Welcome to Social Perspectives on Parenting! I am excited to be studying with you this semester, particularly something as significant and socially complex as parenting. In this course, we will examine how parenting, the seemingly most intimate and personal of experiences, is deeply influenced by economic structures and culture. We will examine the social history of “good parenting,” the effects of capitalist structures on family life, the physically embodied nature of parenting and how that interacts with its social construction, and how racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and class differences, as well as different global contexts, correspond to different parenting approaches. We will also highlight gender and ask: 1) Why is it that WOMEN are typically the rearers of children?, 2) What are the social effects of living in a primarily female-reared society?, and 3) How does this arrangement differently affect the lives and outcomes of women and men?

COURSE READINGS
Readings are entirely found in our course reader, available through Northpoint Printers (781-895-1900). I will give you instructions on how to purchase these in class. The first two weeks’ readings are also available on Latte.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity and the University’s code of conduct.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITY
If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately so I can provide the appropriate support for your success in this class.

COURSE CALENDAR

WEEK 1, September 7

Introduction
“GOOD PARENTING”

WEEK 2, September 12, 14

A Social-Historical Perspective on Parenting
- Thurer, Shari. Myths of Motherhood
- Coltraine, Scott. “Fathering: Paradoxes, Contradictions & Dilemmas”
- Dizard, Dan & Howard Gadlin. The Minimal Family

WEEK 3, September 19, 21

Norms, Morality & the Debate about Parenting in Decline
- Mead, Margaret. Culture and Commitment (brief commentary)
- Coontz, Stephanie. The Way We Never Were

WEEK 4, September 26, 28

Culture & the Concept of “Natural” Development
- Small, Meredith. “Entrainment” and “Bonding,” in Our Babies, Ourselves
- Liedloff, Jean. The Continuum Concept
- Villalobos, Ana. “Antidote Mothering,” Motherload: The Heavy Weight of One Redeeming Relationship (draft only, do not cite)
- Eller, Cynthia. “Why I Hate Dr. Sears,” Brain Child: The Magazine for Thinking Mothers

WEEK 5, October 3, 5

The (White Middle Class) Social Construction of “Good Parenting”
(i.e. Intensive Mothering)
- Douglas, Susan J and Michaels, Meredith. The Mommy Myth
- “Fast-Tracking to Kindergarten?” NY Times
- “How to Land Your Kid in Therapy,” Atlantic Monthly

► Cultural Texts: Student Gallery of Good Parenting in films, glossies, news, popular literature, advertisements, medical or other pamphlets, etc.

WEEK 6, October 10, 12

Child-Raising & Fear (& Resistance to Helicopter Parenting)
- Furedi, Frank. Paranoid Parenting
- Villalobos, Ana. “Inoculation,” Motherload: The Heavy Weight of One Redeeming Relationship (draft only, do not cite)
- Skenazy, Lenore. Free Range Kids
- Anonymous. “I Can’t Believe We Made It!”

WEEK 7, October 19 (no class Monday, October 17)
Midterm Examination
WEEK 8, October 24, 26

Division of Parenting Labor
- Hochschild, Arlie. *Second Shift*
- Susan Walzer, 1996. “Thinking About the Baby: Gender and the Division of Infant Care,” *Social Problems*
- Keverne, Barry. “Neural & Endocrine Mechanisms of Maternal Care,” and “Oxytocin and Maternal Behavior,” *Neurochemistry and Maternal Behavior*
- Susan Allport. 1997. “Father Wolf, Mother Bear—Who Cares?,” *A Natural History of Parenting*
- “In a Clubby World…Men Needn’t Apply,” NY Times

WEEK 9, October 31, November 2

Fatherhood
- Fatherhood 2.0, *Time Magazine*
- “In Sweden, Men Can Have it All,” NY Times

WEEK 10, November 7, 9

Economic Costs to Women of Primary Caregiving
- Williams, Joan. “Hitting the Maternal Wall,” *Academe*

WEEK 11, November 14, 16

Work-Family Conflict
- Hochschild, Arlie. “‘Catching Up on the Soaps’: Male Pioneers in a Culture of Time,” *Time Bind*
- Evans, Elrena & Caroline Grant (eds.) *Mama Ph.D.* (selected testimonials)
- “Work-family Conflict not just a Women’s Issue,” ILR Report, Cornell
DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTING

WEEK 12, November 21 (no class Wednesday, November 23)

Social Class

WEEK 13, November 28, 30

Parenting in Other Cultures
- Small, Meredith. “Other Parents, Other Ways,” Our Babies, Ourselves
- Joseph Tobin, David Wu, and Dana Davidson, Preschool in Three Cultures

WEEK 14, December 5, 7

Differences Within U.S. Parenting

WEEK 15, December 12

Synthesizing Essays Due

COMMUNICATION WITH PROFESSOR AND COURSE ASSISTANT

Office Hours: I invite you to drop by my office hours in Pearlman 208 during office hours (Mondays, 10-noon), even if just to stop by for five minutes to say hello and see where the office is. And during the semester, don’t be shy about coming in regularly to hash out what you’re learning in class or from the readings. That’s what I’m here for! Our course assistant, Julianne Smith, is also available to help you sort through substantive issues, which will be especially helpful as you prepare for your midterm and end of semester synthesizing essays. We will announce where/when this will take place.

E-mail: My e-mail is anavilla@brandeis.edu. For any substantive issue, office hours are the way to communicate. I reserve e-mail for quick practical things such as letting me know you’ll be missing class.

Written letter: For any issues with your grade, I ask you to submit a hard copy written letter explaining why you believe there has been a grading error, along with a photocopy of the work in question, and both the course assistant and I will review it.
EVALUATION OF PROGRESS
Your grade will be based on the following:

Midterm Examination 20%
The in-class midterm will be an essay exam over the course readings as well as over what has come to light in class (such as lecture content, films, etc.).

Synthesizing Essays 30%
There will be several short essays (page length of all essays combined should be less than 5 single space pages) which you will have one week to complete the last week of the semester. These essays will require you to integrate and apply what you have learned throughout the course, and while you may collaborate with other students before the essay questions have been assigned, once they have been given out, you must work on them entirely on your own.

Assignments 25%
This category includes weekly reflections on the readings posted to Latte by Sunday night (you may choose two busy weeks in the semester when you do not want to send these, and you will not be penalized), and occasional other assignments. You can post your reading reflections late, however they will be docked 20% for every day late.

Participation and Facilitation 25%
Participation includes your co-facilitation of two class sessions as well as your day-to-day engagement during class time. To get the most out of our diverse class, we will need to be respectful of the sometimes challenging views others have to offer, and also respectful of the fact that each of us (including YOU) has something to teach the rest of the class. Everyone’s full participation is needed to get the most out of the course, though I am well aware that different people have different ways in which they best participate, all of which are valid. Some of these methods of participation include active listening, thoughtful preparation for class, sharing a well-formulated idea after a long pause for thought, off-the-top-of-your-head reactions to new ideas, helping a classmate understand a difficult concept, asking interesting questions, engaging with another student who has made a comment, coming to office hours, bringing relevant news or magazine articles to class to share, and engagement with the various assignments. While participation can take many different forms, it cannot take any form if you are not present! Thus, except for religious holidays or exceptional circumstances, I expect you to make every effort to attend all classes and to arrive on time for all class meetings.
TIPS FOR FACILITATING DISCUSSION

There is no uniform way to facilitate discussion. Nonetheless, here are some tips that might guide your ingenuity as you prepare for this task.

➣ Facilitators should read all of the reading responses submitted by the class to the Latte forum. Try to pull out the common themes and issues that sparked students’ interest (or share one particular intriguing response) and consider exploring these in your facilitation.

➣ Use the texts!! Point out or read aloud any moving, intriguing, or confusing excerpts from the readings. Close reading is a very effective strategy for engaging the class.

➣ Try to pull the readings together in an innovative way, like involving your classmates in creating a chart, diagram, table or map of the author’s concepts, perspectives, methods and/or arguments, and how they relate to each other. If you want to make handouts in advance, I can make the photocopies for free, provided you notify me in advance.

➣ Use your creativity! Consider devising a short in-class activity that explores an idea, issue or argument raised in the readings. The possibilities are endless (games, small group activities, role-playing activities, skits, debates, etc)! Jeopardy-style games are only acceptable as an occasional quick warm-up since they are more about factual recall and less about working with the material, taking it deeper or making it come alive.

➣ If you do not understand a particular text, your classmates may not fully understand it either. I highly encourage you to point out what you find confusing or contradictory, discuss why you find it confusing or contradictory and open up the issue for discussion.

➣ To stimulate discussion, you want to try to ask focused questions – “how” or “why” questions will elicit much more discussion than “yes”/”no” or recall questions. Examples: “Why do you think men are often excluded from traditionally female-dominated jobs?” “How does so-and-so’s theory apply or not apply to work today?” Come prepared with ideas for jumpstarting discussion in case the class falls silent.

➣ Make it personal. We learn best when we can APPLY what we learn, and drawing on examples from our personal lives and experiences can bring abstract materials to life.

➣ Have fun! The point of the discussion is to learn from each other and get our ideas and reactions to the texts out in the open. The most important thing discussion facilitators can do is to create a space that entices classmates to share their thoughts and questions about the material. I encourage you to focus less on impressing, more on encouraging!

YOUR GOAL: GET EVERY SINGLE STUDENT IN CLASS ENGAGED/TALKING!