

Sociology 165: The Family

California State University, Fresno
College of Social Sciences, Department of Sociology
Fall 2014, Room SA153, MWF 9:00-9:50, 3.0 Units, LEC-70908

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Office Hours: MW 11:00-12:30 and by appointment

Course Description: Family is generally understood to be a social group comprised of people related through biological and legal ties. Yet, its role in society as both an institution and an ideological framework for how to organize our domestic and intimate lives is currently one of the most debated topics in sociology, especially as it relates to ideas about class, gender, race, and sexuality. Much of this debate hinges on different understandings of the role of marriage in family life. In America, and throughout much of the world, the social norms that once strongly regulated decisions about traditional marriage have relaxed in favor of ones that privilege the emotional component of marriage. Love, personal choice, and self-fulfillment now compete with laws, religious sanctions, and economic constraints as the social glue of marriage and family.

Scholars strongly disagree about what these changes mean for marriages and families in the United States. Some argue that a family crisis exists because most people now deviate from traditional family-formation patterns that put life-long marriage at the center of family and social life. They argue that excessive individualism is undermining the institution of marriage, as indicated by high divorce rates and the growing number of individuals who cohabit and have children outside of marriage. Others claim that family life is not deteriorating but simply changing to accommodate more egalitarian gender roles, economic restructuring, and growing social acceptance of diverse family forms. Nowhere is this reflected more clearly than in the intense, on-going debate over same-sex marriage. Much is at stake in this debate, as marriage—and family in general—has always been and continues to be a primary way to allocate economic benefits, political rights, and social legitimacy.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Summarize major historical phases in American family life;
2. Interpret major sociological debates about family life as a dominant social institution and its social, cultural, economic, and political implications;
3. Identify and describe socially-patterned practices of the typical life course, including childhood, dating, cohabitation, marriage, divorce, parenting, and balancing work and caregiving;
4. Critically analyze empirical sociological research on family trends; and
5. Apply family-related sociological concepts in written analyzes using secondary sources.

Method of Instruction: This course will consist of three lectures per week that integrate discussions of course concepts and readings, along with viewings of relevant documentary films.

Required Texts and Readings:

1. Cherlin, Andrew J. 2009. *The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and Family in America Today*. New York: Knopf. (abbreviated as *MGR* on course schedule)
2. Risman, Barbara, ed. 2010. *Families as They Really Are*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (abbreviated as *FATRA* on course schedule)
3. Additional course readings, handouts, and announcements available on course Blackboard site. (indicated by a “BB” on course schedule)

Grade Distribution:

I will calculate your grade in this class as follows and assign letter grades based on the standard University scale (100 – 97 = A+; 96 – 94 = A; 93 – 90 = A-; 89 – 87 = B+; 86 - 84 = B; 83 – 80 = B-; etc.):

- 10 %: Attendance
- 15 %: Exam #1
- 15 %: First Paper
- 20 %: Exam #2
- 20 %: Exam #3
- 20 %: Final Paper

There are no extra credit assignments for this course. I will adhere to the University’s policy on incompletes.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation

To learn the most from this course, you must attend class regularly, arrive on-time having carefully read the assigned readings for that class period, and be attentive. I expect everyone to thoughtfully participate in discussion, respectfully engage with others, and exhibit a willingness to learn. I promise to do these things in return. You can miss three class periods without penalty, but excessive (four or more) absences will negatively impact your grade. You will lose a full letter grade from your attendance grade for the fourth and each subsequent unexcused absence. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class period, so please be on-time to avoid being counted as absent. You are still responsible for any material we covered in class if you are absent. I will excuse absences for serious and compelling reasons for which you can provide documentation, such as illness or a death in the family.

Written Assignments

Both written assignments are due to me via stapled paper copy at the beginning of class on the noted due dates. Turning in your coursework on-time is extremely beneficial to you, as it enables

me to grade your work in a timely manner and get you feedback as soon as possible, while it enables you to focus on subsequent course requirements. I do not accept late papers, unless for serious reasons for which you can provide documentation.

Each written assignment should be double-spaced with 12-point Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins and a bibliography using the ASA (American Sociological Association) citation style. Include page numbers in the footer, your name and course number in one line only as a header on the first page. Do not adjust the margins or font to make the text take up more space on the page. Any deviations from these instructions will result in a deduction from your paper grade. I will also provide grading rubrics for each paper well in advance of the due dates.

I have posted the following writing resources on our course Blackboard site for your reference:

1. This course syllabus indicating due dates;
2. The ASA (American Sociological Association) citation style guide;
3. A key to my written feedback;
4. Sample formatted paper as a Word document;
5. *Writing for Sociology* undergraduate writing handbook for sociology courses; and
6. Writing Center contact information and overview of support services.

First Paper:

Choose any text-based material—such as a song, a magazine advertisement, or a newspaper article—that portrays or discusses family or marriage. Using at least one of the course readings and lecture material, in three double-spaced pages analyze how the text you have chosen defines family. Your task here is to think critically about how contemporary portrayals of family relationships conform to or challenge the ways historians and social theorists define and explain the social role of family and marriage. You must also include a hard copy of the text you have analyzed (e.g., a copy of the magazine article, a copy of the song lyrics, or a copy of the newspaper article.) We will devote an entire class period to discussing this assignment as a group.

Final Paper:

Many scholars and other social commentators argue that we are currently experiencing a family crisis in the United States that signals waning family values and weaker family ties, while others strongly disagree with this interpretation. Using at least three course readings to support your argument, in five double-spaced pages answer the following question: are we currently experiencing a family crisis in America? The quality of your answer (and your grade) will *not* depend on whether you answer yes or no but rather on how well you use material from class to make your case. Your goal for this final assignment is to articulate a well-reasoned and well-argued stance on this issue based on course lectures, readings, and discussions. We will devote an entire class to discussing this paper assignment as a group.

Exams

There will be three non-cumulative, in-class exams for this course consisting of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions pertaining to main topics from lectures, course readings and films, and class discussions. If for whatever reason you miss one of the exams, a makeup exam will not be available. Instead, I will roll over the points for the missed exam to the subsequent exam. Please do not miss the final exam, as a makeup exam will not be available.

Course Schedule & Outline:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings & Assignments Due</u>
Friday, August 22 nd	Course Introduction and Overview	Course Syllabus
Monday, August 25 th	Thinking Sociologically about Families	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 5, Coontz
Wednesday, August 27 th	How American Family Life is Unique	<i>MGR</i> , Cherlin, Introduction and Chapter 1
Friday, August 29 th	American Family Life in Historical Perspective	<i>MGR</i> , Cherlin, Chapter 2
Monday, September 1 st	NO CLASS Labor Day Holiday	None
Wednesday, September 3 rd	American Marriage in Historical Perspective	<i>MGR</i> , Cherlin, Chapter 3
Friday, September 5 th	Modern Family Life: Decline or Change?	<i>MGR</i> , Cherlin, Chapter 4
Monday, September 8 th	How Americans Define Family	“The Public Renders a Split Verdict on Changes in Family Structure,” PEW Report (BB)
Wednesday, September 10 th	The Social Construction of Childhood	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 6, Mintz
Friday, September 12 th	Childhood and Social Inequality	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 25, Furstenberg; and Chapter 26, Lareau
Monday, September 15 th	Gender and the Changing Division of Family Labor	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 33, Sullivan; and Chapter 36, Cotter, England, and Hermsen
Wednesday, September 17 th	Balancing Work and Family	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 32, Gerson
Friday, September 19 th	Class Discussion of First Paper	No Readings; Bring the text you plan to analyze to class.
Monday, September 22 nd	Documentary: <i>Motherhood Manifesto</i>	None
Wednesday, September 24 th	Work/Family Policies	None
Friday, September 26 th	EXAM #1	None
Monday, September 29 th	Social Class and the Marriage Gap	<i>MGR</i> , Cherlin, Chapter 7

Wednesday, October 1 st	Unmarried Parenthood	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 27, Roy and Cabrera; and Chapter 28, Edin and England
Friday, October 3 rd	The Marriage Promotion Debate	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 15, Gerstel and Sarkisian; and Chapter 19, Coontz and Folbre
Monday, October 6 th	Documentary: <i>Let's Get Married</i>	None
Wednesday, October 8 th	Cohabitation	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 13, Smock and Manning
Friday, October 10 th	Divorce	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 16, Rutter
Monday, October 13 th	Divorce and Kids: Is it Always Harmful?	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 17, Li
Wednesday, October 15 th	Documentary: <i>Divorce and Kids</i>	No Readings; First Written Assignment Due
Friday, October 17 th	Remarriage and Blended Families	None
Monday, October 20 th	The Same-Sex Marriage Debate	<i>MGR</i> , Cherlin, Chapter 5
Wednesday, October 22 nd	Same-Sex Families	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 20, Green
Friday, October 24 th	Documentary: <i>Daddy & Papa</i>	None
Monday, October 27 th	EXAM #2	None
Wednesday, October 29 th	Reproductive Technologies, Fostering, and Adoption	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 8, Struening
Friday, October 31 st	The Abortion Debate	None
Monday, November 3 rd	Class Discussion of Final Paper	None
Wednesday, November 5 th	Racialized Patterns of Family Life	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 7, Franklin
Friday, November 7 th	Inter-Racial and Inter-Ethnic Marriage: Why Still So Rare?	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 11, Rosenfeld
Monday, November 10 th	Documentary: <i>The Loving Story</i>	None
Wednesday, November 12 th	Interracial Families	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 10, Rockquemore and Henderson
Friday, November 14 th	Immigrant Families	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 22, Aldarondo and Ameen
Monday, November 17 th	Social Scientific Theories of Attraction and Love	No Readings
Wednesday, November 19 th	Modern Courtship: "Hooking Up" and the Online Dating Revolution	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 31, Armstrong, England, and Fogarty
Friday, November 21 st	Infidelity	None
Monday, November 24 th	Domestic Violence	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 39, Almeida
WF November 26 th /28 th	NO CLASS Thanksgiving	None
Monday, December 1 st	Relationship Interventions	None
Wednesday, December 3 rd	The Future of Families: The Lengthening of Inter-generational Dependence	<i>FATRA</i> , Chapter 14, Coleman

Friday, December 5 th	Exam #3	None
Monday, December 8 th	How Sociology Can Help Families	<i>MGR</i> , Cherlin, Chapter 8
Wednesday, December 10 th	Course Conclusion	Final Paper Due

Additional Course Policies:

Classroom Conduct

Please be respectful towards me and your fellow classmates. This precludes arriving to class late, leaving in the middle of class, chatting with others, passing notes, sleeping, texting, etc. Laptop computers are allowed in class *for note-taking purposes only*. The use of computers or cell phones for any other purpose is a distraction to me and the other students. I will therefore ask you to leave class if you are found to be using any electronic device for anything other than note taking. Lectures may be recorded only with my prior permission.

Office Hours

I hold regularly scheduled office hours and welcome the opportunity to speak with students one-on-one. I strongly encourage you to drop by and discuss the course and other academic issues. I recognize that many of you may not be available during my regularly scheduled office hours. If that is the case for you, please e-mail me to schedule another meeting time and list several dates/times that you can meet so that we can schedule an alternative time that works for us both.

E-mail

I strive to be as responsive as possible to student email during business hours. If you e-mail me during the week, you can expect a response within 24 hours. If you send me a message on the weekend, I will respond on Monday. I will adhere to professional standards of written correspondence in my email communication with you. Please extend the same courtesy to me by using a proper salutation and professional language, tone, and style, including proper grammar and spelling.

Syllabus Modifications

I have tried to outline the course to the best of my ability in this syllabus prior to the beginning of the term. That said, I reserve the right to modify the syllabus if the need arises. If I do so, I will notify you immediately of any changes with the goal of maintaining clear expectations about course requirements and policies.

University Policies:

Refer to the University Catalog or Schedule of Courses for more information.

Students with Disabilities

“Upon identifying themselves to the instructor and the University, students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodation for learning and evaluation. For more information, contact Services to Students with Disabilities in the Henry Madden Library, Room 1202 (278-2811).”

Honor Code

“Members of the CSU Fresno academic community adhere to principles of academic integrity and mutual respect while engaged in university work and related activities. You should:

- a) understand or seek clarification about expectations for academic integrity in this course (including no cheating, plagiarism and inappropriate collaboration)
- b) neither give nor receive unauthorized aid on examinations or other course work that is used by the instructor as the basis of grading.
- c) take responsibility to monitor academic dishonesty in any form and to report it to the instructor or other appropriate official for action.”

Cheating and Plagiarism

“Cheating is the actual or attempted practice of fraudulent or deceptive acts for the purpose of improving one's grade or obtaining course credit; such acts also include assisting another student to do so. Typically, such acts occur in relation to examinations. However, it is the intent of this definition that the term 'cheating' not be limited to examination situations only, but that it include any and all actions by a student that are intended to gain an unearned academic advantage by fraudulent or deceptive means. Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating which consists of the misuse of the published and/or unpublished works of others by misrepresenting the material (i.e., their intellectual property) so used as one's own work.”

Penalties for cheating and plagiarism range from a 0 or F on a particular assignment, through an F for the course, to expulsion from the University. For more information on the University's policy regarding cheating and plagiarism, refer to the Class Schedule (Legal Notices on Cheating and Plagiarism) or the University Catalog (Policies and Regulations).”

Computers

“At CSU Fresno, computers and communications links to remote resources are recognized as being integral to the education and research experience. Every student is required to have his/her own computer or have other personal access to a workstation (including a modem and a printer) with all the recommended software. The minimum and recommended standards for the workstations and software, which may vary by academic major, are updated periodically and are available from Information Technology Services (<http://www.csufresno.edu/ITS/>) or the University Bookstore. In the curriculum and class assignments, students are presumed to have

24-hour access to a computer workstation and the necessary communication links to the University's information resources."

Disruptive Classroom Behavior

"The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the rights of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained....Differences of viewpoint or concerns should be expressed in terms which are supportive of the learning process, creating an environment in which students and faculty may learn to reason with clarity and compassion, to share of themselves without losing their identities, and to develop an understanding of the community in which they live.... Student conduct which disrupts the learning process shall not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal from class."

Copyright Policy

"Copyright laws and fair use policies protect the rights of those who have produced the material. The copy in this course has been provided for private study, scholarship, or research. Other uses may require permission from the copyright holder. The user of this work is responsible for adhering to copyright law of the U.S. (Title 17, U.S. Code). To help you familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, the University encourages you to visit its copyright web page: <http://www.csufresno.edu/library/about/policies/docs/copyrtpolicyfull.pdf>.

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