SOC 596A: ADVANCED TOPICS IN RESEARCH: THE FAMILY
Fall 2006

PROFESSOR:

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Social Sciences 433
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Wednesday 9:00-11:30
Social Sciences 415
Office hours: Mon. 10:30-12 ABA

Course Description
The family is a core institution of all known societies and its study is a core area of sociology. Contemporary debates about the family express fears about changes in marriage, sexuality, and gender roles as a “breakdown” or “decline” of the family. Sociological research reveals that family forms vary historically and cross-culturally and must be viewed in relation to other social institutions. Accordingly, the sociology of family life addresses the relationship between the family as an institution and other social processes and institutions, such as the economy, the workplace, and the state. In doing so, this field addresses historical change, current trends in family life, and the relationship between the family and social inequalities of gender, race and class.

This course surveys the growing body of theoretical and empirical research in the sociology of the family with the goal of providing students with a theoretical grounding for studying families sociologically. In this course you will read some of the work that defines the contemporary field and is important for scholars who define the family as one of their areas of expertise. By semester’s end, you will have some solid theoretical and analytical tools for studying the large and growing topics in the sociology of family life. The readings for the course will also help students to prepare for comprehensive exams in this area. You are expected to always come to class prepared to participate in a discussion of the readings.

Non-Sociology Graduate Students: You must have permission from the instructor to take this course. Please contact me for a face-to-face meeting before the 2nd class.

Requirements
(1) Submit two discussion questions each week. These questions can address conceptual ambiguities in the readings, interesting similarities or differences across readings, or the relevance of readings for other research. Questions are due by email by 2pm on Tuesday. These questions will be an important part of the agenda for each class meeting; come prepared to explain your question, why it is worth asking, and how you have begun to think of an answer. Discussion questions will be part of your class participation grade. You may also submit clarification questions with your discussion questions.

(2) Each student will lead one week’s discussion with an analysis of one of the week’s readings.

(3) Two 4-6 pages conceptual papers, due in weeks 5 and 9.
Final project, due during exam period. You have three choices:

1. You may write a proposal in which you design a research study that you could execute in the future, possibly as a Masters paper or dissertation proposal. After choosing a topic, you will need to find a data source or design a data collection procedure. You may find a statistical source in the statistical resources available through SBSRI, or your question may require some type of data collection. Regardless of which methodology you use, the data should fit the question that you pose and you should describe the data or data collection thoroughly. Also be sure to explain how you will analyze the data.

2. You may use a research proposal that you have designed for another class that involves a family-related topic, and use the semester to refine the topic, sharpen its focus on families, execute the research and write it up as an empirical paper. Students working on a family-related MA topic may submit a draft of their MA paper as their final paper. **If you have taken a graduate seminar with me in the past, I encourage you to submit a different paper for this class.** If you want to submit a revision of a paper that I have already seen, you will need to seek my approval.

3. You may substantially revise a paper that you have written in another class in order to submit it for publication. **If the other class was with me, I encourage you to think about a new or related topic. It is usually beneficial to expand one’s repertoire.** If you want to submit a revision of a paper that I have already seen, you will need to seek my approval. The original paper must either involve a family-related topic, or you may add a family-related dimension if this will strengthen the central argument of the paper. You may also introduce an empirical data analysis to a paper that was formerly only a literature review. If you choose this option, you should have a paper suitable for journal submission by the end of the semester.

Choosing one of the second two options means that you will be writing a paper that analyzes empirical data.

A 1-2 page description of your intentions for the final assignment and the data source you plan to use or how you will collect data will be due in Week 3 (Sept. 6). The final proposal or paper is due on the Wednesday of the exam period (Wed. Dec. 13, 2006). Rather than reading new material, the last two class sessions will be devoted to assisting each other with proposals or papers.

**Grade**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Two 4-6 page conceptual papers (15% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Class participation (includes submitted questions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Description of final project</td>
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<td>50%</td>
<td>Final project</td>
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Books


All articles and other book excerpts will be available in scanned .pdf form or through electronic reserves at [http://eres.library.arizona.edu](http://eres.library.arizona.edu). The password is alimony.
COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: Introduction
Aug. 23

WEEK 2: Family Change in the U.S.
Aug. 30


WEEK 3: The Theoretical Importance of Love
Sept. 6 Submit description of final project research question and data

Swidler, Ann. 2003. Talk of Love: How Culture Matters. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 1, 2, and 9 (Conclusion). {Remove Ch. 9 and replace with 6 and 7 next time}

WEEK 4: Gender Inequality in the Family
Sept. 13


WEEK 5: Families and Race  
Sept. 20 Conceptual paper #1 due  

Stack, Carol. All Our Kin. New York: Basic Books.


WEEK 6: GLBT Families  
Sept. 27  


WEEK 7: Reproduction  
Oct. 4  

WEEK 8: Infertility and Reproductive Technology  
Oct. 11  


WEEK 9: Parents and Children  
Oct. 18  
Conceptual paper #2 due  


WEEK 10: Marriage, Divorce, and Cohabitation
Oct. 25


WEEK 11: Family Violence
Nov. 1


WEEK 12: Work-Family Issues
Nov. 8


**WEEK 13: The Family and the State**

Nov. 15


**Nov. 22**  
**Nov. 23 – 26**  
Class Cancelled

**Thanksgiving Break**

**WEEK14: WORKSHOP RESEARCH PROJECTS**

Nov. 29

**WEEK 15: WORKSHOP RESEARCH PROJECTS**

Dec. 6

*Final Project due Wed. Dec. 13 at noon*