Honors Seminar: Work, Family, and Politics in the 21st Century

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Course Description:

Work and family issues have in recent years become inextricably linked to politics, for better or for worse. To better understand that link in the 21st century, we review the historical shifts that have occurred in the family and the workplace in the post-World War II U.S., and especially since 1970. Women now make up nearly half of the workforce, and have moved in large numbers into some occupations traditionally held by men. Dual-earner households are now the norm, reflecting in part the new economic reality faced by American families. Work has restructured such that it is more international, flexible, high tech, and service-oriented, and prosperity now coexists with rising inequalities. We will examine how such structural changes impact ongoing politics, policy discussions, civic engagement, and the economic and social opportunities available to women, men, and their families.

There are no prerequisites for this course. Although many of the readings come from a variety of disciplines (e.g., sociology, history, psychology, policy studies), an important goal of this course is to introduce you to the sociological perspective, and the sociological imagination.

Readings:

There are six required books. In addition, I will make additional readings available online (see below). The required books (most of which are available at the Livingston College Bookstore) are:


Buy EITHER Clinton OR Santorum through Amazon or other online vendors (we'll decide in class who buys which):


Expectations:
This is an honors seminar, so I have high expectations of you. I anticipate that you will attend each class session. Because this course is a "seminar" and not a "lecture" course, there will be less lecturing, and more discussion. The success of the course depends on your active participation, and the small class size should facilitate this goal. Assigned readings should be completed prior to class meetings, and you should come to class prepared to ask questions. If you absolutely must miss class, please let me know as soon as possible.

I've assigned both academic articles and media (newspaper, magazine) articles, the latter of which tend to be quite short. To keep the number of readings down to a reasonable number, I've moved some of the readings to "recommended." While these articles or books are not required, I nonetheless do recommend them to you if you'd like to do extended reading on the topic, or use them for your short paper (or final) papers. I will continue to add relevant articles as I come across them.

Grades will be based on:

1) Class participation/attendance, including written commentary (QIPS, 20 percent total)

To enhance class discussion, please come to each class with QIPS, a 4x6 index card on which you have written a Question, Interest, or Problem from that day's readings. Pick out something that interests you, and respond to it in a "stream of consciousness" paragraph. We'll use these to structure the day's discussion. Each student will also be asked to facilitate class discussion several times during the semester, so the QIPS will be useful in preparing for this. [Thanks to Professors Ann Mische and Arlene Stein, who suggested this technique to me.]

No QIPs are required on days you have written assignments due. Since they also indicate attendance, they should be turned in at the beginning of class (don't forget to keep a copy for yourself). I'll grade these as either ✓ (which indicates satisfactory work) or ✓+ (which indicates exceptional work). I will give a "-" for a missed class, a missed QIP, or an unacceptable QIP. Because difficult times happen to all of us, you are permitted two "-" grades with no questions asked.

2) Several short papers (double-spaced, 3-4 pp. max.; 20 percent total)

Throughout the semester, you will write several short papers, responding to readings and class discussions. I will give you more specific directions in class, but the (tentative) general topics of these short papers, and their due dates, are:

**Short paper #1** (due Jan. 26; 5 percent): Access the class graphic web page (see week 1), and figure out the class status of your family of origin. Access the political typology web page (see week 1), and figure out your personal political typology. Describe your findings. How are your class of origin and political typology related, or are they? Take a stand, make an argument, and justify it.

**Short paper #2** (due Feb. 2; 5 percent): Focus in on one or two of Elaine Tyler May's arguments re: American families in the Cold War Era. Bring her arguments up to date: are they relevant for 21st century America? Take a stand, make an argument, and justify it.

**Short paper #3** (due March 23; 10 percent): In preparation for our in-class mini-debate, critically analyze the two "opt-out" arguments, by Linda Hirshman and David Brooks. Feel free to supplement with other authors. Who is right? Take a stand, make an argument, and justify it.

3) Analytic review and debate (double-spaced, 4-5 pp. max; due April 6; 20 percent)
On April 6, we will have an in-class debate on the appropriate role of government in family policy. You will read either Clinton's or Santorum's book, write an analytic critique of the book you choose, and use the book's viewpoint as the basis for your arguments during the debate. Thus, you will critique the book in your analytic review, and argue for its viewpoint in the debate. For advice on how to write an analytic review, see Clarke's "On Writing and Criticism."

4) Final research paper (double-spaced, approx. 15 pp. with a minimum of 7 to 10 academic references) on a topic of your choice (40 percent).

Note: this can be an outgrowth of one of your short papers, or the debate topic. A written description of your paper topic with 2-3 annotated references is due Feb. 23rd. Clear your topic with me ahead of time. First draft due April 27th, final draft due May 4th. Use primarily academic references for this paper! Its okay to supplement with excellent articles from reputable media sources (e.g., Fortune, the New York Times), but these should be few in number in comparison with academic references.

Each student will also present a brief summary of her or his paper during one of the last three class sessions (April 24, April 27, or May 1). Prepare a few power point slides to accompany your presentation.

Summary of due dates:

January 26: Short paper #1
February 2: Short paper #2
February 23: Description of paper topic, with 2-3 annotated references
March 23: Short paper #3
April 6: Analytic review and debate preparation due
April 24, April 27, or May 1: Class presentation with power point slides
April 27: First draft of final paper due
May 4: Final draft of paper due

Course Outline:

Part I: Overview and History

Week 1 (Jan. 19): Introduction and Course Overview: Politics and the Family

Hillary Clinton, It Takes a Village, Ch. 1
Rick Santorum, It Takes a Family, Ch. 1

http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/national/20050515_CLASS_GRAPHIC/index_01.html [check the class status of your family of origin]

http://typology.people-press.org/ [check your personal political typology]

Recommended:

Week 2 (Jan. 23-26): Real People, Real Lives: Work, Class, and the American Dream


Week 3 (Jan. 30-Feb. 2): Family and Politics: WWII and Postwar Era


Part II: It's Not the 1950s Anymore: Changing Demographics and Economic Transitions

Week 4 (Feb. 6-9): Demographic Overview: Women, Men, and the Family


Robert Orrange. Forthcoming. The Uncertainty of It All. Cornell University Press. (Chs. 2-3)


Barbara Reskin and Patricia Roos. 1990. Job Queues, Gender Queues: Explaining Inroads into Male Occupations. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. (Chapter 1, Chapter 3; Recommended: Chapter 2)


Recommended:


Week 5 (Feb. 13-16): Economic Transitions: Overview


Recommended:


Week 6 (Feb. 20-23): Economic Transitions: Blue-Collar Work


Recommended:

Charles Fishman, The Wal-Mart Effect (WNYC, Leonard Lopate Show, 33 min.)

Week 7 (Feb. 27-Mar. 2): Economic Transitions: White-Collar Work
Part III. Accommodating Work and Family

Week 8 (Mar. 6-9): Cultural or Institutional?


Recommended:


March 13-17th: Spring Break!

Week 9 (Mar. 20-23): The Opt-Out Revolution?

Leslie Stahl (correspondent), "Staying at Home," 60 Minutes, July 16, 2005. (movie clip shown in class)


Recommended:


Families and Work Institute, "Generation and Gender in the Workplace: An Issue Brief" (http://familiesandwork.org/eproducts/genandgender.pdf)

Part IV. Explanations and Policymaking

Week 10 (Mar. 27-30): Mechanisms of Inequality

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/ [check out implicit attitudes website' "demonstration". "Go to demonstration tests"; choose one and bring your results to class]


Recommended:


Choose one book to prepare for debate (we will do in class):


OR


Week 12 (April 10-13): Work, Family, and Community


Recommended:


**Week 13 (April 17-20): Work-Family Policies**


**Recommended:**


**Week 14 (April 24-27): Student presentations**

**Week 15 (May 1): Student presentations**

**Help on Research, Thinking, and Writing:**


Clarke, Lee. "Notes on Proposing" and "On Writing and Criticism"


Jasper, James. "Why So Many Academics are Lousy Writers"


Rosenfield, Sarah. "Some Things To Think About While Reading Papers"


American Sociological Association, "Writing an Informative Abstract"

And, for some humor: "How to Write Good"