

McGill University
Department of Sociology
Sociology 405 – Families over the Life Course
Winter 2014

Professor: Sarah Brauner-Otto
e-mail: sarah.brauner-otto@mcgill.ca
Office: Leacock 728 **Phone:** 398-5682
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:30pm-4:30pm and by appointment
Seminar: Leacock 721 **Time:** Wednesday, 13:35 – 15:25

General description and objectives:

This seminar examines the profound family changes throughout the life course observed in wealthy, industrialized countries over past decades. For example, given the prevailing high levels of conjugal instability, it is not now uncommon for children to see their parents separate and to have to adjust to the arrival of step-parents, step-siblings and half-siblings into their environment. This has also led to a reconfiguration of parental roles, especially for fathers who often do not live on a regular basis with their children and have to redefine their relationships with them. At the other end of the age spectrum, the decline of fertility combined with the rise of separation and divorce clearly affects the composition of the family networks of tomorrow's elderly. What are the effects of the diversification of family trajectories on children's living conditions and development or on the provision of care to elderly? This seminar aims to answer such questions that are at the forefront of social science research and constitute a major concern for policy makers. The course will examine in a comparative perspective the extent and ways in which the sequences of family events have changed over time across western countries and their consequences among men, women and children. It will expose students to a large array of research drawn from different disciplines, in an effort to understand the mechanisms at work.

Requirements and evaluation:

1. Student contract: All students must sign the student contract (available on myCourses). No work will be graded until the contract is turned in.

2. Participation (20%):

Class discussion leaders (10%): Each week, a group of students will start the session by summarizing (5-10 minutes) the main points of argument in the assigned readings. The group is expected to prepare a few questions and/or highlight some points of debate to spark class discussion. The summaries and discussion starters these should be drafted in a short paper (one page long) to be handed in. A sign up sheet will be available for students to select their preferred day to lead. Two to three students will be in each group and each group member

will be required to rate the participation of the other member(s). This peer rating will contribute to the individual grade.

Participation in discussions (10%): Students are expected to read all the assigned readings, including the Family Inequality blog described below, in order to actively participate in the class discussions.

Both leading and participating in discussions will be evaluated on the clarity of the presentation, the quality, rigour, and relevance of the comments, the openness towards others' point of views, and the critical and constructive nature of the exchanges.

3. **Debates (30%):** Students will be randomly divided into two groups and each one will choose one issue that they want to explore more deeply. Each group will be split into two sub-groups, with one that will emphasize the positive aspects of the chosen issue, and the other one the negative ones. Each team will first have 15 minutes to expose the results of their research; they should turn in a copy of the synopsis of their presentation or of their Power Point presentation by the start of the class when the debates will occur (**February 26**). This presentation will then be followed by a debate between the two teams in which the other students of the class will be invited to participate. The presentation (oral and written) and debate will count for **30%** of the final grade. Again, peer rating will contribute to the grade.

Possible topics include (but are not limited to): the impact of parental separation on the development and well-being of children; adult children's care of their ageing parents; the consequences of teenage and/or unmarried childbearing; consequences of delayed marriage or childbearing.

4. **Research paper (50%):** Each student must write a research paper on a topic flowing from the seminar. This research should result in a paper roughly 15 pages long paper (doubled spaced), including references, which comprises a critical review of existing studies on the chosen topic. Figures or tables may be included but will not count to the paper length.

The topic of research should be chosen by turning in a proposal indicating your goals (1 page or less) by **February 12 at the latest**. Students must set up individual meetings with the professor to review proposals. These meetings will occur between **February 14** and **February 28**. Students who do not have this meeting will receive a 0 for the paper.

Final papers will be presented during the last two days of class, on **April 2** and **April 9**; this presentation will count for **10%** of the final grade. The final paper is due on **April 14**, and will count for **40%** of the final grade. The evaluation will be based on: clarity, the precision and logic of the writing and of the argumentation; the capacity of synthesis; the effort and quality of the personal reflection and critical analysis; a judicious use of data, if appropriate; the quality of the bibliography.

Written Work

All written work must be typed using Times New Roman 12 or Arial 10 font with 2.54 cm/1 inch margins on all sides. Evaluation will include the substance of the paper and the quality of the writing (including grammar and spelling as well as the clarity of presentation).

Late assignment policy

All assignments are due at the start of class on the day they are due. Assignments turned in late will be marked down 1 full letter grade for each 24 hour period late. That is, an assignment due on February 26th is due at 1:35pm that day. If it is turned in after the start of class but before 1:35pm on February 27th the highest grade it can receive is a B. If it is turned in between 1:35pm on February 27th and 1:35pm on February 28th the highest grade it can receive is a C.

Disability and illness policies

Individuals with university recognised disabilities will be afforded special considerations in the setting of examination times and venues and depending on the type of disability may be given extra time to complete the required work. Assignments and/or projects that are late due to illness will not be accepted without an authoritative third party excuse and explanation.

Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Right to submit in English or French written work that is to be graded

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Email: There are two key points regarding email for this class.

- To communicate with you I will most likely use the email tool on the course website on myCourses. It is your responsibility to check this email account (or have it forwarded to an account you use more regularly). It is also your responsibility to ensure that I receive any messages from you. I recommend sending messages through the course website to ensure your messages to me from a non-McGill account are not mistaken as SPAM.
- Email is a written document and should be treated as a permanent record of communication. Each email should be addressed specifically (e.g. "Professor Brauner-Otto," or Dear Prof. Otto) and include your name as a closing. Do not use texting shortcuts or incomplete sentences. Emails to me should be more formal than emails to your friends or family. If it is too cumbersome to properly compose an email from your phone then you should wait until you have access to a computer. I will not respond to emails that do not follow these guidelines.

Tardiness. Tardiness, arriving late to class, will not be tolerated. Students who are more than 10 minutes late to class will not be allowed to attend that day. Students repeatedly arriving late to class will be asked to withdraw from the course. If the time of this class is too difficult for you to accommodate then you need to find another class.

Leaving early. Leaving class early will not be tolerated. If you have other commitments that prevent you from being in class the entire time then you need to find another class. Students repeatedly leaving early will be asked to withdraw from the course.

Cell phones and other electronic devices. The use of cell phones and similar electronic devices is not allowed in class. Use includes texting, checking Facebook, and other similar activities. If a cell phone “goes off” (e.g. rings, buzzes, beeps, vibrates) in any manner the student will be asked to leave the class immediately. Any student who uses a phone or similar device in class may be asked to leave class immediately. Re-admittance into the class at a later date is at the professor’s discretion. Students who repeatedly use unapproved electron devices will be asked to withdraw from the course. Laptops will be permitted but if I find their presence distracts from the learning environment of the class I will ban them.

Calendar and Themes

Date	Theme
1. January 8	Introduction
2. January 15	Defining families
3. January 22	From the family life cycle to the life course perspective
4. January 29	Changing family trajectories
5. February 5	Childhood experience and adult outcomes
6. February 12	Growing up with same-sex parents: does it matter?
7. February 19	No class. Individual meetings regarding paper topic.
8. February 26	Debates
March 5	Reading week. No class
9. March 12	Is there a motherhood wage penalty?
10. March 19	Childbearing after separation
11. March 26	Family changes and elderly support
12. April 2	Student final paper presentations
13. April 9	Student final paper presentations
April 14	Final paper due

Schedule and Reading list

Readings can either be found by clicking the hyperlink in the syllabus or on myCourses (all readings are not in both places). You can also search for articles through the library.

Family Inequality blog: <http://familyinequality.wordpress.com/>

Students are expected to regularly read the blog Family Inequality. This is a blog maintained by Philip Cohen, a professor of sociology at the University of Maryland. We will begin each class discussing his latest posts.

This blog may also be a useful place to get ideas for debate topics and your final paper.

1. **Introduction** (January 8)

Presentation of the syllabus and discussion on interests and expectations.

Brief introduction to different approaches to study ‘family’.

2. ***Defining families*** (January 15)

Munro, B. and G. Munro. 2003. "[Family, Definition of](#)", in *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family*, Second Edition, vol. 2 (Ea-Ju), New York, Macmillan, p. 549-555.

Trost, J. 1990. "[Do We Mean the Same by the Concept of Family](#)", *Communication Research* 17 (4): 431-443.

Bould, S. 1993. "[Familial Caretaking. A Middle-Range Definition of Family in the Context of Social Policy](#)", *Journal of Family Issues* 14 (1): 133-151.

Statistics Canada. 2012. [Portrait of Families and Living Arrangements in Canada: Families, households and marital status, 2011 Census of Population](#). Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011001. Part 1 and Box on page 17.

Also skim:

Statscan definitions: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/ref/guides/98-312-x/98-312-x2011005-eng.cfm>

Family change over past 50 years: http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/98-312-x2011003_1-eng.cfm

3. ***From the family life cycle to the life course perspective*** (January 22)

Glick, P.C. 1977. "[Updating the Life Cycle of the Family](#)", *Journal of Marriage and Family* 39 (1): 5-13.

Hareven, Tamara K. 1991. "[The Home and the Family in Historical Perspective](#)" *Social Research* 58(1): pp. 253-285.

Elder, G.H., M. Kirkpatrick Johnson and R. Crosnoe. 2003. "The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory", in *Handbook of the Life Course*, J.T. Mortimer and M.J. Shanahan (ed.). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, p. 3-19 [ebook].

4. ***Changing family trajectories*** (January 29)

Andersson, Gunnar. 2002. "[Children's experience of family disruption and family formation: Evidence from 16 FFS countries](#)," *Demographic Research* 7(7): 343-364.

Salmela-Aro, K., N. Kiuru, J.E. Nurmi and M. Eerola. 2011. "[Mapping pathways to adulthood among Finish university students: Sequences, patterns, variation in family- and work-related roles](#)", *Advances in Life Course Research*, 16 (1): 25-41.

Ravanera, Z.R. and F. Rajulton. 2006. "[Social Status Polarization in the Timing and Trajectories to Motherhood](#)", *Canadian Studies in Population* 33 (2): 179-207.

Juby, H. and C. Le Bourdais, 1998. "[The Changing Context of Fatherhood in Canada. A Life Course Analysis](#)", *Population Studies*, 52(2): 163-175

5. ***Childhood experience and adult outcomes*** (February 5)

Ongaro, F. and S. Mazzuco. 2009. "[Parental separation and family formation in early adulthood: Evidence from Italy](#)", *Advances in Life Course Research* 14 (3): 119-130.

Sobolewski, J.M. and P. R. Amato. 2005. "[Economic Hardship in the Family of Origin and Children's Psychological Well-Being in Adulthood](#)", *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (1): 141-156.

Amato, P.R. 2003. "[Reconciling Divergent Perspectives: Judith Wallerstein, Quantitative Family Research, and Children of Divorce](#)", *Family Relations* 52 (4): 332-339.

Hobcraft, J. and K. Kiernan. 2001. "[Childhood poverty, early motherhood and adult social exclusion](#)", *British Journal of Sociology* 52 (3): 495-517.

6. ***Growing up with same-sex parents: does it matter?*** (February 12)

Gartrell, N. and H. Bos. 2010. "[US National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study: Psychological Adjustment of 17-Year-Old Adolescents](#)", *Pediatrics* 126 (1): 28-36.

Stacey, J. and T.J. Biblarz. 2001. "[\(How\) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?](#)", *American Sociological Review* 66 (2): 159-183.

Series on same-sex parenting and child outcomes published in 2012 in *Social Science Research* vol 41, issue 4, pages 735-787.

Also Editorial Introductory Remarks the review by Sherkat in vol 41, issue 6.

Skim Family Inequality posts related to Regnerus controversy:

<http://familyinequality.wordpress.com/tag/regnerus/>

Note: this is a *substantial* amount of reading. Focus on Gartrell and Bos 2010, Stacey and Biblarz 2001, and Regnerus, M. 2012. "[How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study](#)", *Social Science Research* 41 (4): 752-770. Skim the other readings well enough to discuss.

7. February 19 **No class.** Set up individual appointments regarding final paper.

8. ***Student debates*** (February 26)

March 3-7 Reading week

9. ***Is there a motherhood wage penalty?*** (March 12)

Gough, Margaret and Noonan Mary. 2013. "[A review of the motherhood wage penalty in the United States.](#)" *Sociology Compass* 7(4): 328-342.

Phipps, S., P. Burton and L. Lethbridge. 2001. "[In and out of the labour market: long-term income consequences of child-related interruptions to women's paid work](#)", *Canadian Journal of Economics* 34 (2): 411-429.

Aisenbrey, S., M. Evertsson and D. Grunow. 2009. "[Is There a Career Penalty for Mothers' Time Out? A Comparison of Germany, Sweden and the United States](#)", *Social Forces* 88 (2): 573-605.

10. ***Childbearing after separation*** (March 19)

Beaujouan, E. and A. Solaz. 2008. "[Childbearing after Separation: Do Second Unions Make Up for Earlier Missing Births? Evidence from France](#)". Paris: INED, Documents de travail N° 155.

Henz, Ursula and Elizabeth Thomson. 2005. "[Union Stability and Stepfamily Fertility in Austria, Finland, France, and West Germany.](#)" *European Journal of Population* 21(1): 3-29.

Stewart, S. D. 2002. "[The effect of stepchildren on childbearing intentions and births](#)", *Demography* 39 (1): 181-197.

11. ***Family changes and elderly support*** (March 26)

Albertini, M. and A. Garriga. 2011. "[The Effects of Divorce on Parent-Child Contacts](#)", *European Societies* 13 (2): 257-278.

Glaser, K., R. Stuchbury, C. Tomassini and J. Askham, 2008. "[The Long-Term Consequences of Partnership Dissolution for Support in Later Life in the United Kingdom](#)", *Ageing & Society*, 28 (3): 329-351.

Kalmijn, M., 2007. "[Gender Differences in the Effects of Divorce, Widowhood and Remarriage on Intergenerational Support: Does Marriage Protect Fathers?](#)", *Social Forces*, 85 (3): 1079-1104.

12. ***Student final paper presentations*** (April 2)

13. ***Student final paper presentations*** (April 9)

April 14. Final paper due