

Families and Modern Social Theory

Fall 2017

Syllabus

Philip N. Cohen

This course is designed to build knowledge about theories of modernity, with emphasis on modern families. Thus, it combines some core theories of modernity (Giddens, Bourdieu, Foucault), with key theoretical debates about families and intimate relationships (economics and economic sociology, gender, race), and social change (development and new family forms).

Assignments

Students are expected to complete the assigned readings and upload a weekly comment to ELMS by 5pm the day before the seminar meeting each week. The comment should be less than 500 words, and include a specific issue from the readings that you would like to discuss, with your question or comment. Please do not summarize the readings – at all.

Students will write three more elaborate thought papers engaging the readings from the previous weeks. These exploratory essays will be approximately 2000 words, and make a critical argument, offering a hypothesis to explore, or making empirical connections between the course material and other research, bringing in some sources from outside the course. This is a chance for you to explore your own work in relation to the concepts and research in the course.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on participation, weekly writings, and exploratory essays.

Universal learning

The principle of universal learning means that our classroom and our interactions should be as inclusive as possible. Your success in this class is important to me. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Students with particular needs should contact the UMD Disability Support Service (<http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/>), which will forward the necessary information to me. Please do it now instead of waiting till late in the semester.

Device ban

Students may not use laptops, tablet computers, or mobile phones in class. Exceptions may be granted on an individual basis.

Difficult subjects.

The content of this course may include topics that are difficult for some people to confront or discuss. I cannot anticipate what those topics are, or who will be affected, but I can be sensitive and work with students who let me know of their needs. If there is a topic you are unable to discuss or need to be warned about, please notify me so we can make appropriate arrangements for your work. However, we cannot prevent all students from being exposed to topics or ideas that they find objectionable or offensive.

Academic integrity

Students must be familiar with the UMD Code of Academic Integrity (<http://president.umd.edu/sites/president.umd.edu/files/documents/policies/III-100A.pdf>). In this course there is zero tolerance for academic dishonesty.

Schedule and readings

1. August 30: Introduction

Cohen, Philip N. *The Family: Diversity, Inequality, and Social Change*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. Chapter 1, “A Sociology of the Family.”

Part I: Modernity

2. September 6: What is modernity?

Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. John Wiley & Sons

3. September 13: Modern relationships

Giddens, Anthony. 1993. *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. 1st edition. Stanford University Press.

4. September 20: Habitus and field

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998. *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Stanford University Press.

5. September 27: Discipline

Foucault, Michel. 2012. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

Part II: Families

6. October 4: U.S. family history [FIRST PAPER DUE]

Coontz, Stephanie. 2016. *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*. Revised edition. New York: Basic Books.

7. October 11: New families

Pugh, Allison J. 2015. *The Tumbleweed Society: Working and Caring in an Age of Insecurity*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

8. October 18: Economics over all

Blau, Francine D., Marianne A. Ferber, and Anne E. Winkler. 2013. *The Economics of Women, Men and Work*. 7 edition. Boston: Pearson. Chapters 3 & 4.

The Austin Institute. 2014. The Economics of Sex.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cO1ifNaNABY>.

Cohen, Philip N. 2014. “Is the Price of Sex Too Damn Low?” Family Inequality. February 24. <https://familyinequality.wordpress.com/2014/02/24/price-of-sex/>.

England, Paula. 1989. “[A Feminist Critique of Rational-Choice Theories: Implications for Sociology](#).” *The American Sociologist* 20 (1): 14–28.

9. October 25: No seminar meeting

10. November 1: Family economics

Boushey, Heather. 2016. *Finding Time: The Economics of Work-Life Conflict*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

11. November 8: Economic sociology of intimacy [SECOND PAPER DUE]

Zelizer, Viviana A. 2009. *The Purchase of Intimacy*. Princeton University Press.

12. November 15: Black families, uncertainty, and exclusion

- a. Burton, Linda M., and M. Belinda Tucker. 2009. "Romantic Unions in an Era of Uncertainty: A Post-Moynihan Perspective on African American Women and Marriage." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 621 (January): 132–48.
- b. Geronimus, Arline T. 2003. "Damned If You Do: Culture, Identity, Privilege, and Teenage Childbearing in the United States." *Social Science & Medicine* 57 (5): 881–93. doi:10.1016/S0277-9536(02)00456-2.
- c. Collins, Patricia Hill. 2001. "Like One of the Family: Race, Ethnicity, and the Paradox of US National Identity." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24 (1): 3–28. doi:10.1080/014198701750052479.
- d. Dow, Dawn Marie. 2016. "The Deadly Challenges of Raising African American Boys: Navigating the Controlling Image of the 'Thug.'" *Gender & Society* 30 (2): 161–88. doi:10.1177/0891243216629928.

Part III: Development and change

13. November 22: Modernity, development, and demography

- a. Thornton, Arland. 2001. "The Developmental Paradigm, Reading History Sideways, and Family Change." *Demography* 38 (4): 449–65. doi:10.2307/3088311
- b. Greenhalgh, Susan. 2003. "Science, Modernity, and the Making of China's One-Child Policy." *Population and Development Review* 29 (2): 163–96.
- c. Kirk, Dudley. 1996. "Demographic Transition Theory." *Population Studies* 50 (3): 361–87. doi:10.1080/0032472031000149536.
- d. Lesthaeghe, R. "The Second Demographic Transition in Western Countries: An Interpretation." In Mason, Karen Oppenheim, and An-Magritt Jensen (eds.). 1995. *Gender and Family Change in Industrialized Countries*. Clarendon Press.

14. November 29: Decoupling, families, and modernity

Stacey, Judith. 2011. *Unhitched: Love, Marriage, and Family Values from West Hollywood to Western China*. New York University Press.

15. December 6: Topic TBA [THIRD PAPER DUE]