



Family Problems and Social Change, Fall 2008
SYO 3100, Section 06
T & R, 12:30-1:45 p.m.
HCB, Room 0210

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Office Location: 423 Bellamy Building

Office Hours: Wednesday: 9:30-10:30 & Thursday: 10:30-11:30 (Or by appointment)

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Course Website: <http://campus.fsu.edu>

***Syllabus Change Policy:** This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

INTRODUCTION AND COURSE OBJECTIVES

Welcome to Family Problems and Social Change!

I am delighted to have you in class this semester. So what is “the family”? Is it falling apart? Stronger than ever? What do we do about it? Who cares? Why should you care? This semester, we are going to tackle these questions and many more. By semester’s end, you should have thoughtful, provocative answers to these sorts of questions and the ability to express these answers in a thoughtful, provocative manner.

This class has three goals.

First, you will become familiar with the history of the American family and the debates surrounding family changes over the past several decades. Topics will include: sex and gender, sexuality, courtship and marriage, divorce and remarriage, parenthood, childhood, work and family life, family and the economy, family diversity, and family troubles.

Second, you will learn how to take a sociological approach to describing, analyzing, and evaluating these problems/changes/debates. To develop your sociological approach, you will learn about the micro-macro connection and will have many opportunities to apply this perspective to both real-world and hypothetical social situations.

Third, you will gain an appreciation of how collective actors participate in creating, defining, maintaining, and/or solving (or attempting to solve) family problems.

Because we live in an increasingly interconnected world, this class will encourage you to take a comparative approach to the study of family. We will discuss how American family attitudes are similar/dissimilar to the attitudes of families in other countries, and we will compare American approaches to various family problems with other countries’ approaches to these problems.

To achieve these goals, you will be expected to master the following objectives:

-Describe and evaluate the major debates surrounding today’s American family.

-Apply a sociological understanding of family problems and change in both verbal and written form.

-Critically analyze a family problem of your choice, presenting the results of your analysis in written form.

-Lead a class discussion on one family topic, and stimulate discussion with insightful sociological questions related to the topic.

REQUIRED READINGS

Skolnick, Arlene S. and Jerome H. Skolnick. 2007. *Family in Transition*, 14th edition. Boston: Pearson.

Coontz, Stephanie. 1992. *The Way We Never Were*. New York: BasicBooks.

These texts are on order at Bill's and FSU Bookstore. If you wish to purchase the books elsewhere (I **highly** recommend you buy them cheap on the internet), the ISBNs are 0-205-48265-1 (Skolnick & Skolnick) and 0-465-09097-4 (Coontz).

*Additional readings may be posted on the course's Blackboard website.

COURSE CONTENT AND OUTLINE

Week 1

T, Aug. 26 Course overview

R, Aug. 28 Family Basics

Readings: S & S: Introduction (p.1-10)
S & S: Reading 1

Week 2

T, Sept. 2 Families Past & Present

Readings: Coontz: Chap 1
Coontz: Chap 2

R, Sept. 4 Revolutions in Family Thought

Readings: S & S: Reading 2
S & S: Reading 3

***Blackboard Discussion 1 available Thursday the 4th-Sunday the 7th.**

Week 3

T, Sept. 9 The Changing Family/Debates about Motherhood

Readings: S & S: Reading 4
S & S: Reading 5

R, Sept. 11 Family Decline?

Readings: S & S: Reading 6
Coontz: Chap 4

***Mini-Test 1 at the beginning of class.**

Week 4

T, Sept. 16 Changing Gender Roles
Readings: S & S: Reading 8
Coontz: Chap 3

R, Sept. 18 More on Gender...
Readings: S & S: Reading 9
Coontz: Chap 7

***Blackboard Discussion 2 available Thursday the 18th - Sunday the 21st.**

Week 5

T, Sept. 23 Sexuality and Sexual Revolutions
Readings: S & S: Reading 11
Coontz: Chap 8

R, Sept. 25 Sex, Dating, & Hooking Up
Readings: S & S: Reading 10
S & S: Reading 12

***Mini-Test 2 at the beginning of class.**

Week 6

T, Sept. 30 Making Marriage Work/ “Shacking Up”
Readings: S & S: Reading 13
S & S: Reading 14

R, Oct. 2 Marriage/ Splitting Up
Readings: S & S: Reading 15
S & S: Reading 16

***Blackboard Discussion 3 available Thursday the 2nd - Sunday the 5th.**

Week 7

T, Oct. 7 Divorce, Remarriage, Step-Families
Readings: S & S: Reading 17
S & S: Reading 18

R, Oct. 9 Parenthood
Readings: Coontz: Chap 9
S & S: Reading 19

***Mini-Test 3 at the beginning of class.**

Week 8

T, Oct. 14 Childcare/ Adoption

Readings: S & S: Reading 20
S & S: Reading 21

R, Oct. 16 Fatherhood/ Childhood

Readings: S & S: Reading 22
S & S: Reading 23

***Blackboard Discussion 4 available Thursday the 16th-Sunday the 19th.**

Week 9

T, Oct. 21 More on Childhood...

Readings: S & S: Reading 24
S & S: Reading 25

R, Oct. 23 Work and Family Life

Readings: S & S: Reading 26
Coontz: Chap 5

***Mini-Test 4 at the beginning of class.**

Week 10

T, Oct. 28 Work and Family Life, continued...

Readings: S & S: Reading 27
S & S: Reading 28

R, Oct. 30 Family and the Economy

Readings: S & S: Reading 29
S & S: Reading 30

***Blackboard Discussion 5 available Thursday the 30th-Sunday the 2nd.**

Week 11

T, Nov. 4 Family and the Economy, continued...

Readings: S & S: Reading 31
Coontz: Chap 6

R, Nov. 6 African-American Families

Readings: Coontz: Chap 10
S & S: Reading 32

***Mini-Test 5 at the beginning of class.**

Week 12

T, Nov. 11 Veteran's Day- No Class- Enjoy your Holiday!

R, Nov. 13 Gay Marriage and Families

Readings: S & S: Reading 7
S & S: Reading 34

***Blackboard Discussion 6 available Thursday the 13th-Sunday the 16th.**

Week 13

T, Nov. 18 Latino and Korean Families

Readings: S & S: Reading 33
S & S: Reading 35

R, Nov. 20 Prisoners' Families/ Unmarried w/ Children

Readings: S & S: Reading 36
S & S: Reading 37

***Mini-Test 6 at the beginning of class.**

Week 14

T, Nov. 25 Thanksgiving Holidays! No class- Get an early start and travel safe!

R, Nov. 27 Thanksgiving Day! No Class- Enjoy your Holiday!

***Blackboard Discussion 7 available Thursday the 27th-Sunday the 30th.**

Week 15

T, Dec. 2 Family Violence/ Family Problems Revisited

Readings: S & S: Reading 38
Coontz: Chap 11

R, Dec. 4 Course Wrap-Up and Review, Last Minute Paper Questions, Informal Discussion on the Future of the Family

Readings: No Readings

***Mini-Test 7 at the beginning of class.**

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, 12/11/08 from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. Your final exam is your Final Paper. You MUST submit your Final Paper by 5:00 p.m. today via Turn It In on the Blackboard Course Website.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

BLACKBOARD

Students need to check Blackboard regularly to keep up with newly posted information, lecture notes, and changes to the syllabus. On the Blackboard site for this course you can find announcements regarding class, copies of the syllabus and assignments, links to Internet

resources useful in completing assignments and preparing for exams, discussion boards to post or address questions, and resources to check your grades. If you have not done so already, you will be expected to activate your FSUID account so that you may access the Blackboard site for this course. If you have not activated your account, or need assistance in doing so, please contact the instructor or ACNS (<http://www.ucs.fsu.edu/> or (850) 644-8502).

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is required, but will not be graded. However, failure to attend class is likely to have a negative effect on the quality of your work. To get the most out of this class, you must do the readings, attend class meetings, be attentive to class lectures and discussions, and take your assignments seriously. If excessive absenteeism becomes a problem, I will institute a graded attendance policy.

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Reading is **essential** to meeting course goals and performing well in this class. **All readings must be completed PRIOR to the class meeting date for which they are scheduled.** In class meetings, we will follow the discussion model. Discussions will focus on the assigned readings for the day and will be an opportunity to raise questions and think through the points made by the readings. Each of you will be responsible for leading **one** course discussion (see details below under “Course Reading Presentation”). Discussions also require that you be absolutely respectful of each other and myself. We can all get heated up and carried away in a lively discussion, but crude language, insults, and general boorish behavior will not be tolerated. Debate, disagree, dislike one another’s opinions- but always, always, always do so respectfully and intelligently. Those who fail to do so will be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

FINAL PAPER

You will complete one final paper, approximately 5-7 pages in length. Double-space your paper, and use a 12-pt font. Your paper is to be submitted by **5:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 11** via Turn It In on the Blackboard Course Website. The final paper makes up 40% of your final grade, so do a good job! You are free to choose any of the following for your final paper:

- Paper Option 1: Family in Cross-Cultural Perspective
- Paper Option 2: Family in Popular Culture
- Paper Option 3: Social Construction of the Family
- Paper Option 4: Tracing the Politics of Family
- Paper Option 5: Building on Class Reading(s) Paper

Each paper option is designed to give you hands-on experience with the material we discuss in class and learn about through course readings. Ideally, it should be an interesting and enlightening experience- perhaps even fun- but it is to be taken seriously and approached with the utmost academic rigor.

Descriptions of the requirements for each paper option are posted on Blackboard under “Assignments”.

The Final Paper is your final class project. As such, it is due by the end of your regularly scheduled final exam period: Submit the paper via Turn It In on Blackboard by 5:00 p.m., Thursday, December 11, 2008. Absolutely no exceptions on the final paper!!!! I will not accept ANY late papers.

Final Grade Breakdown: 1 Final Paper = 40% of your final grade.

MINI-TESTS

Every other Thursday (Weeks 3-15) we will have an in-class Mini-Test at the beginning of the class period. These mini-tests will have 10-15 questions and you will have 20-30 minutes to complete them. They may include multiple-choice, definitions, and/or short answer items. We will have 7 mini-tests, but only your 5 highest will count in the final calculation of your grade. This means I drop the 2 lowest grades. Put another way, you can miss two mini-tests entirely without hurting your final grade. This is to cover any “Unavoidable Absences” that you might have. Because 2 grades are dropped, there are absolutely NO makeup mini-tests. In the very unlikely, but not impossible, event that you have 3 EXCUSED absences all falling on Mini-Test days, we will work out an alternative for you. However, I reserve the right to alter the format of any “Special Exception” makeup tests.

Final Grade Breakdown: 5 Highest Mini-Test Scores @ 6% each = 30% of your final grade.

BLACKBOARD DISCUSSIONS

Every other week (Weeks 2-14), a Blackboard Discussion will be required of you. These discussions will be open from Thursday afternoons at 2:00 p.m. until Sunday evenings at 11:55 p.m. Each discussion will pose a question related to class readings/discussions. You are required to post a thoughtful reply to the question, as well as at least one thoughtful reply to a classmate’s posting. Both your own original response and the reply to a classmate must be completed-thoughtfully!- to receive full credit. Though we will have 7 Blackboard Discussion opportunities, only your 5 highest will count in the final calculation of your grade. This means I drop the 2 lowest grades. Put another way, you can miss two Blackboard Discussions entirely without hurting your final grade. This is to allow you a bit of forgetfulness, general busy-with-other-stuff-ness, or just plain lack of interest in the particular topic at hand. Because 2 grades are dropped, there are absolutely NO makeup Blackboard Discussions.

Final Grade Breakdown: 5 Blackboard Discussions @ 4% each=20% of your final grade.

COURSE READING PRESENTATION

This class will be run on the discussion model rather than the lecture model. It is my hope that this will make for a lively and interesting class, but that depends on you as much as me! It is imperative that you come to class prepared- having read the readings **BEFORE** class. I understand that missing a reading here or there is inevitable- but I am counting upon you all to read the majority of the readings the majority of the time. Further, the Mini-Tests come directly from the readings, so that should provide a bit more incentive for reading. In addition to reading and being prepared to discuss what you’ve read with your peers, you will each have special responsibility for a reading at one point during the semester. You will sign up for your reading on the first day of class. We have 50 individual readings, and will work at a pace of 2 readings per day. Your job for your reading is to summarize and lead class discussion of the reading. You will turn in to me a 1-2 page summary of the reading with 5 discussion questions at the bottom. This 1-2 page document is, essentially, your document for leading the discussion. You will verbally share your summary of the reading with the class, and lead the class discussion with each of your questions. You are **not required** to create a class handout or a fancy power-point to accompany your presentation. If you’re feeling especially inspired by and creative about your reading, you may create something to go along with it, **but it is neither required nor expected**. The purpose of presenting a course reading is to bring everyone up to speed on the topic before we delve into a spirited discussion. The readings vary in length- unfortunately, some of you will have longer readings to present than others (though often, especially w/ Coontz, the longer

readings are much more fun). Overall, no single reading is unbearably long. I encourage you to sign up for a title that catches your eye, regardless of how “long” or “short” it may be!

Final Grade Breakdown: 1 Course Reading Presentation=10% of your final grade.

GRADING AND EVALUATION

All coursework will be graded on a 100-point scale. Scores will be weighted according to the following scale:

- 1 Final Paper= 40%
- 5 Mini-Tests= 30%
- 5 Blackboard Discussions= 20%
- 1 Course Reading Presentation=10%

*Late work is not accepted. You will receive a ‘0’ for work that is not completed on time.

Final Numeric Grades will be assigned letter grades as follows:

| | | | |
|----|--------|----|--------------|
| A | 93-100 | C | 73-76 |
| A- | 90-92 | C- | 70-72 |
| B+ | 87-89 | D+ | 67-69 |
| B | 83-86 | D | 63-66 |
| B- | 80-82 | D- | 60-62 |
| C+ | 77-79 | F | 59 and below |

ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY

Students are expected to abide by the Academic Honor Policy of the Florida State University, including the statement on Values and Moral Standards published in The Florida State University General Bulletin. The Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of these expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty throughout the process. Please see the following website for a complete explanation of the Academic Honor Policy:
<http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/honorpolicy.htm>

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students must abide by the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty will result in a "zero" for that particular assignment or an "F" for the course, at the instructor's discretion. Any student who plagiarizes, cheats on exams, or otherwise behaves in a dishonest way may be reported to the university administration for further disciplinary action as specified in the Academic Honor Policy (<http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/forms/honorpolicy.pdf>).

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact:

Student Disability Resource Center, 108 Student Services Bldg., Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167, (850)644-9566 (voice), (850)644-8504 (TDD)
E-mail: SDRC@admin.fsu.edu

Website: <http://www.fsu.edu/~staffair/dean/StudentDisability/>

CLASSROOM COURTESY

Classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distractions. This means no talking (unless asked by the professor), reading magazines or newspapers, using Ipods, or answering cell phones in class. If you must have a cell phone to receive emergency calls about children or other family members, keep it on vibrate.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Students will be allowed to miss class due to observance of religious holidays but they are still responsible for all materials assigned outside and covered in class on the day(s) missed. You must talk with your instructor in advance of missing a class for religious holiday observance reasons.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

The following and only the following absences are eligible to be excused: Religious holidays, as specified in FSU policy; absences due to representing FSU at official functions, including intercollegiate debating or varsity sports events; verified emergencies and/or medical illness. Medical illness refers to conditions that are serious in nature and require treatment by medical professionals and/or surgical or other treatments. Documentation is required for an absence to be excused.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

Missing work or uncompleted assignments are insufficient reasons for a grade of Incomplete. An Incomplete grade will not be given except under extenuating circumstances at the instructor's discretion. Note that College of Social Science guidelines require that students seeking an "I" must be passing the course.