

## Sociology Of The Family (SOCI 129)

Classroom: Peterson Hall 103

Class Hrs: 12:00-12:50p MWF

Prof Office Hrs: Wednesdays 01:00-02:30 (Office)

TA Office Hrs: Thursdays 1200-0200 (432 Soc Sciences Bldg)

**Professor:** Dr. Richard N. Pitt

497 Social Sciences Bldg

[rpitt@ucsd.edu](mailto:rpitt@ucsd.edu)

**Teaching Assistant:** David Chao

[dkchao@ucsd.edu](mailto:dkchao@ucsd.edu)

## [www.majorsmatter.net/family](http://www.majorsmatter.net/family)

*"Our sense of being a person can come from being drawn into a wide social unit; our self of selfhood can arise through the little ways in which we resist the pull. Our status is backed by the solid buildings of the world, while our sense of personal identity often resides in the cracks." Erving Goffman*

*"So, I guess we are who we are for a lot of reasons. And maybe we'll never know most of them. But even if we don't have the power to choose where we come from, we can still choose where we go from there. We can still do things. And we can try to feel okay about them." Steven Chbosky*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION** The overall goal of this course is to provide students with a working knowledge of conceptual frameworks and theories relevant to the sociological study of families. The course, which consists of lectures, readings, class discussions, and writing assignments is designed to focus on the question of how families function and how variation within and between families affects individuals and society. The class covers a range of theoretical explanations from classical macro-oriented sociology approaches (e.g., structural functionalism) to meso-level approaches (e.g., exchange theory, family systems) to micro-sociological ones (e.g., symbolic interactionism). Woven throughout the class are opportunities to understand how cultural, economic, political, and demographic factors affect family structure and interaction.

**TEXTS.** All assigned readings will be articles made available to you in course reserves. You can access them in Canvas (under "Course Reserves"). You can also find them by clicking on the book icon on the course webpage. You will be responsible for reading each article assigned and write memos (see point B in grading) for two of them each week. Undergraduate students are conventionally expected to complete 2-3 hours of out-of-class coursework for *every hour in class . . . really.* [I know. Stop laughing!] Research on reading speeds shows that undergrads average about 250-300 words per minute for recognition of the material content. The average 20-page article assigned in this course is about 12500 words and should take you about an hour to read carefully and 30 minutes to skim. As you'll see below, you will be required to outline these articles; that will add an additional 30-45 minutes. Therefore, I fully expect that you should be able to read/outline the articles each week. If you find it difficult to manage this level of work, please let me know and we can discuss some techniques for increasing your reading/skimming speed.

**REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING.** Other than the quizzes and the final examination, your grade in this class will be based on your completion of assignments, not "mastery" of material. In order to learn the material we will cover in this class, I need you to complete all of the assignments. Each journal and article memo will be marked as "done" or "not done", not "correct" or "incorrect". These assignments are opportunities to explore, engage with, and challenge ideas raised in the class. Complete them. Each of you starts with an "A" (600 points) and you move down from there. The buffer for each letter grade is 60 points (10%). Pluses and minuses are earned in the 20 point margins at the top/bottom of the letter grade range. **You will receive an A- at 564 points.** Once you go below the threshold for any given grade, there is NO way to go up. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments should be single-spaced, 1" margins, and in Times or Times New Roman font. All assignments must be turned in on Canvas in the correct assignment "mailbox" as WORD (doc. or docx) documents.

**A** = 565-600 points (94%)   **B** = 520-539 points (87%)   **C+** = 460-479 points (77%)   **D** = 360-419 points

**A-** = 540-564 points (90%)   **B** = 500-519 points (83%)   **C** = 440-459 points (73%)   **F** = 0-359 points

**B-** = 480-499 points (80%)   **C-** = 420-439 points (70%)

**A) Encounter The Material:** The single largest predictor of a final grade in any course is attendance (Credé, Roche, Kieczynka 2010), with doing the reading following a close second. As much of the learning taking place in this class will happen during the three hours we have together each week, you hurt yourself by not attending. Not only do I believe your presence enables you to learn from the contributions of others, your own contributions to our learning are critical for our comprehensive engagement with these ideas. That said, I will not take attendance or reduce your grade simply because you don't show up for lectures.

**B) Explain The Material (20 Article Memos at 5 pts each = 100 points):** While most of the theoretical and conceptual material for this class will be found in the lectures and discussions, we will encounter most of the empirical (i.e., research-based) evidence of the theories in the 20 readings assigned in this class. You will be required to outline each week's readings and those outlines are due (in Canvas, in the correct folder) **by midnight on Friday** of the week they are assigned on the syllabus. Each memo for each reading should be no more than one page in length. They **must** follow the model supplied at the end of this syllabus, including each of the sections included in that model; don't include the notes and numbers in parentheses. I will choose one of your memos to post on the course website as a study guide for the rest of us. The posted memo's terms and findings will be what I will base quiz/exam questions upon. If you find that, week after week, your memos don't look like the posted ones (e.g., you don't pick the right concepts), please meet with me to see what you can do differently. We will discuss 6 of the articles in depth the last week of class.

**C) Engage The Material (10 journal entries at 20 pts each=200 points):** Every week you will be expected to write a one page (minimum 600 words) single-spaced journal entry on the issues covered in class that week. I will give you a specific question to answer that's based on that week's material. The journal entry will be due **by midnight the following Monday** in Canvas. The last journal will be due that **Friday (November 5)** by midnight. Your *ideas* will not be graded as "correct" or "incorrect" -- rather this is an opportunity to explore, engage with, and challenge ideas raised in the course. A "useful" (to you) journal entry will try to apply the concepts discussed in class and the readings assigned that week. If we tell you to use specific terms, you must **UNDERLINE** those terms in your journal. Not using the terms makes that an "incomplete" journal and you will get a zero. Using them incorrectly will also lead to lost points. Often, you'll get a response (in Canvas) along with your grade. We'd love for you to respond to those.

**D) Exhibit Erudition (Quizzes and final examination for 300 points):** I would like for you to master the material in this class at the following levels of understanding: (1) basic knowledge, (2) comprehension and understanding, and (3) application. With that in mind, there will be two ways I'll test your understanding: a series of quizzes and a cumulative final exam.

- **Quizzes:** There are four (10 question) quizzes scheduled throughout the semester (essentially one every other Wednesday). Each question will be worth 2.5 points. Quizzes will test that you are keeping up with your knowledge of the material and not waiting until the final exam to cram it all. These quizzes will only cover that week's readings and the material covered since the last quiz. The average on quizzes is usually 70%. If you find that you're scoring much below that, please see me as soon as possible for possible study tips.

- **Final Examination:** There will be a cumulative final exam composed of 80 multiple-choice questions. Each question will be worth 2.5 points. As you'll discover with the quizzes, these multiple-choice questions can't be answered by just looking for a word you recognize. You'll be expected, in some questions, to apply your knowledge to cases. You'll also be responsible for the material in the readings even if we did not discuss that reading in class. The exam will be on **Thursday December 11 from 11:30a-02:30p** on Canvas.

## **SUMMARY OF WHEN ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE**

**Mondays: Journals are due by midnight**

**Wednesdays: Quizzes are open from 7am to 2pm on Wednesdays**

**Friday: Article Memos are due by midnight**

## OTHER IMPORTANT THOUGHTS

**Academic Excuses:** I recognize that life may create interruptions in your ability to fully participate in the class. If an issue arises for you, please make sure to contact me immediately by email, but also be sure you can get the missed material from another student. Constantly monitoring students' late work is not a productive use of my time. If **you turn something in late**, Canvas will automatically mark it as a "zero". It will remain a zero until the Saturday before finals week when I go back and give it (only) 50% of the possible grade. If you know that **you cannot take the quiz** during the 7a-2p window, let me know by 8am that Wednesday and I'll be happy to extend the window for you.

**Academic Integrity:** UCSD's Student Honor and Conduct Code governs all work in this course. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the provisions of the Code addressed in UCSD's Catalog and Student Handbook. Uncertainty about the application of the Honor Code does not excuse a violation. Plagiarism/cheating is easily detected and WILL NOT be tolerated. If I suspect that either has taken place, you will receive no credit for the assignment. Materials presented in this class are for the exclusive use of students enrolled in this course. The release of any of this material is strictly prohibited. Releasing this material will be considered an Honor Code violation and may also be a violation of state and federal laws.

***A Note About ChatGTP Written By ChatGTP:*** "I am aware that some students may be using ChatGTP to complete their assignments. However, I will be able to easily spot any instances of this because ChatGTP produces generic and unoriginal answers that do not demonstrate a genuine understanding of the material. ChatGTP is incapable of producing unique answers for multiple students in the same class. More than one instance of similar writing will be challenged. I expect all students to complete their assignments on their own and with honesty and integrity."

**Academic Accessibility:** The Office for Students With Disabilities (OSD) works with students who have disabilities in order to help us provide reasonable accommodations to enable you to learn the course materials. It is your responsibility to request those accommodations *through that office*. In order to receive consideration for an accommodation, you must register with the OSD as soon as possible. Accommodations cannot be retroactively applied.

**Encountering Food Insecurity?** If you are skipping and stretching meals, or having difficulties affording or accessing food, you may be eligible for CalFresh, California's supplemental nutrition assistance program, that can provide nearly \$300 a month in free money on a debit card to buy food. Also consider the Triton Food Pantry, where you can pick up 15 points worth of food per week. Both resources can be found at the following website: [basicneeds.ucsd.edu/food-security](http://basicneeds.ucsd.edu/food-security).

**Final Thoughts on Respect:** People often have strong opinions about the topics discussed in sociology courses, particularly in discussions that also intersect with ideas about race, gender, and sexuality. In our processes of learning what is empirically "true" and what is not, it is possible that members of the class will make comments which are based on misinformation or an interpretation that other members of the class find objectionable. Given this, it is essential that we treat each other with respect, that we do not demean or devalue the comments of class members, and that we stick to the issues rather than engage in personal attacks. If you find that statements in the class—including my own—cause you to feel left out or make it difficult for you to fully participate, please let me or the TA know and we'll see what we can do to remedy this. It is also important to be aware of how your choice of language regarding race, gender, and sexuality will be received by your classmates who may stand in different relation to the material than you. One important adjustment we should all make for this class is to tend towards inclusive language when talking about human beings (e.g., "people" instead of "men") except when the analysis we're engaging in requires more specificity (e.g., a discussion on gay men).

## Curriculum Units

### **Week Of September 29 Course Introduction**

Furstenberg, Frank. 2014. "Fifty Years of Family Change: From Consensus to Complexity." *ANNALS* 654:12-29.

Sheff, Elisabeth. 2011. "Polyamorous Families, Same-Sex Marriage, and the Slippery Slope." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 40:487-520.

### **Week Of October 06 Functionalism Theory**

Mandara, Jelani, Carolyn Murray, and Toya Joyner. 2005. "The Impact of Fathers' Absence on African American Adolescents' Gender Role Development." *Sex Roles* 53:207-220.

Pitt, Richard, and Elizabeth Borland. 2008. "Bachelorhood And Men's Attitudes About Gender Roles." *Journal of Men's Studies* 16:140-157.

### **Week Of October 13 Symbolic Interaction Theory (QUIZ)**

Burke, Kelsy. 2014. "What Makes A Man: Gender and Sexual Boundaries on Evangelical Christian Sexuality Websites." *Sexualities* 17:3-22.

Collett, Jessica, Kelcie Vercel, and Olevia Boykin. 2015. "Using Identity Processes to Understand Persistent Inequality in Parenting." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 78:345-364.

### **Week Of October 20 Social Exchange Theory**

Coy, Anthony, and Lindsey Rodriguez. 2023. "Affection Preference, Enactment, and Relationship Satisfaction: A Dyadic Analysis of Love Languages." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 49:737-994.

Donnelly, Denise, and Elisabeth Burgess. 2008. "The Decision to Remain in an Involuntarily Celibate Relationship." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 70:519-535.

Kreager, Derek, Richard Felson, Cody Warner, and Marin Wenger. 2013. "Women's Education, Marital Violence, and Divorce: A Social Exchange Perspective." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 75:565-581.

### **Week Of October 27 Family Life Course Theory (QUIZ)**

Fingerman, Karen, Yen-Pi Cheng, Eric Wesselman, Steven Zarit, Frank Furstenberg, and Kira Birditt. 2012. "Helicopter Parents and Landing Pad Kids: Intense Parental Support of Grown Children." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74:880-896.

Nomaguchi, Kei and Melissa Milkie. 2003. "Cost and Rewards of Parenthood: The Effects of Becoming Parents on Adults' Lives." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65:356-374.

### **Week Of November 03 Family Systems & Ecological Theory**

Bacallao, Martica, and Paul Smokowski. 2007. "The Costs of Getting Ahead: Mexican Family System Changes After Immigration." *Family Relations* 56:52-66.

Christie-Mizell, Andre, Erin Pryor, and Elizabeth Grossman. 2008. "Child Depressive Symptoms, Spanking, and Emotional Support: Differences between African American and European American Youth." *Family Relations* 57:335-350.

Porche, Michelle, and Diane Purvin. 2008. "'Never In Our Lifetime': Legal Marriage for Same-Sex Couples in Long-Term Relationships." *Family Relations* 57:144-159.

### **Week Of November 10 Conflict Theory (QUIZ • No Class On Friday)**

Hoffman, Kristi, Jill Kiecolt, and John Edwards. 2005. "Physical Violence among Siblings: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis." *Journal of Family Issues* 26:1103-1130.

Wang, Hongyu and Paul Amato. 2000. "Predictors of Divorce Adjustment: Stressors, Resources, and Definitions." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62:655-668.

### **Week Of November 17 Dating And Assortative Mating**

Allison, Rachel, and Margaret Ralston. 2018. "Opportune Romance: How College Campuses Shape Students' Hookups, Dates, and Relationships." *The Sociological Quarterly* 59:495-518.

Rosenfeld, Michael and Reuben Thomas. 2012. "Searching for a Mate: The Rise of the Internet as a Social Intermediary." *American Sociological Review* 77:523-547.

### **Week Of November 24 Infidelity and Cohabitation (QUIZ • No Class On Friday)**

Jackman, Mahalia. 2015. "Understanding the Cheating Heart: What Determines Infidelity Intentions? *Sexuality & Culture* 19:72-84.

Sassler, Sharon, and Amanda Miller. 2011. "Waiting to Be Asked: Gender, Power, and Relationship Progression among Cohabiting Couples" *Journal of Family Issues* 32:482-506.

### **Week Of December 01 Article Reviews**

No Readings This Week. We Will Engage In A Deep-Dive Review Of Your Favorite Articles.

Hagestad, Gunhild, and Vaughn Call. 2007. "Pathways to Childlessness: A Life Course Perspective." *Journal of Family Issues* 28:1338-1361 (Use this style! Not APA, MLA, etc.)

**PRIMARY ARGUMENT (one sentence, usually found in the front of the article, must begin with "The authors argue that"):** The authors argue that the pathways which individuals take in their early adulthood impact their life course in terms of childbearing as they often deviate from family formation to different paths in their lives.

**IMPORTANT DEFINED CONCEPTS (2, NO acronyms, use bullets\*, underline terms):**

- The Life Stage Principle: How each life stage in an individual's life impacts the next. The consequences of specific events, both historical and societal, and their impact on an individual's life course.
- Path Interdependence: The idea that trajectories in different domains of life are intertwined and together impact the life course of an individual.

**PRIMARY FINDINGS (3-4, numbered, found in "Findings", "Results", or "Discussion"):**

1. In both the Netherlands and the United States, individuals who eventually became parents left their parental home earlier than childless adults.
2. The average age that individuals continued to live in their parental home is high among individuals who had never been married and do not have children. Among those who were single, some did not leave their parental home until their parents passed away.
3. Those who left earlier from their parents' home show significant advancement in their lives. The same pattern is present with single childless women, who gained cultural capital from education in contrast to their counterparts.
4. Childless individuals deferred from traditional transition timing in contrast to parents who engaged early with adult transitions.

**KEY QUOTE (1, include page number):** "Among single, childless women, a high proportion were well educated and had stable employment. Many married, childless women also showed strong work engagement. Thus, there are indications that although a distinction between voluntary and involuntary childlessness is problematic for these cohorts, they did include forerunners who through agency prioritized education and occupation over motherhood." (1359)

**QUESTION (1, don't ask the obvious, ask questions we can take up in class):** How does current political climate over reproduction rights impact the results of the study? Would there be an impact in terms of the considerations that women have regarding becoming a parent? In other words, is restricted autonomy over one's body a reason for women deciding to remain childless?

\*\*\*\* In order to type a bullet (•), use ALT-7 on PC and OPT-8 on MAC \*\*\*

**THIS IS A MODEL. YOURS SHOULD LOOK LIKE IT BUT WITHOUT THE STUFF SHOWN HERE IN RED.**