SOCIOLOGY OF THE FAMILY
Sociology 571
Spring 2008
M 9:50am-12:30pm
Lucy Stone Hall, Room A256

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Office Hours: Wednesday 1:45pm-2:45pm or by appointment
Course Website: sakai.rutgers.edu (course designation: “Soc 571: Sociology of the Family”)

Course Description: This course is an introduction to Sociology of the Family, and is divided into four broad sections. We will first discuss historical trends in the U.S. family and explore the contemporary debate on the “decline of American families.” The following three weeks focus on theoretical perspectives that have been used to understand families from a sociological perspective. We will survey foundational perspectives, but will prioritize feminist theories and “decentering” approaches (race/ethnic and queer theories). The course then turns the focus to inside the family covering topics including family power, housework, marriage, parenting, children, and alternative family forms. The final section utilizes reproduction/mothering as a case study to explore how the family as an institution intersects with other prominent institutions in the U.S. (the labor market, medicine, and the law).

Required Readings: All material listed on the syllabus is required reading and should be closely read before each class period. The articles and book chapters are available on our Sakai website. In addition, the following required books are available at the Livingston Bookstore.


Overview of Course Requirements and Grading: The course is organized as a seminar and I expect everyone to be fully prepared and participatory. While I may provide a very brief overview of each week's readings, the vast majority of the course will consist of student discussion, presentations, and exchanges focused on the readings. Course grades will be based on three major requirements. Incompletes will only be given for serious extenuating circumstances.
(1) **Participation in weekly discussion (25 percent of class grade).**
This grade reflects participation in discussion and the quality of the questions submitted each week. Students should read carefully so that they come to class with both insightful comments and questions. Students who read materials that are not on the syllabus but that are germane to the discussion should feel free to contribute this knowledge to the discussion; the class as a whole will benefit from the specialized knowledge of all participants. Each week, class members will email 3-4 discussion questions to the discussion leader and professor, no later than **9am Sunday** on the day prior to class.

(2) **Leading a class discussion (15 percent of class grade).**
Each week, a student or pair of students will be responsible for leading discussion. The student leader(s) may base the discussion on the questions submitted by class participants, or may design a discussion that incorporates both assigned readings and his/her own research interests. Developing ways to incorporate the ideas emailed to you by other class members is an important part of the leadership role; summarizing readings assigned for the week in a way that presumes others in class have not read them is not “leading the class discussion.”

(3) **Final research paper or proposal (60 percent of class grade).**
The main course requirement is the preparation of an original research paper or research proposal (about 20-25 pages, double spaced). Each student will present a brief synopsis of their research project near the end of the semester. These presentations will be opportunities to learn from and help each other with research before the final paper is due. Paper topics and methodology will be chosen in consultation with the instructor. The paper should define a research question, review relevant prior studies, and either: (1) analyze suitable data, and present the findings and their implications (research paper) or (2) propose a detailed strategy and justification for conducting an original research project (research proposal). Students are encouraged to use this class project to develop a qualifying paper, conference paper, dissertation prospectus, or journal article. Completion of the paper/proposal will proceed in three steps.

1. Submit a brief (2-3 page) proposal by the **start of class on February 18th.** This brief proposal should be an early attempt to delineate your research interests in the sociology of the family and should move toward describing your research question, the data or methodology to be used, and the analyses to be undertaken.
2. Short (~10 minute) presentations to the class on **April 14th.** Having presentations on April 14th will give you approximately one month to incorporate feedback and write the final paper.
3. The final draft of the paper/proposal is due **no later than May 10th at 5pm in my mailbox. I strongly discourage late papers or extensions.**

For students planning to conduct secondary data analyses, many data sets are available through University of Michigan’s Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (http://www.icpsr.umich.edu).

**Sakai:** This course has a Sakai website where I will post announcements and articles. All announcements will also be e-mailed to your Rutgers’ e-mail account.
SECTION I – INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Week 1 (1/28): Introduction

Week 2 (2/4): Historical Trends in U.S./Decline in the American Family?


SECTION II – THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Week 3 (2/11): Survey of Family Theories

Sex Roles

Relative Resource/Family Power

New Home Economics

Psychoanalytic

Life Course
Biosocial

Week 4 (2/18): Feminist Theories


Week 5 (2/25): Shifting the Center: Race/Ethnic and Queer Perspectives on Family


SECTION III – FOCUS WITHIN THE FAMILY

**Week 6 (3/3): Power in Marriage**


Kristen W. Springer. “His and Her Marriage Today: Wives’ Income and Husbands’ Midlife Health.” Under review at *Journal of Marriage and Family*

**Week 7 (3/10): Household Labor**


**Week 8 (3/17): Spring Break**

**Week 9 (3/24): Parenting**
Week 10 (3/31): Children

**NOTE: THIS CLASS WILL NOT MEET ON 3/31. DATE AND TIME OF NEW CLASS TBA**


Week 11 (4/7): Families Formed Outside of Marriage


**SECTION IV: INTERSECTION OF FAMILIES AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS: MOTHERHOOD & REPRODUCTION AS A CASE STUDY**

**Week 12 (4/14): Labor Market**


**Week 13 (4/21): Class Presentations**

**Week 14 (4/29): Medicine (Genetics/Technology)**
NOTE: This class meets on Tuesday 4/29 from 9:50am to 12:30pm at a place to be determined


**Week 15 (5/5): Law**

**Final Papers Due on May 10th by 5pm**