Course Description

This course will focus on the diversity of families in the United States. Families included in discussion are: Gay and lesbian, African American, Asian American, Mexican American, Native American, White, single parents, cohabitators, and married couples. The work-family nexus is investigated in order to understand how these institutions are reciprocally related. Both economic and cultural explanations of diversity are explored. Finally, we address the conflict that surrounds many family forms.

Required Texts


Required Assignments

2 critical analyses of course readings 15% each [Due 3.4, 3.25]
Discussion Logs 10%
Annotated Bibliography 15% [Due 4.13]
Analysis of Literature Research Paper 25% [Due 5.18]
Take Home Final Exam Essay 20% [Due by noon, 5.22]

Critical Analyses: Students are required to write two short (4-5 typed, double spaced pages) critiques of the assigned readings. These essays are not intended to be summaries of the readings, but critical syntheses of the concepts, theories and empirical findings presented in the readings. The goal of these exercises is to provide an analysis of a group of readings. Suggested topics will be handed out in class.

Discussion Logs: Students are required to post discussion via Blackboard 5 times during the semester in order to receive full credit. Discussions will be based on readings, videos and classroom discussions.

Annotated Bibliography: This bibliography should contain at least 12 sources for your research paper and should represent a variety of scholarly sources (monographs, edited texts, journal articles and government documents). A cogent summary of each source should be listed under each
bibliographic entry. These entries should be specific and detailed. APA guidelines for citation and referencing are to be used. A brief description of your paper topic should appear before the beginning of the bibliography.

Analysis of Literature Research Paper: The paper should be approximately 15-20 pages and illustrate an understanding of narrow body of literature. Students must choose a topic in consultation with the instructor which is related directly to some aspect of family. A variety of scholarly sources should be utilized (monographs, edited texts, journal articles and government documents). The literature review should not just summarize information, but also synthesize the information into a paper that presents the reader with a clear and cogent discussion of the literature. Students may refer to the literature review sections of articles in the American Sociological Review, Gender and Society, Journal of Family Issues, Journal of Marriage and the Family, or other sociology journals for examples of how to organize a literature review.

Take Home Final Essay Examination: Essay questions will be handed out on the last day of classes and are due no latter than noon, May 22. These may be handwritten in blue books or word processed. This exam is open book/open notes.

A note on citation and bibliography style: All information taken from another source must be given a proper citation (even if the information is only in the form of an “idea”). You are required to use the parenthetical citation style and the bibliography style of the American Psychological Association (APA). An APA style guide is available in the reference section of the library. This style of citation eliminates the need for footnotes or endnotes, which should only be used to note superfluous information.

Course Outline

2.12 Introduction

2.17-2.19 On reserve:
   Arlie Hochschild: “The Fractured Family”

In Coontz:
Niara Sudarkasa, “Interpreting the African Heritage in Afro-American Family Organization”
Stephanie Coontz, “Working-Class Families, 1870-1890”
George J. Sanchez, “Excerpts from Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity,Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945”
On reserve:
Stephanie Coontz, “The Future of Marriage” (from The Way We Really Are)
Paula England and George Farkas, “Household Formation, Marriage and Divorce”
(from Households, Employment and Gender)
Ruthann Robson, “Families” (from Gay Men, Lesbians and the Law)
In McAdoo, Family Ethnicity, Duane Champage, “Kinship and Political Change in Native American Tribes”

On reserve:
Mary Coombs, “Transgenderism and Sexual Orientation: More Than a Marriage of Convenience.”
Kath Weston, Chapter 4: “Kinship and Coherence: Ten Stories”, Chapter 5: “Families We Choose”, Chapter 6: “Lovers Through the Looking Glass” (from Families We Choose)
Wright, “Forging Families in a Heterosexual Supremacist Environment”

3.4-3.9 In Coontz:
Rayna Rapp, “Family and Class in Contemporary America: Notes toward an Understanding of Ideology”
Patricia Hill Collins, “Shifting Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood”
Karen Brodkin Sacks, “Toward a Unified Theory of Class, Race and Gender”
Maxine Baca Zinn, “Social Science Theorizing for Latino Families in the Age of Diversity”

On Reserve:
In South and Tolnay (eds.), The Changing American Family: Sociological and Demographic Perspectives
Ronald R. Rindfuss and Audrey VandenHeuvel, “Cohabitation: A Precursor to Marriage or an Alternative to Being Single” (Chapter 7)
James A. Sweet and Larry L. Bumpass, “Young Adults’ Views of Marriage, Cohabitation and Family”, (chapter 8)
Scott J. South, “For Love or Money? Sociodemographic Determinants of the Expected Benefits from Marriage”, (Chapter 9)

3.11-3.18
In Coontz:
Michelle Harrison, “Social Construction of Mary Beth Whitehead”
Barbara Katz Rothman, “Comment on Harrison: The Commodification of Motherhood”

On reserve:
Viviana A. Zelizer, "Pricing the Priceless Child: From Baby Farms to Black-Market Babies"

On Reserve:
In McAdoo (ed.) Family Ethnicity
Estella A. Martinez, "Parenting Young Children in Mexican American/Chicano Families" (chapter 11)
Charlotte Tsoi Goodluck, "Social Services with Native Americans: Current Status of the Indian Child Welfare Act" (chapter 14)
Young-Shu Ou and Harriette Pipes McAdoo: “Socialization of Chinese American Children”
In Blumberg (ed), Gender, Family and Economy:
Joan Huber, "A Theory of Family, Economy, and Gender" (chapter 1)
Randall Collins, "Women and Men in the Class Structure" (chapter 2)
Janet Saltzman Chafetz, "The Gender Division of Labor and the Reproduction of Female Disadvantage: Toward an Integrated Theory" (chapter 3)

3.23-3.25

In Coontz:
Thomas Sugrue, “Poor Families in the Era of Urban Transformation: The 'Underclass' Family in Myth and Reality”
Lillian B. Rubin, “Excerpts from Families on the Fault Line: America’s Working Class Speaks About the Family”
Roger Lawson and William Julius Wilson, “Poverty, Social Rights, and the Quality of Citizenship”
Stephen Steinberg, “The Case for a Race-Specific Policy”

On Reserve:
Terry Boggis. “Affording Our Families: Class Issues in Family Formation.”
In Conger and Elder, Families in Troubled Time
Glen H. Elder, Jr., Elizabeth B. Robertson, and Monika Ardelt: “Families Under Economic Pressure”
Glen H. Elder, Jr., Elizabeth B. Robertson, and E. Michael Foster: “Survival, Loss, and Adaptation: A Perspective on Farm Families”

4.6-4.8 Sugar's Life in the Hood ( Entire text)
4.13-4.15 On Reserve
Stephanie Coontz, Chapter 5: “Putting Divorce in Perspective” (from The Way We Really Are)

In Coontz:
Maria P.P. Root, “Resolving ‘Other’ Status: Identity Development of Biracial Individuals”
Margaret Crosbie-Burnett and Edith A. Lewis, “Use of African-American Family Structures and Functioning to Address the Challenges of European-American Postdivorce Families”
Nazli Kibria, “Migration and Vietnamese American Women: Remaking Ethnicity”

On Reserve
In Zambrana (ed.) Understanding Latino Families
William A. Vega, “The Study of Latino Families: A Point of Departure”
Vilma Ortiz, “The Diversity of Latino Families
Aida Hurtado, “Variations, Combinations, and Evolutions: Latino Families in the United States”
In McAdoo (ed.) Family Ethnicity
Suzan Shown Harjo, “The American Indian Experience”

4.20-4.22 On Reserve:
Paula England and George Farkas, “Reproduction and Production in the Household”, (from Households, Employment and Gender)

On Reserve:
In Blumberg, Gender, Family and Economy
Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz, "Money and Ideology: Their Impact on Power and the Division of Household Labor” (chapter 11)

In Coontz:
Sarah Ryan, “Management by Stress: The Reorganization of Work Hits Home”
Pierrette Hondeagneu-Sotel and Michael A. Messner, “Gender Display’s and Men’s Power: The ‘New Man’ and the Mexican immigrant Man”
Tamara Anderson and Beth Vail, “Child-Care Dilemmas in Contemporary Families”

4.27-4.29 On Reserve
In Hood (ed.), Men, Work and Family
Masako Ishii-Kuntz, "Japanese Fathers: Work Demands and Family Roles” (chapter 3)
Norma Williams, “Elderly Mexican American Men: Work and Family Roles” (Chapter 4)
Scott Coltrane and Elsa O. Valdez, "Reluctant Compliance: Work-Family Role Allocation in Dual-Earner Chicano Families” (chapter 8)
Joseph H. Pleck, "Are 'Family-Supportive' Employer Policies Relevant to Men?” (chapter 11)
Scott Coltrane, Chapter 5: “Why Do Couples Share?”, (from Family Man)
Beth Anne Shelton and Daphne John, "Does Marital Status Make a Difference?", Journal of Family Issues
Daphne John, Beth Anne Shelton, and Kristen Luschen, "Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Perceptions of Fairness." Journal of Family Issues
Daphne John and Beth Anne Shelton, “The Production of Gender Among Black and White Women and Men: The Case of Household Labor”, Sex Roles

5.6-5.11 Arlie Russell Hochschild, The Time Bind (entire text)

5.13 In Coontz:
Judith Stacey, “The Family Values Fable”

On reserve:
Stephanie Coontz, “Working with What We’ve Got: The Strengths and Vulnerabilities of Today’s Families”

All assignments must be handed in on the day they are due. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade each day that they are late. No course work will be accepted after May 18 without an authorized incomplete (Oberlin College policy).

The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus during the semester.