

SOCIOLOGY OF THE FAMILY
SOCI 170
FALL 2024 (August 21 – December 9, 2024)
San Jose State University



Instructor: Dr. Yolanda Wiggins

Email: yolanda.wiggins@sjsu.edu

Class Meeting Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00AM-10:15AM

Location: Dudley Moorhead Hall Room 226A

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10-11:30AM (via Zoom) or by appointment

COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course considers the family as a dynamic and robust social institution. Over four primary units, we will consider contested definitions of what a family is, investigate how families sustain themselves, and explore how families absorb and respond to pervasive social inequalities. Our inquiry will be informed by sociological theory, research-based empirical evidence, and social policy. Students will respond to and synthesize course material through classroom and small-group discussion, responses to prompts, short essays, and discussion posts. This means that building skills to respectfully engage competing ideas and perspectives as a speaker, writer, active listener, and collaborative peer is as central to this course as the content itself.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Describe the elements that comprise family relationships and how definitions of family have changed over time and never neatly fit into any one definition/characterization
- Summarize key theories that explain how families form and how family members negotiate and enact roles, responsibilities, and expectations
- Debate how public and social policies may support or inadvertently harm families
- Describe and apply examples of how families accumulate, pool, and distribute resources for either the purpose of sustaining wealth or surviving

- Identify and assess programs in governmental and private agencies that are designed to address the needs of families
- Articulate how axes of social inequality are reflected in family composition and family process
- Adjudicate between multiple perspectives on the future of the family
- Evaluate the quality of data and argumentation in published empirical research
- Explore the roles professionals can play in building family policies that support families across the life cycle
- Think critically and communicate clearly through writing and speaking making logical and persuasive arguments to policymakers, practitioners and the public

EXPECTATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESS

- The success of this course depends upon your active engagement and participation
- Classroom time includes a combination of lecture, small group discussion, and activities
- Please complete all assigned reading/viewing/listening before class begins. This will make classroom discussions far more interesting and sensible! I expect that you will take notes to summarize key points and flag where things aren't clear. I do not expect that you will always fully absorb all the material on the first reading, but I do expect that you will extend your active engagement to the classroom and/or office hours by sharing your questions, observations, and points of confusion for clarification and discussion
- Please familiarize yourself with all assignment deadlines. No late work will be accepted
- Everyone in this class is learning something new. Your peers will rely on you to give them space to learn. Give your peer respect and full attention, and please do not interrupt. When you disagree with something a peer has said, take issue with the idea – not the person – and speak in a way you'd want to be spoken to. Please respect and welcome all perspectives and give them fair and thoughtful consideration. Your role in creating an inclusive, supportive learning environment will contribute to your participation grade
- Family is a deeply personal and sometimes sensitive topic. Some themes in this course may be difficult to discuss. If there is a topic that you cannot discuss or that is otherwise particularly sensitive, let me know and we can work together to make alternative arrangements. Keep in mind that you are in no way expected or required to disclose anything from your own life that you do not wish to share in class or in your assignments

COURSE COMPONENTS

- **Weekly Reading Reflection Statements:** Students will submit weekly reflection paper statements on the assigned material (i.e., readings, podcasts, media clips). **The weekly reflection statements should be no more than 1-2 pages in length.** Typed statements should be double-spaced and use 12pt Times New Roman font. No matter how many readings, podcasts, and/or media clips you are assigned for the class, your statement

never needs to be more than 1-2 pages. These should NOT simply be a summary of the material; they should contain your critical thinking and analysis as you use the material as supporting evidence. The reflections should be critical and thoughtful. These statements are not intended to be complicated or time-consuming. They are meant to make sure that you keep up with the reading. These are due on Canvas each Sunday.

How to structure weekly reading reflection paper:

- Briefly discuss the reading. Respond/react to the assigned material/reading. Do you agree with the material? Disagree? Why? Did it remind you of something else you have read or experienced in your life and/or someone you know has experienced?
- **Sociological Family Tree**
 - Drawing on themes and concepts discussed in class, you will construct a sociological family tree
 - More details on the assignment will be posted on Canvas
- **Depictions of Families in The Media**
 - Images of families are everywhere in media, including movies and television. This assignment will require you to choose a television show or movie with strong depictions of family members and you will explore and discuss sociological concepts.
 - More details on the assignment will be posted on Canvas
- **The Family & Social Policy**
 - This assignment will require you to choose an existing non-profit organization that focuses on a particular program that supports families.
 - **More details on the assignment will be posted on Canvas**
- **Topic Paper**
 - **In 5-6 double-spaced typed pages**, you will delve further into a topic of your choice on the sociology of the family. Pick a topic that interests you – it may be something we've discussed in class that you go further in-depth on, or you may pick something not covered in class that falls under the general heading of the sociology of family.
 - **More details on the paper will be posted on Canvas**
- **In Class Facilitations**
 - One time during the semester you will be assigned to a group and asked to facilitate a class discussion. This presentation will demonstrate your knowledge of the assigned material and research a California family policy on the topic for the assigned week.
 - **More details about the facilitation will be posted on Canvas**

Final grades will be calculated using the following grading scale:

94-100% = A	80-82% = B-	60-65% = D
90-93% = A-	76-79% = C+	< 60% = F
86-89% = B+	73-75% = C	
83-85% = B	70-72% = C-	

COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK 1

August 22

Welcome Week and Course Introduction

TO DO: Submit introduction video Sunday, August 25th by 11:59PM

WEEK 2

August 27 – 29

How sociologists think about the family & The history of the Family

WEEK 3

September 3-5

Marriage and intimate relationships & singlehood

READINGS FOR THIS WEEK AND ASSIGNMENTS

Gerstel & Sarkisian. “Marriage: The Good, the Bad, and the Greedy.”

Edin & Kefalas. “Unmarried with children

“It’s Complicated”: How Black and White Women Innovate with Situationships at Midlife.”

Response Paper #1 Due by Sunday, September 1st by 11:59PM

WEEK 4

September 10-12
(No Class 9/10)

Family formations, & family poverty and public transfers

READINGS FOR THIS WEEK AND ASSIGNMENTS

“America Pulled Children Out of Poverty. Now It’s Set to Reverse Course With a Vengeance.” The New York Times

“The Forgotten Children: Students Who Have an Incarcerated Parent.”
The Education Trust Foundation

Response Paper #2 Due by Sunday, September 8th by 11:59PM
In Class Group Facilitation #1 on Thursday, September 12th

WEEK 5

September 17-19

Fertility & Reproduction

READINGS FOR THIS WEEK AND ASSIGNMENTS

Bell. "It's Way Out of My League": Low-Income Women's Experiences of Medicalized Infertility

Blackstone. "Childless...or Childfree?"

Almeling & Waggoner. "How Men Factor in the Reproductive Equation."

Response Paper #3 Due Sunday, September 15th by 11:59PM
Sociological Family Tree Assignment Due Sunday, September 15th by 11:59PM

In Class Group Facilitation #2 on Thursday, September 19th

WEEK 6

September 24-26

Diverse Family Experiences and Strategies

READINGS FOR THIS WEEK AND ASSIGNMENTS

Heston. "Utopian Kinship? The Possibilities of Queer Parenting."

"The Joy In Finding Your Chosen Family."

Response Paper #4 Due Sunday, September 22nd by 11:59PM
In Class Group Facilitation #3 on Thursday, September 26th

WEEK 7

October 1-3

Intermarriage and Interracial Dating

READINGS FOR THIS WEEK AND ASSIGNMENTS

Qian. "Breaking the Last Taboo: Interracial Marriage in America."

Lundquist & Curington. "Love Me Tinder, Love Me Sweet."

Response Paper #5 Due Sunday, September 29th by 11:59PM
In Class Group Facilitation #4 on Thursday, October 3rd

WEEK 8

October 8-10

Parenthood by Adoption

READINGS FOR THIS WEEK AND ASSIGNMENTS

Khanna & Killian. "We Didn't Even Think about Adopting Domestically": The Role of Race and Other Factors in Shaping Parents' Decisions to Adopt Abroad.

Response Paper #6 Due Sunday, October 6th by 11:59PM
In Class Group Facilitation #5 on Thursday, October 10th

WEEK 9

October 15-17

The Family & Education

READINGS FOR THIS WEEK AND ASSIGNMENTS

Wiggins. "The Balancing Act of College & Family."

Stewart. “Black Americans Home School for Different Reasons Than Whites.”

“Special Ed Shouldn’t Be Separate. Isolating Kids From Their Peers Is Unjust.”

Response Paper #7 Due Sunday, October 13th by 11:59PM
Family & Social Policy Assignment Due Sunday, October 13th by 11:59PM
In Class Group Facilitation #6 on Thursday, October 17th

WEEK 10
October 22-24

Cohabitation and Hooking Up

READINGS FOR THIS WEEK AND ASSIGNMENTS

Grazian. “The Girl Hunt: Urban Nightlife and the Performance of Masculinity as Collective Activity.”

Armstrong, Hamilton, & England. “Is Hooking Up Bad for Young Women?”

“Young Couples Move in Together Early to Save on Rent.” New York Times

Response Paper #8 Due by Sunday, Due by Sunday, October 20th
In Class Group Facilitation #7 on Thursday, October 24th

WEEK 11
October 29-31

Immigration, Deportation, and Mixed Status Families

READINGS FOR THIS WEEK AND ASSIGNMENTS

Dreby. “The Burden of Deportation on Children.”

“Growing Up Undocumented When Your Siblings Are Citizens.”

Response Paper #9 Due by Sunday, October 27th by 11:59PM
In Class Group Facilitation #8 on Thursday, October 31st

WEEK 12
November 5-7

Families in Context: Foster Families, Health, Paid Family Medical Leave

READINGS FOR THIS WEEK AND ASSIGNMENTS

Andino. “If We Want Healthcare Equity, We Need to Get Radical.”

“Why paid family leave is much more than a women’s issue,” MSNBC.

“I Will Never Forget That I Could Have Lived With People Who Loved Me.”

Response Paper #10 Due by Sunday, November 3rd by 11:59PM
Depictions of Families in the Media Assignment Due by Sunday, November 3rd by 11:59PM
In Class Group Facilitation #9 on Thursday, November 7th

WEEK 13

November 12- 14

Union dissolution & re-partnering

READINGS FOR THIS WEEK AND ASSIGNMENTS

McNamee & Smyth. “The Different Roles of Parents and Friends: Support for Divorce and Repartnering Following Marital Dissolution among Latina and White Women.”

“Divorce Rates Are Rising Just for This Age Group: Why has the divorce rate for people 65 and over tripled in recent decades?” Washingtonian.

Response Paper #11 Due Sunday, November 10th by 11:59PM
In Class Group Facilitation #10 on Thursday, November 14th

WEEK 14

November 19-21

The future of the family

NO READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Final class presentations (On both Tuesday and Thursday)

WEEK 15

November 26- 28

Thanksgiving Recess – No class this week

WEEK 16

December 3-5

Class Wrap & Final class presentations on Tuesday
Virtual Office Hours on December 5th – NO FORMAL CLASS
Topic Paper due December 12th