**Sociology of the Family**  
(SOCI.2310-201)

Spring Semester 2019, 3 credit hours  
TuTh, 12:30-1:45 PM  
Riverview Suites 155

Susan Thomson Tripathy, Ph.D.  
Susan_Tripathy@uml.edu  
Office hours: by appt.,  
Tuesday 3:30-5:30 PM Dugan 205H

“Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one.” –Jane Howard

**Course Overview**

This course uses a sociological approach to understand family forms, practices and controversies in contemporary society, with particular emphasis on families in the United States. We will look closely at how family experiences and opportunities have changed over time, and also how they vary by gender, age, class, race/ethnicity and sexual orientation. What functions does the family perform in modern society? How is it changing? How do these changes affect our lives?

**Required Texts**

New York: W.W. Norton & Co.


**Blackboard Site**

This course has an accompanying Blackboard site. Course readings, assignments and grades will be posted regularly. Instructions for accessing this site will be provided.

**Course Objectives**

1. To become aware of the diversity of family forms and functions in the United States and throughout the world, both historically and in our current society.
2. To become familiar with the writings of predominant social theorists engaged in research on families, such as Andrew Cherlin and Annette Lareau.
3. To understand how family experiences and opportunities connect with gender, age, class, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation.
4. To appreciate how social forces such as globalization and economic inequality have impacted family life in the United States.
5. To complete an original sociological analysis of one's own family over three generations, or an analysis of a contemporary social problem affecting families in the United States, both in writing and oral presentation.
6. To become familiar with appropriate interview techniques and library research methodology.
7. To understand how to critique statistical studies and data reporting current trends in family life, especially how they are presented in popular news reports.
8. To become adept at writing response papers to weekly readings and engaging in class discussions.
9. To understand current public policies and support services affecting families in the United States, and formulate one's own opinion regarding what is working well and what needs to be changed.

Course Requirements and Policies

1. Complete all the assigned readings, 6 out of 10 weekly response papers, and prepare summaries and questions to facilitate two small group discussion sessions. Detailed instructions for the response papers are provided on a separate sheet. When you are a discussion facilitator, you should NOT submit a response paper. A comprehensive list with due-dates is provided on the course schedule. Any changes and updates will be announced in class. Detailed instructions for the reaction papers will be provided in class and on Blackboard.
2. Choose and complete a family history research project, a contemporary issue research project, or the service-learning option at SayDaNar. Detailed instructions will be provided in class and on Blackboard.
3. Attend all classes and participate in class and small group discussions. Attendance will be noted at the beginning of each class meeting. Students who arrive after the attendance is completed will be counted as absent. Unexcused absences may result in grade reduction or failure of the course. Specifically, if a student misses more than three classes, they must consult with me to determine whether or not continuation with the course is acceptable.
4. Throughout the semester, you will be notified about important class information and changes via email. Please check your UMass Lowell email at least once a day to be sure you do not miss these announcements.
5. Cell phones should be kept on silent and not used during class, except in the case of emergency. Computers may be used for note-taking only, with permission from the instructor.
6. Written assignments are due on the specified due-date. Point reductions for late work will be decided on an individual basis.
7. Complete a mid-term and participate in a final discussion. Both assignments will require you to integrate concepts from course readings and lectures. Detailed instructions will be provided in class and on Blackboard.
Grading

Final course letter grades will be assigned based on a total of 150 points that may be accumulated over the semester. These points will be divided as follows:

Mid-term: 30 pts
Research or Service Learning Project: 35 pts
$2.00 A Day Book Analysis Paper: 15 pts.
Weekly Response Papers: 30 pts.
Small Group Discussion Facilitations: 20 pts.
Class Attendance/Participation: 10 pts.
Total: 140 pts.

Please note: This grading scheme and the total number of points for the semester are subject to change; any changes will be announced in class and through email.

Each response paper will be graded on a scale of 0-5. Instructions will be provided in class. Response papers and discussion questions/summaries (if you are a discussion facilitator) must be turned in by the start of the class in which they are due (i.e., 12:30 PM) to receive full credit. You are required to complete 6 out of 10 response papers and be a small group discussion facilitator TWICE during the semester.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Maintaining academic honesty is expected at all times during this course. In addition, while drawing connections between courses is to be encouraged, work already submitted for assignments in another course will not be accepted. UMass Lowell policies regarding definitions and sanctions for cheating and plagiarism may be found in the UMass Lowell catalog via the following link: http://www.uml.edu/Catalog/Undergraduate/Policies/Academic-Integrity.aspx

Disabilities, Special Situations, Counseling and Tutoring Services

The Disability Services office is part of the Wellness Center at University Crossing, Suite 300 (http://www.uml.edu/student-services/Wellness-Center/default.aspx). Be sure to notify me regarding any documented disabilities or special situations that may require accommodations.
Phone: 978-934-6800, E-mail: Disability@uml.edu

The Counseling Center is also part of the Wellness Center, and provides counseling to help students with a variety of personal and academic problems, situations and goals.
Phone: 978-934-6800
After Hours Emergency Phone Number: 978-934-4911, OR 44-911 (from UMass Lowell)
Email: counseling@uml.edu Webpage: http://www.uml.edu/student-services/counseling/
**Tutoring and Academic Advising Services** are available at the Center for Learning and Academic Support Services (CLASS) and at The Writing Center. CLASS is located on the first floor of O’Leary Library (South Campus) and The Writing Center is located on the third floor of O’Leary Library. Evening tutoring is also available at Fox Hall. Services are free and available to all students on a drop-in basis. For more information about general tutoring, go to the CLASS website (http://www.uml.edu/class/). You may also send an email to: advisement@uml.edu. To make appointments for help with writing at The Writing Center, call 978-934-5270, stop by the reception desk on the 3rd floor of O’Leary library, or follow the link for the online scheduler on the Writing Center webpage: www.uml.edu/Writing-Center

### COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: In the schedule below, reading assignments, grouped in sets identified by consecutive numbers, are listed below the topic for each week, and written assignments are also noted. “Families” refers to our textbook, Families as they Really Are; “BB” refers to readings posted on Blackboard. This schedule is subject to change; all changes will be announced in class and/or by email.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit #1: Sociology of the Family: Concepts and Contexts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1/22-1/24 Topic: Introduction. What is a family? How do family forms vary worldwide?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1/29-1/31 Topic: How do we know what we know about families?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<td>2) “One Thousand and Forty-Nine Reasons Why It's Hard to Know when a fact is a fact” (Families, pg. 12-16) AND “Uncovering Hidden Facts That Matter” (Families, pg. 22-25) AND CCF Brief, The Trouble with Averages (Families, pg. 26-30)</td>
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<td>3) “Constructing Family: A Typology of Voluntary Kin” (on BB)</td>
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<td>4) Chapter 1, The Stuff of Family Life</td>
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*Response paper #1 due in class 1/31, read all readings on this list*
Unit #2: Families in Historical/Global Perspective

2/5-2/7 Topic: How have families changed over time?
Readings:
1) “The Evolution of American Families” (Families, pg. 36-55)
2) “American Childhood as a Social & Cultural Construct” (Families, pg. 56-67)
3) “In the News: A Golden Age of Childhood” AND “Homesick Kids and Helicopter Parents” (Families, pg. 68-71)
4) “African Americans and the Birth of the Modern Marriage” (Families, pg. 72-83)
5) Chapter 2, The Stuff of Family Life

*Response paper #2 due in class 2/7, choose 3 numbers on this list

2/12-2/14 Topic: Immigrant and Refugee Families
Readings:
1) “Multigenerational Punishment” (BB)
2) “Adoptive Parents Raising Neoethnics” (Families pg. 426-439)
3) “The Ominous Story of Syria’s Climate Refugees” (BB) and “The Hidden Scars All Refugees Carry” (BB)
4) “Immigrant Families and the Shifting Color Line in the United States” (BB)

*Response paper #3 due in class 2/14, choose 3 numbers on this list

2/19: No Class, Monday Schedule

2/21 (Thursday) Topic: Who is an eligible spouse? Interracial and Gay Marriage
Readings:
1) “Interracial Families in Post-Civil Rights America” (Families pg. 98-112) AND “Purple Boots, Silver Stars, and White Parents” (BB)
2) “How Interracial Love is Saving America” AND “Loving, 50 years later”
3) “The Conservative Case for Gay Marriage” (BB) AND “My Father’s Journey (BB)
4) “Supreme Court Ruling Makes Same-Sex Marriage a Right Nationwide” (BB) AND “Let Us Buy Cake”

*Response paper #4 due in class 2/21, read #1 and two other numbers on this list

2/26: Films: The Loving Story and If These Walls Could Talk 2

*Prospectus for Research Paper due in class, 2/26*

2/28: Mid-Term Due
Unit #3: Intimate Relationships

3/5-3/7 Topic: Sex, Love and Gender
Readings:
1) “Why is Everyone Afraid of Sex?” (Families pg. 252-263) AND “We Need Bodice-Ripper Sex Ed” (BB)
2) “Betwixt and Between: Gender Contradictions among Middle Schoolers” (Families, pg. 570-593) and “In Sweden, Boys Won’t be Boys” (BB)
3) “We Can Write the Scripts Ourselves: Queer Challenges to Heteronormative Courtship Practices” (BB)
4) Chapter 3, The Stuff of Family Life

*Response paper #5 due in class 3/7, choose 3 numbers on this list

SPRING BREAK, 3/11-3/16

3/19-3/21 Topic: Cohabitation, Unmarried Parenthood and Marriage Choices
Readings:
1) “New Couples: The Cohabitation Revolution in the U.S.”(Families pg.149-158) AND “CCF Brief: Does Premarital Cohabitation Raise your Risk of Divorce?” (Families pg. 159-163)
2) “Not Just Provide and Reside: Engaged Fathers in Low-Income Families” (Families pg. 542-549)
3) “A Perfect Circle” and “When I Was Garbage” (on BB)
4) “Older Adults Developing a Preference for Living Apart Together” (BB)
5) Childfree Families (Families, pg. 137-144)

*Response paper #6 due in class 3/21, choose 3 numbers on this list

Unit #4: Providing and Caring for Children and Maintaining a Home

3/26-3/28 Topic: Poverty and Families
Reading:
$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America

*Book analysis paper due in class 3/28, read entire book. Note: this analysis paper is not optional, but required for everyone.
4/2-4/4 **Topic: Gender, Jobs, and Housework**  
*Readings:*  
1) “This is Your Job Now: Latina Mothers and Daughters and Family Work (*Families pg. 411-424*)  
2) “The Brotherhood of the Stay at Home Dad” AND “When Workday ends, More Fathers are Heading to the Kitchen” (BB)  
3) “Great Expectations? Working and Middle Class Cohabitors Expected and Actual Divisions of Housework.” (BB)  
4) Chapter 5 OR 6, *The Stuff of Family Life*  
5) “The Instagram-Husband Revolution” (BB)  

*Response paper #7 due in class 4/4, choose 3 numbers on this list*

4/9-4/11 **Topic: Raising Children**  
*Readings:*  
1) “Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families” and “Growing up on Easy Street has its own Dangers” (on BB)  
2) “Consumption as Care and Belonging: Economies of Dignity in Children’s Daily Lives” (on BB)  
3) “The Gendered Buffet: LGBTQ Parents Resisting Heteronormativity” (on BB)  
4) Chapter 4, *The Stuff of Family Life*  

*Response paper #8 due in class 4/11, choose 3 numbers on this list*

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Unit #5: Families in Crisis and Change

4/16-4/18 **Topic: Divorce, Widowhood and Blended Families**  
*Readings:*  
1) “The Case for Divorce” (*Families pg. 329-340*)  
2) “Stepfamilies as they really are: Neither Cinderella nor The Brady Bunch” (*Families 343-357*)  
3) “Good News vs. Bad” (BB) AND “Learning Humanity from Dogs” (BB)  
4) Chapter 7, *The Stuff of Family Life*  

*Response paper #9 due in class 4/18, choose 3 numbers on this list*
4/23-4/25 Topic: Domestic Violence, Substance Abuse and Incarceration

Readings:
1) “Mass Incarceration and Family Life” (Families pg. 551-566) AND “Doing Time = Doing Gender” (Families pg. 567-568)
2) Excerpts from “On Their Own: What Happens to Kids When They Age Out of the Foster Care System” (BB)
3) “Gender, Diversity, and Violence: Extending the Feminist Framework” (BB)
4) “They Passed out from Heroin with Kids in the Car. But There was More” (BB)

*Response paper #10 due in class 4/25. choose 3 numbers on this list

Course Conclusion

4/30-5/2 Research paper OR Service-learning presentations in class

**Research paper OR Service-learning Journal due 4/30

Note: All students are required to come to the final exam session for a final meeting and discussion.