

**SOCIOLOGY 4AA3 – Selected Topics in The Sociology of The Family:
“Alternative Families”**

Fall, 2016
Day and Time of Classes: Thursdays 7:00-10:00pm
Class Location: KTH B107

Instructor: Julie Gouweloos
Email: gouwelj@mcmaster.ca
Office Hours: Thursdays 5:30-6:30pm
Office Location: KTH 643

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The family is a foundational institution upon which societies are built. Families can also tell us a great deal about social inequality. This course examines the social significance of, and relationship between, nuclear and “alternative” families. This course is organized into two broad areas. First, we examine the emergence and the significance of the nuclear family in western societies. Second, we explore the diverse experiences of “alternative” families and grapple with the new questions these families offer us in our quest to understand the relationship between families and social life. Students will have the opportunity to examine empirical and theoretical work in these areas. This is a seminar course (as opposed to a lecture) with a moderate amount of weekly reading; therefore, it is expected that all students will come to class each week prepared to engage in thoughtful and informed discussion.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Demonstrate an ability to identify and evaluate different theoretical and conceptual frameworks that sociologists and other scholars use to understand the complex relationship between social inequality and diverse family forms
 2. Enhance effective written and verbal communication skills through academic writing and in-class discussion
 3. Articulate an understanding of how sexuality, gender, race, and class intersect to shape family experiences
 4. Demonstrate the ability to think critically, and apply this skill to course material, seminar discussions, and written assignments
 5. Please note, this course addresses numerous University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (for specific expectations see “Learning Objectives” section found at <http://www.sociology.mcmaster.ca/undergraduate-program/course%20outlines>)
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REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Course-pack - “Alternative Families”
2. Ingraham, Chrys. 1999. *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge. (Available in hard copy and e-book via the McMaster library)
3. Additional Readings will be posted on the course Avenue to Learn site.

SUGGESTED TEXTS:

1. Course-pack – “Alternative Families Online Readings”
 2. American Sociological Association. 2014. *ASA Style Guide*. 5th ed. Available for purchase through the ASA's online bookstore at <http://www.asanet.org>.
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EVALUATION:

Marks will be assigned as follows:

Seminar Participation: 15%
Mid-term Exam (*October 20*): 24%
Critical Commentaries: 16%
Presentation: 10%
Final Paper (*December 1*): 35%

Seminar Participation (15%):

Class participation is a vital component of this seminar course. Therefore, it is expected that all students will be active participants. *This means attending all classes, being prepared to engage classmates in thoughtful and informed discussion, and completing all in-class assignments.* Participation will be based largely on the quality of your contribution to the class. Students should come to each class equipped with a thoughtful question to provoke discussion. It is also imperative that the class function as a “safe space”; therefore, guidelines around appropriate language and behaviour will be established collectively at the outset of the course. Please note that we will be discussing important and sensitive topics such as sexism, racism, ableism, classism, ageism, and heterosexism; however, at no point is it appropriate to engage in sexist, racist, ableist, classist, ageist, or LGBTQ-phobic behaviour.

Midterm Exam (24%):

The midterm exam will take place on (**October 20, 2016**) and will be written during class time. Students are responsible for all material covered in the assigned readings as well as material discussed in class. Students will be provided with more information on the format prior to the exam.

Critical Commentaries (16%):

Following the mid-term break, students are required to write a total of 4 commentaries on the assigned weekly readings. Please note that at this point in the semester there will only be 6 remaining classes, which means that you must submit a commentary for 4 of those last 6 weeks. Commentaries should include a **brief** articulation of each reading’s main point (stated in your own words) as well as a critical engagement with the broader course concepts/readings wherein students must critique/assess/make connections to course themes. Commentaries should not exceed two pages (double-spaced). Commentaries are to be posted on Avenue no later than 10pm the day before class. Submissions after this time will not be accepted.

Presentation (10%):

Students are required to present a reading drawn from the course outline. Presentations must include: 1) a brief summary of the article's main points (this is to serve as a refresher for the class rather than an overview of the whole article), 2) an insightful analysis of the article in relation to the broader topics of the course, and 3) a class discussion/activity led by the presenter(s). The presentation is intended to demonstrate students' grasp of the literature, ability to communicate effectively, and to facilitate scholarly discussion among the class. Presenters are encouraged to adopt active learning strategies wherein presenters use activities, media, or other creative methods to help students comprehend the ideas and apply that knowledge to other course concepts. Grades will be determined by a combination of peer and instructor evaluation.

Final Paper (35%):

Each student will complete an **11-12 page paper** (excluding references) wherein they will delve deeper into one of the course related weekly topics. This will require students to conduct additional research in conjunction with the course readings. Final papers are due (*December 1*). Students will be provided with more information as the semester progresses.

MARKING AND ASSIGNMENTS:

NOTE: Assignments must be submitted both in hardcopy in class and to Avenue to Learn. When submitting your assignments to Avenue to Learn, you must ensure that your last name is identified in the file name, e.g. "Gouweloos-Final Paper.pdf". All pages should be numbered and have 1" margins on all sides. All text should be double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point font and follow ASA formatting (details can be found in the ASA style guide). Failure to adhere to these guidelines will be reflected in the mark for the assignment.

Review of Marks

I will mark all assignments fairly and accurately; however, should you disagree with a mark you receive, you may have an opportunity to have your assignment mark reviewed. ***Please note that when a mark is reviewed, the new mark may be lower than the original. Should you choose to request a mark review you must complete the following:***

1. Write a 1-page memo (on paper, not email) describing in detail the nature of the perceived marking error.
2. Submit this memo, with the original marked assignment to me. You may submit requests for review no sooner than one week and no later than three weeks after assignments/exams are handed back to the class.

Late Assignments and Absences

All excuses for missed work due to illness, injury and family emergency must be vetted through the office of the Associate Dean of Social Science. Please follow the procedure as outlined on the Faculty of Social Sciences website. We are committed to making appropriate accommodations for students' observance of religious holidays. Please contact me as early in the term as possible to make individual arrangements. We are also committed to working with students with disabilities to make individualized accommodations according to your specific

needs. All such arrangements must be made through Student Accessibility Services. ***For late assignments without approved excuses, you must make arrangements directly with me to hand in the assignment. Assignments will be marked down 5% if turned in late on the day it is due, and an additional 5% for each day it is late after that, including weekend days and holidays.***

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or *for which other credit has been obtained*. In assignments, complete citations are required for all quotes and paraphrases. Consult a writing style guide for information on how to properly cite the work of others.
 2. Improper collaboration in group-work. In this course, I encourage students to work together to understand concepts, discuss ideas, study for exams, etc. Improper collaboration would be defined as using the work of others to get out of doing your own work, claiming the work of others as your own.
 3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.
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ONLINE CONTENT:

Avenue to Learn

This course can be accessed through McMaster's learning system, Avenue to Learn. You are required to login and use the tools and materials available through this on-line system. You must submit your assignments here, and your grades, course outline, and any announcements will be posted here. Students should be aware that when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation, may become apparent to all other students in the same course. ***Check your Avenue to Learn on a regular basis as course amendments and required readings will be updated throughout the course.***

Email

It is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors, and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. Please consider email and instant messaging equivalent to any other form of written communication. You are expected to follow rules of spelling, grammar and etiquette. In addition, please include a proper greeting, such as "Dear..." and a closing that includes your full name, such as "Sincerely,..." Email containing questions that can be answered by referring to this syllabus or to Avenue to Learn may not be answered. ***While I aim to answer emails within 48 hours, please note that this is not always possible.***

DEPARTMENTAL/UNIVERSITY POLICIES:

Do NOT fax assignments. Please see your instructor for the most appropriate way to submit assignments. ***The Sociology staff do NOT date-stamp assignments, nor do they monitor the submission or return of papers.***

The McMaster Student Absence Form (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>) is a self reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report absences that last up to 3 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work. Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period. You may submit a maximum of 1 Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation.

If you are absent more than 3 days, exceed 1 request per term, or are absent for a reason other than medical, you MUST visit your Associate Dean's Office (Faculty Office). You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence.

Students should check the web, the white board and the Undergraduate Bulletin board outside the Sociology office (KTH-627) for notices pertaining to Sociology classes or departmental business (eg. class scheduling information, location of mailboxes and offices, tutorial information, class cancellations, TA job postings, etc.).

Computer use in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture or tutorial.

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

It is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the

identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at their discretion.

WEEKLY BREAKDOWN:

NOTE: Two course-packs containing the required weekly readings have been made available in the campus bookstore. The first course-pack entitled “Alternative Families” (referred to below as AF) contains book excerpts and hard-to-find material. The second course-pack (referred to below as AFO) contains print copies of the required readings. The readings in the second course-pack are also available online via the McMaster library website for those students who do not wish to have a hard copy.

WEEK	READINGS
1 - Sept 8 - Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holstein & Gubrium. “What Is Family? Further Thoughts on a Social Constructionist Approach.” (AFO) • Zinn. “Feminism and Family Studies for a New Century.” (AFO)
2 - Sept 15 - Emergence of “the family”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engels. “The Family.” (AF) • Carter. “Customs not in Common.” (AF)
3 - Sept 22 - The nuclear family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phillips. “Settler Colonialism and the Nuclear Family.” (AFO) • Heath. “State of our Unions: Marriage Promotion and the Contested Power of Heterosexuality.” (AFO)
4 - Sept 29 - Weddings	Ingraham, Chrys. “ <i>White Weddings</i> ” (reading is not in AF, see “Required Texts” for more information)
5 – Oct 6 – Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green. “Queer Unions: Same-Sex Spouses Marrying Tradition and Innovation.” (AFO) • Bernstein. “Same-sex marriage and the future of the LGBT movement: SWS presidential address.” (AFO)
Oct 13	NO CLASS
6 – Oct 20 –	Mid-term Exam (in-class)
7 – Oct 27 – Non-monogamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheff & Tesene. “Consensual Non-Monogamies in Industrialized Nations.” (AF) • Campbell. “Bountiful’s Plural Marriages.” (AFO)
8 – Nov 3 – Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stacey & Biblarz. “(How) does the sexual orientation of parents matter?” (AFO) • Hicks. “Is gay parenting bad for kids? Responding to the 'very idea of difference' in research on lesbian and gay parents.” (AFO)
9 – Nov 10 – Parenting (II)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moore. “Gendered Power Relations among Women: A Study of Household Decision Making in Black, Lesbian Stepfamilies.” (AFO) • Goldberg et al. “The division of labor in lesbian, gay, and heterosexual new adoptive parents.” (AFO)

10 – Nov 17 – Parenting (III)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lareau. “Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families.” (AFO) • Vincent, Rollock, Ball, & Gillborn. “Raising Middle-class Black Children: Parenting Priorities, Actions and Strategies.” (AFO) • Thomas & Blackmon. “The influence of the Trayvon Martin shooting on racial socialization practices of African American parents.” (AFO)
11 – Nov 24 – Motherhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bock. “Doing the right thing? single mothers by choice and the struggle for legitimacy.” (AFO) • Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila. “‘I’m here but I’m there’: The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood.” (AFO) • Elliott, Powell, & Brenton. “Being a Good Mom: Low-Income, Black Single Mothers Negotiate Intensive Mothering.” (AFO)
12 – Dec 1 – Chosen families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smith. “Searching for Kinship.” (AFO) • Reading TBD (AVENUE)