“A family is the nucleus of civilization.” – William James Durant

“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 Description

By definition, sociology involves the systematic study of human social behavior, interaction and organization. Sociologists are particularly interested in understanding how human social life is shaped by social forces (e.g., globalization) and social structures (e.g., class). This is a survey course designed to introduce you to the study of one particular institution of human social life – the family. In this class, we will explore a variety of concepts, methodologies, theoretical perspectives and empirical findings pertaining to the sociological study of family, with particular reference to Canadian and American families.

Course Materials

- Coursepack
- Various Articles (you must access these on your own via the library and/or the Internet)

The textbook and coursepack are available for purchase at the Le James McGill Bookstore. Slide presentations, exam review sheets, etc... will be made available via myCourses, so please check the site on a regular basis.

Course Organization and Requirements

Class Format:

Lectures (held on Mondays and Wednesdays) are intended to build upon material present in the assigned readings. So, while attendance is not mandatory, it is in your interest to attend lecture. Additionally, in order to be best-prepared, you should do the readings as scheduled. This will enable you to better follow my lectures and to most effectively synthesize lecture and reading materials.

CONFERENCES: Conferences will be held every Friday, except September 6th and October 18th (no lectures or conferences will be held on these days). No sign-up for conferences is necessary. You must attend at least six conferences, of your choosing, in order to receive credit (i.e., = 5% of your final grade). Should you attend any less than six you will receive no credit.

Reading: These are the kinds of questions you should be thinking about as you are doing your reading for this course in order to best process the materials:

1. What point/argument is the author trying to make?
2. How does the author go about supporting his/her point/argument? What kind of evidence is s/he relying on? What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of his/her point/argument?
3. What are the implications of the author’s point/argument?

Course Requirements:
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.

Mid-term Exam = 30% (to be held Wednesday, October 16th, in class)
Speech (Parliamentary/Congressional Address) = 30% (due Monday, November 18th, in class, hardcopy) – proposal page due Monday, October 7th (by 5 p.m., online via ‘Assignments’ on myCourses)
Final Exam = 35% (to be scheduled during the final exam period)
Conference Attendance = 5%

Note: If you have a disability and require any special accommodations, please let me know.

Exams
I consider all materials in this course including readings, lectures and videos/documentaries to be ‘fair game’ for the exams. Exams are typically comprised of a mix of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. The final exam is not cumulative.

Note: The Midterm exam CANNOT be made up, except in instances of a doctor-verified illness, family emergency/death or a natural disaster. Also, according to Senate regulations, instructors are not permitted to make special arrangements for final exams. Please consult the Calendar, section 4.7.2.1., General University Information and Regulations at www.mcgill.ca.

Speech
You are required to write a speech (~8-10 pages, double-spaced + bibliography) in which you address either the Canadian Parliament or the United States Congress as an ‘expert/advocate’ on a pressing family issue. Detailed guidelines with regard to the speech’s content are provided on myCourses. This assignment is due Monday, November 18th in class (hard copy).

Note: Please proofread your speech, spelling errors/typos are not acceptable. You will lose 1% of your assignment grade for any such errors (=1% per error).

LATE PAPER SUBMISSION POLICY: For each day that a paper is late, the paper grade will be lowered by half a grade (e.g., if your initial grade is a B- and you submit the paper a day late, your final paper grade will be a C+).

Distraction-Free Zone
Student use of mobile computing (e.g., laptops) and communication devices (e.g., cell phones, recorders) are not permitted in the classroom (whether during lectures and conferences) without my explicit permission.

General Academic Policies
McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand offenses under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Course Schedule

SECTION I : SOCIOLOGY OF THE FAMILY: THE FOUNDATIONS

Topics: Defining “Family”; How We Know What We Know about Families
September 4, 9 and 11

TEXTBOOK:
• Chapters 2, 3, 4, 10 and “In the News: When Numbers Mislead”
COURSEPACK

SECTION II: FAMILIES IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: CRISIS, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

**Topic:** Canadian and American Families in Historical Perspective  
**September 16, 18 and 23**

**TEXTBOOK:**  
- Chapters 5, 6 and “In The News: A ‘Golden Age’ of Childhood”

**COURSEPACK**  

SECTION III: INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

**Topic:** Dating  
**September 25, 30 and October 2**

**TEXTBOOK**  
- Chapters 17, 19, “In Other Words: the Coolest Thing About Online Dating Sites” and “In Other Words: Hooking Up as College Culture”

**Library/Internet:**  

September 25, 2018  
**In-Class Presentation on Library Resources (from librarian: Sharon Rankin)**

**Topic:** Cohabitation  
**October 7 and 9**

**TEXTBOOK:**  
- Chapter 12 and “CCF Brief: Does Premarital Cohabitation Raise Your Risk of Divorce?”

**COURSEPACK:**  

Library/Internet

**Wednesday, October 16**

**(MIDTERM EXAM (in class)**

**Topic:** Marriage  **October 21, 23 and 28**

**TEXTBOOK:**

**COURSEPACK**

**Library/Internet**

**SECTION IV: HOUSEWORK AND PARENTING**

**Topic:** Reproductive Labor  **October 30, November 4 and 6**

**TEXTBOOK:**
- Chapter 14, 30, 36, 37, “In Other Words: Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex and Housework but Were Too Busy to Ask” and “In the News: Yes, I've Folded up my Masculine Mystique, Honey”

**COURSEPACK**

**Library/Internet**

**Topic:** Parenting  **November 11, 13 and 18**

**TEXTBOOK:**
- Chapters 11, 24, 28, “CCF Brief: Homesick Kids and Helicopter Parents: Are Today’s Young Adults Too Emotionally Dependent on Parents,” “In the News: Lean Times Force Many Bay Area 'Boomerang Kids to Return Home as Adults,” “CCF Facts: Myths of Late Motherhood” and “In the News: Number of ‘Older’ Women Having Babies Continues to Grow”

**COURSEPACK**

Library/Internet:

SECTION V: FAMILY DISSOLUTION AND REFORMATION

Topics: Divorce and Remarriage
November 20 and 25

TEXTBOOK:
• Chapters 21, 22, 23, “In Other Words: Some States See Fight for Right to Same-Sex Divorce” and “In Other Words: Silver Linings Divorce Trend”

Library/Internet:

SECTION VI: VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY; COURSE WRAP-UP

Topic: Intimate Partner Violence
November 27

Library/Internet

Topic: Course Wrap-Up
December 2 and 4
NO READINGS ASSIGNED