

## **Sociology 320 – Diversity in Family Forms**

Summer Term I: May 15 to June 22, 2017

Class time: 3–6pm

Class location: BUCH B215 (B209 for split presentations)

Instructor: Tanvi Sirari

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Office Hours: Friday: 3–4pm

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\*Please mention the course number in the subject line, and expect 24–48 hours response time on weekdays.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Family continues to be the pre-dominant institution that organizes social life in North America. Although it's form and composition varies, the idea of what a family is or should be is still shaped by the prevailing cultural discourses and state regulations. Though at first glance family may appear to belong to the domain of private/personal, a careful sociological analysis will demonstrate how it is firmly entrenched in power relations in society. This course will promote critical discussion on how family is socially constructed in relation to complex historical processes like colonization, migration, and the prevalence of racism and sexism in society. The social imaginary of family described by sociologist Dorothy E. Smith's concept of Standard North American Family (SNAF) continues to hold normative significance. This class will study how the consideration of the role of diversity in family life can challenge this normative ideal by focusing on experiences of adoptive and single parent, mixed, first nations, queer, trans and racialized families. The course will use an intersectional framework and draw on interdisciplinary scholars to demonstrate how power relations embedded in social hierarchies of social class, gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity connect with the institution of family. Students are expected to engage in a critical dialogue to challenge a simplistic definition of family and consider how the social institution of family relates to the changing cultural social, economic, and political landscape. As with other upper year courses, I expect students to be able to discuss controversial topics with respect and intellectual rigor.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

**Students will be able to:**

1. Define and deconstruct the normative construct of Standard North American Family (SNAF).
2. Compare and contrast the ideal-typical construction of Standard North American Family (SNAF) with diversity of family forms in North America.
3. Evaluate the role of historical and social contexts in shaping the cultural discourse about family.
4. Identify variations in family forms and analyze the challenges encountered by first nations, mixed-race, racialized, queer and trans families.

5. Generate examples of how government policy and social programming affect families and critique state regulations that affect diverse families.

## **COURSE MATERIAL**

- Texts will be made available on Connect through the UBC library.
- The lecture-notes will be uploaded on connect after each class.

## **COURSE EVALUATION**

### **1. Class Presentation: 20%**

Students (in groups of 4) will lead a seminar session every week. **You will sign up on first day of class for your turn.** The presentation will take place in two split sessions led by Tanvi and Max that will happen concurrently. Session one (B-215) will include everyone whose family name starts with A-K; Session two (B-209) will include everyone whose family name starts with L-Z.

Groups are required to lead a 45-minute session including an oral presentation (about 25 minutes) focused on the required readings for the class and a class discussion with their classmates for another 20 minutes. The seminar presentation should address the themes, issues, and questions raised in the required readings.

### **Students should:**

1. Review the main argument(s) from the readings
2. Highlight what you learned that was new or unexpected in the reading
3. Discuss the implications of the article for thinking critically about family and the diversity of family forms: how does the article challenge normative ways of thinking about family? What does it invite us to think critically about?
4. Relate their article to a current event or to a piece of relevant media and provide an analysis of how the two are connected
5. Create 2–3 discussion questions and discuss them with the class. This is a key part of the assignment as it allows for engaging in a meaningful discussion about the questions, issues, and themes raised by the articles. The best questions are specific and relatable: they allow students to draw on their own experiences or prior knowledge. Groups are encouraged to bring in activities into the discussion as they see fit.

### **2. Mid-term Exam: 20%**

Define and apply key concepts and demonstrate an understanding of course material including readings and lectures. A short essay will be included. It will cover material up to class 6.

### **Final Exam: (20%)**

Define and apply key concepts and demonstrate an understanding of course material including readings and lectures. This is not cumulative and will only include material covered from class 7 to 12. A short essay may be included.

### **Class Participation: (20%)**

I endeavour to provide you with different modes of participation, so you have opportunities to engage in a number of activities, along with comments/questions during class time. Here is the breakdown:

#### **4.1 . Individual Attendance (5%)**

Attendance will be taken during the presentations.

#### **4.2 Class Engagement (5%)**

Engagement in the form of active participation in terms of contribution to classroom conversation in group and class discussion helps students learn and understand material and practice oral presentation skills.

#### **4.3 Email Submissions (5%)**

Identify and submit five pieces (blogs/articles/YouTube videos etc.) that relate to a topic of class. These should be sent by email to the instructor with a subject line mentioning the topic. The email should have **three sentences** about how this relates to the topic in the class. Only two submissions per week are allowed. They must be emailed to me by Friday: 5pm to be counted.

#### **4.4 Class Submissions (5%)**

Responses in the form of reflections, write-ups and answers to quizzes circulated occasionally during class time. They cannot be submitted later.

### **3. Extra Credit (3%)**

Students' will have the opportunity to get one extra credit worth 3% if they attend an event (talk/movie screening/seminar/conference etc.), and submit a one page (single space, 1 inch margins, 12 point, Times New Roman) write-up describing the event and explaining how it related with the topics covered in this class. These have to be submitted by week 8 to Max.

### **4. Media Analysis (20%)**

In this assignment, you will select one of the media clips provided by the instructor on connect (**In week 2**), and analyze the material selected using the concepts and analytics explored the first four classes of the course. The goal is for you to reflect critically on how families are represented in modern media, paying particular attention to issues of gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability. This short paper should be organized in the following way:

1. Provide a short introduction to the clip you chose. What is the clip about? What kind of families are represented in this clip?
2. Drawing on materials from the first seven weeks of class, analyze the clip you've selected to answer the question: how is family represented in this clip, and what are the implications of this representation?
3. Conclude by reflecting on the analysis that you've conducted. Did anything surprise you? What meanings about family are changing, and which ones are staying stable?

To help with your analysis, consider the following questions. **DO NOT** try to answer all the questions! Different questions will be more relevant depending on what clip you chose. These questions are meant to help you think critically about the clip. You are responsible for organizing your thoughts in a coherent way.

1. What assumptions are made in the clip about what constitutes a family?
2. How are race, class, and ability presented in this clip?
3. What characteristics are associated with men, and with women? Are these very different?
4. Does this clip challenge or confirm dominant ideas that we have about gender, sexuality, class, race and ability? How does it do that? In other words, what is expected about family in this clip, and what is unexpected? (There is usually a mix of both.)
5. How does this clip use humour and/or emotion to convey its messages about family? What is the clip assuming about the audience when it does that?

### **Policies for Written Assignments**

1. Before submitting your written assignments, please make sure they:
  - are written in 12 point, Times New Roman Font
  - contains the title of your paper; your name and student ID; the date you are submitting the paper; the course number; and the name of the instructor
  - have page numbers marked at the bottom right of your paper
2. Assignments must be submitted via Connect email by 3pm on the date due (just before class). Late penalties will apply if you hand in the assignment later. Assignments will **NOT** be accepted if submitted in person, ANSO paper drop box or slipped under my office door.
3. Please follow the citation guidelines for the American Psychology Association (APA) for all written assignments. A guideline for how to cite different types of texts using the APA format will be uploaded to Connect.
4. Late assignments will be deducted 3% for each working day it is submitted after the deadline.
5. Exceptions will be made for unforeseen medical or family crises. If you experience a medical, emotional, or personal problems that detracts from your academic performance, please contact the Faculty of Arts Academic Advising Office, located in Buchanan A201, phone 604-822-4028. I only make exceptions for missed deadlines with a letter from the Arts Advising Office. For more information: <http://www.arts.ubc.ca/students/degree-planning-advising/advising.html>

### **Student Needs and Early Alert**

This course welcomes and seeks to accommodate students with physical or learning disabilities or chronic illnesses. If you require any assistance or adaptation of teaching or evaluation, please feel free to discuss your needs with the instructor. The Disability Resource Centre in Brock Hall is available for further consultation and resource provision.

If you speak or read English as an additional language and find the teaching, or evaluation formats, a disadvantage for you, please inform the instructor. If classes or assignment due dates are scheduled during a religious or cultural holiday that you observe, please inform the instructor, and together and we can negotiate alternative arrangements.

During the term, I will do my best to reach out and offer support. If I am concerned about your academic performance or wellbeing, I also encourage you to come and speak with me if you need assistance. In addition, I may identify my concerns using Early Alert. The program allows academic, financial, or mental health concerns to be identified sooner and responded to in a more

coordinated way. This provides you with the earliest possible connection to resources like academic advising, financial advising, counselling, or other resources and support to help you get back on track. The information is treated confidentially and is sent because I care about your academic success and wellbeing. For more information, please visit <http://www.earlyalert.ubc.ca>.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE: 12 Classes/6 Weeks**

### **May 16<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday**

#### **Class 1. Cracking the “Ideological Code” of SNAF**

- Dorothy Smith (1993). The Standard North American Family: SNAF as an Ideological Code. *Journal of Family Issues*, 14(1), 50–65.

### **May 18<sup>th</sup>, Thursday**

#### **Class 2. Forming family: Dating and Marriage**

- Robinson, B. A. (2015). “Personal Preference” as the New Racism: Gay Desire and Racial Cleansing in Cyberspace, *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 1(2), 317–330.
- Fetner, T., & Heath, M. (2015). Do same-sex and straight weddings aspire to the fairytale? Women’s conformity and resistance to traditional weddings. *Sociological Perspectives*.

### **May 23<sup>rd</sup>, Tuesday**

#### **Class 3. Motherhood and Fatherhood Discourse**

- Epstein, R. (2002). Butches with babies: Reconfiguring gender and motherhood. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 6(2), 41–57.
- Wall, G. & Arnold, S (2007) How involved is Fathering? An Exploration of the Contemporary culture of fathering, *Gender and Society*, 21(4), 508–527.

### **May 25<sup>th</sup>, Thursday**

#### **Class 4. Social Class and Family**

- Lareau, A. (2002), Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 67, No. 5 (Oct., 2002), 747–776.
- Elliott, S. Powell, R., & Brenton, J. (2015) Being a Good Mom: Low- Income, Black Single Mothers Negotiate Intensive Mothering, *Journal of Family Issues*, Vol. 36(3), 351–370.
- Gazso, A. & McDaniel, S. A, (2015) Families by Choice and the Management of Low Income Through Social Supports, *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(3), 371–395.

### **May 30<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday**

#### **Class 5. Beyond the two-parent model: Challenges to the nuclear family**

- Schmeekle, M. (2007). Gender dynamics in stepfamilies: Adult stepchildren’s views. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69(1), 174–189.
- Sheff, E. (2011). Polyamorous families, same-sex marriage, and the slippery slope. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 40(5), 487–520.

## **June 1<sup>st</sup>, Thursday**

### **Class 6. Single Parenting **MIDTERM****

- Bock, J. D. (2000). Doing the right thing? Single mothers by choice and the struggle for legitimacy. *Gender & Society*, 14(1), 62–86.
- Coles, R. (2002). Black single fathers choosing to parent full-time. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 31(4), 411–439.

## **June 6<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday**

### **Class 7. Mixed and racialized families**

- Twine, F. W. & Steinbugler, A. C (2006). The gap between whites and whiteness: Interracial intimacy and racial literacy. *Du Bois Review*, 3(2), p. 341-363.
- Schueths, A. M. (2013) 'It's almost like white supremacy': interracial mixed-status couples facing racist nativism. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 13, p. 2438–2456.
- Dorow, S. (2006). "Racialized choices: Chinese adoption and the 'white noise' of Blackness." *Critical Sociology*, 32(2-3), p. 357-379.

## **June 8<sup>th</sup>, Thursday **MEDIA ANALYSIS DUE****

### **Class 8. Trans parents and families**

- Kane, E. W. (2006). "No way my boys are going to be like that!": Parents' responses to children's gender nonconformity." *Gender & Society*, 20, p. 149-176
- Riley, E. A., Sitharthana, G., Clemson, L. & Milton, D. (2011). The needs of gender-variant children and their parents: A parent survey. *International Journal of Sexual Health*, 23(3), 181–195.

In-class screening of documentary film: *Transgender parents (2014)*

## **June 13<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday**

### **Class 9. Queer families**

- Rawsthorne, M & Costello, M. (2010). Cleaning the sink: Exploring the experiences of Australian lesbian parents reconciling work/family responsibilities. *Community, Work & Family*, 13(2), 189–204.
- Riggs, D. W. & Due, C. (2010). Gay men, race privilege and surrogacy in India. *Outskirts*, 22.

## **June 15<sup>th</sup>, Thursday**

### **Class 10. Disability and family**

- Hardonk, S., Daniels, S., Desnerck, G., Loots, G., Van Hove, G., Van Kerschaver, E., Sigurjónsdóttir, H., Vanroelen, C. & Louckx, F. (2011). Deaf parents and pediatric cochlear implantation: An exploration of the decision-making process. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 156(3), 290–304.
- Resch, J. A., Mireles, G., Benz, M. R., Grenwelge, C., Peterson, R., & Zhang, D. (2010). Giving parents a voice: A qualitative study of the challenges experienced by parents of children with disabilities. *Rehabilitation Psychology*, 55(2), 139–150.

**June 20<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday**

**Class 11. First Nations families in a settler society**

- Koostachin, J. (2012). Remembering Inninimowin: The Language of the Human Beings. *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, 27(01), 75–80.
- Dominelli, L., Strega, S., Walmsley, C., Callahan, M., & Brown, L. (2011). “Here”s my story’: Fathers of “looked after” children recount their experiences in the Canadian child welfare system. *British Journal of Social Work*, 41(2), 351–367.

**June 22<sup>nd</sup>, Thursday FINAL EXAM**

**Class 12. Chosen Families: From family to community**

- Muraco, A. (2006). “Intentional families: Fictive kin ties between cross-gender, different sexual orientation Friends.” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(5), 1313–1325.
- Coontz, S. (2015). Revolution in intimate life and relationships. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 7(1), 5–12.