Gender, Work, and Family
Erin L. Kelly, University of Minnesota, Sociology, Spring 2004

What We’re Doing: Our Goals
In this course, we will explore the competing responsibilities of market work (i.e. paid work, which we usually call "work") and family work (i.e. managing a home, caring for children and other relatives) in the contemporary United States. We will investigate work-family conflicts from the perspective of women, men, and children and we will ask how work-family conflicts differ across occupations and types of families. We will consider how patterns of combining work and family responsibilities affect inequality between men and women and, ultimately, between different racial and ethnic groups. We will examine how individual's cope with the dual responsibilities of market work and family work, but we will also consider changes in corporate practices and public policies that might help many Americans.

Objectives for the course:
1) Understand different perspectives on the intersection of work and family, including institutional and social psychological perspectives.
2) Gain factual knowledge about how Americans combine work and family responsibilities and the apparent consequences of those arrangements.
3) Critically assess current and potential responses to work-family conflicts, including individual and family arrangements, corporate practices, and public policies.
4) Practice reading primary sources in the social sciences critically and carefully.
5) Practice discussing both academic sources and personal experiences analytically.
6) Improve writing and presentation skills.
7) [Add your objective here:]

How We’ll Do It: Teaching and Learning Strategies
Our Seminar:
This course is a seminar. A seminar is defined (in Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary) as “a group of advanced students studying under a professor with each doing original research and all exchanging results through reports and discussions.” I will discuss the original research in the next section. Here I want to focus on the fruitful exchange of ideas and information during class.

This course requires your participation. We will spend the majority of our time reviewing and discussing the readings, although I will sometimes present additional information in class. You must come to class with the readings done – and done carefully. If you neglect that responsibility, the seminar will suffer. With responsible preparation, the seminar will be interesting and enjoyable.

How will we create a lively seminar? First, we will all come to class ready to discuss the readings. Second, the memos you write will encourage you to think through the readings and plan what you might ask or say during class. Third, a student will serve as the facilitator for each class meeting. This person will bring a list of discussion questions and comments to class and she/h e will be willing to step in when discussion slows or needs a change in direction. I will ask the facilitator to email me his/her questions and ideas for starting discussion before class so that I can take his/her ideas into account when planning our session.

Readings:

There are a number of additional articles and book chapters on the syllabus. Many of these are available through the course website.

Your Assignments and Your Grade:
There are no exams in this course. All of the assignments are designed to help us have a successful seminar, i.e. to encourage you to contribute to discussions and to allow you to conduct and report on your own research.

Participation (18% of your final grade): See notes above.

Facilitator role (6% of your final grade): Each student will serve as the facilitator for one session. You will prepare a list of questions, comments, or other ideas to start the discussion of the readings for that day. You must send me a note describing your plans by 4:00 p.m. on the school day before your session (i.e. by 4 p.m. on Friday for a Monday class and by 4 p.m. on Tuesday for a Wednesday class). You may begin with your own questions or thoughts about the reading. You may also link the day’s readings to previous readings, to articles you find in the newspaper, to your own experiences, to a movie or novel that illustrates the points, or whatever you can dream up.

Memos (6% each, 6 required, for 36% of your final grade): Each student will prepare 6 memos on the readings. A memo is a short paper (2-3 printed, double-spaced pages) that analyzes the readings. By analysis, I mean critical thinking. For example, you may discuss how the readings fit together or the implications of the readings or raise and explain your criticisms of the readings. The memos should include only a brief summary of the readings if that is necessary; the bulk of the memo should be devoted to your thoughts, reflections, questions, etc.

Memos use conversational language and have an informal tone, but they should be clear, concise, and well written. Write your memo with the class in mind – your peers are your intended audience. Although I will read your memos, you will hopefully raise most of the points during the class discussion (and you will feel more comfortable contributing to class because you have already written down some of your ideas).

Every student must turn in a memo by February 4, 2004. Your remaining 5 memos can be turned at any time during the semester, on the day that we discuss the readings covered in your memos. Late memos (i.e. memos turned in after the class period when we discuss the reading) are not accepted. If you have completed a memo but unexpectedly have to miss class (e.g. you become ill), you may turn in your memo before class by emailing it to me. Otherwise, you must be in class the days that you turn in your memos. Also note that there are no memos turned in when we are hearing case study presentations or during the last week of class.

Case study paper (15%) and presentation (10%): The case study allows you to apply the ideas and concepts from the early part of the course to a particular setting. You will write a paper (probably 8 to 12 pages) based on the case study and give a 10-minute presentation about your case.
There are three possibilities within the case study assignment (plus others we could craft for you individually, if you have a burning desire to do something else):

1) Case study of an organization – You will choose a workplace and investigate the work-family issues facing workers there and the responsiveness of the decision-makers (managers and owners) in that setting. You will probably gather background information on the organization and its industry and conduct 2-4 interviews with key players (e.g. human resources managers, high-level managers, workers of different types). You may also observe work in the organization for a period of time.

2) Case study of an occupation – You will choose a particular occupation or job and investigate the work-family issues facing workers in that occupation. You will probably gather background information on the occupation and conduct 2-4 interviews with people employed in that type of work and perhaps the members of their families. You may also observe the work process for a period of time.

3) Case study of a family – You will choose one family (with some dependents) and investigate the work-family issues facing that family and their strategies for dealing with those issues. You will conduct interviews with all adult members of that family and perhaps with other relevant people (e.g. a childcare worker). You may also observe the family for a period of time. You may not use your own immediate family, your own family of origin, or your partner’s or spouse’s family.

You should begin planning your case study early in the semester. In class, we will discuss deciding on a case study, gaining access to respondents, finding background information, and preparing to talk to respondents. Because I had to obtain permission from the University’s Internal Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, I have developed a rough draft of the interview schedule for this project. However, you may alter it in modest ways in consultation with me. By March 1, 2004, you must turn in a short description of your plan including confirmation that you have gained permission from the organization and/or the individuals you will study. Feel free to talk with me about your ideas and plans over the course of the semester.

The presentations will be scheduled between March 22 and March 31, with four to six presentations per class session. The schedule of presentations will be finalized before Spring Break. All case study papers are due April 5, 2004.

Policy debate (15% of final grade): The final project for the course will be a series of debates on possible public policy responses to contemporary work-family problems. You will work in small teams to research specific problems (to be decided by the class partway through the semester) and then teams will debate each other during the last week of classes. Additional guidance on this assignment will be provided at a later date.

Each assignment will be graded on a 0 – 100 scale and then the assignments will be weighted as noted above. Your final percentage grade will be translated into a letter grade as follows:

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Course Calendar

Tentative! Changes will be announced in class.

Week 1  Introduction to class
Jan. 21  No reading

Week 2  Lingo, Lens, and Context
Jan. 26

Jan. 28
Crittenden, Introduction, chapter 3
Gornick and Meyers, chapter 2

Week 3  Marginalized Mothers?
Feb. 2
Crittenden, chapters 1, 2, 4, 5

Feb. 4
Walsh, Joan. 2003. "Clueless in Manhattan." Salon.com, October 27. (Response to Belkin)

Week 4  Marginalized Mothers? Experiences of the Working-Poor, Working-Class, and Those Downwardly Mobile due to Divorce
Feb. 9
Review Cohen and Bianchi 1999
Crittenden, chapter 10

Feb. 11
Crittenden, chapters 6 – 9

Week 5  Case study preparation (Faculty as an Example of an Occupational Case Study)
Feb. 16


Feb. 18 No reading or class – time for consultations

Week 6 What about Dads?
Feb. 23 Gerson (entire book)

Feb. 25 Continue discussion of Gerson

Week 7 What about Kids?
March 1 *** Case study plan due in class ***

March 3

Week 8 The Time Bind? An Organizational Analysis
March 8 Hochschild (entire book)

March 10 Continue discussion of Hochschild

SPRING BREAK

Week 9 Case study presentations
March 22 Presentation s TBA
March 24 Presentation s TBA

Week 10 Case study presentations
March 29 Presentation s TBA
March 31 Presentation s TBA
Crittenden, chapter 13 and conclusion

Week 11 Strategies and solutions: Care Work in a Global Economy
April 5 *** Case study paper due ***
Hondagneu-Sotelo (entire book)

April 7 Continue discussion of Hondagneu-Sotelo
Crittenden, chapters 11 – 12

**Week 12**  
**Strategies and solutions: Family Policies in Other Countries**

*April 12*
Gornick and Meyers, chapters 1, 3 – 7

*April 14*
Gornick and Meyers, chapters 8, 9

**Week 13**  
**Strategies and solutions: “Family-friendly” Companies in the US**

*April 19*
Explore [http://www.workingmother.com/](http://www.workingmother.com/) to see the criteria for this award

*April 21*
Review Hochschild’s argument and evidence about utilization of family policies

**Week 14**  
**Strategies and solutions: Pursuing legal and cultural changes**

*April 26*


*April 28*

**Week 15**  
**Policy debates and concluding remarks**

*May 3*  
**Deb**  
ates TBA

*May 5*  
**Deb**  
ates TBA

**Late Papers, Make-ups, and Incompletes**
- Each memo must be turned in during class on the date it is due in order to receive credit. If you are ill, you may email me the paper before class (i.e. before 4 p.m.) on the date it is due. **Late memos will not be accepted since the purpose of the memo is to encourage careful reading and lively discussion.**
• If you are ill or have a family emergency on the day you are facilitating class or presenting your case study, please contact me as soon as possible and certainly before class begins. If the illness or emergency is documented, we will work together to reschedule your facilitation duties or presentation. Obviously, you should do everything in your power to be here on those days.
• The case study paper is due in class on April 5th. Late papers will be docked ½ a letter grade for each day (including Saturday and Sunday) that they are late.
• Incomplete coursework is a major inconvenience for both students and instructors. I expect you to do everything in your power to complete all coursework by the time it is due. No incompletes will be given for this course unless you have a prior written agreement with me.

**Information about Policy Debates:**

**Central Goals of Assignment:**

1) Convince the class that, given limited resources (including money, advocacy efforts, and the public’s attention), your proposed policy change is the *most important and most effective* way to help working families in the U.S.
2) Teach the class something new about the need for a change in policy or practice, the current policy / situation, and the main proposals for change.
3) Take the opportunity to synthesize class readings and materials as you prepare for the debate.
4) Learn from and with each other.

**Format:**

Each group can spend up to 15 minutes on a semi-formal presentation. Each group will also have 15 minutes to field questions and to respond to other group’s claims that other policies are more important or more effective. Groups should brainstorm likely questions and prepare their answers to those questions, as well as planning the actual presentation.

Presentations will be evaluated in several ways.

A) The entire class will rank the 4 groups on how convincing they were.

B) I will evaluate each group based on these criteria:

- Preparation – making a strong case for the policy, moving smoothly into, through, and out of the prepared presentation, clear organization of presentation, sticking to the allotted time.
- Expertise on topic – overall familiarity with key issues, including need for change, current policy / situation, main proposals for change, and why the group’s proposed policy is best.
- Good “defense” – able to argue against alternative policies, either preemptively in the presentation or in the question and answer period.
- Creativity is welcomed but not necessary and creativity will only be valuable if the presentation is otherwise solid, clear, and convincing.

C) Each person will evaluate the other members of the group and do a self-evaluation. The questions for these peer and self evaluations are:

- What specific tasks did this student perform toward the completion of the group project? Be very specific. For example, rather than saying “helped research paid family leave,” indicate that this person summarized relevant points from Crittenden’s book and did some Web research on current proposals to create paid family leave in different states.
- Did this student volunteer other useful inputs (such as organization skills, decision-making abilities, conflict resolution strategies, etc)? Please describe.
- Describe any difficulties with this person’s behavior (such as missed deadlines, missed meetings, devaluation of others’ contributions, personality conflicts, goofing off during
meetings, etc.) Be very specific and give concrete examples of the behavior you describe.
- Please rate this person's overall contribution to the group project on a scale from A+ to F.

**Guidance on Case Study Presentation and Paper:**

**Good papers will incorporate:**
1) A rich description of respondents' lives,
2) An interesting analysis of respondents' lives,
   - Do you make an argument (a.k.a. have a thesis)?
   - Do you use the case to think through and elaborate on the arguments in course readings? Because there are no exams in the course, I am always looking for evidence that you have understood and seriously engaged the readings.
3) A clear and engaging writing style, with no grammatical errors or other writing problems.

**Orienting questions that may help you develop an argument:**
What does work-family conflict "look like" in the respondents' lives? Why does it have this character, given their particular situations, and how does it compare to the conflicts described in course readings?

What are the structural conditions that affect the respondents' work and family lives? How do the respondents creatively adapt to these structural conditions?

To what extent do the respondents have "real" choices about their lives? How does the rhetoric of choice appear (or not) in their accounts of their lives? Are there other things about the respondents' language and discourse that strike you as interesting?

What did you learn from your interviews that surprised you or seemed to contradict the readings? (The parallel, but perhaps less interesting question, is: What did you hear in your interviews that reinforced or confirmed ideas you'd already encountered in the readings?)

**Your presentation should:**
1) Be limited to 5-7 minutes so we have some time to ask questions and share our ideas within the 10-12 minutes allotted to each person,
2) Introduce us to your case by briefly summarizing the key facets of the “case,”
3) Identify the most interesting or intriguing things you learned in the interviews,
4) State your argument (or possible arguments / points you are considering if you have not selected one yet).

The presentation is, in effect, a verbal rough draft – a chance for you to get class feedback on your argument and on ways you can convincingly support your argument with the interview “data” and the course readings. Feel free to ask the group for help with specific points if you are feeling stuck.