
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

Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Final	25%
Papers	20%
<u>Class Involvement</u>	<u>15%</u>
Total	100%

Final grades will be assigned according to the following point breakdowns:

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

Goode, William J. 1995. "The Theoretical Importance of the Family." Pp. 1-14 in *Diversity and Change in Families*, edited by Mark R. Rank and Edward L. Kain. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Week 2: Family Change

Aug. 29 and 31

Coontz, Stephanie. 1992. "The Way We Wish We Were: Defining the Family Crisis." Pp. 8-41 in *The Way We Never Were: American Families and The Nostalgia Trap*, by Stephanie Coontz. New York, New York: Basic Books.

Popenoe, David. 1993. "American Family Decline, 1960-1990: A Review and Appraisal." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 55:527-555.

Week 3: Theories and Methods for Studying the Family

Sept. 5 and 7

Cherlin, Andrew J. 2005. "Sociological Theory and Families." Pp. 22-30 in *Public and Private Families*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Hofferth, Sandra. 2005. "Secondary Data Analysis in Family Research." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67: 891-907.

Week 4: Dating and Cohabitation

Sept. 12 and 14

Laner, Mary Riege and Nicole A. Ventrone. 2000. "Dating Scripts Revisited." *Journal of Family Issues* 21(4): 488-500.

Brown, Susan L. 2005. "How Cohabitation is Reshaping American Families." *Contexts* 4(3) 33-37.

Axinn, William G. and Arland Thornton. 1992. "The Relationship between Cohabitation and Divorce: Selectivity or Causal Influence?" *Demography* 29(3):357-374.

Weeks 5 and 6: Marriage

Sept. 19, 21, 26, and 28

Cherlin, Andrew J. 2003. "Should the Government Promote Marriage?" *Contexts* 2(4).

Edin, Kathryn. 2000. "Few Good Men: Why Poor Women Don't Remarry." *The American Prospect* 11(4).

Waite, Linda J. 1995. "Does Marriage Matter?" *Demography* 32(4):483-507.

Graff, E. J. 2002. "The Other Marriage War." *The American Prospect* April 8.

Week 7

Oct 3: Catch-up and Review

Oct 5: *** Exam 1 ***

Week 8: Teen Parenthood

Oct. 10 and 12

Luker, Kristin. 1996. "Why Do They Do It?" Pp. 134-174 in *Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teen Pregnancy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kaplan, Elaine Bell. 1997. *Not Our Kind of Girl: Unraveling the Myths of Black Teenage Motherhood*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapters 1, 2 and 5.

Week 9: Parenthood

Oct. 17 and 19

Crittenden, Ann. 2001. "The Mommy Tax." Pp. 87-109 in *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World is Still the Least Valued*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Belkin, Lisa. 2000. "Your Kids Are Their Problem." *The New York Times Magazine*. July 23.

Whitehead, Barbara. 2006. "Life Without Children." *National Marriage Project*.

Week 10: Housework

Oct. 24 and 26

Bianchi, Suzanne M., Melissa A. Milkie, Liana C. Sayer, and John P. Robinson. 2000. "Is Anyone Doing the Housework?" *Social Forces* 79(1):191-228.

Hochschild, Arlie. 1989. "Joey's Problem: Nancy and Evan Holt." Pp. 33-58 in *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*. New York, New York: Viking.

Weeks 11 and 12: Work and Family

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

Belkin, Lisa. 2003. "The Opt-Out Revolution." *The New York Times Magazine*, October 26.

Hirshman, Linda. 2005. "Homeward Bound." *The American Prospect*, December 20.

Gelertner, David. 1996. "Why Mothers Should Stay Home." *Commentary* 101(2): 25.

Rubin, Lillian B. 1994. "Mothers Go to Work." Pp. 69-84 in *Families on the Fault Line: America's Working Class Speaks about the Family, the Economy, Race, and Ethnicity*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial.

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

Holden, K. and Pamela J. Smock. 1991. "The Economic Costs of Marital Disruption: Why Do Women Bear a Disproportionate Cost?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 17:51-78.

Wallerstein, Judith, Julia Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee. 2000. *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25 Year Landmark Study*. New York: Hyperion. Introduction and Chapters 1-3.

Cherlin, Andrew J. 1999. "Going to Extremes: Family Structure, Child's Well Being, and Social Science." *Demography* 36(4): 421-428.

Week 16: Future of the Family

Dec. 5 and 7

Cherlin, Andrew J. 2004. "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(4): 848-861.

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