SOCIAL SCIENCE 200
THE FAMILY: SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVES

http://courses.washington.edu/ssci200/

Course Content and Goals: The study of families lies at the heart of the social sciences. This course is an introduction to research on the family taught by three social scientists—an economist, a psychologist, and a sociologist—and provides students with an unusual opportunity to learn and practice the models and methods of three disciplines with very different perspectives. A set of questions about the changing American family focus the discussion and highlight the contrasting and complementary views of sociology, psychology, and economics on issues of common concern: What is a family and what do families do? Is the American family in decline? Who marries whom—do opposites attract? Who benefits from marriage and who bears the cost of divorce? Is cohabitation now just an alternative form of marriage? What determines the fertility rate? How are children “raised” to become members of a social group? What determines decision-making power within a family? Why do American mothers work so much? Throughout, we emphasize the diversity of family life and experiences, and the relevance of social science research for policy issues affecting the family.

The key goal of this course will be to help students develop an interdisciplinary perspective on the study of families in contemporary America. The understanding and development of research skills is another important goal of this course. Weekly lab sections will be devoted to projects than enable the student to learn how to access information about families from a variety of sources, prepare and analyze data, and present their results clearly and effectively.

Course requirements: Midterm exam, final exam, lab project reports, possible additional quizzes or small assignments, participation in class discussions.

Class time: MW 1:30-2:50 plus one lab (ThF 8:30-10:20 or ThF 1:30-3:20)


Readings: Additional required readings are placed on Electronic Course Reserve at Odegaard Library. Go to http://www.lib.washington.edu/ougl/reserves/ereserves.html to access the readings in electronic form. In order to view these files you must have Acrobat Reader. Most campus computers will have this application. For your home computer, you can download the application for free from the Adobe website, http://www.adobe.com.

Instructors:
Julie Brines, Sociology, brines@u.washington.edu  SAV 206P  W 10-12
Ana Mari Cauce, Psychology/American Ethnic Studies, cauce@u.washington.edu  PAD B508  MW 12-1:30
Shelly Lundberg, Economics, lundberg@u.washington.edu  SAV 227  T 10:30-11:30, & W 5:30-6
Teaching Assistants:  
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Office:  
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Office Hours:  
F 10:30-12:20  
Th 10:30-11:30, & Th 3:30-4:30

Class Topics and Readings

Week 1: March 27, 29

Introduction: What is the family? Is the American family in decline?
  Cherlin, Chapter 1 “Public and Private Families”
  Chapter 2 “The History of the Family”


Lab: Introduction and session on library use

Week 2: April 3, 5

Dating and Mating: What do we look for in a partner? Do we marry people like ourselves, or people who are different?

Cherlin, Chapter 7. (pp. 197-209)
Cherlin, Chapter 8 (pp.238-248)


Paula England and George Farkas, Households, Employment, and Gender: A Social, Economic, and Demographic View, 1986, pp. 31-42 only (a discussion of marriage markets and search for partners)


Lab: Rating couple interactions
Week 3: April 10, 12

**Cohabitation and Alternative Family Forms:** Is cohabitation a new form of marriage?

Cherlin, Chapter 8, pp. 256-261 and Chapter 9, pp. 281-284


**Lab:** Using the Internet/Web Resources on families

Week 4: April 17, 19

**Family Goals:** Why marry? Who benefits from marriage?

Cherlin, Chapter 9 “Spouses and Partners”


**Lab:** Analyzing Census Data

Week 5: April 24, 26

**Fertility:** Has industrialization caused a steady decline in fertility? What explains “baby booms” (and busts)?


**Lab:** Review for midterm
Week 6: May 1, 3

**Socialization:** Becoming a member of society, who do you want your child to be?

Cherlin, Chapter 14 (pp.423-444)


**Lab:** Midterm exam

Week 7: May 8, 10

**Work-Family Issues:** Why do mothers work so much?

Cherlin, Chapter 10 “Work and Families”


**Lab:** Intro to SPSS/Windows

Week 8: May 15, 17

**Family Decision-making:** What determines power in the household?


**Lab:** Analyzing data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH)
Week 9: May 22, 24

**Divorce and Public Policy:** Who bears the cost of divorce—men, women, children?

Readings: Cherlin, Chapter 12


**Lab:** Analyzing data from the NSFH (continued)

Week 10: May 28, 30

May 28’ Holiday

May 30’ Wrap up

**Lab:** Review for Final Exam