

**Sociology 36**  
**Sociology of the Family**

Winter 2015  
Dartmouth College

---

|               |  |                      |   |
|---------------|--|----------------------|---|
| Professor:    | Emily Walton   | Place:               | Dartmouth 217   |
| Office:       | Silsby 108   | Time:                | MWF 1:45-2:50   |
| Office Hours: | Tues 1:30-2:30 and by appt.  | X-hour:              | Thurs 1-1:50  |
| email:        |  | Canvas site address: |   |
|               | <a href="mailto:Emily.C.Walton@Dartmouth.edu">Emily.C.Walton@Dartmouth.edu</a> |                      | <a href="https://canvas.dartmouth.edu/courses/5962">https://canvas.dartmouth.edu/courses/5962</a> |

*The family. We were a strange little band of characters trudging through life sharing diseases and toothpaste, coveting one another's desserts, hiding shampoo, borrowing money, locking each other out of our rooms, inflicting pain and kissing to heal it in the same instant, loving, laughing, defending, and trying to figure out the common thread that bound us all together.*

-- Erma Bombeck

**Description of the course**

The family is an important social institution, a complex set of *roles* and *rules* that are organized to preserve and promote important functions in our society. The roles give rise to positions such as parent, child, spouse, stepfather, and so on. The rules offer us guidance about how to act in these roles and are regulated by social norms, public opinion, law, and religion. The important functions include public ones, like raising children, and caring for the elderly, and private functions, such as providing love, intimacy, and companionship to family members. In this course, we will learn about the family as both a social institution and as a set of private relationships. One theme underlying our learning is that the form, function, and definition of the family vary across historical and cultural contexts. Another key theme is that social class and gender intersect with family well-being. We explore contemporary debates and issues affecting the family, with an emphasis on utilizing research evidence to inform public policy.

**Course objectives**

Students who successfully complete Socy 36 will be able to:

- Think like sociologists!
- Analyze how the definitions and functions of the family are created within historical, economic, and gendered contexts.
- Consider controversial social issues respectfully from multiple viewpoints, synthesize complex information, and articulate thoughtful and effective arguments.
- Contribute to the intellectual conversation by applying sociological research and theory to current debates in family policy.

## **Required reading**

All required readings are posted in electronic format on the course Canvas site. I expect you to read all course material before class on the day that we are discussing it.

Discussion is a frequent part of this course and everyone is expected to contribute.

## **Assignments**

### **1. Participation (80 points)**

Participation in class discussions and group work makes up a very important part of your grade. You must be able to demonstrate in class – verbally in discussion, through group work, and through in-class writing – that you have read and understood the material. I will keep track of your participation in our in-class work and discussion and this record will comprise your participation grade.

### **2. Critical writing (120 points)**

*Response Memos (80 points).* You will be responsible for writing eight Response Memos during the term. Your memo should be a 1-page, single-spaced, *critical* response to the readings. Please upload an electronic copy to Canvas by **noon** on the day the readings are being discussed. Response Memos are an opportunity for you to apply your critical thinking skills to determine the main argument of the reading and your reflections on it. Reading critically means more than just being moved, affected, informed, influenced, and persuaded by a piece of writing; it also means analyzing and understanding how the work has achieved its effect. The following questions can guide your memo:

- What is the author's argument?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this reading (from your perspective)?
- What questions/reflections does this reading bring up for you?
- In what way does this study inform your understanding of other sociological phenomena?

*News reflections (40 points).* Over the course of the term, I will post news and current events to the Discussion board on Canvas. You are responsible for reading and critically reflecting on these posts by commenting before class.

### **2. Oral history project (100 points)**

Each of you will be creating an oral history project regarding your own parents' experiences with your childhood and work/family balance. Oral history is the systematic collection of living people's testimony about their own experiences. Your job will include a number of steps. First, you will prepare and conduct interviews with each of your parents (separately) about *their* lives while you were growing up. Next, you will analyze your parents' interviews, giving them a sociological

perspective by placing them within appropriate economic, gendered, and historical contexts. Then, you will create a WordPress site as a repository of your oral histories, video reflections and written analyses. See some excellent examples from last year at <http://sites.dartmouth.edu/socyfamilyohp/>. You will also share your contextualized interpretations of your parents' oral histories in a 5-minute (yes, I will hold you to that time limit!) presentation during the last weeks of class.

#### **4. Exams (200 points)**

*Midterm exam (75 points).* This will be a 1-hour, in-class, closed-book exam.

*Final exam (125 points).* This will be a 3-hour take-home exam. The final exam will be cumulative and entirely essay-based. Exam questions will require you to synthesize and analyze the course readings, discussion and lecture material. You will be graded on how well you incorporate all elements of course material into your essay answers.

#### **Final Course Grade**

| <b>Points</b> | <b>Percent</b> | <b>Grade</b> |
|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| 470-500       | 94-100%        | A            |
| 450-469       | 90-93%         | A-           |
| 435-449       | 87-89%         | B+           |
| 420-434       | 84-86%         | B            |
| 400-419       | 80-83%         | B-           |
| 385-399       | 77-79%         | C+           |
| 370-384       | 74-76%         | C            |
| 350-369       | 70-73%         | C-           |
| 300-349       | 60-69%         | D            |

#### **Important notes**

##### **Attendance**

It is my expectation that you will attend each class meeting—and that you will arrive to each class on time and stay for the duration. I will circulate an attendance sign-in sheet at the beginning of each class meeting; it is your responsibility to make sure you sign it each day. There are no opportunities to make up missed in-class assignments. Please get the notes that you miss from a fellow student. Because it is necessary to be in class to participate, missing more than four class periods without a valid medical excuse will result in failure of the course. In case of extended absences, please inform me as soon as possible. We will discuss whether you can successfully complete the class.

### **Accommodations**

Students requiring disability-related accommodations must register with the Student Accessibility Services office. Once SAS has authorized accommodations, students must show the originally signed SAS Services and Consent Form and/or a letter on SAS letterhead to their professor. As a first step, if students have questions about whether they qualify to receive accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions about accommodations will remain confidential.

### **Communication**

My office hours are for you. You are welcome to come in and talk with me about anything during my posted hours. I regularly check e-mail during the school day (8am-5pm) and will make every effort to reply to messages as soon as possible. I expect students to regularly check their Dartmouth e-mail accounts for class announcements and updates.

### **Academic Honor**

I will be following the Academic Honor Principle described in the Dartmouth College Student Handbook and will enforce this policy to the full extent. Students must do their own work—they will write their own papers and exams, prepare their own presentations, and cite the original sources of any material they draw on for their papers. Any student who submits work which is not his or her own, or commits other acts of academic dishonesty is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or separation.

### **Classroom Responsibility and Courtesy**

This is a course in which we will often discuss sensitive topics. Students are welcome to express their opinions, but they should be expressed (and received) respectfully. Please put your cell phones on vibrate (or off!), do not text, and limit laptop use to note-taking. It is distracting to me and to your fellow students when you ‘abuse’ technology during class. Fair warning - if it becomes an issue, I may ban laptops altogether. I know it is tempting to check email/facebook/twitter during class but it ultimately harms everyone’s experience and learning (not to mention that it irks your professor). There may also be times during the quarter when I ask you to close your laptops so we can have a better discussion. Thus, you may wish to have an alternate way of taking notes.

## Course Plan and Readings

### Week One (January 5 – 9)

**Monday**      **Introduction to the course - Public and private families**

**Wednesday**   **The way the family never was, and the way it really is**

- Coontz (1992) *The Way We Never Were* (Ch. 1, 2)
- Response Memo 1 Due

**Friday**        **Institutional marriage, 1650-1800s**

- Cherlin (2010a) *The Marriage-Go-Round* (Ch. 1, 2)

### Week Two (January 12 – 16)

**Monday**        **Companionate to individualistic marriage, 1900-2000**

- Cherlin (2010a) *The Marriage-Go-Round* (Ch. 3, 4)
- Response Memo 2 Due

**Wednesday**   **Data and analysis, how do we know what we know?**

- Cherlin (2010b) "One Thousand and Forty Nine Reasons Why It's Hard to Know When a Fact is a Fact"
- Cowan (2010) "When Is a Relationship between Facts a Causal One?"

**Friday**        **Cohabitation**

- Seltzer (2000) "Families Formed Outside of Marriage"
- Reed (2006) "Not Crossing the 'Extra Line': How Cohabiters with Children View Their Unions"

### Week Three (January 19 – 23)

**Monday**        **NO CLASS: Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

**Wednesday**   **Divorce**

- Coontz (2007) "The Origins of Modern Divorce"
- Rutter (2010) "The Case for Divorce"

**Thursday**      **x-hour: oral history workshop: brainstorming interview questions**

- Friday      Remarriage and stepfamilies**
- Mason (2011) "The Modern American Stepfamily: Problems and Possibilities"
  - Marsiglio (2004) "When Stepfathers Claim Stepchildren: A Conceptual Analysis"
  - Response Memo 3 Due

#### **Week Four (January 26 – 30)**

- Monday      Marriage Equality**
- Goldberg and Kuvalanka (2012) "Marriage (In)equality: The Perspectives of Adolescents and Emerging Adults With Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Parents"
  - American Sociological Association (2012) Amicus Brief to SCOTUS regarding Same-Sex Marriage

**Wednesday   Exam #1 in class**

- Thursday      x-hour: oral history workshop: interviewing techniques**
- Caitlin Birch, Digital Collections and Oral History Archivist

- Friday      Evolution of childhood: part i**
- Mintz (2004) *Huck's Raft* (Ch. 13, 14)
  - Response Memo 4 Due

#### **Week Five (February 2 – 6)**

- Monday      Evolution of childhood: part ii**
- Mintz (2004) *Huck's Raft* (Ch. 16, 17)

- Wednesday   Social class in childhood**
- Lareau (2011) *Unequal Childhoods* (Ch. 1-5)
  - Response Memo 5 Due

- Thursday      x-hour: oral history workshop: technology and practice interview**
- Susan Simon, Jones Media Center
  - Caitlin Birch, Digital Collections and Oral History Archivist
  - Interview template due (bring hard copy to class)

**Friday**      **NO CLASS: Carnival Holiday**

**Week Six (February 9 – 13)**

**Monday**      **Social class and motherhood**

- Edin and Kefalas (2005) *Promises I Can Keep* (Ch. 1 and Conclusion)
- Response Memo 6 Due
- First interview transcript due

**Wednesday**      **Oral history workshop: creating an iMovie**

- Susan Simon, Jones Media Center
- Bring your laptops. If you do not have a mac, please talk to me.

**Friday**      **Social class and fatherhood**

- Edin and Nelson (2013) *Doing the Best I Can* (Intro and Ch. 8)

**Week Seven (February 16 – 20)**

**Monday**      **The stalled and unfinished revolution (pick ONE of the following readings)**

- Hochschild and Machung (2012; 1989) *The Second Shift* (Ch. 1, 13)
- Gerson (2010) *The Unfinished Revolution* (Ch. 1, 2, 8, 9)

**Wednesday**      **Fatherhood**

- Film: Glazer, *The Evolution of Dad*
- Second interview transcript due

**Thursday**      **x-hour: oral history workshop: introduction to WordPress**

- Adam Nemeroff, Instructional Designer
- Meet at Jones Media Center editing stations
- Analysis/framing for oral history project due

**Friday**      **Women leaving the workforce**

- Stone (2007) *Opting Out?* (Ch. 1, 3, 5)
- Response Memo 7 Due

### Week Eight (February 23 – 27)

- Monday**      **Solutions (part i): change your behavior**
- Sandberg (2014) *Lean In* (Ch. 1, 2, 9)
- Wednesday**   **Solutions (part ii): change others' behavior**
- Deutsch (1999) *Halving it All* (Ch. 1, 5, 11)
  - Response Memo 8 Due
- Thursday**      **x-hour: oral history work session**
- Meet at Jones Media Center editing stations
- Friday**          **Oral history presentations**

### Week Nine (March 2 – 6)

- Monday**          **Oral history presentations**
- Wednesday**   **Oral history presentations**
- Thursday**      **x-hour: oral history work session**
- Meet at Jones Media Center editing stations
- Friday**          **Oral history presentations**
- Oral history project WordPress site Due

### Week Ten (March 9)

- Monday** **Final exam**
- 3:00pm Receive exam
  - 7:00pm Submit exam



## References

- American Sociological Association. 2012. "Brief of Amicus Curiae Supporting Respondents (Hollingsworth v. Perry; United States v. Windsor)." Supreme Court of the United States.
- Cherlin, Andrew J. 2010a. *The Marriage-Go-Round*. New York: Vintage Books.
- . 2010b. "One Thousand and Forty-Nine Reasons Why It's Hard to Know When a Fact is a Fact." Pp. 10-14 in *Families as They Really Are*, edited by B. J. Risman. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Coontz, Stephanie. 1992. *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*. New York: Basic Books.
- . 2007. "The Origins of Modern Divorce." *Family Process* 46:7-16.
- Cowan, Philip A. 2010. "When Is a Relationship between Facts a Causal One?" Pp. 15-19 in *Families as They Really Are*, edited by B. J. Risman. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Deutsch, Francine M. 1999. *Halving it All: How Equally Shared Parenting Works*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Edin, Kathryn and Maria Kefalas. 2005. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Edin, Kathryn and Timothy J. Nelson. 2013. *Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gerson, Kathleen. 2010. *The Unfinished Revolution: How a New Generation is Reshaping Family, Work, and Gender in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goldberg, Abbie E. and Katherine A. Kuvalanka. 2012. "Marriage (In)equality: The Perspectives of Adolescents and Emerging Adults With Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Parents." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74:34-52.
- Hochschild, Arlie and Anne Machung. 2012; 1989. *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Lareau, Annette. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life (2nd Edition, with an update a decade later)*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Marsiglio, William. 2004. "When Stepfathers Claim Stepchildren: A Conceptual Analysis." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66:22-39.

- Mason, Mary Ann. 2011. "The Modern American Stepfamily: Problems and Possibilities." Pp. 239-256 in *Family in Transition*, edited by A. S. Skolnick and J. H. Skolnick. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Mills, C. Wright. 1959. "The Promise." in *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mintz, Steven. 2004. *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Reed, Joanna M. 2006. "Not Crossing the 'Extra Line': How Cohabitors With Children View Their Unions." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68:1117-1131.
- Rutter, Virginia E. 2010. "The Case for Divorce." Pp. 159-169 in *Families as They Really Are*, edited by B. J. Risman. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Sandberg, Sheryl. 2014. *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Seltzer, Judith A. 2000. "Families Formed outside of Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62:1247-1268.
- Stone, Pamela. 2007. *Opting Out? Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home*. Berkeley: University of California Press.