

SOCI/WMGS 221: Sociology of Marriage and the Family

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Office hours:
Tuesdays, 2:15-4:30
Wednesdays, 11:15-12:30
Thursdays, 2:15-4:30

Course Overview

The meanings and social practices surrounding family life are diverse and changing constantly. This course explores social change related to 'marriage' and 'the family' in a western context from a sociological perspective. We will examine the social forces that bear on how individuals imagine, shape, and experience their personal lives. Some of the influences explored are social policy, the media, science and (bio)technology, social movements, consumerism, religion, and the expanding role of 'professionals' and 'experts' who have been empowered to make decisions on the behalf of others through government agencies or professional associations. We examine how these social forces interact with cultural understandings of gender, race, ability, sexuality, and social class.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, you will have an appreciation of the many social forces shaping how individuals imagine, shape, and experience their personal lives. You will be able to:

- describe social change related to 'intimate unions' (e.g., fewer heterosexuals marry; more cohabite, increase in same-sex marriage, normalization of divorce);
- describe and appraise the detraditionalization thesis and individualization thesis;
- appraise cultural pressures to yield to performance norms;
- appreciate that beliefs and personal experiences are influenced by structural and cultural factors related to social class, gender, race, sexuality, and so on;
- understand that public policy has a major impact on individuals and families;
- understand the role 'experts' play in shaping the culture of intensive parenting, especially for mothers with different life circumstances;
- appreciate that globalization inequalities and "markets" mechanisms produce structural inequalities for individuals and families.

Required Readings and Documentaries

The required readings are posted on Moodle or you can find them through the library. The exams draw heavily from the readings. Course discussion is intended to illuminate the readings, so please complete the readings on time and with notes to help you participate in the class discussions. Documentaries watched in class are 'required,' so if you miss one, it is your responsibility to access it and watch it.

Grading Scheme

- Participation 10%
- Midterm 25% ~ Tuesday, October 22 [covers Part 1 & 2]
- Research paper 25% ~ Tuesday, November 12 at 12:45 (in class)
- Final examination 40% ~ TBA [cumulative; with emphasis on Part 3 & 4]

Class Participation and Attendance

You will find the Schedule of Readings at the end of the syllabus. Please do your best to complete the readings *on schedule* and *draw from the readings in our class discussions*. You will be asked to submit reading notes on Moodle. This material counts toward the 'participation' grade. As required by the Dean, class attendance will be taken.

Research Paper

- Instructions for the Research Paper will be posted on Moodle and introduced in class. Your paper will be a library research paper around 7-8 pages in length.

Examinations

The exam covers all course material (readings, videos, lectures and class discussion).

- It is university policy that "students unable to write an examination in December and April at its scheduled time due to illness or due to a serious, unexpected circumstance must notify the Associate Dean, Academic Affairs' Office.
- Review your exam schedule prior to making travel plans.
- Please notify me if you are *registered* to write exams at the *Centre for Accessible Learning*. If you are, I request an email reminder a week prior to an exam.

Office Hours and Communication Regarding Course Work

You are encouraged to see me during office hours to discuss any aspect of the course. If my office hours conflict with your schedule, please schedule an appointment.

Email Communication

Please use proper email etiquette, state the topic in the subject line, and provide your name and course number in the message.

Given the number of students I have, I **do not** reply to emails about the following:

- questions that are answered on this syllabus or announcements on Moodle.
- missing a class ~ except to report exceptional circumstances requiring follow-up.
- course work: it is best to see me in class, office hours or, if need be, by telephone.

Important notices are posted on Moodle and/or sent to your StFX email address only. It is your responsibility to check your StFX account regularly to ensure that it is not full.

Academic Integrity

Please familiarize yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy spelled out in the university academic calendar: <https://www2.mystfx.ca/registrars-office/academic-integrity>

Violations of the policy are report to the Department Chair and the Dean.

The Dean has asked professors to draw “your attention to Section 3.8.2 b (v) which reads “Possession of unauthorized aids or assistance including copying during tests and examinations.” This means that students do not need to be caught USING a device like a cell phone or smart watch (for example) during a test or exam to be in violation of the policy. Simply having the unauthorized device on their person during the test or exam is a violation of the policy.”

Resources Available to Students

Libraries and Librarians: The library resources at StFX are excellent. Meghan Landry is the Sociology Liaison Librarian. She and other the Reference Librarians will provide valuable, friendly assistance. Your assignment grades rests up searching and selecting suitable sources. When asking a librarian for assistance, it is advisable to bring the syllabus with you provides the librarians with the information they need to help you. Meaghan Landry can be reached at mlandry@stfx.ca or visit the Reference Desk.

The Student Success Centre: We are fortunate to have academic tutors and advisors at the SSC. You can receive class-based lessons (advertised to students) or one-on-one writing support. When using the SSC, take your paper instructions to your meetings in order to discuss the guidelines with the tutor. Whether in the selection of references or assistance with writing, if you are unsure about your work, see me for feedback.

Communication Regarding Equity and Diversity

“Everyone learns more effectively in a respectful, safe and equitable learning environment, free from discrimination and harassment. I invite you to work with me to create a classroom space – both real and virtual – that fosters and promotes values of human dignity, equity, non-discrimination and respect for diversity”.

Please feel free to talk with me about your questions or concerns about equity in our classroom or in the StFX community in general. If I cannot answer your questions or help you address your concerns, I encourage you to talk to the Chair/Coordinator of the Department/Program or the Human Rights and Equity Advisor. The Human Rights and Equity Advisor is Megan Fogarty. Megan can be reached by email at mfogarty@stfx.ca or by telephone at 902-867-5306.

Schedule of Readings

Part 1: Studying Families and Social Change

➤ Statistical Snapshots: Family Change and Diversity

Sept. 3/5 Milan, Ann. 2000. "One Hundred Years of Families." *Canadian Social Trends*. Statistics Canada: Catalogue No. 11-008.

Milan, Ann and Nora Bohnert. 2012. "Fifty Years of Families in Canada: 1961-2011." Statistics Canada: Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011003.

➤ A Wider-Angle Lens: Recognizing the Social Construction of Official Statistics

Sept. 10/12 Bradbury, Bettina. 2000. Single Parenthood in the Past: Canadian Census Categories, 1891-1951, and the "Normal Family." *Historical Methods* 33(4): 211-217.

Thomas, Derrick. 2010. The Census and the Evolution of Gender Roles in Early 20th Century Canada. *Canadian Social Trends*. Statistics Canada. Cat. No.11-008X.

➤ Cultural Change and Lag: The Power of "Tradition" in Cultural Discourse on 'Family'

Sept. 17/19 Smith, Dorothy. 1993. "The Standard North American Family: SNAF as an Ideological Code." *Journal of Family Issues* 14(1): 50-65.

Gross, Neil. 2005. The Detraditionalization of Intimacy Reconsidered. *Sociological Theory*. 23(3): 286-311.

Part 2: Social Changes in Marriage, Coupling, and Family Forms

➤ Same-sex Partnerships and Marriage

Sept. 24 Green, Adam Isaiah. 2010. "Queer Union: Same-Sex Spouses Marrying Tradition And Innovation." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 35(3): 399-436.

* Video: *Why Thee Wed*, NFB

➤ Same-sex Families and Parenting

Sept. 26 Gibson, Margaret. 2014. "Adopting difference: Thinking Through Adoption by Gay Men in Ontario, Canada." *Signs* 39(2): 407-432.

➤ Singlehood, Cohabitation and Divorce

Oct. 1 Budgeon, Shelley. 2008. "Couple Culture and the Production of Singleness." *Sexualities* 11(3): 301-324.

Oct. 3 Scott Coltrane and Michele Adams. 2003. "The Social Construction of the Divorce 'Problem': Morality, Child Victims, and the Politics of Gender." *Family Relations* 52(4):363-372.

Oct. 8 Smart, Carol. 2000. "Divorce and Changing Family Practices in a Post-Traditional Society." *Family Matters* 56(1): 10-19.

Oct. 15-19 No classes or office hours -- Fall term study break

Midterm exam: Tuesday, October 22 ~ covers Parts 1 and 2.

Part 3: Gender, Class, and Social Change in Heterosexual Families

➤ Working Mothers/ Working Fathers: Gender and Family Work

- Oct. 24 * Video: *The Evolution of Dad*
- Oct. 29 Wall, Glenda. 2013. "Putting Families First': Shifting Discourses of Motherhood and Childhood in Representations of Mothers' Employment and Child Care." *Women's Studies International Forum* 40(1): 162-171.
- Oct. 29 Ranson, Gillian. 2012. "Men, Paid Employment and Family Responsibilities: Conceptualizing the 'Working Father.'" *Gender Work and Organizations* 19(6): 741-761.

➤ "Experts" and the Medicalization of Motherhood

- Oct.31/Nov.2 Malacrida, Claudia. 2002. "Alternative Therapies and Attention Deficit Disorder: Discourses on Maternal Responsibility and Risk." *Gender & Society* 16(3): 366-385.
- Oct.31/Nov.2 Wall, Glenda. 2001. "Moral Constructions of Motherhood in Breastfeeding Discourse." *Gender and Society*. 15(4):592-610.

➤ Constructions of Low-income Lone-Parenting

- Nov. 5 Romagnoli, Amy and Glenda Wall. 2012. "I Know I'm a Good Mom': Young, Low-Income Mothers' Experiences with Risk Perceptions, Intensive Parenting and Parenting Education Programmes." *Health, Risk and Society* 14(3): 273-289.
- Nov. 5 Zartler, Ulrike. 2014. "How to Deal with Moral Tales: Constructions and Strategies of Single-Parent Families." *Journal of Marriage & the Family* 75(2): 604-619.

Part 4: Family Life and Intersectional Social Inequalities: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality

➤ The Sixties Scoop and the Rebuilding of Indigenous Families

- Nov. 7 Spenser, Dale C. 2017. "Extractions and Pulverization: A Narrative Analysis of Canada Scoop Survivors." *Settler Colonial Studies*. 7(1): 57-71.
- Nov. 7 * Video: *We Were Children*, NFB, 2012.
- Nov. 12/14 Ball, Jessica. 2010. "Indigenous Fathers' Involvement in Reconstituting "Circles of Care." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 45:124-138.
- Nov. 12/14 Tam, Benita Y., Leanne C. Findlay, and Dafna E. Kohen. 2016. "Indigenous Families: Who Do You Call Family?" *Journal of Family Studies* 1-17.

➤ Intersectionality of Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality in Global Perspective

- Nov. 19/21 Gerstel, Naomi. 2011. "Rethinking Families and Communities: The Color, Class, and Centrality of Extended Kin Ties." *Sociological Forum* 26(1):1-20.
- Nov. 19/21 Kecia R. Johnson and Karyn Loscocco. 2015. Black Marriage Through the Prism of Gender, Race, and Class *Journal of Black Studies*. 46(2):142-171.
- Nov. 26/28 Hsiung, Ping-Chun and Katherine Nichol. 2010. "Policies on and Experiences of Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada." *Sociology Compass* 4(9): 766-778.

Nov. 26/28 Mamo, Laura and Eli Alston-Stepnitz. 2015. "Queer Intimacies and Structural Inequalities: New Directions in Stratified Reproduction." *Journal of Family Issues* 36 (4): 519-540.