Diversity in American Families - Draft Syllabus

SOCI 3506 – L11
Summer Session I 2017
MTWTh 9:00-12:00
Room TBD

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Office hours by appointment

DESCRIPTION
This course covers a subject about which every student possesses personal experience: family life! However, while any single person has experienced only a small slice of the possibilities of family life, U.S. families vary dramatically based on the characteristics of their members (race and ethnicity, national origin and legal status, social class, sexual identification, age). They also vary by the composition of the family unit (two biological or adoptive parents, single parent with children, step-family, and others). While we will cover much the same topics as any course on the sociology of family life, the focus will always be on family diversity and on the profound ways it affects families and their members.

We will begin with units on the definition of “family,” on the history of family life, and on sociological approaches to race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Afterwards, we will cover the following topic areas: marriage and cohabitation, parents and children, divorce and stepfamilies, the interplay between paid work and family life, and family violence. A few examples of our focus on diversity will be coverage of same-sex marriage and families, of socioeconomic differences in parenting, of the migration of parents across national boundaries, and the roles of the elderly in contemporary families.

At the same time, this is an Eloquentia Perfecta 3 seminar. The writing component will consist of frequent but very short assignments: three short papers, and a number of discussion notes. Some of your writing will be drafted and later revised into a final, polished form. The oral component will include a student presentation and a debate, as well as frequent class discussion.

This course has several objectives.
1. You will become familiar with modern sociological research on families.
2. You will understand the sources, nature, and consequences of diversity in American family life.
3. Through writing and revising papers, editing the work of others, and participating in classroom exercises, you will gain tools to improve your academic writing. Through delivering oral presentations, critiquing the presentations of others, and participating in a debate, you will gain tools to improve your formal speaking.
REQUIRED MATERIALS

There is one textbook available for purchase at the University Bookstore.


The other required readings on the attached course schedule may be found on the course’s Blackboard page.

Important: You must *bring all assigned readings to class*, in hard copy or on an electronic device, on the days scheduled for discussion.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Because this is an Eloquentia Perfecta course, there are no exams or quizzes. Instead, you will be graded on written assignments and on oral presentations and participation.

1) Participation (10%). Participation in class discussion, as distinct from the formal oral presentations you will make at several points during the semester, is required. At the same time, I recognize that some students are more comfortable speaking up than others. I will award full credit for a moderate level of participation. If you hardly ever contribute to class discussion, your course grade will be reduced. It is possible to get extra credit if your participation shows excellent preparation and forethought.

2) Discussion notes (10%). Instructions are attached to the syllabus.

3) Short essay on parental migration (25%). Assignment instructions will be distributed in class.

4) In-class debate and position paper (25%). Assignment instructions will be distributed in class.

5) Cultural evidence of family change paper and oral presentation (30%). Assignment instructions will be distributed in class.

Assignment and grading policies

- To receive a passing grade, you must complete each paper.
- All assignments must be completed and handed in during class on the due date shown on the schedule, unless you are instructed otherwise. A paper will be penalized one full grade for each class it is late. The penalties are cumulative if an assignment is several classes late.
EXPECTATIONS AND ATTENDANCE

You are expected to do the readings and assignments by the dates indicated on the attached class schedule. Please keep in mind that summer courses pack an entire semester’s material into five weeks. Although the reading list has been streamlined to the extent possible, the only way to succeed is to keep up. There is too much material to cram in the night before each paper is due. Plan to spend at least two hours reading and writing in between each class.

As stated earlier, you are expected to bring the day’s assigned readings to class. You may use a laptop or tablet to view the readings in class and to take notes. Alternatively, bring your hard copy of the text.

Because regular attendance is essential to mastering the material, a role will be taken each day. You are allowed two unexcused absences with no questions asked. 3 unexcused absences will result in a five-point deduction from your final grade. 4 or more unexcused absences will result in an additional five-point deduction from your final grade. Being ten or more minutes late three times will count as an absence.

Of course, excused absences are allowed as defined by university policy. It is your responsibility to provide documentation that an absence is excused. No matter the reason for an absence, you are responsible for material from the missed class.

A note about courtesy:
Although this course focuses on facts, we will discuss topics about which many people hold strong opinions. When it is appropriate, you are welcome to express your opinions. I ask everyone to please be respectful of each other’s viewpoints. I will endeavor to do the same. I also strongly encourage you to use facts learned in the course to back up the opinions you express. The hope is that you will learn to become a more informed and effective participant in debates about issues related to work, family, and gender.

TECHNOLOGY

1. I will only send course related email messages to Fordham email addresses. It is your responsibility to regularly check your Fordham account for course-related communications.

2. Email is the most effective way to get in touch with me, your professor. I usually respond to messages no later than the next school day (and sometimes much sooner). Please do not expect me to check email on the weekends.

3. As a courtesy to your fellow students, please silence your electronic devices during class.
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

1. All assignments submitted for credit must be your own work. As stated in the Arts and Sciences Policy on Academic Integrity (http://www.fordham.edu/Audience/handbooks.shtml#6), plagiarism occurs when individuals attempt to present as their own what has come from another source….whether such theft is accidental or deliberate. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to 1) Failing to acknowledge the ideas of another person, whether or not such ideas are paraphrased, from whatever source….; 2) Attempting to rewrite borrowed material by simply dropping a word here and there, substituting a few words for others, or moving around words or sentences; 3) Failing to place quotation marks around borrowed material in the approved style; 4) Presenting, as one’s own an assignment, paper, or computer program partially or wholly prepared by another person.

2. You are prohibited from providing or receiving unauthorized assistance on examinations, quizzes, or in the fulfillment of any course requirement.

Violation of these rules, or any other violation of academic integrity, will result in a formal report being filed with the Department Chair and the Dean. It is also likely to result in a “0” or an “F” on a specific exam or assignment – or a failure for the whole course. When in doubt about whether something is allowed, please come see me!

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of Fordham University. If you believe that you have a disability that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, coursework, or assessment of the object of this course, you may be entitled to accommodations. Please schedule a meeting to speak with someone at the Office of Disability Services (Rose Hill - O’Hare Hall, Lower Level, x0655 or at Lincoln Center – Room 207, x6282).
Diversity in American Families
Discussion notes and oral presentations
Due dates vary

Three times during the course, each student will write a brief discussion note about the day’s readings. Each discussion note should be between 1-2 double spaced pages (or between 300-500 words). They must be submitted to Blackboard before the class begins.

For each discussion note, address two topics.

1. What did you take away from the readings? Do not summarize the entire day’s assignment. Instead, focus upon what you believe to be the main points, or the most interesting ones. Comparing and contrasting the assigned readings (when there are two) is not required, but is recommended.

2. Offer one or more questions or comments to help get class discussion going. If you think a reading is flawed, criticize it. If you think it is exciting, suggest further questions that it inspires you to ask. If you find it difficult to understand, it is perfectly OK to ask for clarification. (As your instructor, I appreciate knowing what students have difficulty understanding!) Make sure you explain the thinking behind your questions or comments, rather than simply posing them.

Students who have written discussion notes will be discussion leaders that day. This simply means that you will present (read or verbally summarize) your note at the beginning of the class. Your questions will be incorporated into the day’s discussion.

The discussion notes will be graded on the following basis.

- Full credit for an acceptable note
- Half credit for a note that does not follow the directions, is poorly thought out, or sloppily written
- No credit for a note that is not submitted before class

Your oral presentation of the discussion notes will not be graded separately, but they will be evaluated as part of your participation grade. As long as you speak loudly and clearly, and tell a coherent “story”, you will earn full credit.