

**Southern Illinois University**  
**SOC 542 Seminar on the Family**  
**Spring 2010**

**Class Times:** R 6:00pm-8:30pm (Faner 3410)

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**Overview**

At the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, American family patterns show little resemblance to the breadwinner-homemaker household that predominated during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Often mislabeled “traditional,” this family form has dwindled from almost 60 percent of American households in 1960 to less than 15 percent today. In its place has risen a diverse range of arrangements, including dual-earning marriages, single-parent households, cohabiting couples, blended families, same-sex intimacies, and unmarried, childless adults. This graduate seminar will explore the causes, contours, and consequences of this “family revolution” by examining the theoretical and political debates that it has spawned and by reviewing the empirical evidence that might help resolve these debates. Readings will include major works by pioneering scholars as well as recent empirical investigations, both qualitative and quantitative, from family sociologists. We will begin by reviewing major family trends and discussing classic and contemporary theories of the family as well as debates about the family and its changing and diverse forms and functions. Then we will turn to topics that dominate current research on family change and variation: coupling and uncoupling, changing gender roles and relations, the rise of nontraditional families and single parenthood, ethnic, class, and sexual diversity, and work-family conflict. Students will be asked to write reactions to readings, to discuss readings in class, and to conduct and present their own research.

**Required Materials**

1. Popenoe, David (1988). *Disturbing the Nest: Family Change and Decline in Modern Societies*. Transaction Publishers.
2. Giddens, Anthony (1992). *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Stanford University Press.
3. Cherlin, Andrew (2009). *The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today*. Knopf.
4. Rosenfeld, Michael (2007). *The Age of Independence: Interracial Unions, Same-sex Unions, and the Changing American Family*. Harvard University Press.
5. Hertz, Rosanna (2006). *Single by Chance, Mothers by Choice: How Women are Choosing Parenthood without Marriage and Creating the New American Family*. Oxford University Press.
6. Sullivan, Maureen (2004). *The Family of Woman: Lesbian Mothers, Their Children, and the Undoing of Gender*. University of California Press.
7. Townsend, Nicholas (2002). *The Package Deal: Marriage, Work, and Fatherhood in Men’s Lives*. Temple University Press.

8. Hackstaff, Karla (2000). *Marriage in a Culture of Divorce*. Temple University Press.
9. Edin, Kathryn & Kefalas, Maria (2005). *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. University of California Press.
10. Lareau, Annette (2003). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. University of California Press.
11. Jacobs Jerry & Gerson, Kathleen (2004). *The Time Divide: Work, Family, and Gender Inequality*. Harvard University Press.
12. Selected readings, available in the Sociology Department.

### **Course Requirements and Grading**

**1. Discussion/Participation** Graduate study means learning from every possible source – from your readings, your peers, your life experiences, your instructor, your research. Participating in seminar discussions is one of the best ways to learn. You are expected to contribute your questions and insights to the class. The culture of the seminar will, I hope, be a congenial one for self-expression. I will work to maintain such a culture by swiftly countering displays of contempt and practicing pedagogical equity to the extent possible. I cannot help you learn if you don't participate in discussion, however. Doing excellent written work is not enough to demonstrate adequate performance in graduate school. So show a little backbone, organize yourselves in whatever way you need in order to ensure broad participation in the discussion, and whatever you do, don't suffer in silence. Say anything you can defend against reasoned argument. Treat colleagues' contributions with respect (which means taking them seriously and challenging them as well as extending basic courtesy).

Naturally, **attendance** is expected and necessary in order to successfully complete this course. More than one absence that is not due to extraordinary circumstances will result in a lowered grade.

**2. Weekly Comments** (worth 15% of the final grade) Before 2:00pm on the day of the seminar, submit to the *seminar distribution list* a comment (as a Word file attachment) of not more than 300 words. Comment succinctly on what you found most interesting, important, puzzling, infuriating, fundamental, etc., about the readings. You may find it helpful to pick the sentence that best states your purpose, meaning, question, or point of view and use that as the topic sentence of the final (distributed) version of your comment. I want a focused comment, not a summary of the material, although sometimes a sentence that distills what you think the readings are "really about" also can be very useful. Distributed in a timely manner, these comments will not only help you organize your response to the readings but also will serve as a guide for discussion. Submit **seven** comments over the course of the term.

**3. Critical Review** (worth 25% of the final grade) Each student must write a publication-length (800 words) formal review of the readings for one week. Most disciplinary journals include examples (I suggest you look over the most recent issue of *Contemporary Sociology*, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, or *Gender & Society*). You may want to divide the critical review into two halves. In the first half (1-2 pages), summarize the purpose of the readings, the major theories or concepts employed, the methods used to gather the data, and the findings or arguments of the readings. In the second half (about 2-3 pages), critique the readings, which involves pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of the readings. Your review should assess the theories, methods, and findings of the research, and identify controversies or unresolved issues. Submit final drafts as though to a book review editor. This assignment is due by no later than .

**4. Presentation of Class Readings** (worth 15% of the final grade) Each student will lead class discussion about assigned readings (either once or twice, depending on enrollment). Your presentation should address: (1) the purpose of the readings; (2) the major theories and concepts employed; (3) the methods used to gather the data; and (4) the findings or arguments of the readings. You should also offer your evaluation of the readings as well as your general thinking on the larger topic. After summarizing the readings' main points, you should identify a number of questions that the readings raise and pose these questions to members of the class. Also, consider particularly problematic passages in the text and help the group engage with them, either by providing and then eliciting alternative readings of the text, contextualizing the debates implicit or explicit in the text, or preparing specific questions for discussion. To help with the presentation, you must duplicate and distribute written presentation outlines to class participants.

**5. Final Project and Presentation** 40% of your final grade will come from a project you complete and hand in by the end of the semester. The project is an opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned in this course, and should be framed around issues, concepts, or problems from the readings and class discussion. You may write a research paper, a research proposal, a critical review of literature on a particular topic or issue, an excerpt from current research, or some similarly substantial piece of work. You must hand in a brief statement of your project choice and topic by no later than March 4. You must submit a draft of your project to another seminar participant for comments (see below) by no later than April 29. *Final drafts* should be typewritten or word-processed, double-spaced, in standard 12-point fonts, and should be at least 20 pages in length. No late projects will be accepted; papers are due by May 13. You will make a formal 15-20 minute presentation to the class on May 13. Your presentation should be based on either the *rough draft* you submitted for comments or on the *final draft*.

**6. Comments on drafts** (worth 5% of your grade) Each participant will be responsible for reading, and providing written and oral comments on, the draft project text of one fellow participant. This will be your opportunity to provide supportive-yet-critical feedback to your colleagues at a critical stage in the development of their projects. You will receive drafts by no later than April 29 and must return comments by May 6 to allow time for revisions. Hand in your colleague's comments with the final version of the paper.

**Grades will be assigned on the following scale:**

- A:** Truly exceptional and outstanding work
- B:** Solid, acceptable graduate-level work
- C or below:** Below acceptable level for graduate work

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS**

WEEK 1: Jan 21	Organizational Meeting
Week 2: Jan 28	Ingoldsby, Smith, & Miller "Structural/Functionalism Theory" (pp. 9-15) in <i>Exploring Family Theories</i> . William Goode "The Theoretical Importance of Love" (pp. 17-28) in Ingoldsby, Smith, & Miller <i>Exploring Family Theories</i> . Talcott Parsons & Robert Bales "Traditional Family Roles Benefit Society" (pp. 197-204) in Bartheck & Mullin <i>Enduring Issues in Sociology</i> . Linda Waite "Why Marriage Matters" (pp. 64-69).

Ingoldsby, Smith, & Miller “Conflict Theory” (pp. 103-113) in *Exploring Family Theories*.

Karen Seccombe “Why Welfare?” (pp. 116-136) in Ingoldsby, Smith, & Miller *Exploring Family Theories*.

Friedrich Engels “Origin of the Family, Private Property, and The State” (pp. 161-171) in Jagger & Rothenberg *Feminist Frameworks*.

Jetse Sprey “The Family as a System in Conflict,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 31, 699-706.

Ingoldsby, Smith, & Miller “Symbolic Interactionism Theory” (pp. 81-92) in *Exploring Family Theories*.

Sheldon Stryker “Identity Salience and Role Performance” (pp. 93-102) in Ingoldsby, Smith, & Miller *Exploring Family Theories*.

Ernest W. Burgess “The Family as a Unity of Interacting Personalities” (pp. 142-149) in Bogue *Basic Writings of Ernest W. Burgess*.

Jaber Gubrium & James Holstein “What is Family” (pp. 1-10) in *What is Family?*

Ingoldsby, Smith, & Miller “Feminist Family Theory” (pp. 187-197) in *Exploring Family Theories*.

Karen Blaisure & Katherine Allen “Feminists and the Ideology and Practice of Marital Equality” (pp. 198-216) in Ingoldsby, Smith, & Miller *Exploring Family Theories*.

Jessie Bernard “Traditional Family Roles Benefit Husbands” (pp. 204-213) in Barteck & Mullin *Enduring Issues in Sociology*.

Arlei Hochschild “Joey’s Problem: Nancy and Evan Holt” (pp. 183-186) in Chelin *Public and Private Families: A Reader*.

- Week 3: Feb 4 Popenoe: *Disturbing the Nest: Family Change and Decline in Modern Societies*
- Week 4: Feb 11 Giddens: *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*
- Week 5: Feb 18 Cherlin: *The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today*
- Week 6: Feb 25 Rosenfeld: *The Age of Independence: Interracial Unions, Same-sex unions, and the Changing American Family*
- Week 7: Mar 4 Hertz: *Single by Chance, Mothers by Choice: How Women are Choosing Parenthood without Marriage and Creating the New American Family*
- RESEARCH PROJECT CHOICE & TOPIC DUE
- Week 8: Mar 11 No class: SPRING BREAK

- Week 9: Mar 18 Sullivan: *The Family of Woman : Lesbian Mothers, Their Children, and the Undoing of Gender*
- Week 10: Mar 25 Townsend: *The Package Deal: Marriage, Work, and Fatherhood in Men's Lives.*
- Week 11: Apr 1 INTERLUDE: Reflecting on the state of the field, thinking about our won research, presenting our work in progress.
- Week 12: Apr 8 Hackstaff: *Marriage in a Culture of Divorce*
- Week 13: Apr 15 Edin & Kefalas: *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*
- Week 14: Apr 22 No Class
- Week 15: Apr 29 Lareau: *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*  
ROUGH DRAFT OF FINAL PROJECT DUE TO COMMENTATOR
- WEEK 16: May 6 Jacobs & Gerson: *The Time Divide: Work, Family, and Gender Inequality*  
COMMENTS DUE
- Week 17: May 13 Paper Presentations  
**FINAL PROJECT DUE**