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SOCL 210: SOCIOLOGY OF FAMILIES
TUES/THUR 10:00 – 11:30, WELLES 115
SPRING 2013

What is a family? Is it a natural unit or a social-historical construct? How is the family changing? Is the family breaking down? Thriving? The goal of this course is to enable students to understand contemporary structures and meanings of the family, and relationships within it, by examining families in social-historical context. There is an emphasis on diversity within and between families in the U.S. and on the connections between families and larger social forces. This course places a significant emphasis on how systems and structures of inequality based on gender, race, class, and sexuality affect the structure and character of families and relationships within them. We will examine families as gendered institutions and put gender relations, as well as race and class relations, at the center of our analyses throughout the course.

Description

The course is organized into 4 sections. The first section provides an introduction to the course by examining structures and meanings of family in social-historical perspective. The second section focuses on gender, sexuality, and the family by examining the division of domestic labor, family work, and domestic violence. The third section focuses on race, class, and families, specifically investigating working class families and the intersection of race and class. The last section analyzes families across the life course - coupling and uncoupling, parenthood, childhood, and grandparenthood.

Key Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- 1) demonstrate an understanding of how the structure of families and family relations are influenced by key social, economic, political, and cultural forces across historical periods.
- 2) evaluate competing political perspectives on the current state of the family and family change.
- 3) demonstrate an understanding of how systems and constructions of gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and class affect family structure and experiences of family members.
- 4) show a basic knowledge of how social policy concerning families is shaped by social and political factors.
- 5) demonstrate an understanding of how experiences and relations at each stage of the life course are best understood by examining them in social-historical context.

Required Readings

The following reading materials are available at Sundance Books and the University bookstore:

Ferguson, Susan J. Shifting the Center: Understanding Contemporary Families. Fourth Edition. 2011.

Cherlin, Andrew. Public and Private Families, A Reader. Seventh Edition. 2013.

Lareau, Annette. Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life. Second Edition. 2011.

Grading and Course Requirements

Exams

There will be three exams. The first will be an in-class exam that will cover material presented in Sections I and II. The second will be an in-class exam that will cover Section III. The third will be an in-class exam that will cover Section IV.

Weekly Journal Entries

You are required to keep a journal. Write no more than two double-spaced pages reacting to the set of articles and/or book chapters assigned for a particular week. Journal entries are due at the beginning of class each Thursday (except for the last entry, which is due on a Tuesday) in which you respond to the set of readings assigned that week. All journal entries must be typed, double-spaced, and (if multiple pages) paginated and stapled.

Be analytic and integrative. Organize your journal entry around one or two issues or points that runs through the readings, then use evidence and examples from the set of readings for the week as well as other class material and personal experience to construct an analysis of the issues or points. Recording your thoughts in a journal such as this will help you to think about the issues and potentially make it easier for you to share your thoughts in class and study for exams.

While there are 11 opportunities for you to submit journal entries (see course schedule below for due dates), your grade is based on only 7 entries. This means that for 4 weeks of your choice you may skip this assignment without being penalized for it. Weekly entries are worth 3 points each, with the exception of your first entry which is worth 2 points. **Late journals receive a 0**. If you cannot submit your entry on time for a particular week, you have the opportunity to make up for it another week.

Class Participation

Your weekly entries, exams, and paper should reflect your involvement with the material and class discussion; this includes awareness of, and participation in, presentations made by invited speakers. Your regular participation as reflected by both the extent and quality of your verbal and written contributions in class and on assignments is therefore taken into consideration when determining your class participation grade.

Discussion is a significant part of this course. Although you are encouraged to, and should, raise issues and questions at any time, Thursdays will be devoted specifically to a class discussion focusing on the concepts and issues addressed in the reading material assigned for the week.

You are expected to read assigned materials prior to class and to participate in discussion. It is suggested that, while reading the assigned material and listening to class presentations, you make a list of questions and/or issues of interest or concern. Bring your list to class and use it to contribute when appropriate. Also, **bring all reading material assigned for the week to class each Thursday** to use as a reference during the discussion.

Discussion Leader Assignment

For one Thursday during the semester you will be expected to co-lead the discussion, along with several other students, for part of the class. The members of your group are responsible for outlining the key points and arguments in the readings for the week and organizing a class discussion that centers on these points/arguments.

Your group (or a designated member of your group) must meet with me briefly on Tuesday prior to your presentation, during my office hours, to inform me (in writing) of your plans. You should be prepared to discuss with me the points you will focus on from the readings AND the strategy you will use to facilitate discussion. That means that you should meet with your group well in advance to decide which points or concepts you think are most important and/or interesting and what your strategy will be. Use whatever strategy you think will work best for encouraging students to discuss the relevant points. You are free to use games, short films, TV clips, songs, or other technology.

Weighing of assignments is as follows:

Weekly journal entries	20 points
Exam I	15 points
Exam II	15 points
Exam III	20 points
Discussion leader assignment	15 points
Class participation	15 points

Expectations and Policies (Please Read Carefully):

- You are responsible for covering all the material assigned as well as integrating the readings with class presentations. You are expected to use specific and relevant examples and evidence from readings, lecture, speakers, and film to demonstrate your understanding of particular concepts or issues covered in this course (as presented in the readings and in class lectures or discussions). This expectation will be reflected in the questions that appear on the exams, written assignments, and in class discussions and in the grading of all assignments.

- Journals must be typed, double spaced, with 1-inch margins. It is expected that papers be checked for proper grammar and spelling. There will be point deductions for spelling and grammatical errors.
- Please keep all returned exams (and other returned graded work) in the event that you have a grade dispute at the end of the semester. If your calculation of your grade does not match my records, it is your responsibility to provide proof of graded work. In any event, it is always good practice to keep copies of your submitted work.
- Due dates for assignments are indicated on the syllabus. No makeup exams or assignments will be given or accepted without both the official and appropriate documentation of reason for absence and PRIOR permission of the instructor.
- You are welcome to meet with me following an exam or assignment to discuss your work and/or the grade assigned. If you choose to do so, you must meet the following requirements: 1) Wait at least 24 hours after receiving the graded exam or assignment before meeting with me; 2) Put your responses to my comments and/or grading in writing and bring them with you to our meeting. I find that following these procedures results in a much more substantive and productive (and thus satisfying) meeting.
- Both students and faculty are expected to abide by the University's honor code. Cheating and plagiarizing will result in a failing grade for either or both the assignment and the course. Information on what constitutes these behaviors can be found in the honor code document if you have any questions.
- Students with learning disabilities will be accommodated as necessary to meet the objectives of the course. Please provide me with documentation outlining the nature of the disability and the necessary accommodations within the first week of class.

NOTE: The most efficient way to reach me is by phone. Please feel free to call me at home. If I am not immediately available, leave a message and I will get back to you as soon as possible. You may also contact me via email (through webmail, not mycourses) if you do not require an immediate response. Email is to be used only for specific questions concerning the course materials or assignments, or to make appointments. For all other matters, talk with me before or after class or during my office hours, or give me a call.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

A. What is a Family?

Read by:

Jan 24 Gittins, Diana. "The Family in Question: What Is the Family? Is It Universal?" in Shifting the Center.

Discussion: What is a Family? **(No journal entry due this week)**

B. Families in Historical Context

Jan 29 Coontz, Stephanie, "What's Love Got to Do with It? A Brief History of Marriage," in Public and Private Families.

Vinovskis, Maris. "Historical Perspectives on Parent-Child Interactions," in Shifting the Center.

Jan 31 Coontz, Stephanie. "Historical Perspectives on Family Diversity," in Shifting the Center.

Discussion: Families in Historical Context **(Journal entry #1 due)**

Feb 5 Coontz, Stephanie. "What We Really Miss about the 1950s." (myCourses)

C. The State of the Contemporary Family: Contrasting Perspectives

Feb 7 Fischer, Claude and Michael Hout. "The Family in Trouble: Since When? For Whom?," in Public and Private Families.

Giele, Janet Z. "Decline of the Family: Conservative, Liberal, and Feminist Views." (myCourses)

Discussion: The State of the Family **(Journal entry #2 due)**

SECTION II: GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND THE FAMILY

A. Invisible Family Work and The Division of Domestic Labor

Feb 12 West, Candace and Don Zimmerman. "Doing Gender," in Public and Private Families.

Carrington, Christopher. “No Place Like Home: The Division of Domestic Labor in Lesbian Families,” in Shifting the Center.

Feb 14 Tichenor, Veronica Jaris. “Gendered Bargain: Why Wives Cannot Trade Their Money for Housework,” in Shifting the Center.

Sullivan, et al. “Men’s Changing Contributions to Housework and Childcare.” (myCourses).

Discussion: Gender and the Division of Labor/Invisible Family Work (**Journal entry #3 due**)

B. Domestic Violence

Feb 19 Johnson, Michael. “Control and Violence in Intimate Relationships,” in Public and Private Families.

Feb 21 Yllo, Kersti. “Gender, Diversity, and Violence: Extending the Feminist Framework,” in Shifting the Center.

Kaplan, Satya, Malahat Baig-Amin, Louisa Gilbert, Nabila El-Bassel, and Anne Walters. “Lifting the Veil of Secrecy: Domestic Violence Against South Asian Women in the United States,” in Shifting the Center.

Discussion: Gender and Domestic Violence (**Journal entry #4 due**)

Feb 26 Exam 1, Sections I and II

Note: You will be expected to have read *Unequal Childhoods*, in its entirety, by March 14; plan your reading schedule accordingly.)

SECTION III: RACE, CLASS, AND THE STATE

A. Working Class Families

Feb 28 Lareau, Annette. Chapters 1 - 7 (Chapters 1 & 2 and Parts I & II) in Unequal Childhoods.

No journal entry due this week.

Mar 5 Lareau, Annett. Chapters 8 - 12 (Part III) in Unequal Childhoods.

Mar 7 Pugh, Allison. “Consumption as Care and Belonging: Economies of Dignity in Children’s Daily Lives,” in Shifting the Center.

Discussion: Working Class Families (**Journal entry #5 due**)

B. The Intersection of Race and Class

Mar 12 Lareau, Annett. Sections 13 - 15 (Part IV) in Unequal Childhoods.

Mar 14 Hill, Shirley. "The Politics of Theorizing African American Families," in Shifting the Center.

Discussion: The Intersection of Race and Class (**Journal entry #6 due**)

MAR 18 – 22 SPRING BREAK

C. Families, the State, and Social Policy

Mar 26 Rank, Mark. "As American as Apple Pie: Poverty and Welfare," in Shifting the Center.

Hays, Sharon. "Flat Broke with Children: The Ground Level Results of Welfare Reform," in Shifting the Center.

Mar 28 Sidel, Ruth. "Assault on the Female-Headed Household." (myCourses)

Popenoe, David. "Can the Nuclear Family Be Revived?" (myCourses)

Discussion: Families, the State, and Social Policy (**Journal entry #7 due**)

Apr 2 Exam 2 - Section III

SECTION IV. FAMILIES ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

A. Meeting and Coupling

Apr 4 No readings, no journal entry due

Apr 9 Whyte, Martin King. "Choosing Mates – The American Way," in Shifting the Center.

Apr 11 Pasupathi, Monisha. "Arranged Marriages: What's Love Got to Do With It?," in Shifting the Center.

Cherlin, Andrew. "The Deinstitutionalization of Marriage," in Shifting the Center.

Discussion: Coupling (**Journal entry #8 due**)

Apr 16 GREAT DAY – NO CLASS

C. Fertility, Childhood, and Parenthood

Apr 18 Hertz, Rosanna. “The Father as an Idea,” in Shifting the Center.

Furstenberg, Frank Jr., et al. “Growing Up is Harder to Do,” in Public and Private Families.

Discussion: Fertility and Childhood (**Journal #9 Due**)

Apr 23 Meezan, William and Jonathan Rauch. “Gay Marriage, Same-Sex Parenting, and America’s Children,” in Public and Private Families.

Apr 25 Butler-Sweet, Colleen. “A Healthy Black Identity: Transracial Adoption, Middle-Glass Families, and Racial Socialization.” (myCourses)

Association of Black Social Workers. “Preserving Families of African Ancestry.” (myCourses)

Discussion: Parenthood (**Journal entry #10 due**)

E. Grandparenthood and Growing Old in Families

Apr 30 Casper, Lynne and Suzanne Bianchi. “Grandparenting,” in Shifting the Center.

May 2 Bahr, Kathleen. “The Strengths of Apache Grandmothers: Observations on Commitment, Culture, and Caretaking,” in Shifting the Center.

Discussion: Grandparenthood and Growing Old (**Journal entry #11 due**)

May 7 Wrap-up

May 14 Exam 3 – Section IV 12:00 – 3:00 p.m. (Final Exam Period)
