

Sociology 247: Family and Modern Society

Fall 2016

Class Location: BURN 1B45

Class Meeting Times: 2:35 - 3:25 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays

Professor: Elaine Weiner

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Office Hours: 12:30 – 2:00 p.m. Wednesdays 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 McGill University Bookstore. Slide presentations, handouts, 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 not only cover material from the readings, but also material which is *not* in the 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 9th and October 21st (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 or argument is the author trying to make?
2. How does the author go about supporting his/her argument? What kind of evidence is s/he relying on? What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of his/her argument and/or research?
3. What are the implications of the author's argument and/or findings?

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 Monday, October 17th, *in class*)
Final Exam = 35% (to be scheduled during the final exam period)
Speech (Congressional/Parliamentary Address) = 30% (due Monday, November 21st, *in class*)
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 (*not including the bibliography*). This assignment is due Monday, November 21st, **in class**.

The State of the Family: Recommendations to Government: You have been called as an ‘expert’ on the family to address the Canadian Parliament or the U.S. Congress (*your choice*). You are to write a short speech and to conclude with a few recommendations to the government as to what kinds of actions you believe it should take in order to improve the contemporary circumstances of families in Canada (or the U.S.).

Note: **More elaborate guidelines, with regard to the paper’s format and content, are provided on *myCourses*.**

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+).

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

Topic(s): **Defining “Family”; How We Know What We Know about Families**

September 2, 7 and 12 (Monday, September 5th – Labor Day)

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(s): **Canadian and American Families in Historical Perspective**

September 14 and 19

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(s): Dating
September 21, 26 and 28

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.

Topic(s): Cohabitation
October 3

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.

Topic(s): Marriage (and Singledom)
October 5, 12, 19 and 24 (Monday, October 10th – Thanksgiving Holiday)

Monday, October 17th

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 LEA 232

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.
- Hawn, Roxanne. 2005. "Mr. and Mrs. Bothofus." *New York Times* March 13.
- 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.

SECTION IV: HOUSEWORK AND PARENTING

Topic(s): **Reproductive Labor**
October 26, 31 and November 2

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(s): **Parenting**
November 7, 9 and 14

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.
- Gibbs, Nancy. 2009. "The Growing Backlash Against Overparenting." *Time* November 30.

SECTION V: FAMILY DISSOLUTION AND REFORMATION

Topic(s): **Divorce and Remarriage**
November 16, 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(s): Intimate Partner Violence
November 28 and 30

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(s): Course Wrap-Up
December 5

NO READINGS ASSIGNED