

**Sociology 36 (WGSS 33.08)**  
**Sociology of the Family**

Winter 2017  
Dartmouth College

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Professor:	Emily Walton	Place:	217 Dartmouth Hall
Office:	Silsby 108	Time:	MWF 2:10-3:15
Office Hours:	Wed 1:30-3:00 and by appt.	X-hour:	Thurs 1:20-2:10
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*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

### **Course description**

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 (40 points)**

Participation in class discussions and group exercises makes up a very important part of your grade. How does one demonstrate active participation? 1) By actively contributing to class discussion in a critical, insightful manner; and, 2) actively contributing to small group exercises. If you come into class and sit quietly every day without actively contributing to larger group discussions or small group exercises, you will receive a 0 for your participation grade. I will keep track of your participation in discussions and in-class work, and this record will comprise your participation grade.

### **2. Critical writing (110 points)**

*Response Memos (70 pts).* You will have an opportunity to write eight Response Memos during the term and I will grade seven (10 pts. each). You may choose to skip one of the memos or I will drop your lowest grade. Each memo should be a 1-page, single-spaced critical response to the readings. If there are more than one reading for the day, you must include all readings in your Response Memo. In this case, spend less time summarizing the main arguments, and more time analyzing common threads you discover across readings. Please upload an electronic copy to Canvas before class (noon) on the day the readings are being discussed.

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. Thus, your Response Memos should consist of two parts. First, you will work to determine the argument of the piece, and what strategies/evidence the author is using to support it. The first paragraph of your memo should *briefly* explicate how the authors convey and support their arguments. The following questions may serve as a guide:

- What is the author's argument?
- What evidence does he or she use to support the argument?

Second, you should focus on your analysis and reflections on the piece(s). The following questions may serve as a guide:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this reading (from your perspective)?
- What questions/reflections does this piece bring up for you?
- Do the ideas in this reading relate to other concepts from the course, your life, ideas that are important to you, or current events?

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

### 3. Oral history project (150 points)

Each of you will be creating an oral history project regarding your own parents' experiences with raising children and achieving work/family balance. Oral history is the systematic collection of living people's testimony about their own experiences. Your oral history project will consist of a series of steps:

- First, you will prepare an interview protocol for each of your parents. (10 pts.)
- Second, you will conduct interviews with each of your parents (separately) about *their* lives while you were growing up. Each interview should be transcribed and coded. (10 pts. each, 20 pts. total)
- Third, you will analyze your parents' interviews in writing. I would like this analysis to take the form of a 2-3 page document with an argument, which is supported with multiple claims and evidence for each. Your analysis will be graded on both content and form. (25 pts.)
- Fourth, you will construct a WordPress website as a repository for your oral history. The website should contain multiple pages with your written analysis, video reflections, and photographs. Your WordPress site will be graded on both content and form. See some excellent examples from two previous classes at <http://sites.dartmouth.edu/socyfamilyohp/>. (75 pts.)
- Finally, you will share your contextualized analyses 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. (20 pts.)

### 4. Exams (200 points)

*Midterm exam (80 points).* This will be a 1-hour, in-class, closed-book exam.

*Final exam (120 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.

### Grading

I follow the grading conventions as defined by the Organization, Regulations, and Courses (ORC) at Dartmouth. [http://www.dartmouth.edu/~reg/transcript/grade\\_descriptions.html](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~reg/transcript/grade_descriptions.html)

- A Excellent** mastery of course material (student performance indicates a very high degree of originality, creativity, and excellent performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- B Good** mastery of course material (student performance indicates a high degree of originality, creativity, and good performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)

- C Acceptable** mastery of course material (student performance indicates some degree of originality, creativity, and acceptable performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- D Deficient** in mastery of course material (student performance indicates some degree of originality, creativity, and deficient performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- E Serious deficiency** in mastery of course material (student performance clearly lacking originality, creativity, and seriously deficient performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)

**I will determine your final letter grade according to the following percentage breakdown:**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A	95-100%
A-	92-94.9%
B+	89-91.9%
B	83-88.9%
B-	80-82.9%
C+	77-79.9%
C	73-76.9%
C-	70-72.9%
D	60-69.9%
E	< 60%

Please note the following about grades: 1) I do not round grades; 2) I do not negotiate grades unless an error was made.

### **Important Notes**

#### **Teaching Assistant**

You will notice that we have a teaching assistant for the course, Lydia Shahi. Lydia is a graduate student in the MALS program at Dartmouth. She will participate in class, provide feedback on your written work, and be available to assist you with questions about the material or your approach to understanding it. Lydia is available for meetings by appointment and can be reached by email at [Lydia.T.Shahi@dartmouth.edu](mailto:Lydia.T.Shahi@dartmouth.edu). Please be sure email her at least 24 hours in advance of your requested meeting time, and she can meet you in Baker Library Monday through Friday during regular work hours (9-5).

#### **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. If you miss more than three days of class, your course grade will decrease by one whole letter grade (e.g., A to B), and decrease by one step (e.g., B to B-) for each

additional absence. In the event that you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for getting notes from another student. As a general policy, I do not make my notes available. After you review your classmate's notes, I would be happy to meet with you to talk about the material or answer questions about anything that is unclear. If you anticipate missing class meetings because of athletic team participation, religious observances, or some other reason, please arrange a meeting with me at the start of the term, and bring documentation of the expected conflicts.

### **Late work**

Unexpected things will come up over the course of the term. To ensure you don't wind up in a difficult position, plan ahead: start your assignments early and finish them in advance of the deadline. Please speak with me at the beginning of the term if you anticipate any circumstances that might affect your ability to get your work in on time.

Response Memos are designed to help you prepare for in-class discussion, so we can make the most of our time together; therefore, they will not be accepted late. For the oral history project (and all its components), the maximum grade you may earn will be reduced by one letter grade for each day late. In other words, if you turn your assignment in 1-24 hours after the deadline, the maximum grade you can receive is a B; if you turn your assignment in 25-48 hours after the deadline, the maximum grade you can receive is a C; if you turn your assignment in 49-72 hours after the deadline, the maximum grade you can receive is a D. I will not accept your assignment after 72 hours.

Extensions will only be given if a deadline was missed because of extreme circumstances beyond your control. For example: severe illness requiring a doctor's visit or hospitalization, or death in the family. Generally not feeling well, forgetting about the deadline, having computer problems, needing to help your friend or family member with something, scheduling conflicts with interviews, appointments, or exams in other classes, etc. are not considered extreme circumstances. If you believe you are eligible for an extension, it is your responsibility to notify me before missing the deadline, and explain in writing why your circumstances warrant an exception.

### **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 am also available by appointment if my office hours do not coincide with your schedule. I regularly check e-mail during the school day (9am-4pm) and will make every effort to reply to messages as soon as possible. I expect students to regularly check their Dartmouth e-mail and Canvas 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. For a broad overview on the practice of citing sources, see <http://dartmouth.edu/writing-speech/learning/materials/sources-and-citations-dartmouth>.

### **Classroom Responsibility and Courtesy**

All students are expected to have a voice in our class dialogue. Class participation involves thinking carefully, listening, and posing questions to others as much as it involves sharing your own ideas. This requires us to be present, set aside distractions, and focus our attention on engaging with one another. Please put your cell phones on vibrate, do not text, and do not use your laptop during class.

The tone with which we engage one another is also extremely important, and should come from a place of mutual respect and understanding. You are free to disagree with the views raised in the material or by others in the class, but must do so with a reasoned critique based on a complete consideration of their argument. Your own argument should be supported by sociological evidence rather than personal opinion or anecdotes. Disrespectful behavior such as talking while others are talking, dominating the floor, or engaging in personal attacks will not be tolerated. You are expected to treat one another and me with respect at all times.

### **Additional Support for Learning**

*Student Center for Research, Writing, and Information Technology (RWIT)*: At RWIT, you can meet one-on-one with an undergraduate tutor to discuss a paper, research project, or multimedia assignment. <http://dartmouth.edu/writing-speech/learning/support-writing-research-and-composing-technology/rwit>

*Academic Skills Center (ASC)*: The mission of Dartmouth's Academic Skills Center is to assist students in achieving academic success through a wide variety of services and programs. The Center is available to all students who wish to improve their academic skills and ability to learn, thereby maximizing their academic experience and allowing them to achieve greater academic performance and personal fulfillment. <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/>

## Course Plan

### Week One (Jan 4-6) What is a Family?

- Wednesday Introduction to the course - public and private families**
- Mills (1959), “The Promise” in *The Sociological Imagination*
- Friday The way the family never was, and the way it really is**
- Coontz (1992), *The Way We Never Were* (Ch. 1, 2)
  - Powell et al. (2010), *Counted Out* (Ch. 3)
  - Response Memo 1 due

### Week Two (Jan 9-13) Family Formation

- Monday Dating through the ages**
- Ansari (2015), *Modern Romance* (Intro, Ch. 1, 2, 7)
- Wednesday Cohabitation**
- Seltzer (2000), “Families Formed Outside of Marriage”
  - Reed (2006), “Not Crossing the ‘Extra Line’”
  - Response Memo 2 due
- Friday The evolving meaning of marriage**
- Cherlin (2010), *The Marriage-Go-Round* (Ch. 1 and 2)
  - Fowler (2007), “Love and Marriage”
  - de Botton (2016), “Why You Will Marry the Wrong Person”

### Week Three (Jan 16-20) Family Diversity

- 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: Remarriage and stepfamilies**
- Mason (2011), “The Modern American Stepfamily”
  - Marsiglio (2004), “When Stepfathers Claim Stepchildren”
- Friday Marriage equality**
- Goldberg and Kuvalanka (2012), “Marriage (In)equality”
  - American Sociological Association (2012), Amicus Brief
  - Response Memo 3 due

#### **Week Four (Jan 23-27) Family inequality**

- Monday**      **The working class family**
- (Cherlin 2014), *Labor's Love Lost* (Intro and Ch. 7)
  - Response Memo 4 due
- Wednesday**    **Family structure and function**
- McLanahan and Percheski (2008), "Family Structure and the Reproduction of Inequalities"
- Thursday**      **x-hour: Oral history workshop: interviewing techniques, technology, and practice**
- Caitlin Birch, Digital Collections and Oral History Archivist
  - Susan Simon, Jones Media Center
  - Interview protocol due
- Friday**         **Exam #1 in class**

#### **Week Five (Jan 30-Feb 3) Becoming a parent**

- Monday**         **Social class and motherhood**
- Edin and Kefalas (2005), *Promises I Can Keep* (Ch. 1 and Conclusion)
- Wednesday**    **Social class and fatherhood**
- Edin and Nelson (2013), *Doing the Best I Can* (Intro and Ch. 8)
  - Response Memo 5 due
  - Kathryn Edin visits class, please prepare one question about the readings or their implications.
- Thursday**      **x-hour: oral history workshop: Introduction to WordPress and Creating an iMovie**
- Adam Nemeroff, Instructional Designer
  - Susan Simon, Jones Media Center
  - Bring your laptops. If you do not have a mac, please talk to me.
  - First coded interview transcript due
- Friday**         **Fatherhood**
- Film: Glazer, *The Evolution of Dad*
  - Please finish the film on your own, streaming is available through JMC

#### **Week Six (Feb 6-10) Becoming a person**

- Monday**         **Evolution of childhood**
- Mintz (2004), *Huck's Raft* (Ch. 16 and 17)
  - Fass (2016), "The End of Adolescence"



- Wednesday Social class in childhood**
- Lareau (2011), *Unequal Childhoods* (Ch. 1, 3, and 5)
  - Response Memo 6 due

- Thursday x-hour: oral history workshop: working with WordPress**
- Adam Nemeroff, Instructional Designer
  - Meet at Jones Media Center editing stations
  - Second coded interview transcript due

- Friday Social class in college and beyond**
- Hamilton (2016), *Parenting to a Degree* (Ch. 2 and 4)
  - Lareau (2015), “Cultural Knowledge and Inequality”

### **Week Seven (Feb 13-17) Work and family**

- Monday Uneven, stalled, and unfinished gender revolution**
- England (2010), “The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled”
  - Gerson (2010), *The Unfinished Revolution* (Ch. 1 and Ch. 9)
  - Analysis/framing for oral history project due

- Wednesday Women leaving the workforce**
- Stone (2007), *Opting Out?* (Ch. 1, 3, 5)
  - Response Memo 7 due

- Thursday x-hour: oral history work session**
- Meet at Jones Media Center editing stations
  - Adam Nemeroff and Susan Simon present at JMC

- Friday Putting it all together**
- Filipovic (2016), “The Men Feminists Left Behind”
  - Denvir (2016), “Why Women are Still Voting for Trump”
  - Cherlin (2016), “A Happy Ending to a Half Century of Change?”

### **Week Eight (Feb 20-24) Can we have it all?**

- Monday Changing your behavior**
- Sandberg (2014), *Lean In* (Ch. 1, 2, 9)

- Wednesday Changing 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
  - Adam Nemeroff and Susan Simon present at JMC

**Friday**        **Oral history presentations**

**Week Nine (Feb 27-Mar 3)**

**Monday**        **Oral history presentations**

**Wednesday**   **Oral history presentations**

- Thursday**    **x-hour: oral history work session**
- Meet at Jones Media Center editing stations
  - Adam Nemeroff and Susan Simon present at JMC

**Friday**        **Oral history presentations**

**Week Ten (Mar 6-8)**

- Monday**        **Oral history presentations**
- Oral history project WordPress site due

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

## References

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