Course Description

Whereas current rhetoric would have the family as a private institution, this understanding is not consistent with U.S. family history in which families have always been deeply embedded within the surrounding economic systems, systems that they both reproduce and resist in various ways. Contemporary U.S. families are likewise are deeply embedded within the current economic system of modern advanced capitalism. As men and women are differently integrated into that economic system, market influences on the family are highly gendered, as well as highly raced and classed. In turn, the gendered nature of families, and especially of parenting, has a profound influence on women’s and men’s work and economic lives.

In this seminar, we will examine several key questions regarding families:

- What is the relationship between the household division of labor and gendered hierarchies in the marketplace?
- How do we view the consequences of family transformation from a producing unit to a consuming one?
- How does socio-economic class affect families?
- How have families managed to rear children over time while parents work?
- How are family structure, love, and the meaning of kinship affected by transformations in the global economy?
- How do families attempt to privately deal with the public social problems associated with our economic system, and with what effect?
- And finally, what are some public solutions that could better support families—and thereby society—to thrive and grow?

On the one hand, we will take a critical view in this course. We will study how the family is a site of race, class and gender inequality and an institution that serves the purposes of advanced capitalism, such as through ever-increasing consumerism, or through producing the next generation of acquiescent workers tooled to the appropriate class of work. On the other hand, we will study how family can function as a pivotal site of empowerment, resistance, or as an alternative to the surrounding economic ethos.

Disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.
A Note on Academic Integrity

Please familiarize yourself with University policies on academic integrity, described in Section 3 of “Rights and Responsibilities,” and if you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, please ask for clarification.

Course Requirements*

Weekly Readings and Reading Notes (20%)

Required readings for each week are listed in the course outline below. You are expected to complete the required readings and be prepared to discuss them before the class. In addition, students will post reading notes to LATTE at least 24 prior to coming to class each week. The reading notes are designed to encourage students to see the readings as a group or “set” in relation to the weekly course topics. As a result, the reading notes should not merely summarize each reading but should: (1) synthesize and critically evaluate key theoretical and/or substantive contributions of the readings in relationship to one another, and (2) identify questions that the readings provoke or points of particular interest, concern, curiosity, or confusion to the student. Response papers should generally be no longer than one single spaced typed page. To facilitate class discussion, prior to the beginning of class, all students should review the response papers submitted by other seminar participants, as they will become the basis for our class discussion.

Attendance and class participation (20%)

Students are expected to attend class and to have completed the reading before the class begins so that we can engage in an intellectual discussion about the current topic. The success of the course in providing stimulating ideas and advances for your graduate work, and for the class as a whole, depends on your careful reading of materials and thoughtful contributions to discussion each week.

Leading Discussion (20%)

Each student is expected to lead the discussion twice during the semester. This involves preparing an overview of the topic, drawing on required readings, supplemental materials and classmates’ response papers. Successful formats in the past have included a 20-30 minute presentation/overview of the suggested supplemental readings and their relevance to the topic and/or a short video (not more than 15 minutes), followed by leading the rest of the class discussion. Dates/topics will be assigned after receiving preferences the first day of class.

Final paper (40%)

Each student will complete a research proposal, persuasive literature review with argument, or empirical research paper related to the topic of families, with attention to economic parameters such as social class, work in the paid labor market, or the division of domestic labor. Written projects should be 15 to 20 pages (double spaced, references excluded).
Research proposals should consist of a statement of the research question and rationale for posing the question, a description of the guiding theoretical or conceptual framework, a persuasive literature review, and a description of the data and methods that you propose to use to study the question posed. Persuasive literature reviews should make an argument that has not yet been fully developed in the literature, and should support that argument using existing theories and empirical work. Empirical research papers should include data (4-6 interviews or other data) and should be written as you would write a journal article with the following sections: introduction, literature review/background, methods, findings/analysis, discussion/conclusion.

Below are deadlines for the final paper.

a. One page prospectus/project description that describes your research question and its significance (as well as your timeline for data collection if you are doing an empirical paper), or your argument and how you intend to support it. (We may set additional intermediate deadlines for your individual project, in discussion with the professor.)

   Due February 6, in class

a. Final written project (uploaded to Latte AND hard copy in my box)

   Due by 2pm on May 4

I encourage you to meet with me individually to discuss your final paper topic.

*note: The course requirements syllabus section borrowed liberally from Sara Shostak’s SOC 218A syllabus for both structure and wording. The syllabus as a whole also took inspiration from Karen Hansen’s SOC 206B syllabus. Thanks to both of them!

Course Readings

Most course readings (with the exception of the books below) can be found on LATTE. The following books can be purchased at the University bookstore or on-line:


Note: *Unequal Childhoods* is also available electronically through Brandeis’s e-brary.
Course Outline

**U.S. FAMILIES IN VARYING HISTORIC-ECONOMIC CONTEXTS**
WEEK 1, Jan 16 (145 pages)

- Stephanie Coontz. *The Way We Never Were*, 30-page excerpt

Recommended:

**GENDER**

**MOTHERHOOD, SECOND WAVE FEMINISM AND PAID WORK**
WEEK 2, Jan 23 (105 pages)

- Simone deBeauvoir. 1952. *The Second Sex*, 521-523

Recommended:
Families and Economic Intersections  
Spring 2012  
Page 5

**MASCULINITY AND BREADWINNING**  
WEEK 3, Jan 30 (161 pages)


Recommended:
- Kathleen Gerson. “Dilemmas of Breadwinning and Autonomy” in *No Man’s Land*, 182-214

**FATHERHOOD & THE UNEQUAL DIVISION OF DOMESTIC LABOR**  
WEEK 4, Feb 6 (113 pages)

*Final Paper Prospectus due*

- BC Fatherhood study
- “In a Clubby World of San Francisco Mothers, Men Needn’t Apply,” *New York Times*, April 2, 2011 (2 pages)
- “In Sweden the Men Can Have it All,” *New York Times*, June 9, 2010 (6 pages)
Recommended:

• Elizabeth Rapoport. *How Many Working Fathers...* (gendered division of labor test)

**ECONOMIC COSTS OF WOMEN’S PRIMARY CAREGIVING** (118 pages)

WEEK 5, Feb 13

• Ann Crittenden, *The Price of Motherhood*, Intro and chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 (p. 1-44, 65-109, 131-148)

Recommended:


**RACE, CLASS & IMMIGRATION**

**FAMILY AS SITE OF REPRODUCTION OF/RESISTANCE TO INEQUALITY**

WEEK 6, Feb 27 (150 pages)

• Annette Lareau. *Unequal Childhoods*, 1-13, 35-103
• bell hooks “Homeplace: a Site of Resistance,” *Maternal Theory*, 266-273

Recommended:

Families and Economic Intersections
Spring 2012
Page 7

- Patricia Hill Collins “Shifting the Center: Race, Class & Feminist Theorizing About Motherhood,” Maternal Theory, 311-330 (available elsewhere as well)

POVERTY, PARENTING AND MARGINALIZATION
Experiences of urban families, poor families, and/or families in the “system”
WEEK 7, Mar 6 (115 pages)

- Kathryn Edin & Timothy Nelson. Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City, 70-102
- “The Case of Marie and her Sons,” NY Times Magazine (15 pages)

THE TIME SPEED-UP
Experiences of Professionals
WEEK 8, Mar 13 (186 pages)

- Juliet Schor. Overworked American (excerpts), 1-22, 43-50, 68-72
- Arlie Hochschild. Time Bind. 3-84, 197-238

WORK-FAMILY STRUGGLES AND SOCIAL CLASS (120 pages)
WEEK 9, Mar 20 (116 pages)

- Poor: Joan Williams. Three Faces of Work-Family Conflict (intro & poor), ii-iii, 1-31
• “Paying to Work” (2 pages)

TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES
WEEK 10, Mar 27 (229 pages)

• Joanna Dreby. Divided by Borders.

Recommended:
• Nazli Kibria, “Globalization,” At the Heart of Work and Family, Garey & Hansen (eds.)

ATTEMPTS AT RESOLUTION

INDIVIDUAL FAMILY SOLUTIONS 1
Intensive Mothering
WEEK 11, Apr 17 (181 pages)

• Ana Villalobos. Motherload: Making it All Better in Insecure Times, Chapters 1-5 & 8
• Amy Chua, Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother (bear in mind, this is a parody of her own parenting; 6-page excerpt printed in Wall Street Journal, 1-8-11)
• “Fast-Tracking to Kindergarten?” NY Times, 5 pages
• “Cockpit Parents,” Huffington Post, 3 pages

Recommended:
• “How to Land Your Kid in Therapy,” Atlantic Monthly

INDIVIDUAL FAMILY SOLUTIONS 2
Expert Advice, and Coping through Purchasing Goods & Services
WEEK 12, Apr 24 (106 pages)

First, a little taste of popular parenting advise books today:
• Sears & Sears, The Baby Book
• Ezzo, Babywise
• Murkoff et al., *What to Expect when You’re Expecting*

Then some scholarly work on families, love, and the market:

• Allison Pugh. “Consumption as Care and Belonging,” *At the Heart of Work & Family*, Garey & Hansen (eds.), 217-227
• Juliet Schor. “Viacom Generation,” *At the Heart of Work & Family*, 206-216
• Dizard & Gadlin. *The Minimal Family*. 197-203

Recommended:

• Arlie Hochschild. 2012. “Our Baby, Her Womb,” and “My Womb, Their Baby,” in *The Outsourced Self*, 73-103

**COLLECTIVE SOLUTIONS**

*Restructuring Society & Social Policy*

WEEK 13, April 28

***NOTE: THIS IS A TUESDAY!!! (A “BRANDEIS FRIDAY”)***

• Ann Crittenden. *The Price of Motherhood*, chapter 10, 186-201

Recommended:

• Janet Gornick and Marcia Myers. *Families That Work*, chpt. 9.
• Nancy Folbre. *The Invisible Heart*, chpt. 8