The American Family
Course #: 034:061
Fall Term 2006
T, TH 9:30 – 10:45 am
105 English Philosophy Building

Instructor: Mary Noonan
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Office Hours: T, TH 11:00-12:30 pm

Course Description

In this course, we will study American families from a sociological perspective. First, we will look at how American families have changed over time. Second, we will develop an understanding of the theories and methods employed by sociologists to examine issues related to the family. Third, we will examine specific aspects of family life including cohabitation, marriage, divorce, parenthood, and work-family conflict. In the process, we will learn to think objectively and open-mindedly about many controversial aspects of the family and family change, an ability that will enable you to critically evaluate popular portrayals of family-related issues.

Course Materials

- Articles and book chapters are available on the course web page (see url below). In order to download these articles you will need Acrobat Reader. All of the 25 Instructional Technology Centers (ITCs) on campus have Acrobat Reader.

- The course web page (http://www.uiowa.edu/~c034061). Power point slides that accompany the class lectures are available on the course web page. I encourage you to print out the slides prior to each lecture. The following are also on the web page: paper assignments, study guides for the exams, and grades. These will not be distributed in class; students are expected to retrieve the information from the course web page.

Exams and Assignments

(1) There will be three exams. The exams will cover material from both the readings and the lectures. The final is cumulative, but more emphasis will be given on the material covered since the 2nd exam. The exams will include multiple-choice, short-answer and essay questions. I do not give make-up exams. If you anticipate having a problem making it to an exam, you should drop the course now. If you miss an exam due to illness or an emergency contact me by phone or e-mail as soon as possible (See University of Iowa’s policy on “Excused Absences from Examinations”).

(2) There will be two paper assignments, approximately 4-5 pages in length. You will receive a detailed set of instructions well in advance of the due date. Papers will be collected at the beginning of the class on the due date. A paper handed in late will be penalized 10% for each
day it is late. If you think that you have been given an undeserved score on your paper, I will be happy to reevaluate it for you, as long as you request a reevaluation within a week of the date that graded papers are made available. However, requests for reevaluation are submitted with the understanding that a reevaluation might result in a higher or lower score than originally received.

(3) Class involvement. During the class, you are expected to be alert and take part in class exercises and discussions. Readings for each week should be done prior to coming to class; this will allow you to better understand the lectures and contribute to the class discussions. The class involvement grade will be based on 100 points: 50 points for quizzes and 50 points for the reading journal.

A. Quizzes. On 12 random days (approximately once per week), a short quiz will be given during the first couple minutes of class. The typical quiz will consist of two general questions (true/false or multiple choice) based on the readings for the day. The quizzes serve two purposes: (1) they encourage you to do the reading and (2) they allow me to track attendance. There are no make-up quizzes. Your 2 lowest quiz grades will be dropped and the remaining 10 scores will be totaled for your quiz score. Each quiz is worth 5 points; you will receive 1 point for taking the quiz and 2 points for each correct answer.

B. Reading Journal. To help guide you in preparation for each class, you are required to complete a reading journal entry before each class. Journal entries can be written by hand in a notebook, or typed, printed, and kept in a folder. Journal entries must always include at least ONE analytic comment (critiquing the author’s analysis) and at least ONE question you could ask in classes (either a discussion question or a question of clarification). You must bring your journal to each class. This will help you be prepared to contribute to class discussion. All journals will be collected randomly three times during the semester. If you are absent or do not have your journal in class, you may turn it in at the next class, but will automatically receive a 10% penalty for each class day late. Journals will receive a score between 1 and 100 reflecting the level of critical thinking, quality of writing, and completeness of all entries.

Grading Procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Involvement</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
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Final grades will be assigned according to the following point breakdowns:

- 97-100 points: A+  
- 93-96 points: A  
- 90-92 points: A-  
- 87-89 points: B+  
- 83-86 points: B  
- 80-82 points: B-  
- 77-79 points: C+  
- 73-76 points: C  
- 70-72 points: C-  
- 67-69 points: D+  
- 63-66 points: D  
- 60-62 points: D-  
- 57-59 points: F  
- 0-59 points: F
Other Considerations

(1) Plagiarism and cheating. All course assignments must represent the independent work of students. Students with questions regarding the collegiate policy on plagiarism, cheating, and academic misconduct should consult the full policy (printed in the Schedule of Courses and College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Bulletin).

(2) Academic accommodation. If you have a disability that may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements, please notify me after class or during my office hours so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

(3) Procedure for student complaints. If anyone is faced with an issue regarding this class that they feel they cannot resolve by speaking with me, please contact Michael Lovaglia, the Department of Sociology Executive Officer.

(4) Class etiquette. A course on the family often involves examining sensitive and controversial issues (religious beliefs, sexuality, discrimination). Many of us have strong personal feelings and experiences related to these issues. Consequently we can expect to find differing opinions across individuals in our classroom discussions. All students are expected to treat other students (and their opinions) with respect.

During lectures, I expect that you will demonstrate respect to me and other students by paying attention and by avoiding activities that could distract me and/or others in the class. In particular, it is not acceptable to for students to sleep, read, converse with others, or use cell phones during class.

(5) Resources for obtaining help. “The Writing Center” is available to all students to help improve writing skills (located at 110 English Philosophy Building; Hours: Mon-Th, 9:30am-3:30pm).
Tentative Course Outline and Readings

**Week 1: Introduction**

Aug 22: General Introduction

Aug 24: Introduction to the Family


**Week 2: Family Change**

Aug. 29 and 31


**Week 3: Theories and Methods for Studying the Family**

Sept. 5 and 7


**Week 4: Dating and Cohabitation**

Sept. 12 and 14


Weeks 5 and 6: Marriage

Sept. 19, 21, 26, and 28


Week 7

Oct 3: Catch-up and Review
Oct 5: *** Exam 1 ***

Week 8: Teen Parenthood

Oct. 10 and 12


Week 9: Parenthood

Oct. 17 and 19


Week 10: Housework

Oct. 24 and 26


Weeks 11 and 12: Work and Family

Oct. 31 and Nov. 2, 7, and 9


Week 13

Nov. 14: Catch-up and Review
Nov. 16: *** Exam 2 ***

Week 14

*** No Class due to Thanksgiving Recess: Nov 21 and 23 ***

Week 15: Divorce

Nov. 28 and 30


Week 16: Future of the Family

Dec. 5 and 7


*** Final Exam: Wednesday, December 13, 12:00 – 2:00 pm ***