

THE FAMILY IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

Sociology 369

Class Number 61506D

Fall 2017

Wednesday 2:00– 4:50 pm, HSH 201

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Office Hours: 8/22-10/10 Tuesdays 11:00-1:30
10/18-12/2 Wednesdays 5:00-7:30
and by appointment

Office: HSH, Room 313

Course Website:

Announcements, links to readings, assignments, class notes, and all other information will be posted to our course website. The site is <https://blackboard.usc.edu> and can be accessed with your USC username and password. Lectures will be posted by noon the day of class. Please print them and bring them with you for note taking.

Introduction:

The diversity and complexity of families in the United States and other industrialized countries have increased dramatically over the past half century. Since the 1950s the “ideal” family of breadwinner-husband, homemaker-wife, and three children has become less common, while dual-earner families, single mothers, single fathers, childless couples, and cohabiting partners have become more prevalent. The family has evolved throughout history. It differs from one society to another, and has changed over time within our own society. Recently, however, some changes have seemed to intensify. Some scholars and policy makers are alarmed at the ways in which the family has changed and believe that the family itself is disintegrating. Others believe that many of the changes in the family have been positive, and that although families have grown more complex and diverse, the family is an enduring institution that continues to serve its purpose in society.

Course Objectives:

In this course you will learn about four general aspects of the family, focusing particularly on contemporary patterns in the United States:

- How has the structure and composition of families changed over time?
- How does the structure and composition of families vary by race, class, and gender?
- What are the social, economic, historical, psychological and cultural explanations for these changes, and which are most strongly supported by empirical evidence?
- What are the implications of these changes for family members, family relationships, and society as a whole?

We will explore differences in the social construction of the meanings and practices of family

life over time, between women and men, among racial and ethnic groups, and by social class. We will also examine how recent changes in the family are linked to current policy debates and public policy initiatives.

We all have direct experiences with our own families and the families of others. We also have daily encounters with family life as portrayed in newspapers, television and other media. This course will challenge you to think about how your personal experiences with families relate to what is happening with families throughout the United States, and to more general features of the family as an institution. This course will provide you with a basic understanding of family trends and help you to distinguish between what is myth, what is speculation, and what is reality. It will also provide you with the information and the tools to distinguish among the three.

This course examines changes in family behaviors and household relationships from a sociological perspective. A major focus is the relationships among economic and social institutions, culture, family structure, and the content of family life. Readings are drawn from family sociology, family demography, economics, and human development. The major focus is on the post-World War II United States, but I hope we can “diversify” and “internationalize” the readings through your essays, projects, and class discussion.

Statement for Students with Disabilities:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to us (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity:

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00; the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/> Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis: In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See USC’s website on campus safety and preparedness <http://safety.usc.edu/>

If you need any special accommodations to complete the course requirements, please talk to me right away.

Required Course Materials:

We will be reading four books (in their entirety or in large part) and a set of texts compiled from academic journals, government reports, scholarly books, and the popular press. The books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore and will be placed on reserve at Levey library:

1. Casper, Lynne M. and Suzanne M. Bianchi. 2002. *Continuity and Change in the American Family*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. **(Required chapters are on Blackboard)**.
2. Edin, Kathryn and Maria Kefalas. 2005. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
3. Furstenberg, Frank F. and Andrew J. Cherlin. 1991. *Divided Families: What Happens to Children When Parents Part?* Harvard: Harvard University Press.
4. Lareau, Annette. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Additional required readings will be posted on our class website. These readings are labeled “Blackboard” in the syllabus.

Course Requirements:

1. Examinations

This course has *three* take-home exams each consisting of two or three essay questions. They will cover material from lectures, your essays and the readings. The first two take-home exams will be due at the beginning of class on **October 11th and November 8th**. The third take-home exam is due **Friday, December 8th by 4:00 pm. Make sure to also upload all of the exams to Turn-It-In.**

2. Attendance and Participation

This course is designed to foster dialogue about issues and ideas that come up in lectures, readings, and group discussion over the course of the semester. For this reason, students are expected to attend lecture *regularly* and *punctually*, do all required reading on time, and come to class prepared to participate in class discussions. Students are expected to welcome differing viewpoints and to respect the thoughts and ideas of all class participants, listen quietly while others are speaking, and arrive and leave on time. Note that information covered in lectures may not be in the readings, and vice versa.

Students often overlook how important participation and attendance are in their education. In this course, your grade for participation and attendance is based on the percentage of class meetings you attend (you can't participate if you're not here!), and will be increased or decreased based on your participation.

It is your responsibility to sign in on the class roster sheet every lecture. This sign-in sheet will provide proof of attendance. Signing in for previous classes or for other students is not permitted.

3. Essays

Most weeks starting August 31, I will assign a brief essay question via blackboard to help me ascertain the extent to which you are engaged in the course (i.e., comprehending lectures and completing reading assignments). These assignment will provide you an opportunity to reflect on the material and will help you to focus in on what is important for the exams. You are required to turn in the assignment each Wednesday at the beginning of the class Your essay should be typed, double spaced, and no more than 2 pages.

I will choose an essay topic from a central theme of the previous week's readings, lecture, and class discussion. There are 10 assignments each worth 1 percentage point of your overall grade. You will therefore have the opportunity to earn 2 additional percentage points. **No make-ups will be permitted unless you have an excused absence.** Do not assume that simply filling a page with words will earn you credit; your writing must reflect awareness of central issues and ideas expressed in the readings and lectures.

4. Outline and Project

Your project will be a 10 page (at least 7 pages of which must be text) analytical report that requires you to obtain, analyze, synthesize, and critically evaluate graphs and tabular data on a specific family topic of your choosing. An outline of your project including draft tables, charts, and references will be due in class **Wednesday, September 20th**. The project should integrate material from the lectures and readings and from outside sources. The specifics of this project will be discussed at length in class. The final project is due on **Wednesday, November 29th at the beginning of class**. Please see the handouts for more details regarding the specific requirements for the outline and the project.

Grading Summary:

The majority of your grade will be based on evidence of your knowledge, comprehension, and critical analysis of course materials; however, the quality of your writing (including grammar, spelling, and clarity) will also affect your grades.

10%	Attendance and class participation
8%	Essays
36%	Exams 1 and 2= 18% a piece
14%	Exam 3
7%	Outline for final project
25%	Final project

Summary of Important Dates:

Wednesday, September 20th	Project outline due!
Wednesday, October 11 th	Exam 1 due!
Wednesday, November 8 th	Exam 2 due!
Wednesday, November 29 th	Final project due!
Wednesday, December 7 th , 4:00 pm	Exam 3 due!

JEP Extra Credit:

Earn up to another **3%** toward your final grade by participating in service learning supervised by the Youth and Family Agencies Program (YFA) at the Joint Educational Project (JEP). JEP participation involves placement as a volunteer in a community setting where you will be able to view family life from the inside. YFA currently partners with several different sites that offer a variety of service-learning opportunities for USC volunteers, ranging from working with students in foster care, at-risk youth, and children in domestic violence shelters. You will be overseen by and provide reports of your activities to JEP and its staff. Evidence of the successful completion of your placement will be provided to me by JEP. Placements are made on a first-come, first-served basis. Details will be announced in class.

General Guidelines and Policies:

No make-up exams will be given and no late assignments will be accepted unless you can provide clear evidence that circumstances beyond your control prevented your timely performance. Written assignments must be double-spaced in 12-point font and stapled, and you must keep a copy of all work that you turn in. ***As the course progresses, it may be necessary to make some adjustments to the schedule of readings, topics, assignments, and due dates printed in this syllabus.*** You should check the course website on a regular basis for updates and changes. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed.

Please do not leave and re-enter the classroom during class unless you are ill. Such behavior interrupts the lecture and is inconsiderate to me and your fellow students.

The use of electronic devices in this class is strictly prohibited unless you are using them for note taking or presentation purposes. The use of computers, cell phones, blackberries, etc. for other purposes will result in dismissal from that lecture. After three lecture dismissals you will be asked to drop the class.

Each student must hand in his or her own writing assignments and respect USC's standards for academic integrity. Authors and researchers work hard on their papers and books; plagiarism will not be tolerated!

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

(This schedule may change as appropriate)

August 23rd

Introduction: discuss syllabus, course objectives, and requirements
Who Wants to Be a Family Sociologist?

Topic 1: Trends and Interpretations of Changing Family Patterns

August 30th

Readings A: Methods and Materials

- 1) Casper & Bianchi. 2002. "Introduction" Pp. xiii-xxxii (Blackboard)

September 6th

Readings B: Changing Families

- 1) Casper & Bianchi. 2002. Chapter 1. "Changing Families..." (Blackboard)

September 13th

Readings C: Family Debate

- 1) Popenoe. 1993. "American Family Decline, 1960-1990..." (Blackboard)
- 2) Glenn. 1993. "A Plea for Objective Assessment..." (Blackboard)
- 3) Stacey. 1993. "Good Riddance to 'The Family'..." (Blackboard)
- 4) Cowan. 1993. "The Sky Is Falling..." (Blackboard)
- 5) Popenoe. 1993. "The National Family Wars...." (Blackboard)

Readings D: Should the Government Be Involved in Marriage?

- 1) Ooms. 2002. "Marriage and Government, Strange Bedfellows" (Blackboard)
- 2) MOVIE: "Let's Get Married"

Topic 2: Theoretical Perspectives on Family Change

September 20th

Readings A: Explanations of Family Change

- 1) Bianchi & Casper. 2004. "Explanations of Family Change..." (Blackboard)

Outlines for Final Project due Wednesday, September 20th!

September 27th

Readings B: Institution of Marriage

- 2) Nock. 1998. "Marriage as a Social Institution..." (Blackboard)

October 4th

Readings C: The Deinstitutionalization of Marriage

- 3) Cherlin, Andrew J. 2004. "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage." (Blackboard)
- 4) Coontz, Stephanie. 2004. "The World Historical Transformation of Marriage." (Blackboard)

First Exam posted at 8:00 pm!!! Exam covers material through October 4th

October 11th EXAM 1 Due Beginning of Class.

Topic 3: Marriage: Meanings, Importance, and Implications

October 11th

Readings A: Does Marriage Matter?

- 1) Waite. 1995. "Does Marriage Matter?" (Blackboard)
(Get a jump on reading Edin and Kefalas for Feb 9. Introduction pp. 1-14 and Chapter 1 pp.46-49)

October 18th

Readings B: Promises I Can Keep

- 1) Edin & Kefalas. 2005. *Promises I Can Keep*:
(pp. 1-14, 46-49, 71-75, 97-103, 104-137, 197-220)

Topic 4: Cohabitation: Heterosexual and Same Sex Unmarried Partnering

October 25th

- Readings:
- 1) Casper & Bianchi. 2002. Chapter 2. "Cohabitation."
 - 2) Biblarz and Savci. 2010. "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Families" (Blackboard)
 - 3) MOVIE: "Same-Sex Parenting"

Topic 5: Divorce and Remarriage: Causes and Consequences

November 1st

- Readings:
- 1) Furstenberg & Cherlin. 1991. *Divided Families*:... (Chapters 1-5).

Second Exam posted at 5:00 pm!!! Exam covers material through October November 1st

November 8 EXAM 2 Due Beginning of Class.

Topic 6: Race, Class, and Family Life

November 8th and November 15th

- Readings:
- 1) Lareau. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*.
(Pp. 1-104, 161-181, 182-258)
 - 4) MOVIE: "Minimum Wage"

No class! November 21st Happy Turkey Day!

Topic 7: Family Caregiving: Contested Gender Terrain?

November 29th

Readings: 1) Casper and Bianchi. 2009. *The Stalled Revolution*. (Blackboard)
2) Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie. 2006. *Changing Rhythms of American Family Life*. Chapters 1 (pp. 1-14) and 3 (pp. 38-58) (Blackboard)
MOVIE: "Outsourcing"

Final Project due Wednesday, November 29th

Friday, December 8th EXAM 3 Due in HSH 314 by 4:00pm