**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

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**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.

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**Course Materials**

- 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.

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**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 21st, 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 an 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”


**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**

**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:**

**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:**

**Library/Internet**

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**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)

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**Topic: Marriage**

**October 17, 19 and 24**

**TEXTBOOK:**


**COURSEPACK**


**Library/Internet**


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**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**


**Library/Internet**


**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


Library/Internet:


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:


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

Topic: Intimate Partner Violence
November 28

Library/Internet


Topic: Course Wrap-Up
November 30

NO READINGS ASSIGNED