

## University of Wisconsin-Madison

### Sociology 640: Sociology of the Family Fall 2015

Professor Marcy Carlson  
Office: Room 4446 Social Science  
Phone: 608/262-1085  
E-mail: [carlson@ssc.wisc.edu](mailto:carlson@ssc.wisc.edu)

Section 1: Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:45am  
Room: Social Science 6116  
Office hours: Wednesday 10:00-11:00am  
(or by appointment)

#### **Course Description**

This course examines the nature of and change in family life from a sociological perspective, while incorporating insights from other fields, including demography, psychology, and economics. A key underlying theme of the course is how inequality is intertwined with patterns of family change. The course reviews some cross-national and historical variation in the family; however, the focus is on U.S. families in recent decades. Contemporary debates and issues are explored, with emphasis on research evidence and considering potential implications for public policy. A major goal of the course is to encourage students to critically evaluate their own assumptions about families as we together consider the research evidence and discuss the larger issues and implications.

#### **Prerequisites**

This course is open to upper-level undergraduates (who have taken Soc. 360, Statistics for Sociologists I, or equivalent) or graduate students.

#### **Readings**

Students are expected to read the assigned readings for each week before coming to class. Readings can be found under the 'Content' tab of the course website at Learn@UW. There is no required textbook.

#### **Course Requirements**

Students will be evaluated on six short in-class quizzes (20%), two non-cumulative in-class exams (20+20%=40%), a short paper (20%), a brief written reflection (5%), and attendance, participation and discussion (15%).

1. Quizzes. There will be six brief, in-class quizzes on the material. These quizzes will be given during the first 15 minutes of class. The quizzes will be held on September 17, September 29, October 8, November 3, and November 12, and December 3. I will drop your lowest grade and count your five highest quiz grades toward your final grade (5\*4%=20%). There are no make-up quizzes (except for sickness or other legitimate absences).
2. Exams. There will be two in-class, non-cumulative exams held during regular class sessions on Thursday, October 22<sup>nd</sup> and Thursday, December 10<sup>th</sup>. The first exam will cover the

course material (including readings, lectures and videos) from the first 6 ½ weeks (through October 20<sup>th</sup>), and the second exam (non-cumulative) will cover the material from the last 7 weeks (through December 10<sup>th</sup>). These will consist of multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions. The first exam is worth 20% of your grade, and the second exam is worth 25% of your grade (20% + 25%=45%). (Note that there will be NO exam during the scheduled final exam time on December 22<sup>nd</sup>.)

3. Paper. A short paper is due on Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup> (but you should feel free to submit it earlier). The paper assignment will be distributed in class (and posted on the course website). The paper should be no more than 8 pages in length (double-spaced, 12-point font). I will give you guidance about how to cite relevant references. The short paper will count for 20% of your final grade. Late papers will not be accepted and will receive a grade of zero.
4. Attendance, Participation and Discussion. As Woody Allen says, “Eighty percent of success is just showing up,” and I believe it’s important for you to show up and contribute to our class environment. I will take attendance each class, and more than one unexcused absence will count against your participation grade. Students should come to class prepared to demonstrate an understanding of the assigned readings. This entails reading all of the assigned material before each class and actively participating in class discussion. Class attendance, participation and discussion counts for 15% of your final grade.

### **Expectations and Information**

Course Policies. The professor adheres to all Department, College, and University policies regarding accommodations for students with disabilities, religious holidays, incompletes, plagiarism, and student evaluation of the course and its instruction.

Accommodations. Please send me an email by the end of the second week of the course if you are eligible for special arrangements or accommodations for testing, assignments, or other aspects of the course. This may be the case if English is your second language or you experience a physical or psychological condition that makes it difficult for you to complete assignments and/or exams without some modification of those tasks. Accommodations are provided for students who qualify for disability services through the McBurney Center. Their website has detailed instructions about how to qualify: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu>. Provide a copy of your accommodations request (VISA) to the instructor by the end of the second week of class. We try to reserve rooms and proctors by the third week in class, so we must know of all accommodations by then.

If you wish to request a scheduling accommodation for religious observances, send an email by the end of the second week of the course stating the specific date(s) for which you request accommodation; campus policy requires that religious observances be accommodated if you make a timely request early in the term. See the university’s web page for details:

<https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=21698>.

Writing Center. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the resources and classes offered by the Writing Center (located at 6171 Helen C. White Hall) to help with organization, thesis statements, grammar, sentence structure, and appropriate citations. See: [www.writing.wisc.edu](http://www.writing.wisc.edu). Before submitting your short paper, you are expected to be familiar with the guidelines on the

Writing Center website about “Quoting and Paraphrasing Sources” (see: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>). See next section regarding ‘Academic Integrity.’

Academic integrity. As with all courses at the University of Wisconsin, you are expected to follow the University’s rules and regulations pertaining to academic honesty and integrity. The standards are outlined by the Office of the Dean of Students: <https://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity>. According to UWS 14, academic misconduct is defined as, an individual:

- Seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
- Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
- Forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
- Intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
- Engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance;
- Assists other students in any of these acts.

For a complete description of behaviors that violate the University’s standards as well the disciplinary penalties and procedures, please see the Dean of Students’ website (above). If you have questions about plagiarism specifically, you should consult the information on the Writing Center website regarding “Quoting and Paraphrasing Sources” (<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>). Knowledge of these rules is your responsibility, and lack of familiarity with these rules in no way constitutes an excuse for acts of misconduct. If you have questions about the rules for any of the assignments or exams, please don’t hesitate to ask.

Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights. The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors and teaching assistants near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them to the instructor or to the Chair, Professor Pamela Oliver, 8128 Social Science (Pamela.Oliver@wisc.edu).

Departmental learning objectives. Beyond the specific substantive and methodological content I will cover in this course, I have designed this course to achieve the following instructional objectives designated as priorities by the Department of Sociology:

- *Critically Evaluate Published Research:* Sociology graduates will be able to read and evaluate published research as it appears in academic journals and popular or policy publications.
- *Communicate Skillfully:* Sociology majors write papers and make oral presentations that build arguments and assess evidence in a clear and effective manner.
- *Critical Thinking about Society and Social Processes:* Sociology graduates can look beyond the surface of issues to discover the “why” and “how” of social order and structure and consider the underlying social mechanisms that may be creating a situation, identify evidence that may adjudicate between alternate explanations for phenomena, and develop proposed policies or action plans in light of theory and data.

- *See Things from a Global Perspective:* Sociologists learn about different cultures, groups, and societies across both time and place. They are aware of the diversity of backgrounds and experiences among residents of the United States. They understand the ways events and processes in one country are linked to those in other countries.
- *Prepare for Graduate School and the Job Market:* Students use their social research skills to identify opportunities for employment or further study, assess their qualifications for these opportunities, and identify strategies for gaining the necessary knowledge and experience to improve their qualifications. Students are encouraged to develop and maintain portfolios of their written work and educational experiences to aid them in preparing applications.

Useful websites: I encourage you to become familiar with various on-line resources available about aspects of family life and trends (and to use relevant information in your class paper), for example:

Center for Research on Child Wellbeing (Princeton University) – <http://crcw.princeton.edu/>

Child Trends – [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)

Council on Contemporary Families – [www.contemporaryfamilies.org](http://www.contemporaryfamilies.org)

Future of Children – [www.futureofchildren.org](http://www.futureofchildren.org)

National Center for Family and Marriage Research – <http://ncfmr.bgsu.edu>

National Council on Family Relations – [www.ncfr.org](http://www.ncfr.org)

National Marriage Project (University of Virginia) – [www.virginia.edu/marriageproject](http://www.virginia.edu/marriageproject)

Population Reference Bureau – [www.prb.org](http://www.prb.org)

U.S. Census Bureau (population trends) – [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

Administration for Children and Families – [www.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.acf.hhs.gov)

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation – <http://aspe.hhs.gov>

## Sociology 640: Sociology of the Family

### Schedule and Required Readings

**Thurs., Sept 1: NO CLASS**

**Tues., Sept. 8: Introduction (to the course and to each other)**

Coontz, Stephanie. 2010. "The Evolution of American Families," pp. 30-47, in *Families As They Really Are*, edited by Barbara J. Risman. New York: Norton.

**Thurs., Sept. 10: What Is a Family?**

Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1964 [1930]. "Parenthood, the Basis of Social Structure." Pp. 3-19 in R.L. Coser (ed.), *The Family: Its Structure and Functions*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Reiss, Ira. 1965. "The Universality of the Family: A Conceptual Analysis." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 27:443-453.

**Tues., Sept. 15: What's Happening to the Family?/Is the Family in Decline?**

Popenoe, David. 1993. "American Family Decline, 1960-1990: A Review and Appraisal." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 55(3):527-555.

And all four (4) responses by: Norval Glenn ("A Plea for Objective Assessment"), Judith Stacey ("Good Riddance"), Philip Cowan ("The Sky Is Falling"), and David Popenoe ("The National Family Wars").

**Thurs., Sept. 17: Families throughout History**

*Quiz 1 (first 15 minutes of class).*

[Review Coontz 2010 from Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>.]

Laslett, Peter. 1973. "The Comparative History of Household and Family." Pp. 19-33 in Michael Gordon (ed.). *The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

**Tues., Sept. 22: Guest speaker – Tim Smeeding, Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor of Public Affairs and Economics, La Follette School of Public Affairs, UW-Madison**  
(see: <https://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/faculty-staff/faculty/timothy-smeeding>)

Lecture on: "Intergenerational Mobility: The Importance of Family Structure and Parents"

Assigned reading:

Smeeding, Timothy M. 2015. "Gates, Gaps, and Intergenerational Mobility: The Importance of an Even Start."

## **Thurs., Sept. 24: Classic, Economic and Feminist Theories**

Parsons, Talcott. 1943. "The Kinship System of the Contemporary United States." *American Anthropologist* 45:22-38.

### Supplementary:

Ferree, Myra Marx. 1990. "Beyond Separate Spheres: Feminism and Family Research." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52(4):866-884.

Sawhill, Isabel V. 1977. "Economic Perspectives on the Family." *Daedalus* 106(2):115-125.

## **Tues., Sept. 29: Biosocial and Life Course Perspectives**

*Quiz 2 (first 15 minutes of class).*

Elder, Glen H., Jr. 1998. "The Life Course as Developmental Theory." *Child Development* 69(1):1-12.

### Supplementary:

Booth, A., K. Carver, and D. A. Granger. 2000. "Biosocial Perspectives on the Family." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62(4):1018-34.

## **Thurs., Oct. 1: Marriage**

Cherlin, Andrew J. 2004. "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66:848-861.

Steinhauer, Jennifer. 1995 (April 10). "Studies Find Big Benefits in Marriage." *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/04/10/us/studies-find-big-benefits-in-marriage.html>

## **Tues., Oct. 6: Marriage and Public Policy**

Wood, Robert G., Quinn Moore, Andrew Clarkwest, and Alexandra Killewald. "The Long-Term Effects of Building Strong Families: A Program for Unmarried Parents." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 76(2): 446-463.

*In class: Watch PBS Frontline Documentary "Let's Get Married," 2002 (60 mins.) plus discussion*

## **Thurs., Oct. 8: Cohabitation**

*Quiz 3 (first 15 minutes of class).*

Brown, Susan L. 2005. "How Cohabitation is Reshaping American Families." *Contexts* 4(3):33-37.

### Supplementary:

Bumpass, Larry and Hsien-Hen Lu. 2000. "Trends in Cohabitation and Implications for Children's Family Contexts in the United States." *Population Studies* 54:29-41.

Smock, Pamela J. 2000. "Cohabitation in the United States: An Appraisal of Research Themes, Findings, and Implications." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26:1-20.

**Tues., Oct. 13: Divorce, Remarriage, and Stepfamilies**

Sweeney, Megan. 2010. "Remarriage and Stepfamilies: Strategic Sites for Family Scholarship in the 21st Century." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72:667-684.

**Thurs., Oct. 15: The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children**

Amato, Paul R. 2000. "The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62(4):1269-1287.

**Tues., Oct. 20: Fertility Patterns, and brief exam review**

Musick, Kelly, Paula England, Sarah Edgington and Nicole Kangas. 2010. "Education Differences in Intended and Unintended Fertility." *Social Forces* 88(2):543-572.

Sawhill, Isabel V. 2014 (September 13). "Beyond Marriage." *The New York Times*.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/14/opinion/sunday/beyond-marriage.html>

**Thurs., Oct 22: \*\*In-class Exam 1\*\***

**Tues., Oct. 27: Family Structure and Children's Wellbeing**

Sigle-Rushton, Wendy and Sara McLanahan. 2004. "Father Absence and Child Well-Being: A Critical Review," pp. 116-155 in *The Future of the Family*, edited by Daniel P. Moynihan, Timothy M. Smeeding, and Lee Rainwater. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

**Thurs., Oct. 29: Guest speaker – Lawrence (Lonnie) Berger, Professor of Social Work and Director, Institute for Research on Poverty, UW-Madison** (see: <https://socwork.wisc.edu/lonnie-berger>)

Lecture on: "Men in Disadvantaged and Complex Families"

Assigned reading:

Berger, Lawrence M. and Sharon H. Bzostek. 2014. "Young Adults' Roles as Partners and Parents in the Context of Family Complexity." *Annals of the American Academic of Political and Social Science* 654: 87-109.

### **Tues., Nov. 3: Families and Inequality**

*Quiz 4 (first 15 minutes of class).*

DeParle, Jason. 2012 (July 14). "Two Classes, Divided by 'I Do'." *The New York Times*.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/15/us/two-classes-in-america-divided-by-i-do.html?smid=pl-share>

McLanahan, Sara. 2004. "Diverging Destinies: How Children Fare Under the Second Demographic Transition." *Demography* 41:607-27.

### **Thurs., Nov. 5: Parenting and Social Class**

Brooks, David. 2006 (March 9). "Both Sides of Inequality." *The New York Times*.  
<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A0CEFDDB1231F93AA35750C0A9609C8B63>

Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review* 67: 747-776.

### **Tues., Nov. 10: Families in Challenging Economic Times**

Sawhill, Isabel V. 2013. "Family Structure: The Growing Importance of Class." Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2013/01/family-structure-class-sawhill>

*In class: Watch PBS Frontline Documentary "Two American Families," 2013 (84 mins.)*

### **Thurs., Nov. 12: Same-Sex Families**

*Quiz 5 (first 15 minutes of class).*

Meezan, William and Jonathan Rauch. 2005. "Gay Marriage, Same-Sex Parenting, and America's Children." *The Future of Children* 15(2):87-115.

### **Tues., Nov. 17: Men in Families**

Lamb, Michael E. 2000. "The History of Research on Father Involvement: An Overview." *Marriage & Family Review* 29(2/3):23-42.

#### Supplementary:

Eggebeen, David J. 2002. "The Changing Course of Fatherhood: Men's Experiences with Children in Demographic Perspective." *Journal of Family Issues* 23:486-506.



## **Thurs., Nov. 19: Non-Resident Fathers**

*Paper due in class.*

Cancian, Maria, Daniel R. Meyer and Eunhee Han. 2011. "Child Support: Responsible Fatherhood and the Quid Pro Quo." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 635:140-162.

Smeeding, Timothy M., Irwin Garfinkel and Ronald B. Mincy. 2011. "Young Disadvantaged Men: Fathers, Families, Poverty, and Policy – An Introduction to the Issues." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 635:6-21.

**\*\*Tues., Nov. 24: NO CLASS, but please spend 1 hour talking to a family member (over break or any time before) and write up a short reflection (see assignment)\*\***

**\*\*Thurs., Nov. 26 – NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)\*\***

## **Tues., Dec. 1: Nonmarital Childbearing, including cross-national comparisons**

Kiernan, Kathleen. 2001. "The Rise of Cohabitation and Childbearing outside of Marriage in Western Europe." *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family* 15: 1-21.

Ventura, Stephanie. J. 2009. "Changing Patterns of Nonmarital Childbearing in the United States." NCHS data brief, no 18. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db18.pdf>

## **Thurs., Dec. 3: Unmarried Families in the U.S.**

*Quiz 6 (first 15 minutes of class).*

Gibson-Davis, Edin and McLanahan. 2005. "High Hopes but Even Higher Expectations: The Retreat from Marriage among Low-Income Couples." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67:1301-1312.

McLanahan, Sara. 2011. "Family Instability and Complexity after a Nonmarital Birth: Outcomes for Children in Fragile Families." Chapter 5 (pp. 108-133) in *Social Class and Changing Families in an Unequal America*, edited by Marcia J. Carlson and Paula England Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

### Supplementary:

Seltzer, Judith A. 2000. "Families Formed Outside of Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62(4):1247-68.

## **Tues., Dec. 8: Family Change in International Perspective**

OECD. 2011. "Families Are Changing," Chapter 1 (pp. 17-53), in *Doing Better for Families*. OECD Publishing.

**Thurs., Dec. 10: The Future of the Family, discussion, and brief exam review**

Furstenberg, Frank F. 2004. "Values, Policy, and the Family," pp. 267-275, in *The Future of the Family*, edited by Daniel P. Moynihan, Timothy M. Smeeding, and Lee Rainwater. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Preston, Samuel H. 2004. "The Value of Children," pp. 263-266, in *The Future of the Family*, edited by Daniel P. Moynihan, Timothy M. Smeeding, and Lee Rainwater. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

**Tues., Dec. 15: \*\* In-class Exam 2 \*\***

(Note: There will be NO exam in the scheduled final exam time on Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup>.)

Revised: October 12, 2015