

**Soc 4800: Sociology of the Family**  
**Spring 2016**  
**Appalachian State University**  
**Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:45 CW 226**

**Instructor:**

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Office Hours: Office Hours: Monday 10:00-1:00, Tuesday 12:30-2:00, and by appointment

**Course Description**

This is a senior level course on current sociological perspectives on the family, with an emphasis on recent U.S. family trends. At present, American families show little resemblance to the male breadwinner-female homemaker families that predominated during the mid-20th century and are often used as a template for what all families should be. Instead, we have diverse arrangements, some of which are new and some of which have always existed, but were rendered invisible. We will explore the range of family experiences in order to understand the causes and consequences of social, political, and economic change for family life and how these changes impact the well being of contemporary families. In addition, “the family” is the subject of frequent heated rhetoric in media and politics. This course will enable you to respond to popular claims thoughtfully, using sociological theories and evidence to defend your position and evaluate the arguments of others.

**Course Objectives**

We will learn to:

Describe and explain the changes in U.S. family life that have taken place over the last half-century.

Analyze the family from a sociological perspective rather than from personal experience.

Describe how family experiences vary by gender, class, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

Analyze the ways in which ideologies, public and political discourse, public policy, and our economic system impact the social and economic conditions of families.

**Course Requirements**

***General:***

**Paper Format:**

All papers should be typed in Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins. Papers not following the requested format will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade. I am strict about page requirements. Two and a half pages is NOT three

pages and will be graded as an incomplete assignment. Please print and staple your papers yourself. There are nifty mini staplers you can purchase and keep in your bag. Printer problems or App Card problems are your problems alone and you must deal with them. They do not constitute an excuse for not having an assignment in on time.

### **Late Papers:**

Late papers will result in a lowered grade. Your grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade per “business” day late (M-F), up to a limit of a three full grade reduction. You are free to turn in make-up work for partial credit up to the last day of class before the final exam. Remember that an F on a paper is always better than a zero. You should treat this class as you would a job. This means that I will not track you down and ask for your papers; you are responsible for turning them in on your own. You should also take the workload (both readings and assignments) seriously and decide now if you are willing to do the work necessary to receive a passing grade in the class.

### **Classroom Behavior:**

Please do not text, check the internet, or whisper to your friends during class. It is disrespectful to your classmates and me and interferes with learning. Yes, I notice!!

Throughout this course, we will be discussing many sensitive and contentious subjects. I encourage everyone to participate in discussions, raise questions, and offer interpretations to the study of the sociology of families. However, course content, including lectures, readings, videos, and discussions may include graphic descriptions of sexism, racism, homophobia, violence, and sexual activity. For students who are apprehensive and/or uncomfortable with the content, please speak to me about your uncertainties or drop the course early on. Although these anxieties are understandable, our job in the classroom is to learn about how inequalities, discrimination, and violence affect our lived experiences and the lived experiences of those around us. You need to immediately read through the syllabus to make sure you are able to complete the required readings and assignments.

Discussions will often involve personal experiences and beliefs. The college classroom at its best is a space for exploring ideas, from that we know to what we may not understand. This is not the same as a space free from dissent or beliefs that you find distasteful or offensive. Please be respectful of the opinions and experiences of your classmates. I do not appreciate students trying to silence or shame other students for their thoughts on various subjects. These ideas may not be well-developed or well-stated, but may serve as someone's attempt to start thinking critically. You are free to offer a counter-argument through class discussion. Although students will not be asked specifically to relate personal information, it is expected that we keep confidential any information garnered from those who do. Thus, no audio recordings are allowed in the course.

### ***Assignments:***

**Readings:** You are expected to come to every class having read all the assigned readings *and* prepared to discuss them. You need to have access to the readings in class, whether printed or on your computer. You may find it helpful to summarize each

author's argument in a short paragraph and write down any interesting points or questions raised that you would like to discuss. While you read, please start to think through the following questions:

- What is the author's main argument?
- How does the author support his/her argument?
- What are the implications of the author's findings?
- Do you find the author's argument convincing? Why or why not?
- What other issues might be relevant to the author's argument and findings?
- How does the text reflect or challenge cultural attitudes about family?
- Did you find your own values and assumptions reflected or challenged in the text?
- How do the ideas in the text relate to your own experience? Why might this be?

**Reading Responses:** You will write fourteen 1-2 page reading responses. They are due every Thursday, except in weeks 8 and 16. Each paper should succinctly reflect on **all** the readings from the week, with a discussion and analysis of the themes presented. These papers should not just be a summary or list of the findings of the readings, but should synthesize the key concepts of the readings in a succinct, coherent analysis. Papers must be well-edited for full credit.

**Course Paper:** You will write an 8-10 page research paper for the course, due on **5/3**. Detailed instructions for the assignment are posted on AsULearn.

**Midterm and Final Exam:** These exams will be taken in class on the days indicated in the syllabus. Each exam consists of one to two essay questions requiring you to synthesize multiple course readings. No make-ups will be given except in the case of a documented emergency. These should be reported to the instructor **prior** to the exam and documentation is required. **Unreported absences from an exam will be recorded as a zero for that exam.** If you need accommodations for the exam, please let me know at least two weeks in advance of the exam date. I will distribute a study guide one week prior to each exam and we will review the guide in class. You are allowed to bring 1 page of notes to the exams.

**Participation:** This course will be run as a seminar, with discussion based on the assigned readings. Participation is critical. This includes attendance and participation in and preparedness for class discussion and in-class activities. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. You are allowed three absences over the course of the semester. You will be marked down if you miss more than three classes or repeatedly leave class early or arrive late. Missing class is inadvisable, as it will influence your class participation grade *and* your understanding of the material. Short homework or in-class assignments will be included in your participation grade. If you must miss class, obtain a copy of the notes from another student in class. If you have ongoing medical or personal issues that require frequent absences, please see me as soon as possible to work out accommodations. I require an email from the Dean of Students office verifying the reason for your absences and requesting accommodations. Please use your allotted absences judiciously. This means that if you know you will need to miss a class for a school sponsored or family activity, save

an absence for that day. In addition, if you are sensitive to a particular subject, please use one of your allotted absences that day.

**Grading:**

Reading Responses	25%
Midterm Exam	15%
Course Paper	20%
Final Exam	25%
Participation	15%

**Grading Scale:**

A+ 99-100	C+ 77-79
A 94-98	C 74-76
A- 90-93	C- 70-73
B+ 87-89	D+ 67-69
B 84-86	D 64-66
B- 80-83	D- 60-63
	F 59 and below

**A range**      **Excellent work.** Demonstrates superior ability to creatively and thoughtfully organize and express ideas. Displays excellent comprehension of all course material and provides a well-considered and thorough response to the assignment.

**B range**      **Good work.** Demonstrates good organization and expression of ideas. Displays a good understanding of course material and provides detailed response to the assignment, although there may be some oversights or missing connections.

**C range**      **Fair work.** Demonstrates uneven skills in organization and expression of ideas, and displays a satisfactory understanding of general course concepts, but with significant gaps in understanding of details, applications, or connections.

**D-F range**    **Marginal to Unacceptable work.** Demonstrates little ability to organize and express ideas in an understandable manner, displays little comprehension of course concepts or provides an incomplete assignment.

**Student Policies:**

There are important university policies that you should be aware of, such as the add/drop policy, cheating and plagiarism policy, grade appeal procedures, and accommodations for students for university-sponsored activities. Go to this URL to find them:

<http://academicaffairs.appstate.edu/resources>. I take plagiarism seriously. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will receive an automatic zero for the assignment and your case will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

## **Academic Integrity**

*As a community of learners at Appalachian State University, we must create an atmosphere of honesty, fairness, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of each other. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of an Appalachian degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form and will oppose any instance of academic dishonesty. This course will follow the provisions of the Academic Integrity Code, which can be found on the Office of Student Conduct Web Site:*

[www.studentconduct.appstate.edu](http://www.studentconduct.appstate.edu).

## **Accommodations For Students With Disabilities**

*Appalachian State University is committed to making reasonable accommodations for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If you have a disability and may need reasonable accommodations in order to have equal access to the University's courses, programs and activities, please contact the Office of Disability Services (828.262.3056 or [www.ods.appstate.edu](http://www.ods.appstate.edu)). Once registration is complete, individuals will meet with ODS staff to discuss eligibility and appropriate accommodations.*

If you require accommodations for a documented qualifying disability, you must see me in office hours at the beginning of the semester so that we can make arrangements. It is up to you to schedule this appointment.

## **Religious Observance**

*All ASU students are allowed a minimum of two absences per year for religious observances. Up to two absences for such observances will be excused, without penalty to the student, provided that the student has informed the instructor in the manner specified in the syllabus. Notice must be given by the student to the instructor before the absence occurs and no later than three weeks after the start of the semester in which the absence(s) will occur. Arrangements will be made to make up work missed by these religious observances, without penalty to the student. For the purposes of this policy, ASU defines the term "religious observance" to include religious holidays, holy days, or similar observances associated with a student's faith that require absence from class.*

## **Course Texts:**

Cohen, Phillip N. (2015) The Family: Diversity, Inequality, and Social Change.  
New York: W.W. Norton & Company.  
All course readings are available on ASU Learn.

## Course Schedule

Readings are due the day they are listed, i.e. they must be completed before the class date.

The following course schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and by email.

### **Theorizing American Families**

#### Week 1

1/12 - Introduction to the Course

1/14 - Powell et al. (2010) "Family Counts" and "Who Counts as Family?" Counted Out: Same-Sex Relations and Americans' Definitions of Family. Pgs. 1-36.

#### Week 2

1/19 - Giddens, Anthony (2011) "The Global Revolution in Family and Personal Life" Family in Transition. Pgs. 27-33.

Powell et al. (2010) "Family Accounts" Counted Out: Same-Sex Relations and Americans' Definitions of Family. Pgs. 37-70.

1/21 - Cherlin, Andrew (2009) "How American Family Life Is Different" in The Marriage-Go-Round. Pgs. 13-35.

Coontz, Stephanie (1997) "What We Really Miss About the 1950's" The Way We Really Are. Pgs. 33-50.

***Reading Response 1 Due***

### **Reimagining Romantic Relationships**

#### Week 3

1/26 - Sheff, Elisabeth (2011) "Polyamorous Families, Same-Sex Marriage, and the Slippery Slope" *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 40(5): 487-520.

Stacey, Judith (2011) "Love, Sex, and Kinship in Gay El Lay" Unhitched. Pgs. 13-48.

1/28 -Pfeffer, Carla (2014) "'I Don't Like Passing as a Straight Woman': Queer Negotiations of Identity and Social Group Membership" *American Journal of Sociology* 120(1): 1-44.

## **The Gendered Family**

### Week 4

2/2 - Gerson, Kathleen (2010) "Women's Search for Self-Reliance" The Unfinished Revolution. Pgs. 124-158.

2/4 - Powell et al (2010) "Family Names Count: Marital Name Change and Definitions of Family" Counted Out: Same-Sex Relations and Americans' Definitions of Family. Pgs. 170-200.

### Week 5

2/9 - Gerson, Kathleen (2010) "Men's Resistance to Equal Sharing" The Unfinished Revolution. Pgs. 159-188.

2/11 - Hays, Sharon (1996) "Intensive Mothering" The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood. Pgs. 97-130.

Wall, Glenda and Stephanie Arnold (2007) "How Involved is Involved Fathering?" *Gender and Society*: 508-527.

## **Parenting**

### Week 6

2/16 - Collins, Patricia Hill (1994) "Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood" Shifting the Center. Pgs. 275-291.

Lareau, Annette (2002) "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." Shifting the Center. Pgs. 431-447.

***In-Class Video: Wife Swap***

2/18 - Dozier, Raine (2015) "The Power of Queer: How 'Guy Moms' Challenge Heteronormative Assumptions about Mothering and Family" Families As They Really Are. Pgs. 458-474.

## **Work/Family Conflict**

### Week 7

2/23 - Coontz, Stephanie (2013) "Why Gender Equality Stalled." *The New York Times*.

Stone, Pamela (2007) "The Choice Gap" Opting Out? Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home. Pgs. 105-131.

Warner, Judith (2013) "The Opt-Out Generation Wants Back In" *The New York Times Magazine*.

2/25 - Williams, Joan (2010) "One Sick Child Away from Being Fired" Reshaping the Work-Family Debate. Pgs. 42-76.

***Exam Study Guide Distributed***

Week 8

3/1 - Review for Midterm

3/3 - Midterm Exam

Spring Break

**Fragile Families**

Week 9

3/15 - Cherlin, Andrew (2009) "Blue-Collar Blues/White-Collar Weddings" in The Marriage-Go-Round. Pgs. 159-180.

3/17 - Cowan, Philip and Carolyn Pape Cowan (2015) "Beyond Family Structure: Family Process Studies Help to Reframe Debates about What's Good for Children" Families As They Really Are. Pgs. 358-379.

Rutter, Virginia (2015) "The Case for Divorce" Families As They Really Are. Pgs. 329-340.

Week 10

3/22 - Edin, Kathryn (2013) "Thank You, Jesus" Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City. Pgs. 46-69.

3/24 - Edin, Kathryn (2013) "The Stupid Shit" Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City. Pgs. 70-102.

**The Politics of Sexuality and Reproduction**

Week 11

3/29 - No Class

3/31 - Schalet, Amy (2011) "Dutch Parents and the Sleepover" and "American Parents and the Drama of Adolescent Sexuality" Not Under My Roof: Parents, Teens, and the Culture of Sex. Pgs. 29-75.

## Week 12

- 4/5 - Conley, Dalton (2005) "A Man's Right to Choose" *The New York Times*.  
Flavin, Jeanne (2008) "Back-Alley Butchers: Terminating Pregnancies" Our Bodies, Our Crimes: The Policing of Women's Reproduction in America. Pgs. 51-73.

***In-Class Film: The Last Abortion Clinic***

- 4/7 - Calhoun, Ada (2012) "The Criminalization of Bad Mothers" *The New York Times Magazine*.  
Flavin, Jeanne (2008) "Breeders: The Right to Procreate" Our Bodies, Our Crimes: The Policing of Women's Reproduction in America. Pgs. 29-50.

## **Families, the Welfare State, and Social Policy**

### Week 13

- 4/12 - Hays, Sharon (2003) "Enforcing the Work Ethic" and "Promoting Family Values" in Flat Broke with Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform. Pgs. 33-93.

4/14 - No Class

### Week 14

- 4/19 - Haney, Lynne (2010) "The Empowerment Myth: Social Vulnerability as Personal Pathology" Offending Women: Power, Punishment, and the Regulation of Desire. Pgs. 150-177.

- 4/21 – Avishai, Orit, Melanie Heath, and Jennifer Randles (2015) "The Marriage Movement" Families As They Really Are. Pgs. 304-320.  
Heath, Melanie (2012) "Teaching Marriage to Single Mothers and Inmates" One Marriage Under God: The Campaign to Promote Marriage in America. Pgs. 93-122.

## **Intimate Partner Violence**

### Week 15

- 4/26 - Crenshaw, Kimberle (1994) "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" Feminist Frontiers. Pgs. 405-414.  
Flavin, Jeanne (2008) "Asking for It: Battered Women and Child Custody" Our Bodies, Our Crimes: The Policing of Women's Reproduction in America. Pgs. 164-181.  
Luo, Michael (2013) "In Some States, Gun Rights Trump Orders of Protection"

*The New York Times.*

4/28 - Bourgois, Philippe (1996) "In Search of Masculinity: Violence, Respect, and Sexuality among Puerto Rican Crack Dealers in East Harlem" *The British Journal of Criminology* 53: 412-427.

Schrock, Douglas and Irene Padavic (2007) "Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity in a Batterer Intervention Program" *Gender & Society*: 625-649.

***Exam Study Guide Distributed***

## **The Future of the Family**

Week 16

5/3 - Cohen Ch. 13 - "The Future of the Family" Pgs. 452-483.

Review for Final Exam

***Course Paper Due***

**Final Exam - Thursday, May 12th 12:00-2:30 pm**