Syllabus- Sociology of Work and the Family
SOCI-32700-01  Fall 2008
Section 1 T,Th 9:25-10:40
Friends 208

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Office Hours: M,W, F 10-11am
T,Th 10:45-11:15am
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Course Description
This course examines the interlocking relationships between two key institutions in society: the workplace and the family. We consider three core questions. First, how do jobs and workplaces affect family life? Second, how do family commitments influence the behaviors of workers and their ability to contribute to the economy? Third, to what extent do existing policies meet the needs of working families? Our approach will focus on issues of history, gender, class inequality, race, the life course, career development, organizational practices, and government policy.

Required Texts

The remaining readings are available online or will be distributed in class

Products
In this class students will create 4 products (described below) comprised of
- 2 analysis projects
- 1 class presentation
- 1 journal of reflections on readings

Journal
For each reading assignment, students will write a brief reflection in their journals (~15 minutes). Each essay will address the following:
1. What is the author’s central thesis?
2. What are the implications for understanding the connections between work and family?
3. What are the implications for social policy (consider issues such as social justice, the employer’s bottom line, taxes, office morale, costs, etc.)

Each class will begin with a small group of students sharing reflections on the reading assignment. Students are expected to keep a printed notebook of their reflections and bring these to each class session. Reflections will be graded on completeness and overall quality.

Analysis Assignments
Students select any two of the following assignments

**Assignment 1: The Changing Workforce**
Consider the changing composition of American workforce (e.g., age at first marriage, number of children, percent of women in the labor force, trends in multiple births, life expectancies, divorce rates, immigration, etc.). Examine the types of demographic data available in Statistical Abstracts of the United States (http://www.census.gov/statab/www/) and identify a few variables that may be associated with changing challenges of managing work and family. Create a small set of
Assignment 2: Making the Business Case

Review the series of workplace flexibility case studies listed on The Sloan Work and Family Research Network (http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/template.php?name=casestudy). Select two to three case studies that you see as especially promising, ones that could offer a model to promote family friendly work environments. Perform a literature review of 5 empirical articles on the policies enacted (e.g., flex-time, flex-space, breastfeeding facilities, paid family leave, corporate sponsored daycare, etc.). In your paper, address the following issues:

1. Describe the ways these policies have been crafted in the case studies and do modest external research on the nature of work in these companies (view the company websites)
2. Using the sociological literature, review the impact these types of policies had on employees and employers at other locations
3. Consider if a business case can be made for implementing this policy for all workers (or a subset –and explain why only a subset) at Ithaca College
4. Consider if a business case can be made for implementing this policy for all workers (or a subset –and explain why only a subset) at McDonalds
5. Offer a summary reflection on the business case for the policies reviewed.

Assignment 3: Research Methods and the Study of Work-Family

Identify one work-family concern that is of major interest to you. Perform a modest search of the literature on this question, and locate five empirical/sociological research articles on the issue. These articles can be found through SocAbs, SocLit, and The Sloan Work and Family Research Network http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/. Briefly discuss the research questions posed in each of these articles and discuss the methods used to answer the questions, the core findings, and the limitations of the studies. Then propose a new study, adopting your own methodology. In your proposal, outline:

The research question
Sample – who or what would be studied – and for how long
Data collection methods – surveys, organizational files, government statistics, direct observation, or other approaches
Costs, timeframes, and other necessary resources
Strengths and limitations of the chosen methodology

Class Presentation Assignment

Students will work in teams of 2-3 members to prepare a class. Their presentation will be based on information contained in the various links located in the “Topics Pages” of the Sloan Work and Family Research Network (http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/). The presentations will be for the entire class and should summarize:

(A) Why is it important to understand this issue?
(B) What do we know about this issue?
(C) What are the relevant policy considerations?
Presentations will be graded on the basis of organization, depth of understanding demonstrated, and peer evaluations. The following are potential topics that can be addressed, and will be assigned at the conclusion of the add/drop period.

Afterschool Care
Breastfeeding and the Workplace
Changing Definitions of Families
Dependent Care Tax Assistance
Domestic Violence and the Workplace
Elder Care at the Workplace
Employer-Supported Child Care
Family Leave
Flexible Work Schedules
Gender and the use of Workplace Policies
Generation X/ Generation Y
Health and Workplace Flexibility
Low Wage Workers
Older Workers Overview
Part-Time Work
Phased Retirement
Shift Work
Telework

Attendance and Preparedness
Each day an attendance/preparedness sheet will be passed in the class, students sign in and indicate if they have, or have not, read the assignment and if they are prepared to discuss the materials. This component comprises 10% of the course grade. If students attend all classes and consistently contribute informed comments to class discussions, they can expect full credit for this component. It is understood that sometimes events outside of students’ control, such as illness, may prevent them from attending every class. But it is also expected that students will make every effort reasonable to attend all classes and be punctual. See below for the method of calculating this component in final grades.

The following table indicates how attendance/preparedness grades are calculated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Absences</th>
<th># Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9+</td>
<td>no credit</td>
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Final Grades
Students will be evaluated on the basis of two analysis assignments (50%), a journal of reflections on reading assignments (25%), a class presentation (15%) and attendance/preparedness (10%). Graded papers can be revised and resubmitted for reevaluation no later than one week after they are returned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis Assignment</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis Assignment</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Presentation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/preparedness</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accumulations of points result in the following grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 - 93.9</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87 - 89.9</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84 - 86.9</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 - 83.9</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77 - 79.9</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74 - 76.9</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 - 73.9</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67 - 69.9</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64 - 66.9</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 63.9</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;60</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Reading Assignments

**Week 1**  
**Introduction to the Course**

**Thursday Aug 28**

Introduction to the Course

**Week 2**  
**Historical Perspectives**

**Tuesday Sept 2**

Before coming to class – go to The Sloan Work and Family Research Network website [http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/](http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/). Take about a half an hour and explore the different types of entries and issues presented on the site. As your first entry in your journal, create a list of what you see as interesting and compelling issues from your brief overview. Bring this list to class.

Sept 3 is the last day to add/drop.

**Thursday Sept 4**


**Week 3**  
**Historical Perspectives**

**Tuesday Sept 9**

“Child Labor: A Historical Perspective” Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia  
http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/encyclopedia.php?mode=nav


**Thursday Sept 11**  
**Journals submitted for initial evaluation**

“Demographic Implications for Work-Family Research” in *The Work and Family Handbook* by Martha Farnsworth Riche

Last day to declare S/D/F option

**Week 4**  
**Family Diversities**

**Tuesday Sept 16**


Sept 17 is the last day to declare S/D/F
Thursday Sept 18 (read any three of these)

“Sandwiched Generation” Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia

“Aging and Work” Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia

“Asian Women and Work-Family Issues” Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia

“Family Diversity” Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia

Week 5  Diversities of Opportunity

Tuesday Sept 23

Thursday Sept 25
“Job Insecurity” Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia

“Legal Professions and Job Demands” Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia

“Unions and Work and Family Integration” Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia

Week 6  Family Adaptation to Job Demands Across the Life Course

Tuesday Sept 30

“Career-Prioritizing in Dual Earner Couples” Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia

Thursday Oct 2  ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE

Week 7  The Business Case

Tuesday Oct 7

Thursday Oct 9

“Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment” Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia
Week 8  Legal Perspectives and Fall Break

Tuesday  Oct 14
“A Legal Perspective on Family Issues at Work” in *The Work and Family Handbook* Mary C. Still and Joan C. Williams

Thursday  Oct 16
No Class

Week 9  Legal Perspectives on Work-Family

Tuesday  Oct 21

Thursday  Oct 23

Week 10  Work-Family as Connected to Community

Tuesday  Oct 28
Afterschool Care and Work-Life Issues”  Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia

“Family Friendly Community” Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia

Thursday  Oct 30  ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE
Last Day to Withdraw

Week 11  Methodological Approaches- Studying Families in Context

Tuesday  Nov 4

Thursday  Nov 6
Steve is away at National Council on Family Relations Conference


Nov 7 is the last day to withdraw or revoke S/D/F Option

Week 12  Methodological Approaches – Studying Organizations and Employees

Tuesday  Nov 11
Both Art and Science: Employing Organizational Documentation in Workplace-Based Research in *The Work and Family Handbook* Susan Lambert

Thursday  Nov 13

In the Moment: The Benefits of the Experience Sampling Method” in The Work and Family Handbook Barbara Schneider

Week 13 Presentations

Tuesday Nov 18 PRESENTATION 1
Thursday Nov 20 PRESENTATION 2

Week 14 Thanksgiving Break

Tuesday Nov 25
No Class
Thursday Nov 27
No Class

Week 15 Presentations

Tuesday Dec 2 PRESENTATION 3
Thursday Dec 4 “Transnational Families” – Sloan Work and Family Encyclopedia


Week 16 Global Perspectives

Tuesday Dec 9 ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE
Thursday Dec 11
Journals submitted for final evaluation
Evaluations and Reflections

Week 17 Final Consultations and Materials Returned

Friday December 19 7:30am-10am.

Note: This syllabus is subject to change.