**SOCIOLOGY OF KINSHIP & FAMILY**

### Sociology of the Family

This course presents the social and cultural forces that have implications for the formation and maintenance of social relationships with special attention to marriage and family forms and functioning. Additionally, the course will compare social/cultural patterns and implications for individuals, groups, and society. The course includes (but is not limiited to) a focus on social aspects of relationship formation (mate selection), familial roles, parental roles, sexuality, gender and the life cycle.

**Grade breakup:**

Class participation and attendance 10%

Quizzes 20%

Mid-term exam 30%

Final Exam 40%

### Topic 1: What is a family?

* **Unit 1:** The family as a social (and biological) institution.
* **Unit 2:** Theories of family development: conjugal kinship systems and the nuclear family.
* **Unit 3:** Alternative family and household forms.

**Read:**  
Library Reserve: S. Mintz, “New Rules: Post-War Families”; Tricarico, The Italians of Greenwich Village (two chapters on the ethnic family).  
  
Kearl’s Guide to the Sociology of the Family: <http://www.trinity.edu/nmkearl/fam-inst.html#mm>

### Topic 2: The Demography of Living Arrangements in America

* **Unit 1:** Family households
* **Unit 2:** Nonfamily households

**Internet Lab**: Research data bases at [http://www.uscensus.gov](http://www.uscensus.gov/)

### Topic 3: Family Dynamics: The Social Construction of Family Life

* **Unit 1:** The rules and activities that create a family microculture; ethnic and class variation.
* **Unit 2:** Age and sex as a basis for allocating roles within family microculture.
* **Unit 3:** Individuation within family microculture.
* **Unit 4:** Family microculture reflected in the spatial properties of the “home”.

**Read:** Library Reserve: M. Devault, “The Meaning(s) of Family”; E. Pleck, Celebrating the Family.

### Topic 4: Dating and Mate Selection

* **Unit 1:** Historical and cross-cultural variations: social arrangements and romance.
* **Unit 2:** Contemporary strategies for finding partners.
* **Unit 3:** Social pressures and marital endogamy.
* **Unit 4:** The social calculus of relationship satisfaction and commitment.

**Read:**  
Library Reserve: Michael et al., “Finding A Partner”; Sacher and Fine, “Predicting Relationship Stability after Six Months among Dating Couples”; Tricarico, “Personals Ethnicity”.  
  
Kearl’s Guide: Dating and Courtship

### Topic 5: Marriage

* **Unit 1:** Erotic friendship: the ideals of romance and companionability.
* **Unit 2:** Spouse-centered kinship.
* **Unit 3:** Partnership and pragmatism.

**Read:** Kearl’s Guide: Marriage

### Topic 6: Working and Family

* **Unit 1:** Structural and historical determinants of household division of labor.
* **Unit 2:** Gender and age variation within the household division of labor.
* **Unit 3:** Reconciling work and family.

**Read:**  
Library Reserve: J. Bernard, “The Good Provider Role: Its Rise and Fall”  
  
A.L. Hochschild, “Work: The Great Escape”.  
  
Kearl’s Guide: Work and Family

### Topic 7: Divorce and Remarriage

* **Unit 1:** Statistical patterns in the divorce rate.
* **Unit 2:** High divorce rates as a function of changing sex roles, “cultural narcissism”, and new marital ideals.
* **Unit 3:** Divorce and changes in legal and religious norms.
* **Unit 4:** Patterns of remarriage.

**Read:**  
Kearl’s Guide: Divorce  
  
Internet Lab: Research census data to track trends in divorce and remarriage.

### Topic 8: Parent and Parenting

* **Unit 1:** Economic and cultural determinants of low fertility; “priceless” children and lifestyle liabilities.
* **Unit 2:** The social construction of parenting ideals.
* **Unit 3:** Social origins and implications of parenting practices in cross-cultural perspective.
* **Unit 4:** Transition to Parenting.
* **Unit 5:** Parent-child relationships through the life cycle.

**Read:**  
Library Reserve: Hymowitz, “Why Parents Fail”; A. Lareau, Unequal Childhoods; Kearl’s Guide: Parenting  
  
Internet Lab: Survey sites devoted to parenting advice (e.g., National Parenting Center,[http://www.tnpc.com](http://www.tnpc.com/))

### Topic 9: Child Care

* **Unit 1:** Types of Child Care in Modern Society
* **Unit 2:** The Social Basis for Alternative Child Care
* **Unit 3:** Child Care and Social Values
* **Unit 4:** Supplying Daycare

**Read:**  
Early Head Start National Resource Center (Zero to Three), <http://www.ehsnrc.org/InformationResources/rmfamily.htm>

Dreby. 2007. “Children and Power in Mexican Transnational Families” Sarkisian and Gerstel. 2004. “Kin Support among Blacks and Whites: Race and Family Organization.