Housework but Were Too Busy to Ask” and “In the News: Yes, I’ve Folded Up my Masculine Mystique, Honey”

COURSEPACK

- Coltrane, Scott and Michele Adams. 2001. “Men, Women and Housework.” Pp. 145-54 in *Gender Mosaics: Social Perspectives* (Original Readings), edited by Dana Vannoy. California: Roxbury Publishing.
- Dunne, Gillian. 2009. “Lesbians at Home: Why Can’t A Man be More Like A Woman?” Pp. 385-416 in *Family Patterns: Gender Relations* (third edition), edited by Bonnie Fox. New York: Oxford University Press.

Library/Internet

- Rehel, Erin. 2014. “When Dad Stays Home Too: Paternity Leave, Gender, and Parenting.” *Gender & Society* 28(1): 110-32.

Topic: Parenting

November 9, 14 and 16

TEXTBOOK:

- Chapters 11, 24, 28, “CCF Brief: Homesick Kids and Helicopter Parents: Are Today’s Young Adults Too Emotionally Dependent on Parents,” “In the News: Lean Times Force Many Bay Area ‘Boomerang Kids to Return Home as Adults,” “CCF Facts: Myths of Late Motherhood” and “In the News: Number of ‘Older’ Women Having Babies Continues to Grow”

COURSEPACK

- Hays, Sharon. 1995. "The Mommy Wars: Ambivalence, Ideological Work, and the Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood." Pp. 131-51 in *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* by Sharon Hays. Connecticut: Yale University Press.

Library/Internet:

- Biblarz, Timothy and Judith Stacey. 2010. "How Does the Gender of Parents Matter?" *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 72: 3-22.
- Dalton, Susan and Denise Bielby. 2000. "That's Our Kind of Constellation': Lesbian Mothers Negotiate Institutionalized Understandings of Gender within the Family." *Gender & Society* 14(1): 36-61.
- Gibbs, Nancy. 2009. "The Growing Backlash Against Overparenting." *Time* November 30.

SECTION V: FAMILY DISSOLUTION AND REFORMATION

Topics: Divorce and Remarriage **November 21 and 23**

TEXTBOOK:

- Chapters 21, 22, 23, "In Other Words: Some States See Fight for Right to Same-Sex Divorce" and "In Other Words: Silver Linings Divorce Trend"

Library/Internet:

- Cherlin, Andrew. 1978. "Remarriage as an Incomplete Institution." *American Journal of Sociology* 84(3): 634-50.
- Thomas, Susan Gregory. 2012. "The Gray Divorcés." *The Wall Street Journal* March 3.
- Walzer, Susan. 2003. "Accounting for Divorce: Gender and Uncoupling Narratives." *Qualitative Sociology* 26(6) 331-49.

SECTION VI: VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY; COURSE WRAP-UP

Topic: Intimate Partner Violence **November 28**

Library/Internet

- Baker, Nancy et al. 2013. "Lessons from Examining Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence." *Sex Roles* 69:182-92.
- Eckstein, Jessica. 2011. "Reasons for Staying in Intimately Violent Relationships: Comparisons of Men and Women and Messages Communicated to Self and Others." *Journal of Family Violence* 26: 21-30.

Topic: Course Wrap-Up **November 30**

NO READINGS ASSIGNED