

## **SOCIOLOGY OF THE FAMILY**

**Sociology 272**

**Spring 2008**

**MW 3:20-4:40pm**

**Lucy Stone Hall A143**

**Professor:** Kristen W. Springer  
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Office Hours: Wednesday 1:45pm – 2:45pm or by appointment  
**Course Website:** sakai.rutgers.edu (course designation: “Family Sociology (272:01): Sp08”)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines one of the most important institutions in social life and an institution with which we all have experience and familiarity – the family. We will look at the family from a sociological perspective. The goal of this course is to teach you *how* (not what) to think about the family as a public and private social institution. Families are where we spend much of our private lives, however families also serve important societal functions and are shaped by public perception, social conventions, and laws.

During the semester we will examine major themes studied by sociologists of the family. We start the course with a discussion of what family means including an examination of historical trends and changes that led to a current form of Western families. We then spend substantial time examining how the most significant structures of social inequality (social class, race/ethnicity, gender) affect family lives. Next, we explore sexuality, partnerships, marriage, parenting, and divorce with a particular focus on gender inequality in marriage, violence, and struggles with work-family balance. Finally, we will conclude the semester by discussing family-related social policies and social change.

### **REQUIRED TEXT**

Andrew J. Cherlin: Public and Private Families. An Introduction. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. McGraw-Hill, 2008.

The textbook is available at the Livingston College Bookstore and is on reserve at the Kilmer Library.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **LECTURES**

The course is organized around readings, lectures, films, and current event presentations. Lecture time is used to clarify the reading material, to present additional material related to the readings, to present guest speakers and films, and to discuss the course material. It is highly unlikely that you can pass the course without regularly attending lectures. Furthermore, you need to read the assigned material *prior* to class. If you miss a lecture, you need to get lecture notes from a classmate, not from the instructor.

The films listed on the syllabus will be shown as time permits. If a film is not shown in class, students will NOT be tested on that film’s material. However, films shown in class will be included on the tests. If you miss a film during class, you may view the film at the Kilmer Library Media Center on the Livingston Campus. Films will be on hold for one week after the date shown in class.

## EXAMS

Eighty points of your grade will come from two closed-books, closed-notes exams consisting of multiple choice and true/false questions. The tests are designed to gauge not only your ability to memorize pertinent facts about the sociology of family but also your ability to connect theories learned in the course to real world applications. The exams will cover all course material including guest lecturers, current news, and videos shown in class. Please bring pencils and your RUID to the tests. The last test is scheduled during the final exam period but is not cumulative and will be the same length as the first exam. Exams start at the beginning of class and finish at the end of class. You will not get extra time if you arrive late to an exam. Students must take exams when they are scheduled. Please notice that our final exam is on the last day of exams (May 14<sup>th</sup>). Unfortunately, I have already checked and **I am unable to reschedule the final exam.**

Make up exams will only be allowed under extraordinary circumstances. Personal holidays, broken alarm clocks, weddings, jobs, exams in other courses, and the Rutgers bus system are not acceptable reasons for missing an exam. Make up exams will be given during the Sociology Department scheduled make up times and will be harder than regular exams.

Cheating will result in a failing grade on the exam and a referral to the appropriate Dean's office. Exam grades will be distributed at <https://secure.fas.rutgers.edu/apps/gradebook/>.

## CURRENT EVENT PRESENTATIONS

Family-related issues are often the subject of news coverage, and incorporating these stories into class can provide contemporary real-world examples of course topics. Furthermore, analyzing news stories about families is an ideal way to practice applying sociological ideas and family perspectives to current events. In order to incorporate current events into our class, each student will be responsible for identifying, summarizing, and being ready to present on one *news* articles throughout the semester. It is important to emphasize that this assignment is focused on *news* articles from reputable sources. These reputable sources can include, but are not limited to, the *New York Times*, *CNN.com*, or your local news paper. It is also fine to draw from reputable international newspapers. Schools papers (i.e. the *Targum*) do not count as news sources. Although I recommend you focus on newspapers or news websites, I will also accept TV news segments so long as the segment is from a reputable source *and* you can provide me a *video* of the segment to show in class. If you have any questions about whether something is a reputable news source, please ask, because you will get *zero* credit for using an inappropriate source.

This news article assignment is worth 20 total points. At the beginning of the semester, each student will be assigned one week where s/he is responsible for finding a relevant news article. This strategy is designed to make sure that current events are introduced for every topic during the semester. The assignment is due **10 minutes before the beginning of class** on the Monday class *following* your assigned week. The article must be on the topic of your assigned week and must have appeared in the news during the *three* weeks preceding your Monday due date. For example, if you are responsible for the "Gender and Families" week (February 25-27), you must hand in your assignment by Monday March 3<sup>rd</sup> 10 minutes before the beginning of class. The article you choose must have appeared in the news between February 11<sup>th</sup> and March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

In addition to handing in a copy of the article (or video), each student must also write a short report (< 3 pages, 12 point font, double-spaced, 1 inch margins) on the news story. In order to receive full credit, the report must: a) summarize the news article, b) analyze the news story in light of the course material, and c) explain how the news article contributes to our understanding of the sociology of families. Analyzing the news article in light of the course material means explicitly describing how you can apply what you've learned in class to understand the news article. For example, how can you read the article differently now that you are trained as a family sociologist? In asking you to explain how the news article contributes to sociology of the family, I am asking you to articulate whether/how the news article supports/refutes/elaborates something we discussed or read for this class.

Students should also be prepared to present their article, and their interpretation of their article. Not every student will be called on to give an oral report, but all students should be prepared to do so. This “oral report” will be very short and informal – probably no more than 1 or 2 minutes. I do appreciate that some people are very uncomfortable speaking in front of groups. Please e-mail me prior to your presentation date if you would strongly prefer not to present in class.

In order to receive full credit, students must hand in their assignment on time, format the assignment as directed, hand in a copy of the article, write a report that convincingly covers all three aspects described above, and discuss their article articulately in class. Assignments will be marked down 5 points for every day late without a Dean’s excuse.

**ATTENDANCE:**

I will not routinely take attendance, but I may occasionally take random attendance checks for extra credit. Students who are in class at those times will receive one extra credit point. There will be no more than five extra credit points available through attendance. No “make ups” are allowed for extra credit.

**REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW AND GRADES**

**REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW**

Exams - 2x40 pts.	80 pts.
<u>Current Events Assignment</u>	<u>20 pts.</u>
	100 pts.

**GRADES**

A	90 – 100 pts.
B+	86 – 89 pts.
B	80 – 85 pts.
C+	76 – 79 pts.
C	70 – 75 pts.
D	61 – 69 pts.
F	60 pts. and less

**FINAL GRADES CAN NOT BE NEGOTIATED**

**COMMUNICATION**

**SMART CLASS**

Students are expected to regularly access their Eden e-mail and/or the course website at sakai.rutgers.edu. Important information will be disseminated to your Eden account (unless you change your e-mail address through Rutgers’ system) and will be posted on the sakai course website. Furthermore, the Powerpoint lecture *outlines* will be posted on the course web-site by midnight before class. The lecture outlines are not full lecture notes and do not substitute for your own note-taking. Furthermore, if posting the lecture outlines prior to class deters students from attending class, I may cease posting my outlines.

**E-MAIL AND OFFICE HOURS**

This is large lecture course and as such, there will be limited opportunities for one-on-one student/Professor engagement. There are, however, several ways to contact me. Students should feel free to ask questions before, during, or after class. In addition, I will hold office hours every Wednesday from 1:45-2:45pm and I encourage you to come by. If you have a class conflict with this time, you can arrange to meet with me at another time. Finally, I am happy to correspond by e-mail within the following guidelines.

Please do not e-mail me with questions that can be answered by looking at the syllabus. In addition, if you miss a lecture, you need to get lecture notes from a classmate. I prefer that you e-mail me from an account that *lists your name* as the sender. The subject heading should signal that you are one of my students. You may begin the subject with Soc 272 Family Student, or the like. I also ask that you include your full name in the text of the e-mail so I can be sure I am responding to the correct student!

I receive so many e-mails each day that even important e-mails may not receive a reply for 48 hours – though I will make every effort to return your e-mails within 24 hours. If you have not received a reply from me within 24 hours, please feel free to e-mail me again. However, please do not e-mail me at the last moment (that is 24 hours before exams, deadlines, etc.) with questions regarding the material and assignments. These questions should be raised in class or in my office hours.

To reply to as many e-mails as possible, I convey my responses in as few words as possible. Please do not view my parsimonious responses as discourteous. I respond to all students with the same brevity.

### **CLASS CONDUCT AND GROUND RULES**

The Department of Sociology encourages the free exchange of ideas in a safe, supportive, and productive classroom environment. To facilitate such an environment, students and faculty must act with mutual respect and common courtesy. Thus, behavior that distracts students and faculty is not acceptable. Such behavior includes cell phone use, surfing the internet, checking email, text messaging, listening to music, reading newspapers, leaving and returning, leaving early without permission, discourteous remarks, and other behaviors specified by individual instructors. Courteous expression of disagreement with the ideas of the instructor or fellow students is, of course, permitted and strongly encouraged.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

I follow the Rutgers University's policy on academic integrity and you can familiarize yourself with this policy at this website: <http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and I am obligated to report such conduct and violations of this policy to the Undergraduate Director of the Sociology Department (or Women's and Gender Studies) and the Dean of your college.

### **SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS\***

January 23	<b>Introduction to the Class: Overview of Topics and Requirements</b>  Short Film: <i>Motherhood Manifesto</i> (part 1)
January 28-30	<b>What is Family? Sociological Perspectives on Family</b> Reading: Cherlin textbook: Chapter 1
February 4-6	<b>History of the Family; Trends in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Beyond</b> Reading: Cherlin textbook: Chapter 2
February 11-13	<b>Social Class, Inequality, and Families</b> Reading: Cherlin textbook: Chapter 4  Short Film: <i>On the Edge: America's Working Poor</i>
February 18-20	<b>Race, Ethnicity, and Families</b> Reading: Cherlin textbook: Chapter 5
February 25-27	<b>Gender and Families</b> Reading: Cherlin textbook: Chapter 3
March 3-5	<b>Sexuality</b> Reading: Cherlin textbook: Chapter 6

	Short Film: <i>If These Walls Could Talk 2</i> (Vignette 1)
March 10	Exam Review & Presentation on Academic Integrity
March 12	<b>Exam 1</b>
March 15-23	Spring Break – Have a Great Time.
March 24-26	<b>Marriage and Cohabitation</b> Reading: Cherlin textbook: Chapter 7
March 31-April 2	<b>Work and Families</b> Reading: Cherlin textbook: Chapter 8  Short Film: <i>The Pay Gap: Sexism or Something Else?</i> or <i>Motherhood Manifesto</i>
April 7-9	<b>Children and Parenting</b> Reading: Cherlin textbook: Chapter 9  Short Film: <i>Life with Dad</i>
April 14-16	<b>Divorce, Remarriage, and Stepfamilies</b> Reading: Cherlin textbook: Chapter 12  Short Film: <i>An American Stepfamily</i>
April 21-23	<b>Family Violence and Abuse</b> Reading: Cherlin textbook: Chapter 11  Short Film: <i>Wrestling with Manhood: Boys, Bullying, and Battering</i>
April 28	<b>Guest Lecture: Violence Prevention</b> <b>Lisa Smith</b> <b>Coordinator, Domestic Violence</b> <b>Department of Sexual Assault Services and Crime Victim Assistance</b>
April 30	<b>Changing American Families</b> Reading: Cherlin textbook: Chapter 15
May 5	Exam Review
<b>MAY 14th at 12 noon</b>	<b>EXAM 2 in Lucy Stone Hall A143</b>

**\*This schedule may be modified throughout the course. Students will be given ample notice of any changes.**