

**Sociology Department
University of California San Diego**

**SOCI 129
The Family
Spring 2026**

When: Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 10:00-10:50 am

Where: Humanities and Social Sciences Room 1330

Instructor: Dr. Maud Arnal, PhD, CPM, LM (she/her)
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University California San Diego
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Teaching Assistant: Caroline Petronis
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Office Hours: Wednesday 11:30am-1:30pm, both in person and on Zoom.
Social Sciences Building – Room 450
Map link: <https://goo.gl/maps/v3A4GnqCt8LkZ6cR7>

➔ To ensure that we can address each student's concerns or questions, please sign up for a 15-minute office hour slot using this Calendly link if you would like to meet with Caroline: <https://calendly.com/cpetronis/soci-129-office-hours-sp26-with-ta-caroline> .

Please contact Caroline Petronis by email or on Canvas for any questions you may have: cpetronis@ucsd.edu

Course Credits: 4

Prerequisites: This is an upper-division elective course for undergraduate students in the Sociology department. Others require permission of the instructor to enroll.

Format: Lectures, discussion, case study, and small groups. Each class will provide an opportunity to discuss the key issue identified for that day through a combination of presentations and discussions. Guest speakers have been invited to give students an opportunity to interact with individuals with diverse expertise and perspectives. Students will also have the opportunity to create class presentations and earn extra credit.

Course Description¹:

This course offers a sociological examination of historical and social influences on family life, with an emphasis on contemporary families in the United States. It will analyze how gender, class, race, and ethnicity shape family dynamics, as well as explore current issues such as divorce, domestic violence, and the feminization of poverty. Students will engage with classical and contemporary sociological theories, applying them to real-world family structures and problems. We will consider both the “public” and “private” dimensions of families: the public family as a setting for socially necessary tasks and a target of public policy, and the private family as the place where we hope to find love, intimacy and meaningful personal relationships. Central themes of the course are continuity and change in families, along with family diversity and its relationship to structural forces in American society.

The purpose of this course is to develop critical thinking about the family. According to Joanne G. Kurfiss,² critical thinking is “a rational response to questions that cannot be answered definitively and for which all the relevant information may not be available. It is defined here as an investigation whose purpose is to explore a situation, phenomenon, question, or problem to arrive at a hypothesis or conclusion about it that integrates all available information and that therefore can be convincingly justified. In critical thinking, all assumptions are open to question, divergent views are aggressively sought, and the inquiry is not biased in favor of a particular outcome.” By adopting a critical social science approach to exploring the historical and social influences on family life, students will gain a comprehensive initiation to the field of the family, while taking a critical look at their own representations of the “public” and “private” dimensions of families.

Course Objectives: Having successfully completed this course, the students will be able to:

1. Understand the historical development of the family as a social institution;
2. Analyze the impact of gender, race, class, and ethnicity on family life;
3. Demonstrate an understanding of contemporary challenges facing families, including divorce, domestic violence, and economic inequality;
4. Apply sociological concepts, perspectives, and theories to the analysis of family-related issues;
5. Critically assess how families are produced through social, political, economic, and cultural forces on macro, meso, and micro levels;
6. Discuss and evaluate public policies affecting families;
7. Develop conversations with peers/others about topics covered in class. Students should demonstrate awareness of ways in which the conceptual framework used in the assigned readings is developed to enlighten the complexity of chosen topic.

In addition to the broad objectives above, students will be able to critically analyze disparities in families based on race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, and gender; to identify essential gaps in existing policies programs; and to promote cultural competence concepts in the field of sociological study of the family.

¹ *Acknowledgement:* This course is modeled and further informed by reflection on courses taught by Andrea S. Dauber-Griffin, Laura Hamilton, Rhiannon Kroeger, and Joanna Reed.

² Kurfiss, J.G. 1988. Critical thinking: Theory, research, practice, and possibilities. Washington, DC: Association for the Study of Higher Education.

Course Requirements and Assessment:

There will be a variety of assignments and graded projects for this course. The diversity in assignments is meant to ensure success for different kinds of learners and to offer many opportunities for accumulating points. The course requirements, on which student evaluation is based, are as follows:

1. Class attendance and Participation	10%
2. Reflective discussion posts	32%
3. Midterm Exam	25%
4. Final Project	30%
5. Session Evaluation Survey	3%
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Total	100%

Course Requirements:

General requirement: Teaching and learning are interrelated. Instructors and students are expected to be active participants in this course and other student-led activities. The instructor's responsibility has been to develop a core Social Problems course that addresses significant topics and concepts in the field and to prepare individual sessions, exercises and assignments that will facilitate students' learning. Please realize that not all significant topics and concepts can be addressed by a one quarter core course. Topics and speakers have chosen thoughtfully in order to give initial exposure to foundational concepts. The student's responsibility as a learner is to engage with the course ideas, to come to class prepared to participate in class discussions, exercises, and to learn to think critically as she/he/they listen/s, write/s and discuss/es.

Attendance: Attendance is required for both in-person and remote sessions. Your attendance and active participation in every class session is central to your ability to succeed in this course. Active participation in workshops and discussions is essential. Student can earn up to 1 point per week for attendance and participation. The Sociology Department in the School of Social Sciences at the University of California San Diego expects students to attend class on time and to stay until the end. University of California believes that significant student learning occurs in the classrooms and recognizes the importance of in-class experiences, and if missed by a student even for legitimate reasons, cannot be fully recovered. Students are responsible for any missed content, announcements, due dates, homework assignments, date changes, etc. when they miss a class. To the extent possible, please inform the instructor if you know ahead of time that you will be absent or late for a class. In case of extraordinary circumstances (e.g. serious illness, death in the family, etc.), considerations will be made regarding any assignments that occur in the timeframe of the emergency. Please note that the extensions are not guaranteed and will be granted solely at the discretion of the instructor. Missing more than two sessions will negatively impact your grade.

Required readings: Readings will be made available through Canvas every Thursday for the following week. Complementary readings will be suggested from time to time for students who wish to pursue selected topics in depth. Students are encouraged to share other helpful resources with the class. Please come to class prepared to critically and actively engage with the assigned texts.

Reflective discussion post: The reflective discussion post represents a summary of critical thoughts in response to the required readings of each week. The purpose of this exercise is to allow students a chance to process weekly class material and to help students to develop questions, comments, or critiques to discuss in class with their peers. It will also help the instructor assess students' understanding of materials and readings. Students are invited to write one paragraph (200-250 words) that should include 1) a summary of the main argument of at least one required reading of the week and 2) students' opinion of the reading. Only your highest eight reflective discussion posts will be counted. Please post the reflexive discussion post on Canvas by 11:59pm every Sunday.

Midterm Exam: A midterm exam will be made available through Canvas starting at 11:59pm PST on Thursday, April 30th of Week 5 and will close at 11:59pm on Friday, May 1st. The midterm exam will consist of multiple choice, short response answers and one essay response. The exam will cover both readings and lecture materials that are *not* taken directly from the readings.

Final Project: First, students will interview another student about their thoughts and plans for marriage, work and family (interview questions will be provided), write up a transcript of the interview and post it on Canvas where your classmates will have access to it. After the interviews are due, we will devote at least one lecture to a “crash course” on qualitative data analysis that will teach students the techniques they will be expected to use to develop their project. Finally, students will present their project based on their analysis of a sample of interview summaries, drawing on relevant readings from class. This project is assigned to help students improve their analytical skills, critical thinking, and to become familiar with how their thoughts are shaped by their assumptions and preconceived ideas. Guidelines will be provided closer to the deadline. This assignment is due on Canvas by 11:59pm on June 7th.

Midterm Session Evaluation Survey: Your feedback helps to assess the effectiveness of individual sessions, provide requested feedback to guest speakers, and most importantly to keep improving this course in real time and for future quarters. Therefore, you are asked to complete a midterm evaluation survey to receive full credit for this portion of your grade. The evaluation is very brief and will be made available through Canvas on Week 5 from April 27th to May 4th. **Your submissions will be anonymous** – I will be able to see that you completed the evaluation, but the survey results will not be attached to your name. The evaluation will be open for completion for a week, after which point the evaluation will be closed. These evaluations are also an opportunity for you to provide general feedback to the instructor about how the class is going, not specific to a session. There will also be an opportunity to provide anonymous feedback through the Department (which will also be shared with the instructor) at the end of the quarter: <https://cape.ucsd.edu/>.

Extra credit opportunity

Current Event Analysis: Students will have the opportunity to earn extra credit (up to 5 points) by exploring in depth a topic of interest, learn in a group, and practice cooperation, negotiation, and delegation with peers. The topic can be chosen by the students but must be approved by the instructor prior to the presentation. Topic ideas may also be provided by the instructor to the students in need of assistance. As part of a team, students will present an analysis of a current event in class. A two-to-three-member team will have 10 minutes to present the current event analysis considering, based on the following format:

- Background/ contextual information
- Fact description, and if possible, the meanings it might have for the actors involved
- Analytical reflections related to the topics discussed in the course
- In conclusion, the team must bring two to three questions to discuss with all the classmates

The presentations will take place on June 5th. The sources of information can be the media, newspapers, and documentary films (not academic articles). The team must inform the instructor of their interest in participating in this activity no later than May 8th. Students can earn up to five points, which will be added to the final grade. Students are encouraged to work together and will receive a group grade for the final product. Current event analysis will be graded based on group participation in preparation and presentation, relevancy of the content, critical thinking, and presentation style. Groups will be supported by the instructor as needed.

Course Assessment:

Grading: Grades are assigned based on the following letter grade and marks criteria (see below). The instructor will take every effort to grade all submitted assignments within ten days of the due date.

Letter Grade and Marks:

A+	96.50 – 100	B+	86.50 – 89.49	C+	76.50 – 79.49	D+	66.50 – 69.49
A	92.50 – 96.49	B	82.50 – 86.49	C	72.50 – 76.49	D	60.00 – 66.49
A-	89.50 – 92.49	B-	79.50 – 82.49	C-	69.50 – 72.49	F	59.00 and below

Key Dates:

ASSIGNMENT	DEADLINE	SUBMISSION TYPE
Reflective Discussion Posts	Each Sunday By 11:59pm	On Canvas
Midterm Evaluation Survey	From April 27th to May 4th By 11:59pm	On Canvas
Midterm Exam	May 1st By 11:59pm	On Canvas
Final Project	June 7th By 11:59pm	On Canvas
Extra credit opportunity		
Interest in Participating	May 8 th By 11:59pm	By email
Extra credit presentation	June 5 th By 11:59pm	On Canvas

Course policy:

Late Work Policy: Assignments turned in late will be assessed a penalty: a half-letter grade if it is one day late, or a full-letter grade for 2-4 days late. Assignments will not be accepted if late by more than four days other than under exceptional circumstances. Assignments submitted after June 7th will not be graded. Final assignment submitted after June 7th will not be accepted.

Grades of "Incomplete": The current university policy concerning incomplete grades will be followed in this course. Incomplete grades are given only in situations where unexpected emergencies prevent a student from completing the course and the remaining work can be

completed the next semester. Your instructor is the final authority on whether you qualify for an incomplete. Incomplete work must be finished by the end of the subsequent semester or the “I” will automatically be recorded as an “F” on your transcript.

Writing Policy: Commentary on written work will be delivered in written format, at the end of the assignment. However, upon request, an alternate delivery method can be used. If desired, instructor comments can be made verbally and delivered to the student as an mp4. This approach yields far fewer written comments, but much more commentary in general is delivered, due to the speed and specificity of speech. Those requesting mp4 feedback must state so when the essay is turned in. All papers should demonstrate mastery of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and syntax expected of college level students. If you need writing assistance, please seek help from the Student Support Services Program in the Office of Academic Support and Instructional Services (OASIS). You can also contact the UCSD Writing Hub (writinghub@ucsd.edu). All papers are to be word-processed, proofread, and solely the work of the author.

Group Work Policy (for extra credit only): Everyone must take part in the assigned group (midterm) project. All members of a group will receive the same score; that is, the project is assessed, and everyone receives this score. However, that number is only 90% of your grade for this project. The final 10% is individual and refers to your teamwork. Every person in the group will provide the instructor with a suggested grade for every other member of the group, and the instructor will assign a grade that is informed by those suggestions.

Student Expectations:

Statement of University of California’s Policy on Integrity of Scholarship: The UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship provides in-depth information about the policies and procedures relating to student integrity of scholarship.

According to the policy, “Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. Instructors, for their part, will exercise care in planning and supervising academic work, so that honest effort will be upheld.”

More information can be found on the Academic Senate Office website: <https://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/appendices/2>.

Statement Related to Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you require classroom accommodation because of a disability, you must first contact the Office for Students with Disabilities (<https://osd.ucsd.edu/>) to determine eligibility for modifications, and other adjustments and accommodations due to a disability. You should inform the course instructor as soon as possible regarding eligibility determinations. The university is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to assist students in their coursework.

Counseling and Student Health: Students may occasionally have personal issues that arise in the course of pursuing higher education or that may interfere with their academic performance. If you find yourself facing problems affecting your coursework, you are encouraged to talk with an instructor or to seek confidential assistance at Student Health Services, 858-534-3300 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), 858-534-3755. Visit their website for more information: <https://wellness.ucsd.edu/Pages/default.aspx>. Crisis intervention is always available 24/7 from: CAPS, 858-534-3755. **BUT** – Do not wait until you reach a crisis to come in and talk with us. We have helped many students through stressful situations impacting their academic performance. You are not alone so do not be afraid to ask for assistance.

Title IX Statement: The Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination (OPHD) is the Title IX Office for UC San Diego and investigates reports of sexual harassment, sexual violence, dating and domestic violence and stalking. You may file a report online with the UC San Diego Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination (OPHD) at <https://ophd.ucsd.edu/> or you may call OPHD at 858-534-8298.

Please note that University employees (including faculty and teaching assistants), who are not confidential resources, are designated Responsible Employees. Responsible Employees are required to report any incidents of sexual violence or sexual harassment to Michael Diaz OPHD Director / Title IX Officer.

If you are not ready to file a report, but wish to receive confidential support and advocacy, please contact CARE at the Sexual Assault Resource Center (CARE at SARC). CARE at SARC provides violence prevention education for the entire UCSD campus and offers free and confidential services for students, staff and faculty impacted by sexual assault, relationship violence and stalking. Accessing resources at CARE at SARC will not constitute a report to the University.

Academic Conduct Policy: The success of the Honor Code is made possible only with the acceptance and cooperation of every student. Each student is expected to maintain the principles of the Code. Example of Honor Code violations include:

- Giving or receiving information from another student during an examination;
- Using unauthorized sources for answers during an examination;
- Illegally obtained test questions before the test;
- Any and all forms of plagiarism – submit all or part of someone else’s work or ideas as your own;
- The destruction and/or confiscation of school and/or personal property.

Violations of the Honor Code are serious. They harm other students, your professor, and the integrity of the University. Alleged violations will be referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs. If found guilty of plagiarism, a student might receive a range of penalties, including failure of an assignment, failure of an assignment, and withholding of the final course grade until a paper is turned in on the topic of plagiarism, failure of the course, or suspension from the University.

Violations of Academic Integrity: Violations of the principle include, but are not limited to:

- Cheating: Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids, or other devices in any academic exercise.
- Fabrication and Falsification: Intentional and unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. Falsification is a matter of inventing or counterfeiting information for use in any academic exercise.
- Multiple Submissions: The submission of substantial portions of the same academic work for credit (including oral reports) more than once without authorization.
- Plagiarism: Intentionally or knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source).
- Abuse of Academic Materials: Intentionally or knowingly destroying, stealing, or making inaccessible library or other academic resource materials.
- Complicity in Academic Dishonesty: Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- Copying or borrowing liberally from someone else's work without his/her knowledge or permission; or with his/her knowledge or permission and turning it in as your own work.
- Copying of someone else's exam or paper.
- Allowing someone to turn in your work as his or her own.
- Not providing adequate references for cited work.
- Copying and pasting large quotes or passages without properly citing them.

Use of AI and Academic Integrity

In this course, the use of AI tools (such as ChatGPT or similar systems) is not permitted for any assignments. All submitted work must reflect your own thinking, writing, and analysis, in line with UC San Diego's Academic Integrity Policy and the Sociology department's standards (see resources below). Using AI to generate, rewrite, paraphrase, or structure any part of your assignments counts as unauthorized assistance and may be treated as academic misconduct. That said, learning about AI and how to use it responsibly as a learning tool will be covered in class in person. Separately, please note that the instructor may use AI-assisted tools to support fair, consistent, and equitable grading practices (for example, to help check clarity, consistency, or bias in evaluation), but final grading decisions always remain the instructor's responsibility. If you are ever unsure about what is allowed, please ask before submitting your work.

UCSD Academic Integrity & AI Resources

- Academic Integrity Policy: <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/process/policy.html>
- Academic Integrity Office (general): <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/>
- AI & Academic Integrity Guidance: <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/choose-integrity/gen-ai/index.html>
- Academic Integrity in UCSD Catalog: <https://catalog.ucsd.edu/academic-integrity.html>

Instructor Goals:

At a minimum, I hope to pursue the following goals and solicit your open and timely feedback on how well we are meeting these goals:

- Communicate effectively and frequently;
- Be an enthusiastic, active and involved;
- Demonstrate a mastery of the discipline;
- Relate material to current practices;
- Clearly explain complex concepts and ideas;
- Provide a framework for lifelong learning;
- Strive to involve participant in class activities;
- Be available to assist participants in or out of class; and
- Have respect and concern for all participants.

Class Schedule:

Tentative schedule available at the time of syllabus publication. Due to availability of potential guest speakers, course content might need to be modified. The instructor will inform the students of any changes to topic and readings.

See schedule below and on Canvas for the most up to date schedule!

Week 1 – Introduction to the Family

Welcome, Class Overview and Expectations

The Origine of the Family

- Required reading: Gough, K. (1971). The origin of the family. *Journal of Marriage and family*, 33(4), 760-771.

Historical Perspectives on Family Studies

- Required article: Coontz, S. (2000). Historical perspectives on family diversity. *Shifting the center: Understanding contemporary families*, 4, 42-58

Week 2 – Historical Perspectives on Family Lives

Historical Perspectives on American Family Structure

- Required reading: Cherlin, A. J. (2004). The deinstitutionalization of American marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66(4), 848-861.

Historical Origins of U.S. Family Diversity (Part I)

- Required reading: Cherlin, A. J. (2014). *Labor's love lost: The rise and fall of the working-class family in America*. Russell Sage Foundation. Introduction.

Historical Origins of U.S. Family Diversity (Part II)

- Required reading: Cherlin, A. J. (2014). *Labor's love lost: The rise and fall of the working-class family in America*. Russell Sage Foundation. Introduction.

Week 3 – Transitions of the Later 20th Century

“In the Name of the Family”

- Required reading: Jackson, D. D. (2001). “This hole in our heart: The urban-raised generation and the legacy of silence. American Indians and the urban experience”. In: *American Indians and the Urban Experience* (pp. 189-206). Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.

Gender and Family Life

- Required reading: Van Bavel, J., Schwartz, C. R., & Esteve, A. (2018). The reversal of the gender gap in education and its consequences for family life. *Annual review of sociology*, 44(1), 341-360.

Queering Family Lives & Extraordinary Kinship

- Required reading: Garwood, E. (2023). Queering the kinship story: constructing connection through LGBTQ family narratives. *Feminist Theory*, 24(1), 30-46.

Week 4 – Race/Ethnicity, Social Class, Gender & Parenthood

Understanding Contemporary Families

- Required reading: Hill, S. A. (2001). Class, race, and gender dimensions of child rearing in African American families. *Journal of Black studies*, 31(4), 494-508.

The “Second Shift” & The Gender Revolution (Part I)

- Required reading: Frejka, T., Goldscheider, F., & Lappegård, T. (2018). The two-part gender revolution, women's second shift and changing cohort fertility. *Comparative Population Studies-Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft*, 43, 99-130.

The “Second Shift” & The Gender Revolution (Part II)

- Required reading: Frejka, T., Goldscheider, F., & Lappegård, T. (2018). The two-part gender revolution, women's second shift and changing cohort fertility. *Comparative Population Studies-Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft*, 43, 99-130.

Week 5 – Feminization of Poverty

Families and the Marketplace

- Required reading: Landour J. (2020), Mompreneurs: Economics, Parenting and Identity, *Travail et Emploi*, vol. 2020, n°Hors-série, p. 121-142

Midterm review

Midterm Exam

Week 6 – Ideologies About Motherhood and Fatherhood

Fatherhood and Work

- Required reading: Ranson, G. (2012). Men, Paid Employment and Family Responsibilities: Conceptualizing the ‘Working Father’ *Gender, Work & Organization*, 19(6). 129

Constructing Men as Father

- Required reading: Schmitz, R. M. (2016). Constructing men as fathers: A content analysis of formulations of fatherhood in parenting magazines. *The Journal of Men’s studies*, 24(1), 3-23.

Cultural Contradiction of Motherhood

- No Required reading

Week 7 – Violence in the Family and Resilience

Understanding Violence in the Family

- Required reading: Hearn, J. (2013). The sociological significance of domestic violence: Tensions, paradoxes and implications. *Current sociology*, 61(2), 152-170.

Intimate Violence and Trauma Prevention

- No Required reading

Domestic Violence

- No Required reading

Week 8 – Family Lives: Housework, Parenting & Childcare, and Leisure

Time and Parenthood

- Required reading: Lareau, A., & Weininger, E. B. (2008, September). Time, work, and family life: Reconceptualizing gendered time patterns through the case of children's organized activities 1. In *Sociological Forum* (Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 419-454). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Work-family Responsibilities

- Required reading: Pedulla, D. S., & Thébaud, S. (2015). Can we finish the revolution? Gender, work-family ideals, and institutional constraint. *American sociological review*, 80(1), 116-139.

Home Service Digital Platforms: A Professional Opportunity for Single Mothers?

- Required reading: Pulignano, V., Marà, C., Franke, M., & Muszynski, K. (2023). Informal employment on domestic care platforms: a study on the individualisation of risk and unpaid labour in mature market contexts. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 29(3), 323-338.

Week 9 – Parents and Children: Family Relationships and Dynamics

Final Project Review

Conflict, Coping, and Reconciliation

- Required reading: Seltzer, J. A., & Bianchi, S. M. (2013). Demographic change and parent-child relationships in adulthood. *Annual review of sociology*, 39(1), 275-290.

Week 10 – Love, Romance, Sex and Intimacy

The Feminization of Love

- Required reading: Cancian, F. M. (1986). The feminization of love. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 11(4), 692-709.

Courtship and Dating

- Required reading: Owens, E. (2007). The sociology of love, courtship, and dating. Bryant CD and Peck DL (eds., 21st Century Sociology: A Reference Handbook. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 266–271.

Final Reflections and Course Synthesis

- No Required reading