Overview

This seminar applies a life course approach to the interface between jobs and lives. In the seminar we consider: 1) the dramatic changes in cultural definitions of occupational careers, family careers, and their intersections, as well as changes in life-styles, gender roles and expectations, 2) the changing nature of occupational careers, work behavior, job ladders, and the implicit employment contract, and 3) the changing nature and experiences of working families. The seminar focuses on middle-class two-career couples at various stages of the life course. We assess the ways husbands' and wives' experiences differ over the life course in terms of occupational choice, job and family trajectories and turning points, work/family cross-pressures, and adaptive strategies. The class considers also the role of social and corporate policies and practices in perpetuating options, behaviors and dispositions, as well as the broad implications of this dramatic social change in the nature of families, workers, and the work place.

This course is designed as part of the training program of the Cornell Employment and Family Careers Institute, but others interested in the topic are also welcome.

Grading and Course Requirements

Students will be expected to complete four in-depth, life history interviews, three short (1 to 3 pages) papers and a 10 page paper reviewing the existing literature on some aspect of the "career" concept, broadly defined, drawing on the interview materials as illustrative examples.

Readings for each week should be completed prior to the assigned date. Students should be prepared to participate in class discussions, and give at least one oral presentation.

The quality of class participation will be graded. Students are expected to reflect a grasp of the assigned readings, build on previous contributions, and integrate examples from other contexts.

Grading is based on written papers as well as class participation.

COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS

I. Historical Uses of the "Career" Concept


II. Subjective Paths, Cultural Norms and Expectations


Additional Readings


Illa. **Career Patterns and Pathways: Selection Processes or Choice?**


Illb. **Career Patterns and Pathways: A Life Course Approach**


**Additional Readings**


IV. Careers as Labor Markets and Attainment


Additional Readings


V. New Methods and Concepts


Abbott, Andrew. "On the Concept of Turning Point."


Additional Readings


VI. Family and Emotional Careers


Additional Readings


VII. Gender and Age as Context and Contingency


Tolbert, Pamela S., Phyllis E. Moen, and Eleanor O. Bell. 1996. "Men's and Women's Definitions of Good Jobs: Similarities and Differences over Time." (Unpublished draft)

Additional Readings


Additional Readings

ASSIGNMENT #1

Describe a topic related to work-family careers that you would like to focus on in this course. What are key concepts, issues? Try to be as specific as you can in terms of the variables in interest--both independent and dependent. List (don't discuss) 3 references of published research on this topic (that you will be reviewing in the future). On this topic, what is the research problem/question? What are key concepts, issues?

Limit: 2 pages, double-spaced
ASSIGNMENT #2

Write a two-page summary of the best study you have found in the research literature related to your topic of interest on careers. Include a discussion of its theoretical underpinnings, the nature of the sample and research design, and the most important findings. Conclude with a brief discussion of its strengths and weaknesses. Be prepared to "defend" the study in class!

Limit: 2 pages, double-spaced

ASSIGNMENT #3

CAREERS AND LIVES: THE IN-DEPTH LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEW

PURPOSE: TO INTRODUCE THE METHOD OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWING AS A MEANS OF GRASPING CONTINUITY, COORDINATION, AND CHANGE IN COUPLES' WORK AND FAMILY CAREERS OVER THE LIFE COURSE, AS WELL AS THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN BIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Use a life history, in-depth interview schedule to learn about the distinctive careers and life pathways of (typically married, professional) men and women.

Summarize your findings by writing an analysis of:

• key turning points/ transitions
• subjective assessments of "success," "career"
• the role of timing in relation to career and family transitions
• the long-term effects of early life experiences
• implications in terms of meaning, values, and subjective identity
• implications in terms of corporate or social policies
• implications for conceptualizing the career concept