Course Description

Many Americans might approach this course with a bit of skepticism, wondering whether public policy does or should have much to do with the family. The American approach to social welfare tends to leave much of the work of raising the young and tending the old to the private sphere of the family or market; we often hear that expensive, intrusive welfare states run counter to our core values. But whether we want a hands-off state or a generous one that mitigate work-family conflicts, nurture all children, and cares for the frail elderly, we do have a variety of family-related laws and policies in the United States, crafted in the context of fundamental historical, political and institutional forces. Our aim in this course is to understand these forces better.

A theme that weaves through this course is the idea of incomplete revolutions. Indeed, two of the course books, Gerson’s and Esping-Andersen’s, use this metaphor in their titles, and a third (Powell et al.’s Counted Out) examines changing public opinion toward same-sex families during a period of rapid social change. As we work our way through these books, we will be talking about forces that have fundamentally challenged and changed family forms: the gay rights movement; the mass movement of women into the workforce; the increase in divorce rates; the difficulty men have finding and keeping male breadwinner jobs in the post-industrial world, and changing gender norms. We will expand our purview beyond the U.S. as we consider Esping-Andersen’s approach to comparative family policy, and bring some of those lessons back home to help us think about this country freshly.

If change and revolution is one motif, another is historical continuity and forces that pull us in recurrent, familiar directions. Evelyn Nakano Glenn provides an historically grounded approach to understanding why some people have been forced to provide care because of status obligations based on marriage and gender, histories of forced labor, or limited work opportunities. This argument can help us understand why care work is not respected or well-paid in the U.S.

At the end of the course, my goals are

1. for you to understand macroscopic social changes—demographic, political, and policy changes—that are changing the landscape of families in the U.S. and around the world. In wealthy countries, people are waiting later to form families, having fewer children, and both men and women commonly work for pay outside the home for most of their lives. This is producing new problems to which societies are responding to unevenly, some crafting, funding and implementing generous family support policies or recognizing same sex marriages and families, some lagging behind in terms of problem recognition and designing government or workplace policies that can help sustain families as they face new challenges.

2. Some of the issues we will study are bound to touch nerves, strike you as personal, visceral issues that you have strong reactions to and opinions about. You will probably discern that I have points of view about the issues and policies that we study, but I have no desire to teach you the gospel according to Pat. Rather, my aim is to foster wide-ranging debate and discussion out of the
recognition that diverse opinions are bound to exist among a diverse citizenry with varying experiences, political opinions, and notions of moral propriety.

3. To encourage you to think critically and realistically about the role that government and employers can and should play in recognizing and easing work-family conflicts and issues, in part by comparing the US to several other wealthy countries.

4. Along the way, you will learn a lot about policy approaches that different countries take to support working parents, and to recognize and validate nontraditional families. The content and explanations for different policy approaches are important, and there is a body of factual “stuff” I expect you to learn. I expect you to read and learn nuts-and-bolts, detailed information about changing families, work-family policies, unpaid care work, and the like.

We cannot cover everything interesting about families and family policies in 15 weeks, so I would like you to research and write a term paper that explores questions or approaches that we do not foreground in the larger course. We’ll talk in class about appropriate topics, and I’ll ask you to give me 2 or 3 rough-and-ready ideas by September 13th. There are lots of great topics out there: the politics and ethics of new reproductive technologies and surrogacy arrangements; the debate about “family values”; anti-poverty policies; support policies for aged, handicapped, or chronically ill people; “other” families (e.g., gay, lesbian, poor, Black, immigrant) and the marginalization and discrimination they face; the politics of passing the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA); the historical evolution of child care policies; the impact of child care on children; employers’ role in providing family friendly benefits; the kids vs. careers dilemma for women; theoretical approaches to analyzing family policy and welfare state regimes. This list is not exhaustive, and you will no doubt think of other interesting issues and problems to explore.

Grads vs. undergrads: 500 level courses are a little bit of both, and this raises the issue of whether the course should be dual track or a consolidated course where all students are expected to produce the same work. I use elements of both approaches: everyone has to meet the same basic requirements, but grad students will be expected to write more sophisticated, better conceptualized exams and papers. In addition, the grad students will be expected to do a handful of readings that are optional for undergraduates: in the schedule of readings below you will notice several instances where it says “report on such-and-such, TBA.” On those days, a grad student will be assigned responsibility for reading an extra chapter or article and briefly (10 minutes or so) presenting it to the rest of the class. (There will be a sign up sheet for these extra readings circulating in class on Wednesday August 21st).

Grad or undergrad, the expectations of this course are significant with respect to both reading and writing, and the class meetings will be a mixture of lecture and discussion. Good discussions are a collective good, so if you cannot devote the time needed to do the readings and be engaged in discussions, don’t take the class.

Books (ordered at Follett’s and University bookstores, or you can buy them on line, or borrow them from course reserves). Other items on the course schedule will be available on Blackboard.


Course Requirements:

1. **Class participation:** First, the quality of seminars is dependent on the preparedness and creativity of the group. Much of the quality of this seminar will depend on our engagement with the texts, as a group, and bringing our own thinking and research to group discussions, so I expect you all to attend regularly and come prepared to discuss the assigned readings. (No one’s perfect, and missing a couple of classes will not cause a problem. But as the saying goes, half of life is showing up, so try to miss as few classes as possible. Please let me know if you encounter serious problems with illness, work, etc.). Second, demonstrate **active engagement** in class discussions. Complete the assigned readings and reflect on them before you get to class, so you have a couple of ideas to rub together as we discuss topics and readings in class. I will keep track of your preparedness and your ability and willingness to venture interesting ideas (I will also take note of hot air artists).

2. **Midterm:** There will be an in-class exam given on Wednesday October 2nd.

3. **Research Paper:** I want you to write a well-conceived and well researched paper on a topic of your choosing, drawing on appropriate data and research. Two or three rough-and-ready topics must be turned in by September 13, just to get your thinking. You **must** come talk with me about your topic in office hours and get my approval of your topic by September 30th so that I can advise you about your topic and appropriate sources for researching it. Rough drafts are due on November 20th, and final drafts of your papers are due by December 10th (turning it in earlier is better, and you are free to plan your deadlines any way you like so long as I have your paper by midnight on the 10th). You will give oral presentations of your findings in class on November 25, December 2 and December 4, so you will be giving your presentations while you are still working on your papers (a chance to see if your basic argument is sound or not). The papers should be substantial efforts, 12-15 pages for undergrads and 20-25 for grads (1” margins, double spaced, 11 or 12 point font).
   a. Two-three rough topics, 9/13: 2%
   b. Discussion about final topic, 9/30: 8
   c. Rough drafts of paper, 11/20: 10
   d. Final draft of paper, 12/10: 10
   e. Total percentage of final grade: 30%

4. **Final Exam:** this will be given during finals week at a time/place to be announced. It will focus mostly on work covered since the midterm.

**Grading:**

Regular attendance and active participation: 20%

Brief paper about your family of origin/ideal family, due Sept 25: 5%

Midterm due October 2: 25%

Final paper (see breakdown above): 30%

Final exam (during finals week) 20%

My grading breakdowns follow standard cutoffs for A, A-, B+, B, B- etc:

- 98-100 A+
- 94-97 A
- 90-93 A-
- 87-89 B+
- 84-86 B
- 80-83 B- and so on

**Class Schedule:** unless otherwise indicated, readings are either from the required texts, or they are PDF files available on Blackboard. “**Report TBA**” are extra readings that graduate students will read and present briefly (in 5 - 10 minutes) in class.
8/19 Introduction to the course and to one another. Discuss: what is a family? What are the defining features? How expansive or flexible can we be, and still be talking about families?

I. The revolution in attitudes toward same sex marriage and families
8/21 Read Powell et al., Counted Out, chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 1-36); we'll also look at and discuss the New York Times article, "Support for Same Sex Marriage," 8-20-2010

8/26 Read Counted Out, chs 3-4 (pp. 37-102)

8/28 Read Counted Out, ch. 7 (pp. 170-200), plus brief reports on chapters 5 and 6 (TBA)

9/2 Labor Day - no class

9/4 Read Counted Out, ch. 8, 201-218. Also read United States v. Windsor (majority opinion)


9/11 Discuss: where are we heading with respect to same sex marriage in the U.S.? What difference does it make? NB: Give me 2-3 rough ideas for paper topics by Friday September 13th!

II. The unfinished gender revolution

9/18 read Gerson, The Unfinished Revolution, chs 1-2 (43 pp)

9/23 read Unfinished Revolution, chs 5-6 (56 pp) Remember, you must OK your paper topics with me by September 30!

9/25 read Unfinished Revolution, ch 7 (men's resistance to equal sharing, 30 pp); short essay due on your family of origin, and your own ideal family situation (these count toward participation grade)

9/30 read Unfinished Revolution, chs 8-9 (reaching across the gender divide; finishing the gender revolution, 36 pp)

10/2 Midterm exam

10/7 October break - no class

III. The devaluation of carework
10/9 Read Nakano Glenn, Forced to Care, chapters 1-2 (pp. 1-41)

10/14 Fraser and Gordon, "Genealogy of Dependency"

10/16 Read Forced to Care, chapters 4-5 (pp. 88-151 w/ some photos); report on ch. 3 (TBA)

10/21 Read Forced to Care, chapters 6-7 (pp. 152-202)

10/23 Read Crittenden, The Price of Motherhood, chs 2, 5, and 13

10/28 Read Murray, chapter from Losing Ground

IV. Comparative social policy
10/30 Read Esping-Andersen, The Incomplete Revolution, introduction and chapter one (pp. 1-54)

11/4 Read Incomplete Revolution, chs. 2-3 (pp. 55-110)

11/6 Read Incomplete Revolution, ch. 4 (111-144) and Iversen and Stephens, "3 Worlds of Human Capital Formation"

11/11 Esping-Andersen, The Incomplete Revolution, ch. 5 and Afterword (145-174); report on Morel, "From Subsidiarity to 'Free Choice'" (TBA)

11/13 Read Daley and Kulish, "Germany Fights Population Drop" and Henninger et al., “Demography as a Push toward Gender Equality?"
11/18  Read Boling, "Germany Enacts Change"
11/20  Read Glass, "Work-Life Policies: Future Directions for Research" (17 pp); Blau and Kahn, "Female Labor Supply: Why is the US Falling Behind?" (10 pp); report on Hacker, "Policy Drift" (TBA). Your rough drafts of your research papers are due today.
11/25  Student presentations, group one
11/27  Thanksgiving break - no class
12/2   Student presentations, group two
12/4   Student presentations, group three

NOTE on academic dishonesty: do not borrow sources without citing them properly, whether from books, articles, websites, or anywhere else. Put quotations in quotation marks. If you are discovered plagiarizing, you will receive an “F” for the assignment and I will turn you in to the head of the department or the Dean of Students. When in doubt, ask me about sources!

Recommended readings:


Ostner, Ilona (2010). “Farewell to the Family as We Know it: Family Policy Change in Germany,” *German Policy Studies* 6(1): 211-44.


