

SOC 8400: SOCIOLOGY OF THE FAMILY

Fall 2015

Wednesdays, 3:00-5:45pm
0168 Old Main Hall

Professor: Dr. Heather Dillaway
Office Location: 2237 Faculty Administration Building (FAB)
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3-5pm, or by appointment, *beginning on September 15th*.
Phone Number: 313-577-2930 or 313-577-2520 (you can leave a message for me)
Email Addresses: dillaway@wayne.edu (*quickest way to reach me*)

Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with a sociological framework for analyzing families in contemporary U.S. society. An emphasis will be placed on changing definitions of “family,” helping students become acquainted with family lives across time and space. We will also think about the organization and structure of families, interactions among family members, and the constraints, conflicts, and changes affecting contemporary families. Throughout the course, we will also focus on family differences created by class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, history, and politics. Finally, we will analyze a few current debates about the family.

This is a PhD-level course, which means that it will include substantial reading and writing. Our class is also a seminar—its purpose is to explore together the ideas and themes we are reading about. Each person is an important member of the seminar. For a seminar to work well, it is important that each person complete the reading before class, share his or her thoughts and ideas with the group, help to keep the discussion on track, and monitor the flow of conversation to help produce a discussion where everyone has a chance to speak and no one person dominates the discussion.

Attendance is mandatory for this course, and students are required to participate when I open topics up for discussion. Students should complete all assigned readings before coming to class and be prepared to discuss with the larger group the key ideas found in the readings.

The broad learning objectives of SOC 8400 are to help students from a range of disciplines:

- 1) Understand and analyze the complexity and diversity of families in the United States;
- 2) Contemplate the importance of both structure and agency when looking at U.S. families, to help students understand the choices families have and the constraints they face;
- 3) Become familiar with a variety of sociological theories on families
- 4) Understand the social construction of “family”;
- 5) Think beyond our own present-day family lives to consider what families’ lives have been like across time and space; and
- 6) Understand the reasons for and substance of current debates about U.S. families.

If students have questions or concerns about the course at any point during the semester, I will be available before/after class, during office hours (starting September 15th), or by appointment. Also, students may contact me via email or phone using the contact information listed above.

One Last, Very Important Note: Because this is a course on families, students must be ready to keep an open mind and engage thoughtfully with written material, lecture material, and their own and others’ ideas about particular families. If you are not ready to keep an open mind while reading, writing, and participating in class, this course may not be for you. Please review this syllabus and contact Heather Dillaway if you have any questions or concerns.

REQUIRED READINGS

Required Books for SOC 8400:

There are NO required books for SOC 8400. Instead, we will read a series of Blackboard articles each week. **Blackboard articles are required reading and students must come to class having read all articles assigned on Blackboard for that week.** On average there will be five (5) article-length pieces to read before coming to class each week. Please visit the Blackboard site to find out which articles are due to be read each week.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course Requirements for SOC 8400:

Attendance = 10 points (5% of your course grade)

Participation/Facilitation of Discussion = 20 points (10% of your course grade)

Reaction Papers (Two) = 60 points (30 points each) (30% of your course grade)

Research Presentation on a Subfield (on December 9th): 20 points (10% of your course grade)

Final Review Paper on a Subfield = 90 points (45% of your course grade)

Total number of possible points = 200 points

Explanation of Course Requirements:

1. *Attendance:* You may miss one (1) class during the semester, no questions asked. After this one absence, every subsequent absence will affect the final course grade. There are NO exceptions to this policy, unless you have a VERIFIABLE emergency and we work something out. If you are absent due to medical reasons, I will need to see a doctor's note. Attendance will be recorded at ALL class sessions, starting on September 2, 2015, and ending on December 9, 2015. Students are responsible for making sure that I have recorded them as "present" on any given day. Please be advised that the instructor will NOT provide lecture notes for students, but all students ARE responsible for all material covered and announcements made during class. Therefore, if students must be absent at some point during the course, it is their responsibility to find a classmate who is willing to share her/his notes with them.

2. *Participation and Facilitation of Discussion:* All students are required to participate actively during discussion. This is part of all students' grades. It is not enough to simply attend class. We will dedicate time to group discussion of readings, lecture material, and course assignments, and all students should be prepared for those discussion times. To facilitate discussion and earn participation points, each week students will also write three discussion questions/thoughts about the reading(s). You may state three questions in bullet points followed by a few sentences of your thoughts about the reading(s). You might include a quote from the reading(s). What questions are raised by the reading(s)? To receive full participation credit, you will turn in these discussion questions/thoughts on 7 of the 10 weeks of class (it is your choice which weeks you choose).

Twice in the semester each of you will also have the role of coming prepared to help lead discussion (see "Guidelines for Facilitating Group Discussion" at the end of the syllabus). You will help to facilitate the discussion by posing your questions/issues to the group and helping to keep the discussion on track. You can think of your role here as helping to move along the conversation so that it stays focused on the key issues, is not derailed, provides a comprehensive discussion of the main issues, and connects with discussions we have had in previous weeks. While I will help facilitate discussions, students should be

ready to be in charge of the discussion on their appointed days. (Students will be assigned their discussion days on **September 2nd** during class.) NOTE: *If there is more than one facilitator per class meeting, students are also responsible for coordinating their discussion of the course material so that there is no overlap and so that multiple topics are covered in discussion each day.*

3. *Reaction Papers (Two):* For two of the weeks (and it is your choice which two weeks), instead of discussion questions, you will write a reaction paper within which you first summarize the major findings/results/methods of a reading (or readings) assigned for that week. Then you will offer an analysis or interpretation of themes or arguments within the reading(s). What contribution do you think that these themes or arguments make to the field? What are the weaknesses in these themes or arguments? How is the reading relevant for your own research interests in the sociology of family? Ideally you should organize your reaction paper around a broader question raised or a particular argument offered by the reading(s). Each paper should be 3-5 pages, typed, double-spaced, in 12-point font, and with one inch margins all around. These papers are due by the Wednesday class time on the two weeks of your choice. You will email your reaction papers to me. We will talk more about this assignment during class time.

4. *Final Paper and Presentation on a Subfield:* Students will choose a subfield of family sociology and construct a final paper that reviews the research literature in that subfield. (You can visit the journal, *Sociology Compass*, if you'd like to think about the type of paper I'd like to see you write: <http://sociology-compass.com/>) Students will write a 15-20 page "review of the literature" paper, typed, double-spaced, in 12-point font, and with one inch margins all around. The paper is due on Wednesday, December 16th by midnight. The paper needs to have a cohesive argument, a complete citation list of at least 20 peer-reviewed academic sources, a title page, and a full discussion of the issues raised in the literature in your subfield. You will complete a class presentation of your review of the literature for about 10-15 minutes on Wednesday, December 9th; this presentation will be followed by 10 minutes of discussion on your topic. You will also be asked to select a representative reading on your subfield for the class to read for that last day, so that your classmates are somewhat knowledgeable about your topic before you present. The final paper is worth 45% and the final presentation is worth 10% of your final course grade. Students will be required to turn in a one-paragraph description of their research paper topic in early October, and a list of tentative outside sources for the paper by early November. There will be in-class exercises that we do to help you think about how to research and write this paper, and I will hand out more detailed guidelines for the paper and presentation during the semester.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

1. *Assignment Deadlines:* If students hand in papers or exams late, they will automatically lose points on their grade for that assignment. As a rule, assignments that are one day late will be moved down one grade step (e.g., A to A- or C+ to C). Assignments that are two days late will be marked down a full letter grade (e.g., A to B). Assignments that are three days late will be moved down one full letter grade plus another grade step (e.g., A to B-). Assignments that are four days late will be marked down two full letter grades (e.g., A to C). Assignments that are more than four days late will not be accepted.
2. *Responsibility for All Material Covered During Class:* You are responsible for all announcements made during class, as well as all information relayed during lecture, all discussions we have as a group, and all films (if any) we view during class meetings. I do not provide notes for students; thus I

encourage you to find someone in the class who would be willing to share notes with you if you are absent or late to class.

3. *Cell Phones, Pagers, iPhones, iPads, iTouches, etc.:* All phones, pages, and other electronic devices should be turned off (or turned to a silent ringer option) before you enter the classroom and before the class period begins. Students should also refrain from texting, facebooking, tweeting, or surfing the web during class time. If you are using a laptop during class time, please use it for note-taking purposes only. Please respect your classmates who are trying to learn course material. I reserve the right to lower students' participation and attendance grades if students are disruptive in class because they are online during class time.
4. *Course Withdrawals and Incompletes:* Incompletes will only be given in the cases of medical or other VERIFIABLE emergencies. If students are not doing well in this course, they have the responsibility of formally withdrawing from this course. Please note that the withdrawal system at Wayne State is student-initiated, in that students who desire to withdraw from the course do so themselves via Pipeline. When students withdraw, they may receive a "withdraw passing" (WP), "withdraw failing" (WF), or "withdraw not enough information" (WN) on their transcript, depending on how much of the course is completed. According to the university's grading policies, students who do not formally withdraw from the course but stop attending class and do not complete scheduled assignments will receive a failing grade (F) in the course. *Before withdrawing from the course, you should talk to the instructor about why you are withdrawing.* The last date to withdraw from this course is November 15th. The last day to withdraw from this course AND get your money back is September 16th.
5. *Course Ground Rules:* All rules of courtesy and respect are in effect during class time. Please respect your fellow students and your instructor by coming to class on time, staying until class is over, being patient and courteous while others are talking, etc. Treat others as you yourself would like to be treated. I reserve the right to lower students' attendance and participation grades if students are disruptive in class. Please also review the course "ground rules" found at the end of the syllabus.
6. *Concerns about the Course:* If you have any concerns about the course (grade-related or otherwise), you should speak to me immediately and directly about your concerns. However, class time will NOT be used to discuss your course concerns. The concerns you have about the course should be discussed PRIVATELY with the instructor, as they are *your* concerns and not your classmates'.
7. *Problems with Writing?* The grade for written assignments will depend partially on student's ability to write a coherent, well-organized, and grammatically sound written product. If students have concerns about their writing abilities, they should visit Wayne State University's Writing Center in the Undergraduate Library (313-577-2544). There is also a page of writing resources posted on the sociology department's website that might help you:
<http://clasweb.clas.wayne.edu/Sociology/WritingResources>
8. *Student Disability Services:* If you are a student with a disability or condition (physical, emotional, or other) that might affect your performance in this course, you should inform me of this as early as possible. Students with a range of disabilities can also receive help from Student Disability Services (SDS), located in the Undergraduate Library (phone number: (313) 577-1851; email: studentdisability@wayne.edu; website: <http://studentdisability.wayne.edu/>).

9. *Plagiarism & Cheating:* All university rules about plagiarism and cheating are in effect during this course. Please make a note of this.
10. *Class Cancellations:* Class is cancelled on several weeks, because of departmental events, Thanksgiving, and my administrative responsibilities. There are also two days on which we will start class late (at 3:45pm), due to my other administrative duties. Please make a note of all cancellations and late starts. Besides these cancellations and late starts, please expect the course to meet at its scheduled time every week unless there is a weather or university emergency.
11. *Changes to the Syllabus:* Information in this syllabus is always subject to change. Please pay attention to course announcements each week so that you are informed of any changes. Please also make sure that you have access to your WSU email account so that you will receive emails that I may send via the course's Blackboard site.

FINAL GRADES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS*
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FINAL GRADES WILL BE DETERMINED USING THE FOLLOWING SCALE:

92.51-100	A	70.00-75.50	C
89.51-92.50	A-	69.99 or below	F
86.51-89.50	B+		
82.51-86.50	B		
78.51-82.50	B-		
75.51-78.50	C+		

*Please remember that most graduate students need a “B” final grade or higher, in order to receive credit for the course within their program of study.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS
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A. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE FAMILY

Sept 2nd: class starts at 3pm

Topic: Introduction to the Course, Discussion Signups, Research Interests

Sept 9th: NO CLASS

Topic: Perspectives on the Family

Required Reading: Visit Blackboard

If you are a PhD student in Sociology, please attend the Sociology Graduate Student Orientation this afternoon!

Sept 16th: class starts at 3pm

Topic: Family Theory, Part I

Required Reading: Visit Blackboard

Sept 23rd: class starts at 3:45pm

Topic: Family Theory, Part II

Required Reading: Visit Blackboard

Sept 30th: NO CLASS

No required reading. Please work on your other assignments instead.

B. TOPICS IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF THE FAMILY

Oct 7th: class starts at 3pm

Topic: Intimacy and Marriage

Required Reading: Visit Blackboard

Research Paper Topic Paragraph Due

Oct 14th: class starts at 3pm

Topic: Parenthood and Reproduction

Required Reading: Visit Blackboard

Oct 21st: NO CLASS

No required reading. Please work on your other assignments instead.

Oct 28th: class starts at 3pm

Topic: Work and Family

Required Reading: Visit Blackboard

Nov 4th: NO CLASS

No required reading. Please work on your other assignments instead.

Nov 11th: class starts at 3pm

Topic: Poverty and Economic Instability

Required Reading: Visit Blackboard

Research Paper Source List Due

Nov 18th: class starts at 3:45pm

Topic: Race and Ethnicity

Required Reading: Visit Blackboard

Nov 25th: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving week

No required reading. Please work on your other assignments instead.

Dec 2nd: class starts at 3pm

Topic: The Dark Side of Family Life: Violence, Delinquency and Crime in the Family

Required Reading: Visit Blackboard

Dec 9th: class starts at 3pm

Topic: Student Presentations on Subfields of Family Sociology

Required Reading: Visit Blackboard

December 16th – SOC 8400 RESEARCH PAPERS DUE BY MIDNIGHT VIA EMAIL

Guidelines for Facilitating Group Discussion:

On one designated day during the semester, each student will help discuss reading assignments. (Signups for facilitation of discussion will occur on September 2nd during class.) Appointed students will direct our conversations about the chapters/articles we have read during the current week. Students' tasks include the following: (1) *briefly explain some of the key themes of the readings;* (2) *identify questions the articles raise so that we can carry out our group discussion;* and (3) *highlight confusing/problematic sections of the readings so that we can clarify their meaning.* Student facilitators are also encouraged to think of innovative ways to create discussion through large or small group activities. This assignment will give students experience in identifying critical issues and themes in scholarly works, and also presentation/teaching experience. Below are some questions to think about when preparing to facilitate discussion. These questions are simply guides; students may discover that there are more important questions to address than the ones I suggest.

Finding Themes in the Articles You Read:

1. What is/are the major research question(s) or theme(s) of the work(s) you have read? Define the theme(s) and come up with an example of each theme you define.
2. What is/are the key findings or conclusions of the book chapters/articles in recent weeks? Can you summarize these findings in one or two sentences? Are these findings controversial and debatable at all?
3. What are the readings really saying about families today?

When Thinking of Questions to Discuss with the Class, Perhaps Try to Answer the Following:

1. Can you identify ways in which the researcher(s) could have gone farther in exploring this particular topic?
2. What implications do the authors' findings have for our definitions of family?
3. Why did I pick this reading for a "family" course? Do you think the subject of the readings is appropriate to discuss, or are there more important subjects that we should be discussing?
4. What is most interesting to you about this reading? What is most controversial? Does it make you think differently about family/certain types of families?
5. How does your reading fit with or contradict all the other readings assigned for this week/prior weeks?? How are the readings similar to each other and how are they different? Are there any common themes? Do authors of these readings contradict each other?
6. Given the argument that the author(s) present(s), could you play "devil's advocate?" In other words, could we argue the opposite viewpoint?
7. Is the author presenting a biased viewpoint? If so, how do you know? Would you discuss the author's topic differently?
8. Who is the audience for this reading? How does this impact the author's arguments or presentation of the topic?
9. In what ways does this reading make you think deeper about the subjects covered in this class?
10. What might be the most interesting aspect of this reading for individuals in the class – i.e., students at Wayne State or residents of the Detroit Metropolitan Area? How is this reading relevant for us?
11. What argument/theme in the readings did you dislike and why?
12. Based on the readings you have done, do we need to do more research in order to understand U.S. families? In other words, does the research push our knowledge far enough?
13. How can we take authors' conclusions and learn from them? What should we take away from this reading?

Ideas for Small/Large Group Activities:

1. Have groups of students take opposite viewpoints on a particular "family" debate related to our readings.
2. Bring in current event articles or media items that relate to course material for that week, and discuss connections.
3. Brainstorm about how to study this topic further.
4. Pair up students and have them interview each other on a common question about families that is related to our readings, and then compare answers/experiences.
5. Come up with your own idea!

~ See me if you have problems or questions about facilitating discussion on your designated day. ~

GROUND RULES FOR CLASS DISCUSSION*

We are distributing these ground rules to help guide future class discussions. Everyone in this class has an individual social location and a personal perspective to go along with that location. To facilitate class discussion, I encourage you to think about how everyone's perspective is shaped by their social location. I would like each of you to think in terms of the relationship between society, ideas about "the family," and the individual when contributing to class discussions.

1. Recognize that the various axes of our social location – our gender, race, class, sexuality, age, etc. – grant us different amounts of power and prestige in society.
2. Acknowledge that sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism and other forms of institutionalized oppression exist.
3. Acknowledge that we are all systematically taught misinformation about our own group and about members of other groups. This is true for members of privileged and oppressed groups.
4. Agree not to blame ourselves or others for the misinformation we have learned, but to accept responsibility for not repeating misinformation after we have learned otherwise.
5. Agree not to "blame victims" for the conditions of their lives.
6. Assume that people – both the people we study and the members of this class – always do the best they can.
7. Acknowledge that, perhaps, there is no "correct" type of "family." Accept the diversity in family experience and try to understand it rather than critique it.
8. Actively pursue information about our own groups and that of others.
9. Share information about our own groups with other members of the class and never demean, devalue, or in any way "put down" people for their experiences.
10. Agree to combat actively the myths and stereotypes about our own groups and other groups so that we can break down the walls that prohibit group cooperation and group gain.
11. Create a safe atmosphere for open discussion. If members of the class wish to make comments that they do not want repeated outside of the classroom, they can preface their remarks with a request that the class agrees not to repeat their remarks.
12. Follow general rules of courtesy and respect for others. Take turns speaking so that no one dominates discussion and acknowledge everyone's opportunities to speak/share knowledge with the class.

*These guidelines were adapted from guidelines written by Lynn Weber and Rita Gallin.

Just a Heads Up: We will do these exercises across the semester in class, to make sure you are moving ahead on your research papers.

Exercise 1:

Come to class prepared to answer these questions verbally:

- 1) I am interested in learning more about
- 2) I am interested in this area because.....
- 3) A book or article that I admire that touches on the study of the family is.....
- 4) One of the most important areas of family life to understand is.....

Exercise 2:

Write a memo where you answer the following questions (which you will share in a roundtable discussion in the class and with the entire class).

- 1) In this class the topic I'd like to study is.....
- 2) The research question I am interested in learning more about is.....
- 3) My (superficial) impression so far is that the literature does a better job ofthan of
- 4) Broadly conceived, I think that my topic falls under these areas of the family.....
- 5) Potential search words might be

Exercise 3: Finding a role model

The purpose of this week's exercise is to find an article that might serve as a role model. You will find an article and read it. (It doesn't have to be a perfect role model. It just needs to be an example of one approach.)

Here is what you will do:

- 1) Find an article that you would like to read (ideally it will be on the family, but it is not essential that it focus on the family)
- 2) Read it
- 3) Post it on blackboard for others to see
- 4) Write a one-page memo where you state the thesis of the piece and the intellectual positions that the author was challenging.
- 5) You will share this information with the class.

Exercise 4:

- 1) Submit key words for your subfield
- 2) Look up the words in the thesaurus and find other key words
- 3) Generate a list of ten possible sources you could read for your paper
- 4) Write a one-page memo where you state your key works, restate the topic you are interested in studying, and restate your understanding of your research question and the competing arguments or answers to your research question

Exercise 5:

How do you focus your research paper?

Draw a diagram where you try to describe the different bodies of literature you are trying to discuss. What is more interesting to you? What is core? What is periphery? What's the focus of your work?

Exercise 6:

Bring to class two sample articles from your subfield. One should be a high-quality article. One should be a low-quality article. You will present these articles. What are the components of quality in a review of the literature?

Exercise 7:

Turn in a list of articles you will read on your subfield, to help you write your paper and present on the last day. Pick one article from your subfield that the entire class should read for December 9th.

Exercise 8:

Design a study that you would like to complete on the family. State a general research question. State a general research design. This should be only 2 pages single-spaced. You should not spend a lot of time on this exercise. Now think about how the subfield of literature helps provide the foundation for your research question and research design.