

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

**Sociology 603: The Contemporary Family (Cross-listed with Women's Studies 603)**

**Spring 2010**

**M, 2-5 p.m.**

**Professor Sarah N. Gatson**

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**Office hours: 2-5 p.m. W, and by appointment**

**Course Description:** This course will involve an analysis of the social construction and social experience of the family as an institution (including marriage, divorce, and other related familial issues) and as a set of everyday relationships. In this course, we will discuss particular concepts of the family and its attendant institutions and roles 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 the family, and what is it for?" The course will deal primarily with these issues over the last two decades or so, with an eye simultaneously towards a historical grounding of our understanding of contemporary family issues.

**Books:**

*The Politics of Parenthood: Child Care, Women's Rights, and the Myth of the Good*

*Mother*, Mary Frances Berry, 1993

*Rabbit-Proof Fence*, Doris Pilkington, 1996

*The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families*, Stephanie Coontz, 1998

*Same-Sex Marriage: The Cultural Politics of Love and Law*, Kathy Hull, 2006

*White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*, Chrys Ingraham, 2nd Edition, 2008, Routledge.

*Families in Global Perspective*, Jaipaul L. Roopnarine & Uwe P. Gielen, 2005, Pearson.

*All Our Families: New Policies for a New Century*, eds. Mary Ann Mason & Steven Sugarman; Oxford University Press, 2003.

*Flat Broke with Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform*, Sharon Hays, Oxford University Press, 2004.

**Coursepack readings: All available on online course reserve or eLearning**

"Sex Roles in the American Kinship System," Talcott Parsons.

"The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State: Workmen's Compensation and Mother's Aid," Barbara J. Nelson.

"The Facts of Fatherhood," Thomas Laquer.

"The Standard North American Family as an Ideological Code," Dorothy Smith.

"Labor Policy and the Social Meaning of Parenthood," Sarah N. Gatson.

"Making Men into Dads: Fatherhood, the State, & Welfare Reform," Laura Curran & Laura S. Abrams.

"Opting into Motherhood: Lesbians Blurring the Boundaries & Transforming the Meaning of Parenthood and Kinship," Gillian A. Dunne, 2000.

- “‘That’s Our Kind of Constellation’: Lesbian Mothers Negotiate Institutionalized Understandings of Gender within the Family,” Susan E. Dalton & Denise D. Bielby.
- “Doing the Right Thing? Single Mothers by Choice & the Struggle for Legitimacy,” Jane D. Bock.
- “Moral Tales of the Child and the Adult: Narratives of Contemporary Family Lives,” Jane Ribbens McCarthy, Rosalind Edwards, & Val Gillies..
- “Race, Ethnicity, & Local Marriage Markets,” Kristen Harknett & Sara McLanahan.
- “Kin Support among Blacks & Whites,” Natalia Sarkisian & Naomi Gerstel.
- “Reality Television and Contemporary Family Life: Make Over Television and the Question of Parenting,” Margaret Tally.
- “(How) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?” by Judith Stacey & Timothy J. Biblarz.
- “The Wage Penalty for Motherhood,” Michelle J. Budig & Paula England.
- “Time-Dependent Effects of Wives' Employment on Marital Dissolution,” Scott J. South.
- “Losers and Winners: The Financial Consequences of Separation and Divorce for Men,” Patricia A. McManus & Thomas A. DiPrete.
- “Wives Marital Work in a Culture of Divorce,” Karla Hackstaff..
- “How Marriages End,” Demie Kurz.
- “Adoptive Families in the United States,” Christine Ward Gailey.

### **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.)

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

Charlotte Perkins Gilman: *Herland*

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

*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

*Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Frederick Engels

“The Moynihan Report: Rethinking the Family,” Christopher Lasch

*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, (from *The New York Times Magazine*).

“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 (from *Middletown*).

“Role-Making Among Married Mexican American Women: Issues of Class and Ethnicity,” Norma Williams.

“The Balance of Power in Lesbian Relationships,” Caldwell and Peplau.

“American Fathering in Historical Perspective,” Joseph Pleck.

“Child Care 2000: Policy Options for the Future,” Lubeck and Garrett.

*Historical contingencies and social policy : benign control over the poor, 1971-1996*, Daniel B. Tope., MS Thesis, TAMU, 2002 ([2002 Thesis T675](#)).

*Who Counts?: How the State (Re)creates Households*. Carol S. Walther, Ph.D. Dissertation, TAMU (2007).

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

#### **Course Requirements (200 points possible):**

**Discussion Leadership: 15%** (30 points, 15 points each) The seminar will proceed as follows (**with the exception of the first week of class**): Discussion will be led by the student(s) who has (have) signed up for that week; each student is expected to sign up for this duty twice during the semester. Students should be prepared to give brief presentations at the beginning of the discussion.

**Class Participation: 15%** (30 points) Class participation refers both to contributions to the class discussion and written discussion questions (1 page) that you are expected to turn in each week (with the exception of weeks where you are a discussion leader; see above), whether you refer to those issues in actual class discussion or not.

**Short Papers:** Each short paper shall address one or two of the assigned texts, dealing with the author’s conception of culture as a concept (even if not directly dealt with or defined). Students may choose which readings to address, but four papers each must be written. These are response papers, but this does not mean that they are solely opinion papers. You must deal adequately with the authors’ arguments, 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. Papers are always due by Friday at 5 p.m.

Short Paper #1 (3-5 pages): **10%** (20 points; due at end of week four)

Short Paper #2 (3-5 pages): **10%** (20 points; due at end of week seven)

Short Paper #3 (3-5 pages): **10%** (20 points; due at end of week ten)

Short Paper #4 (3-5 pages): **10%** (20 points; due at end of week fourteen)

**Final Project** (30%; 60 points): In a 20-30 page research paper using mass media sources produced between 1990-2010 (e.g. a television series like *Everybody Loves Raymond*, or a film like *Parenthood*; the news, talk shows, reality programming, etc., the source does not *\*explicitly\** have to be about family), you will present the sociology of family as it is presented in popular culture. In order to make your case, choose from among the theories and experiences dealt with during the course, incorporate appropriate course materials and outside research (journal articles, books, etc.) into an analysis. Do not merely provide a review of the source

material (e.g. no “book reports” or “TV/film 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, or other sources. 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.** I will hand out a guideline for how the paper should be structured. In addition to the paper itself, it should have a full and adequately annotated bibliography, reflecting the secondary research you performed.

### **Schedule:**

**1/18-22:** Introduction to course

#### **Historical bases for discussing the family**

**1/25-29:** Nelson; Parsons; Pilkington

**2/1-5:** Berry

**\*2/8-12:** Coontz **SP due**

#### **International perspectives on the family**

**2/15-19:** Roopnarine & Gielen pp.1-204

**2/22-26:** Roopnarine & Gielen pp. 205-380

#### **The family as social practice**

**\*3/1-5:** Smith; Gatson; Dunne; Bielby; Bock **SP due**

**3/8-12:** Harknett & McLanahan; Sarkisian & Gerstel; McCarthy, Edwards, & Gillies; Laquer; Gailey

### **SPRING BREAK: MARCH 15-19**

#### **Economics and the family**

**3/22-26:** Budig & England; South; McManus & DiPrete

#### **Divorce**

**\*3/29-4/2:** Hackstaff; Kurz **SP due**

#### **Policy and the family**

**4/5-4/9:** Hays

**4/12-16:** Curran & Abrams; Mason & Sugarman

#### **Frontiers of the family: Same-sex marriage**

**4/19-23:** Hull; Stacey & Biblarz

#### **Popular Culture and the family**

**\*4/26-30:** Tally; Ingraham **SP due**

**5/3-5/7:** Class presentations on the final project – feedback from peers

**5/10-14:** Final project due by NOON, May 12.

### **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 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 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).

**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.

**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 Writing Center in the English Department – for more information: <http://www-english.tamu.edu/wcenter/> usingcenter.html

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 a reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Office of Support Services for Students with Disabilities in Room 126 of the Student Services Building. The phone number is 845-1637.**

### **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/>.

**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.