HDFS 524: Work as a Context for Human Development
Spring 2008

Thursdays 1:00 – 4:00 pm, 105 White Building
Instructor: Kathryn Hynes

Course Description
This course focuses on the complex ways that work influences children, parents, and families. Drawing from economics, sociology, and developmental psychology, we will examine recent changes in adults’ allocation of time to work and family, the reasons for these changes, and how they affect women, men, couples, and children. Beyond these broad patterns, we will focus on the way work arrangements and their impacts vary across population subgroups such as dual-career couples, single parents, and low-income families. We will also examine the role of social contexts such as norms, economic conditions, and social policies in work-family decisions and their implications. Throughout the semester we will focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the empirical strategies used in the readings. Students will have the opportunity to complement the course materials with in-depth study of a related topic of their own choosing.

Goals for the class
1. To gain a broad familiarity with the major theories, facts, and researchers in the work-family area today
2. To understand the strengths and weaknesses of various empirical methods for answering particular work-family research questions
3. To write a professional book review
4. To conduct an original research study including reviewing relevant literature, identifying hypotheses, and analyzing data.

Class Format
The class will be divided into two components. Some of the time we will use a standard seminar format in which students are expected to read the assigned material and come to class prepared to discuss relevant substantive and empirical issues. We will also have several days consisting of student presentations and discussion that allow us to cover more substantive material than if everyone read the same articles and books. Finally, throughout the semester we will be working on your final paper projects. Class time will be devoted to sharing substantive information about your topics, providing each other with feedback on hypotheses and research design, and finally presenting final paper projects.

Paper topics Each student will write an empirical paper. Literature reviews and research proposals will not be sufficient. Each student will discuss final paper topics with me early in the semester.

Data You are welcome to use any reasonable data source for this final paper project, including data from your research assistantship or from other projects that you are working on. For those of you who do not have data available, I have data that (with IRB approval) you may use. The data will not be perfectly set up for your project, but will provide you with some basics to start.
Data sets include: Child Development Supplement of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, NICHD Study of Early Child Care, and the National Survey of America’s Families.

Class requirements and grading

15% Presentation of Empirical Articles Once during the semester we will divide up a longer list of reading and each student will present two of the articles to the class. Presentations will be 30 minutes (15 minutes per article, the same length as a conference presentation) using Power Point. Presentations will include the article’s background and theory, main research questions, data, methods, results, conclusions, and your own interpretations of the strengths and limitations of the study including its technical merit and its substantive contribution to the larger work-family literature.

Purpose: The presentations will expose the class to more material than if everyone read the same thing. In addition, formal presentations are an essential part of many careers therefore practicing these skills is important.

15% Book Review You will read a work-family book of your own choosing. After reviewing several sample book reviews, you will then write a professional quality book review. In class you will describe the book to your classmates but these will not be formal, graded presentations.

Purpose: To allow you to read a book of interest to you and to provide you with experience writing a book review. Also, sharing the content of your book with the class will greatly expand the amount of information we can cover in the semester.

10% Preliminary Paper Abstract After discussing your paper topic with me and identifying an appropriate data set, you will write a two page paper abstract. Because the first two pages of a paper or grant proposal (that introduce your topic, state its significance, and specify your specific research questions) are the most important, practice writing these well is critical. I expect the quality of writing for these to be very high.

Purpose: To provide you with practice crafting good introductory sections.

10% Preliminary Literature Review for Final Paper These do not need to be fully written out (bullets are fine) but need to provide a clear outline of your literature review including citations to central theories and empirical papers, your research questions, and your hypotheses.

Purpose: To keep you moving along with your final papers and to provide you with feedback about your research questions and hypotheses.

10% Presentation of Final Paper You will present preliminary results from your final paper during the last class period. These will be formal, Power Point presentations similar to a conference presentation, but with added time at the end for you to pose questions to the class and receive useful feedback on your project.

Purpose: These presentations serve several goals: 1) forcing you to have preliminary results before finals start, 2) providing you with presentation practice, and 3) providing you with an opportunity to receive feedback from your classmates about your theory, methods, results, and interpretations so that you can improve your final papers.

35% Final Paper A semester is not long enough to do a perfect paper therefore it is reasonable to have a section at the end of your paper about the limitations of your analysis, appropriate ways
to improve your analysis, and whether you think it is worth pursuing this line of research further. I expect the sophistication of your study to match your progress toward your PhD.

**Purpose:** The most important thing you can learn in graduate school is to conduct high quality research. This class will provide you with an opportunity to work on your own research project. Students may work on papers that are associated with their research assistantships, that build on their MA theses, or that explore a new topic. I hope that these papers will be foundations for conference presentations and future publications.

**Timelines for final paper projects**
- Feb 21 – paper topics due. Abstract, preliminary hypotheses, thoughts about data to use
- March 20 – preliminary lit review (bullets are fine), hypotheses, how your study adds to prior literature, data selection, and analysis plan due
- March 21 – April 30: Data set up & analysis
- May 1 – Final paper presentations
- May 7 – Papers due

*** SCHEDULE OF SEMINAR TOPICS AND COURSE READINGS ***

**Jan 17 – Introduction**

**Jan 24 – Women’s labor force participation**

**Jan 31 – The division of household labor**

**In class: Select articles for Feb 14 presentations.**

**Feb 7 - The care of children**

**Feb 14 - The consequences of work-family decisions on women, men, and children**

**Presentations of Empirical Articles**

**Feb 21 – Balancing work and family**

**Paper abstracts due**

**Feb 28 Contexts shaping work-family decisions and experiences**

**March 6 - Book reviews due**
In class we will share and discuss the books that you read.

**March 10 – 14 Spring break**

**March 20 - Literature Reviews due**
In class we will do peer reviews of literature reviews, hypotheses, and analysis plan to provide you with early feedback on your project.
March 27 - Low-income families


April 3 – Work and child care among welfare families


April 10 - Emerging Adulthood: The implications of work for family formation, led by Mary Ann Demi


April 17 - Workplace policies

April 24 - Comparative contexts


May 1 - Presentations of final paper projects

Final papers are due on Wed May 7 by 4:00 pm.