

CLASS SYLLABUS Fall 2009

Sociology of the Family

HTS 3823A/SOCIOLOGY 9:35-10:55 am T/TR D. M. Smith, Room 304

Instructor: Dr. W. Pearson, Jr. Office: 119 OCE Phone: 385-2265 E-mail:

willie.pearsonjr@hts.gatech.edu Office Hours: TTR Noon-1:00 pm, 3-4:00 pm and by appointment.

During my regularly scheduled office hours, if you are unable to meet or if I am unavailable (due to meetings or speaking engagements), please leave a voice-mail message or speak with me after class and we can set up an appointment for an alternative time.

Required Readings: See Course Calendar

Texts: Andrew J. Cherlin, Public and Private Families and Public and Private Families: A Reader, 5th Editions, McGraw Hill, 2008.

Additional required readings will be distributed in class and/or electronically. **NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to make revisions to the syllabus and calendar. You are responsible for all changes. In case of revisions, you will receive a hardcopy to replace the original.**

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The primary objective of this course is a sociological study of the family, reflecting the impact of both historical and contemporary events, while noting the usefulness of theoretical orientations and social science constructs. While much of the analytical focus is on the structures and dimensions of American families, global perspectives are also addressed. The course examines the role of society in shaping family norms and the interrelations between the family and other social institutions (e.g., economy, polity, etc.). Some scholars view the family as both a social institution and a scientifically meaningful category of social groups. However, a comprehensive review of studies of the family reveals considerable variation with respect to patterns, structural arrangements, and behaviors across and within societies. The course will examine these family and family-like patterns. Families may also be viewed as products of social forces. Therefore, material conditions of individuals and groups shape attitudes, behaviors, and family patterns. Similarly, the structure of a society's economy affects which family/work patterns, lifestyles, life chances for children, and decision making processes. Family formation and relations may also be influenced by patterns of social inequality.

OBJECTIVES

Upon satisfactory completion of the course, the student should be able to:

- Distinguish between the public and private dimensions of the family.
- Identify problems and frame research questions related to the study of the family.
- Become familiar with the processes of theory-building and the application of theoretical perspectives used to study the family.
- Understand research methodologies used in the sociological study of the family.

- Critically assess research literatures.
- Demonstrate an understanding how social norms impact the structure and dynamics of the family.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the interrelations between the family and other social institutions.
- Demonstrate an understanding of family diversity in cross cultural, global and historical perspectives.
- Describe and critically assess theories of mate selection.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the various methods of sexual expression as related to family dynamics.
- Demonstrate variations in parenting and in kin networks created by social class, race and ethnicity.
- Understand the social causes of conflict in families.

FORMAT AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Research from the learning sciences indicates that most people learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. This course is designed to emphasize active student involvement and participatory learning. As a result, the class will be highly interactive. While the course will focus primarily on discussions and presentations, lectures will be used to introduce or highlight critical knowledge areas. The final grade will be determined from the average score derived from:

1. **Class participation** (individual and group). Over the course of the semester, each student will serve as a co-discussion leader by presenting a 10-15 minute synthesis or overview of the assigned reading(s), after which the discussion will be opened to the entire class. You are strongly encouraged to supplement the assigned readings with other relevant readings and/or video clips. Given the criticality of class participation, it is imperative that you keep up with your reading assignments and be well-prepared (this means having thought critically about the readings) to engage in a spirited but respectful discourse. During your reading, it is highly recommended that you take notes and formulate questions. You are expected to be an active participant. Always bring your text, readings, notes and questions to each class. Participation is not evaluated in terms of how many times you comment, but by the clear demonstration that you have read the assignments, and the quality of your overall engagement in the discussion. Class participation includes the end-of-term presentations.
2. **Critiques.** Six to eight page typed critiques covering the weekly readings are due in class on the last coverage day--unless otherwise noted. (A reminder of the due date will be announced during the preceding class.) **Critiques are not summaries of the readings.** Rather, they are focused arguments documented by evidence from the texts, reader and handouts. Informed opinions are encouraged. The critique should examine the strengths and weaknesses of the authors' argument. In all cases, one or more of the theoretical perspectives covered in the lecture should be applied in the assessment.
3. **Research paper.** The paper--10-15 pages, typed, double-space, including an annotated bibliography--may be single or co-authored (up to 4 classmates). Details on

the format and structure of the paper will be addressed in class. The paper should not rely solely on Internet websites. You are encouraged to seek assistance from the professionals at the GT library. The library staff is very knowledgeable about databases and other informational sources. At various points during the course, you are provided class release time to work on your research.

4. **Presentation.** You will present the results of your research paper during the class period at the end of the semester (a scoring guide will be provided at least two weeks prior to the scheduled presentation). If your presentation involves the use of AV equipment, you are strongly advised to test the equipment the day before your presentation. Also, you should come to class early on the day of your scheduled presentation. If you plan to distribute handouts, you are responsible for providing a sufficient number of copies for the class. Note that any missed presentation cannot be rescheduled because slots are full.

5. **Optional essay exams** (mid-term and final) are available upon request. The request must be in writing and submitted NLT **August 27th**. All requirements (including optional exams) are weighted equally and will be based on the following scale:

A = 100-93 (Exceptional understanding of all materials: general ideas and specific details, facts as well as applications and connections.)

B = 92-85 (Very good understanding of most of the materials: some gaps in understanding details, applications, or connections.)

C = 84-75 (Satisfactory understanding of some materials: general ideas with substantial gaps in understanding of details, applications, or connections.)

D = 74-65 (Minimal understanding of the materials: superficial understanding of general ideas with significant failure to grasp details, applications, and connections.)

F = below 65 (Lack of understanding of the materials: general ideas, applications and connections.)

NOTE: Your name and page number must appear on each page of all written assignments. Failure to do so results in an ungraded paper.

All assignments are scheduled for each week. Each student is required to be thoroughly prepared for each class. All assignments are given far enough in advance to

preclude tardy assignments. Each student is responsible for signing the daily attendance sheet and returning each graded assignment to coursework folder within one class week.

NOTE: The course requirements will be adjusted to serve the needs and capabilities of students with disabilities that may negatively impact your academic performance. The Georgia Tech Honor Code applies to all student work (SEE: www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/Honor/).

Attendance Policy. Approved absences typically include: illness, religious holidays, family and personal emergencies, and official representation of GT in extracurricular events. To the extent possible, email and leave a voice message regarding anticipated absences.

Classroom Protocol. Please adjust your cell phone or any other electronic device to the “off” position during class. Do not use your computer for purposes other than taking notes for this class. Do not read in class. Do not arrive late or depart early without permission from the instructor. You are expected to respect your classmates by providing your undivided attention while they are presenting and/or commenting.

FALL 2009 COURSE CALENDAR

August

18 T	INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW	
20 TR	CHAPTER 1 READER:	PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FAMILIES Casper and Bianchi
25 T	CHAPTER 1 READER:	AND NOTES CONTINUED Cancian
27 TR	NOTES	METHODOLOGIES

September

1 T	CHAPTER 2 (AND NOTES) READER:	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND Coonz Furstenberg et al.
3 TR	TENTATIVE RESEARCH PROPOSALS PRESENTED (ABSTRACTS SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL)	
8 T	CHAPTER 3 (ABSTRACTS RETURNED) READER:	GENDER West and Zimmerman DeVault
10 TR	CHAPTER 4 (REVISED ABSTRACTS DUE) READER:	SOCIAL CLASS Sheehan Lareau
15 T	CHAPTER 5 READER:	RACE AND ETHNICITY Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila Qian
17 TR	CHAPTER 6 READER:	SEXUALITIES Schwartz and Rutter Levin
22 T	NOTES CRITIQUE:	THEORIES OF MATE SELECTION Notes
24 TR	RESEARCH DAY (NO CLASS—WORK ON RESEARCH PROJECT)	

10 T NOTES GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES CONTINUED
(OPTIONAL ESSAY EXAM 2 TBA)
CRITIQUE: Notes

12 TR FIELD WORK

17 T FIELD WORK

19 TR FIELD WORK PRESENTATIONS
Q AND A

24 T RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS
Q AND A

December

1 T RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS
Q AND A

3 TR RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS/WRAP UP
Q AND A