Course Description: This course critically examines the family as a social institution, and explores how it has been influenced and shaped by the shifting structure, demographics, and needs of society. We will examine the changing function and structure of family units over time; how changing ideas about gender roles and work shape family development; and some of the common themes associated with the family, including love, marriage, wealth, poverty, divorce, and violence. We will also look at contemporary issues in family formation and policy, and explore whether current policies are consistent with the reasons and manner in which people form families in the 21st century.

Prerequisites: There are no specific prerequisites for this course.

Course Expectations: Most weeks will generally be structured with lectures on Tuesdays and group exercises, discussions, films, or other activities on Thursdays. Students should be prepared to contribute to and sometimes lead class discussions.

School of Education and Social Policy Academic Integrity Statement: Students in this course are expected to comply with the policies found in the booklet, Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide. All final examinations must be submitted as electronic files as well as delivered in printed form. Written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern, visit: http://www.northwestern.edu/uace/. If you need a copy of the brochure, visit the SESP Student Affairs Office on the 1st floor of Annenberg Hall.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: In compliance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Northwestern University is committed to providing equal access to all programming. Students with Disabilities seeking accommodation are encouraged to contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 467-5530 or ssd@northwestern.edu. SSD is located in the basement of Scott Hall and has a website at http://www.stuaff.northwestern.edu/ssd/.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Class attendance is required; any absences without notice to the professor will result in lost points. Assignments turned in late will result in lost points; assignments will not be accepted more than 24 hours late without prior written permission from the professor. Final course grades will be based on a total of 100 points. Generally, regular attendance, active participation, on time delivery of assignments, and thoughtful written products will result in an A or B grade; however, lower grades will be given if these expectations are not met.
Points:

1. Class attendance and thoughtful, informed participation 20 points
2. Group exercises and classroom leadership 10 points
3. Interviews and Bibliography assignments 30 points
4. Final examination 40 points

Written Assignments: All written assignments must be delivered in hard copy on standard size paper, typed, double-spaced in size 12 font (preferably Palatino or Times), pages stapled, with a header that includes the student’s name, the date the assignment is due, and the title of the course.

For the final exam: The final is a take-home exam for which you will write 7 pages in response to several examination questions. References are required for the final exam and the work should be prepared in American Psychological Association (APA) style (see manual or copy the reading assignment format).

For interview assignments: You will write 2 pages about each of your interviews; the questions on which you should focus will be handed out in class. Begin your write-up with a paragraph that describes the interview subject in terms of relationship, gender, age, other relevant characteristics, and date of the interview. For the interview itself, distinguish clearly between the question(s) asked and the responses provided; paraphrasing is acceptable, but include the individual’s exact wording whenever possible. Conclude with a paragraph that delineates what you learned, what surprised you, and the thoughts and feelings that emerged for you during the interview and afterwards.

For bibliography assignment: Prepare the bibliography according to the instructions handed out in class. Use APA style to reference the works for which you develop your annotations. Annotations should be no longer than one-half page each, and should present the central thesis of the article, chapter, or book, the main arguments delivered, and a brief summary of the discussion and conclusion.

Assigned Readings: The Course Packet is available from Quartet Copies on Clark Street. From time to time, additional readings will be handed out in class.

WEEKLY TOPICAL OUTLINE AND ASSIGNED READINGS:

WEEK ONE: What is a Family?

Thursday January 4—Class One

Discussion:
- Course overview
- Review the syllabus.
- What is a family? What are the roles within a family? What functions does a family serve?
WEEK TWO: An Historical View of the Family

Tuesday January 9—Class Two

Read in preparation for class:


Discussion:

- How has family been defined over time and in different places? What kinds of legal relationships have defined the family? What kinds of expectations have defined the family?

Thursday January 11—Class Three

Read in preparation for class:


Discussion:

- How has family been defined over time in the United States? What kinds of legal relationships defined the US family through history? What kinds of consistencies and inconsistencies have the defined the US family through history?

WEEK THREE: Families by the Numbers

Tuesday January 16—Class Four

In preparation for class:

- Watch one of the following movies and come prepared to discuss the movie with the class. Complete the assignment sheet and use it as a guide for developing your discussion questions. The movies are available at the NU Library Mitchell Multimedia Center for on-site viewing, or for rent at Video Adventure (on Central Street or South Chicago Avenue in Evanston) and other video rental stores.
  - Antonia’s Line (sub-titles)
  - Fried Green Tomatoes
  - The Squid and the Whale
Discussion:
• Professor Puntenney will be out of town; the classroom will be open; please sign the attendance sheet and use the classroom with respect.
• Working session for student groups; develop a presentation according to the Movie Assignment Guidelines; complete the Movie Assignment sheets.

Thursday January 18—Class Five

Read in preparation for class:

Discussion:
• Brief presentations of Tuesday’s movie assignment. What do the films tell us about families, the forms they take, and the functions they serve?
• What are the statistics? What are the hidden realities about families? How do these realities compare with the numbers?

WEEK FOUR: The Family and Work

Tuesday January 23—Class Six

Read in preparation for class:

Discussion:
• How is work defined in the private (family) and public (labor market) domains? Who fares best in the labor market? How are work decisions made among family members?

Thursday January 25—Class Seven

Watch film in class:
• Film: Family Matters (30 minutes).

Discussion:
• In what ways does the film add to our understanding of families and work?
WEEK FIVE: The Family and Caregiving

Tuesday January 30—Class Eight

Read in preparation for class:


Discussion:

- Which family members tend to do the majority of the household labor? How are decisions made about the distribution of household labor? What are some implications of the choices families make about how work is distributed?

Thursday February 1—Class Nine

Watch film in class:

- Film: The Double Shift (47 minutes).

Discussion:

- In what ways does the film contribute to our understanding of families and work?

WEEK SIX: Non-Traditional Families

Tuesday February 6—Class Ten

Read in preparation for class:


Discussion:

- What kinds of families are legitimate? How do definitions of legitimacy correlate with definitions of family function? Why does it matter?

Thursday February 8—Class Eleven

Watch film in class:

- Film: Daddy and Papa (57 minutes).

Discussion:

- In what ways does the film contribute to our understanding of what a family is?
WEEK SEVEN: Non-Traditional Families and Aging Families

Tuesday February 13—Class Twelve

Read in preparation for class:


Discussion:

- What kinds of families do people create? Are some forms of non-traditional families more legitimate than others? Why or why not?

Thursday February 15—Class Thirteen

Read in preparation for class:


Watch film in class:

- What About Mom and Dad? (56 minutes).

Discussion: In what ways does the film contribute to our understanding of aging families?

WEEK EIGHT: The Vulnerable Family and Poverty

Tuesday February 20—Class Fourteen

Read in preparation for class:


Discussion:

- How does poverty limit the everyday experiences of families? How do the work and care decisions of poor families differ from other families?

Thursday February 22—Class Fifteen

Watch film in class:

- Film: Waging a Living (45 minutes).
Discussion:

• In what ways does the film contribute to our understanding of families in poverty?

WEEK NINE: The Family and Oppression

Tuesday February 27—Class Sixteen

Read in preparation for class:


Discussion:

• What kinds of historical roots support recent and current trends in family violence? How are these traditions associated with inequalities within the family in the present? What other forms of oppression exist within the family?

Thursday March 1—Class Seventeen

Watch films in class:

• Film: Twenty-eight women (17 minutes).
• Film: Leave it to Beaver (30 minutes).

Discussion:

• In what ways do the films contribute to our understanding of oppression in the family?

WEEK TEN: The Family: Where Do We Go From Here?

Tuesday March 6—Class Eighteen

Read in preparation for class:


Discussion:

• What are realistic possibilities for families in the 21st century? To what extent will families form themselves according to dated definitions, or continue to define for themselves what a family is?
Thursday March 8—Class Nineteen

Read in preparation for class:


Discussion:

- Where do we go from here? What are the limits and boundaries of “family?” To what extent is the US likely to join the international community in a flexible understanding of family that recognizes its “diversity and peculiarity?”

WEEK of March 12—No Meeting: Finals Week

- Turn in final exam by March 14 at noon.

OPTIONAL READINGS

- Feder, Judith, & Levine, Carol (2004). Explaining the paradox of long-term care policy: An example of dissonant cultures. In Carol Levine & Thomas H. Murray (Eds.), *The cultures of caregiving: Conflict and common ground among families, health professionals, and policy makers* (pp. 103-112). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.