

SYLABUS FOR SOCIOLOGY OF THE FAMILY

Course Number: SOC-K210 Sociology of the Family

Course Schedule: On-Line

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Office Hours: C-142 by arrangement

I. Course Description

The family is one of the most basic and fundamental institutions in society. It plays pivotal functions that both shape and are shaped by the larger society. It also involves close emotional and economic relationships that contain elements of both consensus and conflict between family members. Examining the family in this manner is what it means to look at the family from a sociological perspective.

The course will focus on several key issues. First, we will examine the family from a historical perspective, focusing on how the structure and functions of the family have changed during the transition from a pre-industrial to an industrial society. This will include issues such as emergence of the nuclear family, increased rights for women, changing views of childhood, and the sexual revolution. As I will suggest, industrialization has resulted in families becoming more egalitarian over time with more emphasis on emotional intimacy and satisfaction, although many traditional family functions that helped hold families together have also declined in importance.

Second, we will discuss family life today and how it is being affected by the transition to a post-industrial economy. This will include a discussion of changing gender roles of mothers and fathers, marital satisfaction between spouses, and problems of domestic violence and abuse.

Third, in addition to economic changes, we will look at how the family is shaped by other “macro” social characteristics in the larger society, such as social class and race and ethnicity on the family in our society.

Finally, the latter part of the course addresses the current debate regarding whether or not the family is in “decline”. This part of the course will look at trends in marriage, cohabitation, divorce, remarriage, and out-of-wedlock births, as well as the status of non-traditional families such as single-parent families, blended families, and gay families. We will also discuss conservative and liberal policy solutions to strengthen the family.

II. Course Objectives

The objectives for this course are:

- I. Cultures and Societies: analyze and understand the family as a diverse social institution
- Analyze and understand family and kinship patterns in comparative and historical perspective
 - Analyze and understand how social class and racial and ethnic stratification affect family diversity
 - Analyze and understand how gender stratification affects the family as an institution
 - Assess current trends in the family and evaluate arguments about “family decline”
- II. Critical Thinking: Utilize critical thinking skills to analyze societies and social behavior
- Understand and apply various theoretical perspectives in sociology to the family
 - Understand and critique different policy proposals for strengthening families
 - Read and critique original writings on the family
 - Write a critical book review on the family

III. Course Readings

The required books for the course are:

- Arlene S. Skolnick and Jerome H. Skolnick, *Family in Transition, 15th Edition*, 2009. (Henceforth known as S & S).
- Roberta L. Coles, *Race & Family: A Structural Approach*, 2006.

IV. Course Evaluation

Your final course grade will be based on the following components:

- Weekly written assignments posted in each week's learning module will count for 20% of your final grade
- Participation in weekly discussions will count for 20% of your final grade
- There will be a mid-term exam that counts for 20% of your final grade
- There will be a final exam that counts for 20% of your final grade.
- You will write a book review of a book of your own choosing (not one of the required course readings) that will count for 20% of you final grade.

Your weekly assignments will receive a grade of check plus (3 points), check (2 points), or check minus (1 point). You will receive an overall grade for your weekly assignments based on your total number of points for the semester.

You will receive a letter grade each week for your participation in the weekly discussion. You will be expected to post at least 4 times during the week at a minimum to receive an A, although 4 posts will not necessarily guarantee you an A. Your grade overall will be determined by the number of times you participate in the weekly discussion, the quality of your contributions, and how consistently you participate throughout the week.

Late work will be penalized accordingly. Failure to complete assignments and/or exams will hurt your final grade more than submitted work that receives an F but reflects some level of effort.

V. Course Schedule

The following schedule is a tentative list of the topics that are intended to be covered each week as well as the required readings for the week. Since the schedule is tentative, the dates for specific topics and readings may be revised during the course.

Week 1 8/26: Understanding the Family

Readings: S & S, Introduction and Reading 1; Coontz article

Week 2 9/2: Industrialization and the Family

Readings: S & S, Readings 2, 3, 22, and 25; Coles, Chapters 3

Week 3 9/9: Patriarchy and Women's Rights

Readings: S & S, Readings 7, 8, 9, 26; Coles, Chapter 4

Week 4 9/16: Love, Sex, and The Sexual Revolution

Readings: S & S, Readings 10, 11

1st Film Assignment posted; due 9/23 by 9:00 a.m.

Week 5 9/23: The Post-Industrial Family

Readings: S & S, Readings 27, 29, 30, 31

Week 6 9/30: Motherhood and Fatherhood

Readings: S & S, Readings 5, 21, 28

Week 7 10/7: Marital Satisfaction and Domestic Violence

Readings: S & S, Readings 15, 19, 38

Mid-Term Exam posted; due 10/14 by 9:00 a.m.

Week 8 10/14: Social Class and the Family

Readings: S & S, Reading 23 Coles, Chapter 7

Week 9 10/21: Race/Ethnicity and the Family

Readings: Coles, Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6,

Week 11 10/28: African-American and Native American Families

Readings: S & S, Readings 32 and 36; Coles, Chapters 9 and 10

Second Film Assignment posted; due 11/4 by 9:00 a.m.

Week 12 11/4: Asian and Hispanic Families

Readings: S & S, Readings 33 and 34; Coles, Chapters 11 and 12

Week 13 11/11: Marriage, Cohabitation, and Child Birth

Readings: S & S, Readings 12, 14, 37; Coles, Chapter 13

Week 14 11/18: Divorce and Its Consequences

Readings: S & S, Readings 4, 16, 17

Week 15 11/25: Non-traditional Families and Gay Marriage

Readings: S & S, Readings 13, 18, 34

Week 16 12/2: Public Policy and the Family

Readings: S & S, Readings 6, 20, 24

Book Reviews due Monday 12/6 by 9:00 a.m.

Week 17 12/9: Finals Week

Final Exam posted; Due Thursday 12/16 by 9:00 a.m.