

**\*\*\*THIS IS YOUR CONTRACT; PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY\*\*\***

**Sociology 315W: The Marriage Institution-Writing Intensive (Cross-listed with  
WMST 489)**

**Spring 2010**

**MWF, 11:30-12:20 p.m.**

**Class location: HECC 201**

**Professor Sarah N. Gatson**

**ACAD 427 [gatson@tamu.edu](mailto:gatson@tamu.edu)**

**Office hours: 9:00-11:00 a.m. MW, and by appointment**

**Course Description & Learning Outcomes:** This course will involve an analysis of the social construction and social experience of marriage and the family as institutions. In this course, we will discuss particular concepts of marriage and the family as important cornerstones of ways to structure social interactions on various levels, and especially relations of power and inequality in society. The objective of the course is to challenge our taken for granted notions about these topics, and ask the sociological questions, “How constructed/natural is the family?” and “What is marriage, and what is it for?” Students should leave the course with an understanding of the general sociological perspective on marriage and family as institutions and everyday practices, as well as be able to discuss and present informed and reasoned opinions upon these subjects. Students should be able to express themselves in a variety of written formats, and will produce basic research papers, mainly of a secondary nature.

**Pre-requisites:** Junior or Senior Classification, or permission of the instructor

**Books:**

Kathleen Gerson, *Hard Choices: How Women Decide About Work, Career, and Motherhood* (selected chapters) & *No Man’s Land: Men’s Changing Commitments to Family and Work* (selected chapters)

*The Second Shift*, Arlie Hochschild, with Anne Machung

*The Way We Never Were*, Stephanie Coontz

*From the Front Porch to the Back Seat*, Beth Bailey

*The Black Family* ed. by Robert Staples (selected chapters)

*On Writing* by Stephen King

*A Short Guide to Writing About Social Science* by Lee Cuba

**Articles & Chapters: All available on online course reserve**

“The Patriarchal Family,” from *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Frederick Engels, (from *Social Theory*) 1884

“Sex Roles in the American Kinship System,” Talcott Parsons, 1954 (from *Social Theory*).

“The Moynihan Report: Rethinking the Family,” Christopher Lasch, 1977 (from *Social Theory*).

“Introduction,” from *The Hearts of Men*, Barbara Ehrenreich, 1983.

“The Oneida Community,” William M. Kephardt, 1988 (from *Family Relations*).

“Sexual Cruelty and the Case for Divorce in Victorian America,” Robert L. Griswold,

- 1986 (online, JStor, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*).
- “The Emergence of the Modern American Family,” Carl N. Degler (from *Family Relations*)
- “Restoring the Traditional Black Family,” Eleanor Holmes Norton, 1988 (from *Perspectives on the Family*).
- “The Family as a Utopian Retreat from the City: The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Contribution,” Kirk Jeffrey, 1988 (from *Perspectives on the Family*).
- “Marriage,” Robert Lynd and Helen Lynd, 1988 (from *Perspectives on the Family*).
- “Role-Making Among Married Mexican American Women: Issues of Class and Ethnicity,” Norma Williams, 1988 (from *Perspectives on the Family*).
- “The Balance of Power in Lesbian Relationships,” Caldwell and Peplau, 1988 (from *Perspectives on the Family*).
- “American Fathering in Historical Perspective,” Joseph Pleck, 1988 (from *Perspectives on the Family*).
- “Child Care 2000: Policy Options for the Future,” Lubeck and Garrett, 1988 (from *Perspectives on the Family*).
- “The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State: Workmen’s Compensation and Mother’s Aid,” Barbara J. Nelson, 1990 (from *Women, the State, and Welfare*).
- “The Facts of Fatherhood,” Thomas Laquer, 1992 (from *Rethinking the Family*).
- “Labor Policy and the Social Meaning of Parenthood,” Sarah N. Gatson, 1997
- “Making Men into Dads: Fatherhood, the State, & Welfare Reform,” Laura Curran & Laura S. Abrams, 2000.
- “Opting into Motherhood: Lesbians Blurring the Boundaries & Transforming the Meaning of Parenthood and Kinship,” Gillian A. Dunne.
- “‘That’s Our Kind of Constellation’: Lesbian Mothers Negotiate Institutionalized Understandings of Gender within the Family,” Susan E. Dalton & Denise D. Bielby, 2000.
- “Doing the Right Thing? Single Mothers by Choice & the Struggle for Legitimacy,” Jane D. Bock, 2000.
- “Race, Ethnicity, & Local Marriage Markets,” Kristen Harknett & Sara McLanahan, 2004.
- “Kin Support among Blacks & Whites,” Natalia Sarkisian & Naomi Gerstel, 2004.

**Recommended Reading:**

- \**Loving v. Virginia*, 388 U.S. 1 (1967)
- \**Bowers v. Hardwick*, 478 U.S. 186 (1986)
- \**Lawrence v. Texas* (2003)

(Note: These may be found on Lexis/Nexis Academic, available from the TAMU Library electronic index/database search engine.)

Dorothy Smith, “The Standard North American Family as an Ideological Code,” 1993, V. 14, n.1, pp.51-63, *Journal of Family Issues* (online, electronic journal link on Evans Library website)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Dale M. Bauer, editor (1998 Bedford Books edition)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman: *Herland*

**Course Requirements & Evaluation [200 points total; 180-200 (A), 160-179.5 (B), 140-159.5 (C), 120-139.5 (D), Below 120 (F)]:**

**Class Participation:** 15%/30 points (Class participation will be based on written responses to discussion questions; some of these will be in-class writings and discussion sessions, while many will be held online on WebCT/eLearning). (6 X 5 points) **NOTE: Deadlines are attached to these. Due to some issues with VISTA, make sure to save a copy of your posts (you can type a post up FIRST in a word-processing program, for example, and then copy and paste it into your VISTA post)– if you ever have trouble making a post, MAKE SURE TO EMAIL A COPY by the deadline – emails are automatically time-stamped. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE I HAVE ALL YOUR ASSIGNMENTS IN AND ON TIME.**

**ABSENCE POLICY:** I do not take attendance; it is your responsibility to come to class on time and to be responsible for the material covered therein. While I am happy to answer questions pertaining to the course, I will not re-provide lectures or produce lecture notes for you; if you miss class for any reason, your best option for getting back up to speed is to communicate with other students, whom you may ask to share their notes. Please see Rule 7 under Part I (<http://student-rules.tamu.edu/search/rule7.htm>) for details on excused absences, which I only need to be notified of in the event of missing an assignment or exam deadline, so that make-up work may be scheduled.

**Papers (Papers may be turned in to the class website online; ALWAYS MAKE SURE TO MAKE A BACK-UP COPY; AND NEVER ERASE YOUR PAPER FROM DISK UNTIL AFTER THE SEMESTER ENDS, TO AVOID “LOST” PAPERS AT THE END OF THE COURSE AFTER GRADES HAVE BEEN TURNED IN. IF YOU CHOOSE TO TURN IN A HARDCOPY, ALWAYS DO SO TO MY MAILBOX IN ACAD 311, NEVER UNDER MY OFFICE DOOR!!! THE PAPERS ARE OTHERWISE VERY LIKELY TO BE THROWN AWAY BY THE CLEANING STAFF.)**

**#1 (20%/40 points) (7 pages)** Discuss the conceptions regarding marriage and the family with which you entered the class. In light of the readings and discussions of the first five weeks, reflect on your own initial understandings, and those that the course has thus far highlighted for you. In other words, how has a structural, historical, and institutional/legal understanding of marriage and the family affected your understanding of these concepts? You may choose which readings and course materials to address, but you must use class sources. These are response papers, but this does not mean that they are solely opinion papers. You must deal adequately with the authors’ arguments which you choose to engage, but not in a summary form. Rather, choose critically which issues you want to discuss in light of the first part of the assignment above.

**DRAFT = 10%/20 points; Final paper = 10%/20 points**

**#2 (35%/70 points) (15 pages)** For this paper, you may **choose** from **two options**:

**A:** You will do some original research on your own family situation. You may gather data on the history of your family and/or its various members. You may interview your parents or other family members, etc. You may engage in constructing a sociologically-informed narrative of yourself. Then, from among the theories and experiences dealt with during the course, present the sociology of your family. You must incorporate appropriate course materials in your analysis, not merely tell a story about yourself and your family.

**B:** Using a mass media source (e.g. a television series like *Everybody Loves Raymond*, or a film like *Parenthood*; the source does not *\*explicitly\** have to be about marriage/family), from among the theories and experiences dealt with during the course, present the sociology of family as it is presented in popular culture. You must incorporate appropriate course materials into an analysis, not merely provide a review of the source material (e.g. no “book reports” or “TV reviews.” You may compare and contrast several episodes in one series, between two or more series, or engage in an extended analysis of a film, or compare and contrast between two or more films. What do(es) the media source(s) say about the family? What sociological paradigm would you say it falls into? **You should actually watch some specific episode(s)/film(s), not merely rely on your memory of having seen a series; remember, Dr. Gatson is a pop culture geek, and will likely have watched the source(s) that you use.**

**DRAFT = 15%/30 points; Final paper = 20%/40 points**

For both final paper options, I will provide a further list of references that may add you in your analysis, and provide guidance on how to extend these projects into full-blown research projects (either individual or collaborative) for presentation at either the TAMU System Pathways Research Symposium in Fall 2010, TAMU Student Research Week in Spring 2011, or as a Senior Thesis Project in Sociology when applicable.

**Final Exam:** (30%/60 points) I will hand out a study guide with the terms and quotations from reading and lecture that you will be expected to know a week prior to the exam. You should spend that time coming up with full and complete answers for all of the material in the guide. For the exam itself, you will be given a number of both definitions and quotations, from which you will be able to choose four definitions/terms and four quotations to answer. While these are short answers, because you have time beforehand to prepare your answers, they must be thorough and detailed, using examples from course materials to fully flesh out the definitions, and contextualize the quotations. The following link provides information on how to write a good answer on an essay type exam:

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl\\_essay.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_essay.html)

**Schedule:**

**1/18-22:** Introduction to course & Online resource tutorial (M). King pp. \_\_\_\_ & Cuba Ch. 1 (W). Basic perspectives and concepts (F)

**HISTORICAL & STRUCTURAL CONCERNS**

**1/25-29:** *The Black Family*, pp. 18-24, Lynd and Lynd, Parsons, and Ehrenreich. King pp. \_\_\_\_ & Cuba Ch. 2-3

**2/1-5:** Kephardt; Engels, Pleck; *The Black Family*, pp. 25-39; 129-150.

**2/8-12:** *The Way We Never Were*, 1-121; *From the Front Porch to the Back Seat*, 1-76.

**\*2/15-19:** *From the Front Porch to the Back Seat*, 77-144; Griswold, Jeffrey, and Degler. **DRAFT FOR SP#1 DUE, 5 pm Friday**

**CONFLICTING EXPERIENCES: Gender, Race, Class, Sexuality.**

**2/22-26:** *Hard Choices*. (ch. 1-5; Appendices A-C) King pp. \_\_\_\_ & Cuba Ch. 4-5

**\* 3/1-5:** *The Black Family*, pp.67-86, Laquer **P#1 due, by 5pm Friday**

**3/8-12:** *No Man's Land* (Part II; Appendix). King pp. \_\_\_\_ & Cuba Ch. 6-7

**SPRING BREAK: MARCH 15-19**

**3/22-26:** *The Second Shift*, through ch.16.

**3/29-4/2:** *The Black Family*, pp. 333-356, Caldwell and Peplau **NO CLASS**

**FRIDAY – READING DAY**

**4/5-4/9:** Williams, Dunne, Dalton & Bielby, Bock

**POLICY**

**\*4/12-16:** Moynihan (pp.2-17 in Staples), Lasch, and Norton, *The Way We Never Were*, 121-254; Sarkisian & Gerstel; Harknett & McLanahan. **DRAFT FOR SP#2 DUE by 5 p.m. Friday**

**4/19-23:** Nelson, Gatson, Staples pp. 357-366; Curran & Abrams. **NO CLASS WEDNESDAY -- MUSTER**

**\*4/26-30:** Lubeck and Garrett, *The Second Shift*, ch.17; *The Way We Never Were*, 255-288; **P#2 due, by 5pm Friday**

**5/3-5/7:** Reading week: Last Class Meeting Mon., May 3; Exam #2 study Guide posted on WebCT, 5/3; online discussion

**\*5/10-14:** Finals week. See Finals Schedule for Exam date and time.

### **Teaching philosophy and structure of the course.**

My teaching philosophy is based on the idea of non-passive learning. This means that I expect you to participate to a high degree in your own learning process. I expect you to do the reading, and to do it critically, and come to class prepared to discuss it, and be prepared to respond to it in writing. This doesn't mean that I expect you to have all the answers, or to be able to parrot minute details, but rather that you are willing to challenge your own first understanding of the materials. My lectures on will cover the broad outlines of the material, stress the important points of the materials and my approach to them, and introduce connections to materials not in your readings. Discussions are to provide the class with a more in-depth approach, and the opportunity to explore your response to the material and get a bead on that of your peers. As much discussion occurs in online venues, I also encourage to you to raise questions – for clarity and for exploration – during class.

You will also notice from the syllabus that I stress writing – this is due to my own pedagogical belief that having to **use** the material that you are learning in critical formats is the best way to retain any knowledge you gain. In addition, learning to communicate well in written form is a skill that will serve you generally in your life.

## Format for Papers

All papers must conform to the following guidelines:

**Cover page:** This page should have your name, course and section number, and any other identifying information. Do NOT repeat any of this information in the text of your paper, unless it is in a header or footer (i.e. it should not be used to take up space in the body of the paper).

**Works cited page:** A bibliography of all sources referred to in the body of the paper should appear here, preferably in alphabetical order.

**Margins:** All margins (top, bottom, right and left) must be 1 inch. If you are using Microsoft Word, click on File; click on Page Set up; under Margins, enter the number “1.” If you have trouble doing this, SEE ME prior to turning in the paper.

**Spacing:** Double-spaced, except for any lengthy (taking up more than four lines of text) quotations, which should be indented and single spaced. Do NOT put an extra space between paragraphs.

**Font:** You must use 12-point font. Size matters. Style (as long as it isn't one of the fancy or symbol fonts) doesn't. Personally, I prefer Times New Roman.

**Length:** Adhere to the page-length requirement in the syllabus for each paper assignment – these length requirements are meant to highlight the need for editing to make your paper more concise and clear. If, before you turn in the paper, you find that you are more than a line or two under or over the required length, this is a signal to you that you need to do some re-writing. **THE COVER PAGE AND WORKS CITED PAGE DO NOT COUNT AS PART OF THE PAGE-LENGTH REQUIREMENTS.**

**Grammar and Proofreading:** Adhere to standard American English spelling and grammar requirements. Proofread your papers, as spell-checking with a computer program is not the same thing as using language properly, and spell-check will not alert you to typographical errors other than misspelled words. If you have concerns about your proof-reading skills, ask a classmate to proof your paper for you, as it is often easier to catch someone else's mistakes. You may also go to **The University Writing Center (UWC)**, located in Evans Library 1.214, offers help to writers at any stage of the writing process including brainstorming, researching, drafting, documenting, revising, and more; no writing concern is too large or too small. These consultations are highly recommended but are not required. While the UWC consultants will not proofread or edit your papers, they will help you improve your proofreading and editing skills. If you visit the UWC, take a copy of your writing assignment, a hard copy of your draft or any notes you may have, as well as any material you need help with. To find out more about UWC services or to schedule an appointment, call 458-1455, visit the web page at [writingcenter.tamu.edu](http://writingcenter.tamu.edu), or stop by in person.

**Sources/Works cited/Bibliography:** If the paper is a research rather than a short response paper (i.e., you are required to do outside research of primary and/or secondary materials), please include a full bibliographic section, in alphabetical order, of the sources you used. Within the text itself, you may use whatever citation format with which you are most comfortable. If you are unfamiliar with citation formats, you may check out the online *Chicago Manual of Style* for commonly used formats:

<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools.html>. The parenthetical method of citation within the text – (Gatson, 1997: 56) or (Gatson, 1997, p.56) is generally more concise and easy to read. Online sources are fine for general research, but must be cited as such, and you must be able to explain why they are relevant when a research article was just as available as a source. News articles may be used as sources if they are being used to illustrate the existence of a phenomenon or cultural concept, but NOT as independent research sources like law review articles or scholarly journal articles or books.

All of the above are meant to be read as **requirements** aside from the content requirement of critical engagement with the course materials. These requirements may seem nit-picky to you, but they are required because the various ways students have of getting around length and style requirements often make the papers vastly unequal and difficult to grade on an acceptable standard.

**The papers will be graded on the following percentage system: 40% for content, and understanding and application of the material; 30% for clarity and structure of your argument; and 30% for the grammar and style/format and proofreading rules.**

Making the same guidelines errors will result in more points off than that occurrence in the first paper.

**The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.**

### **Aggie Honor Code**

“An Aggie does not lie or cheat or tolerate those who do.”

Our conduct in this class should embody the spirit as well as the letter of the Aggie Honor Code. If you have any questions about the code or Honor Council and its Procedures, please consult the “Know the Code” website found at <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/>.