SOCIOMETRY 190.5
Parenting in the Contemporary United States:
Myths, Trends and Controversies
University of California, Berkeley
Spring 2012, 115 Kroeber
Thursdays, 2 - 4pm

Instructor: Sarah B. Garrett
E-mail: sbgarrett@berkeley.edu
Mailbox: 410 Barrows Hall
Office Hours: TBA
OH Location: Barrows 483

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to help students to see something familiar and “natural”—the raising of children—through a sociological lens. How have parenting styles and advice changed over the last century? What, if anything, is special about parenting done by women versus men? What aspects of a cross-generational relationship make it “parenting”? What different parenting practices appeal to or offend Americans today? What factors (institutional, cultural, economic) make the job of parenting easier or harder? How different are these perspectives and influences across groups with different social class, immigrant, and racial backgrounds? Which of these issues will matter most to you, the next generation of parents?

This seminar is designed to give students a both an introduction to the diverse factors that influence parents, their activities, and parent-child relationships, and to foster a rich theoretical understanding of the ways in which these factors and “family life” inter-relate. The course will focus primarily on parenting in the late 20th/early 21st century United States, but will at times introduce historical research in order to contextualize the material.

At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to identify the myriad ways in which experts, institutions, policies and material resources have shaped parenting styles, parent-child relationships, and perceptions of parenting in the United States. Students will be able to compare and contrast different perspectives of what constitutes “parenting,” “mothers,” and “fathers”; will know how the care of children has changed in the past decades; and will be able to identify the historical, cultural, and institutional factors that have shaped these relationships. By drawing on the theories and studies covered in the course, students will be able to critically analyze and discuss the ways in which these factors affect controversies, myths and stereotypes concerning the care of children in the contemporary U.S.
COMPONENTS OF YOUR GRADE

Attendance and participation (15%)

I expect all students to attend all class meeting, read all required texts, and actively participate in classroom discussion. Class will always involve discussion of the readings and/or your research projects. Certain weeks will also include student presentations, debates, in-class journaling, and/or peer workshopping of materials you have produced in preparation for your research paper. Since this is a seminar and not a lecture course, the class environment is strongly affected by how much you participate! Being an active participant means you regularly share your thoughts, observations, and questions about the readings as you interact with each other and the material. If you have trouble speaking in class, please come see me in office hours at the beginning of the semester.

Because this class is so dependent on student involvement, attendance is mandatory. I will take attendance during each class meeting, and two or more absences will negatively impact your grade. Please contact me in advance if you know you will miss a class, and come talk to me during office hours early in the semester if you know you will have trouble meeting these attendance requirements. If you absolutely must miss a class, you are responsible for any material covered during your absence.

Reading responses (15%)

As a way to promote class discussion and show that you’re doing the readings and thinking about them critically, you are required submit a reading response most weeks* to sbgarrett@berkeley by 5pm the day before class. These should be thoughtful but concise responses (300-400 words; approximately one double-spaced page). They should briefly summarize the readings, and then creatively discuss one or more of them (e.g., in the form of a critique; a comparison among them or with other readings, theories or concepts from the course; or by engaging other theories and concepts you have learned outside of class). Each response should include at least one well-formulated analytical question about the material for that week. They will be “graded” on a pass/fail basis. *Weeks in which a reading responses can be submitted are marked with an asterisk in the syllabus. You may skip three reading responses during the semester without your grade being affected.

Discussion facilitating (10%)

Students in pairs will be expected to lead discussion for one class during the semester. Sign-up sheets will be distributed on the first day of class. See additional handout: “Tips on Facilitating Discussion.”
Components of the research paper (35%)

The following assignments will help you generate your research project over the course of the semester. More information on the following assignments will be distributed in class.

- Proposal followed by office-hour meeting with instructor (10%)
- Literature review (10%)
- Outline and abstract (10%)
- Paper presentation (5%)

Final research paper (25%)

Drawing from your research, previous assignments, peer and instructor feedback, you will be required to write a 15-20 page (double-spaced) paper based on a research project that you will design and carry out over the course of the semester. The paper must address a sociological question related to a parenting practice, approach or “style” about which there is currently controversy, debate or disagreement in the public sphere. The paper will draw on concepts, findings, and theories that we have read in class and on the original research that you conduct leading up to it (e.g., textual/historical analysis, ethnography, interviews, or statistical analysis). Consider who the stakeholders are in these debates; their relation vis-a-vis different types of power/prestige; and whose voices are heard. Think about why your topic would be controversial or even moral at this moment in time. You will have several opportunities over the course of the class to receive feedback on various aspects of the project from the instructor and your peers. More information on the full paper will be distributed in class.

In the final weeks of the semester students will give very short presentations of their findings to their peers. In addition to being a great learning opportunity for the class, this will allow individual students to get feedback as they prepare their final papers.

Grade summary

Attendance and participation = 15%
Weekly reading responses = 15%
Discussion facilitating = 10%
Research paper
  Support assignments (4) = 35%
  Final paper = 25%

COURSE MATERIALS

All course reading is either on Bspace or in the course reader. The course reader is available at: Krishna Copy 2595 Telegraph Ave (Telegraph & Parker).
I also encourage everyone to review and use the writing resources available on the sociology department’s website: http://sociology.berkeley.edu/index.php?page=writing%20guide
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

E-mail: I will send out announcements to the class via bSpace/email. You are responsible for reading all of these emails and understanding their content. You are welcome to email me if you need to get in touch. For emails sent on weekdays, you can expect a response within 24 hours; on weekends, you can expect a response on Monday.

Office Hours: I will hold one hour of regularly scheduled office hours a week. If you are having trouble with any aspect of the class, please see me as early as possible. If you have a recurring obligation at that time, please e-mail me to schedule another meeting time.

bSpace: I will use our class’s Bspace website to post announcements and required and recommend readings. This is also where you will post your assignments, and I invite you all to post comments and discussion questions to each other.

Missed or late assignment policy: Except in the case of a real and verifiable emergency, students will not be allowed to make up missed assignments. If you do have a real emergency, you must notify me within 24 hours of the missed class and provide appropriate documentation to verify the emergency. Final papers must be submitted by the assigned time and date. Extensions will only be given in extreme circumstances. No extensions will be granted on the actual due date.

Accommodations: University policy requires that students needing accommodation provide instructors with a letter from the Disabled Students Program detailing what particular accommodations are necessary. If you require accommodations, please let me know within the first two weeks of class.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism: All the written work you submit must be your own. If you cite, borrow or paraphrase any idea from another source, you must include a citation that indicates its source. If there is evidence your work has been plagiarized (e.g., not citing others’ work, cheating, passing off another student’s work as your own, etc.), I will report it to the Committee on Student Conduct. This puts you at risk of course failure, and potentially expulsion. I encourage all of you to review UC Berkeley’s specific guidelines on citation and policies on plagiarism here: http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Citations.html. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask.

Recommended readings: Note that I have listed recommended readings for each week to provide extra resources for students who are particularly interested in those topics. Please know that I do not expect you to read these additional readings for our seminar discussions, though you are certainly welcome to!
SCHEDULE
[* = Accepting reading responses this week]

Week 1 (1/19) – Introduction to the course and the historical context of the topic

- Chapter 1 of the department’s Writing Guide for Sociologists
  (link on bSpace under “Resources” → “Writing Guide & Resources”)

Recommended:


*Week 2 (1/26) – Social trends & theories of social problems – Part 1


Recommended:


*Week 3 (2/2) – Social trends & theories of social problems – Part 2


Recommended:


*Week 4 (2/9) – Critical Approaches **Proposal due (2-3 pages)***

  o “Family and Class in Contemporary America: Notes Toward an Understanding of Ideology,” Rayna Rapp, pp. 49-70.
Recommended


*Week 5 (2/16) – “There is a ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ way to parent”: Part I - Controversies


Recommended

Week 6 (2/23) – Research workshop at the library with Jim Ronningen

**Revised and expanded proposal (optional)**

- Methods readings (TBA depending on methods proposed)
- Chapter 3 in the *Writing Guide for Sociologists*
  (link on bSpace under “Resources” → “Writing Guide & Resources”)

*Week 7 (3/1) - “There is a ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ way to parent”: Part II – “Effects?”*


**Recommended**


*Week 8 (3/8) – Parenting is more natural for mothers than for fathers: Part I - Mothers*

**Literature review due**

  *[Readings for this week continue on the next page!]*

Recommended

- Chodorow, 1978/1999. The Reproduction of Mothering: Chapter 5 (pp. 77-91)

*Week 9 (3/15) – Parenting is more natural for mothers than for fathers: Part II - Fathers


Recommended

**Week 10 (3/22) - “Kids need both a mother and a father,” Part I**

- Hansen, Karen V. 2006. *Not-So-Nuclear Families: Class, Gender, and Networks of Care*. Rutgers University Press, Introduction (pp. 1-22), Chapter 2 (pp. 25-46), Chapter 4 (pp. 74-97).

**Recommended**


No class March 29 – SPRING BREAK!

**Week 11 (4/5) - “Kids need both a mother and a father,” Part II**

**Outline and abstract due**

- From Risman, 2010, *Families as they really are.*
  - “Fact sheet: Myths and Realities about Same-Sex Families” (pp. 228-230).

**Recommended**

*Week 12 (4/12) - “All you really need to be a good parent is enough love for your children”: Part I – Institutions and policies


Recommended

*Week 13 (4/19) - “All you really need to be a good parent is enough love for your children”: Part II – Material resources

  - [Cut if much of the class has read Hays]

Recommended


*Week 14 (4/26) – Research Presentations, Part 1*

- Gerson, 2010, Chapters 8 and 9 (pp. 189-226) from *The Unfinished Revolution*.
- Doucet, 2006, Conclusion (pp. 211-245) from *Do Men Mother?*

Recommended:


*Week 15 (5/3; RRR Week) – Research Presentations, Part 2*