At the outset of the 21st century, American family patterns show little resemblance to the breadwinner-homemaker household that predominated during the mid-20th century. Often mislabeled "traditional," this family form has dwindled from almost 60 percent of American households in 1960 to less than 15 percent today. In its place has risen a diverse range of arrangements, including dual-earning couples, single-parent households, and unmarried, childless adults. As children and adult, Americans today are also highly likely to experience change in their family circumstances. This course will explore the causes, contours, and consequences of this "family revolution" by examining the theoretical and political debates that it has spawned and by reviewing the empirical evidence that might help resolve these debates. Our goal is to understand the problems and prospects for contemporary family life in the U.S.

Course Organization and Requirements:

As an advanced seminar, the course will rely heavily on student participation and initiative as well as on in-depth reading and preparation for each weekly meeting.

"Reflection" memos: For the first two assignments (Sept. 18 and 25), class participants will submit a short written “reflection” memo on that week’s assigned readings. These memos, which should be no longer than 1-3 pages, are intended to provoke students to think seriously about the readings and prepare for class discussions. Students may submit either (1) a brief list of the central questions and debates raised by the readings, or (2) a short analysis of the main arguments and debates. The memos are due in class on the assigned date and will be used as guide for class discussion.

In-class "debates": After several weeks of introductory readings and discussion, class meetings will be organized around in-class debates, each of which addresses an issue of central importance and controversy. Students will take turns dividing into small “teams” to prepare in-class presentations and conduct class discussion on the week’s debate topic. Each student will participate on three debate teams (with each team consisting of approximately 4 students). Topics are divided into three groups, and each student will join one team within each group. Topics will be assigned as much as possible according to students’ preferences.

Written paper: A paper based on one of the debate topics is due at the end of the semester. Final grades will be based on the quality of class participation and the final paper.
Readings: The weekly assigned readings are required for everyone. For those class sessions in which you are part of the debate team, additional reading may be needed to supplement the assigned material. Books to purchase include:

Susan Ferguson, *Shifting the Center: Understanding Contemporary Families*, 3rd edition
Arlene Skolnick and Jerome Skolnick, *Family in Transition*, 14th edition
Xeroxed readings (distributed in class)
Additional readings, if/when necessary to enhance debate presentations
Weekly Topics and Assigned Readings

Sept. 11: Introduction and Overview

Sept. 18: American Families as Contested Terrain:
How and why are theoretical and political debates intertwined?

Skolnick: Skolnick, Introduction: Family in Transition
1. Goode, The Theoretical Importance of the Family
6. Giele, Decline of Family: Conservative, Liberal, and Feminist Views

2. Zinn, Feminist Rethinking from Racial-Ethnic Families
3. Weston, Exiles from Kinship
4. Lichter and Qian, Marriage and Family in a Multiracial society

Xerox: Poponoe, American Family Decline
Skolnick, The State of the American Family

Sept. 25: Where Are We Now, and How Did We Get Here:
Does family change represent decline, resilience, or something else?

Skolnick: 2. Giddens, The Global Revolution in Family and Personal Life
3. Skolnick, The Life Course Revolution
4. Hernandez, Changes in the Demographics of Families Over the Course of American History
8. Jackson, Destined for Equality

Ferguson: 5. Coontz, Historical Perspectives on Family Diversity

Xerox: Cancian, Love in America: Gender and Self-Development

Oct. 2: Sex, Sexuality, and the Transition to Adulthood: As youth grow up, are new sexual patterns an indication of rising personal freedom or new pressures to separate sex from intimacy and commitment?

Skolnick 10. Schalet, Raging Hormones, Regulated Love: Adolescent Sexuality in the United States and the Netherlands
11. Bailey, Sexual Revolution(s)

10. Raffaelli and Ontai, ‘She’s 16 Years Old and There’s Boys Callin Over to the House’: An Exploratory Study of Sexual Socialization in Latino Families
11. Savin-Williman, Dating and Romantic Relationships Among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth

Xerox: Furstenberg, et al., Growing Up is Harder To Do
Oct. 9: Columbus Day – no class

Oct. 16: Adult Relationships: Are more fluid and diverse intimate bonds a case of expanded options or a decline of commitment?

Skolnick: 7. Chauncey, Why Do Gays Want to Marry?
13. Skolnick, Grounds for Marriage: How Relationships Succeed or Fail
14. Casper and Bianchi, Cohabitation
15. Furstenberg, The Future of Marriage
16. Hackstaff, Divorce Culture: A Quest for Relational Equality in Marriage

Ferguson: 12. Cherlin, The Deinstitutionalization of Marriage
15. Seltzer, Families Formed Outside of Marriage
16. Stiers, From This Day Forward: Commitment, Marriage, and Family in Lesbian and Gay Relationships

Xerox: Swidler, Love and Adulthood in American Culture

Oct. 23: The Rise of Work-Family Conflict: Does the rise of new institutional conflicts between family and work result from the rise of nontraditional families or the failure of work institutions to adapt to families that increasingly rely on women’s employment?

Skolnick: 26. Newman, Family Values Against the Odds
28. Gerson and Jacobs, The Work-Home Crunch (or Ferguson, 40)
29. Rubin, Families on the Fault Line
30. Presser, The Economy That Never Sleeps
31. Warren and Warren, Why Middle-Class Mothers and Fathers Are Going Broke

Ferguson: 41. Hochschild, The Emotional Geography of Work and Family Life

Xerox: Gerson, Moral Dilemmas, Moral Strategies, and the Transformation of Gender
Oct. 30: The Contested Terrain of Motherhood: Does the rise of women’s employment represent new options for women and more balanced, egalitarian ways of being and seeing mothers or has it created new difficulties for women and new dangers for children?

Ferguson: 22. Hill Collins, Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood
24. Parrenas, Mothering From a Distance: Emotions, Gender, and Intergenerational Relations in Filipino Transnational Families
42. Crittenden, The Mommy Tax
Xerox: Barnett and Rivers, Biology, Destiny, and Bad Science
Epstein, Working Moms Under Attack
Harrington, Women, the Values Debate, and a New Liberal Politics

Nov. 6: Beyond Mothers: Has the rise of new family forms redefined the meaning of parenting to include more involvement among fathers and other caretakers, or has it intensified inequality between caretakers and other household members?

Skolnick: 19. Cowan and Cowan, New Families: Modern Couples as New Pioneers
22. Townsend, The Four Facets of Fatherhood
34. Stacey, Gay and Lesbian Families: Queer Like Us
Ferguson: 14. Schwartz, Peer Marriage
25. Coltrane, Fathering: Paradoxes, Contradictions, and Dilemmas
26. Hamer, What It Means to Be Daddy: Fatherhood for Black Men Living Away From Their Children
27. Marsiglio, Overlooked Aspects of Stepfathering
32. Arendell, The Social Self as Gendered: A Masculinist Discourse of Divorce
43. Carrington, No Place Like Home: The Division of Domestic Labor in Lesbigay Families
Nov. 13: Children’s Fate: Are children better off growing up in a specific type of family – such as the two-parent, homemaker-breadwinner household – or does family “process” matter more than family form?

Skolnick: 9. Gerson, Children of Gender Revolution: Some Theoretical Questions and Findings From the Field
17. Kelly and Emery, Children’s Adjustment Following Divorce: Risk and Resilience Perspectives
23. Mintz, Beyond Sentimentality: American Childhood as Social and Cultural Construct
24. Galinksy, What Children Think About Their Working Parents
25. Bengston, Biblarz, and Roberts, How Families Still Matter: A Longitudinal Study of Youth in Two Generations (or Ferguson, 20)
37. Edin and Kefalas, Unmarried with Children

Ferguson: 17. Vinovskis, Historical Perspectives on Parent-Child Interactions
18. Sugarman, Single-Parent Families
19. Stacey and Biblarz, (How) Does the Sexual Orientation or Parents Matter?
31. Ahrons, No Easy Answers: Why the Popular View of Divorce is Wrong
34. Amato, Life-Span Adjustment of Children to Their Parent’s Divorce

Nov. 20: Class, Race, and Ethnic Divides: Does social inequality among families reflect the diverse “family values” of differing ethnic and class subcultures or, instead, families’ unequal access to economic and social opportunities?

Skolnick: 32. Taylor, Diversity within African American Families
33. Zinn and Wells, Diversity in Latino Families: New Lessons for Family Social Science
35. Pyke, ‘The Normal American Family’ as an Interpretive Structure of Family Life among Grown Children of Korean and Vietnamese Immigrants

Ferguson: 6. Hill, Black Families: Beyond Revisionist Scholarship
7. Griswold del Castillo, La Familia: Family Cohesion Among Mexican American Families in the Urban Southwest, 1848-1900
Nov. 27: Political Fallout of Family Change: Does the rise of new family forms and practices signal the emergence of growing tolerance and support for diversity or the emergence of unending culture wars among groups with conflicting values?

Xerox: Dombrink, Red, Blue, and Purple: American Views on Personal Morality and Law
Furstenberg, Can Marriage Be Saved?
Gerson, Morality of Time: Women and the Expanding Workweek
Joffe, It’s Not Just Abortion, Stupid
Morone, Tropes of Wrath: Virtue, Markets, and the Family
Rubin, Why Don’t They Listen to Us? Speaking to the Working Class
Schudson, No Time For Nostalgia
Wisenale, Think Tanks and Family Values

Dec. 4: What is to be done: Are the solutions to new family dilemmas and insecurities best sought through collective efforts to create public policies or via the private strategies of individuals and families?

Skolnick: 20. Clawson and Gerstel, Caring for Our Young: Child Care in Europe and the United States (or Ferguson, 44)
Ferguson: 45. Rank, As American as Apple Pie: Poverty and welfare
46. Hays, Flat Broke With Children: The Ground Level Results of Welfare Reform
48. Rainwater and Smeeding, Is There Hope for America’s Low-Income Children?
Xerox: Gornick, Overworked, Time Poor, and Abandoned by Uncle Sam
Strober, Children as a Public Good

Dec. 11: Wrap-up: Reflections on the current state of, and future prospects for, American families