



Module Title: Gender Work and Family 1

Module Code: SOU22021

Module Name: Gender, Work and Family 1

- **ECTS Weighting: 5**
- **Semester/Term Taught: Michaelmas Term**
- **Contact Hours: 22**
- **Module Personnel: Dr David Ralph**

Module Learning Aims:

- Introduce students to the main ideas and thinkers, both historical and contemporary, on the sociology of the family
- Present students with a range of issues pertaining to the study of contemporary families
- Relate ideas and concepts from the sociology of the family to present-day public discussions of families and family life

Module Learning Outcomes:

Following successful completion of this module students should be able to:

- Critically evaluate the idea of what family means both now and in the past
- Question some of our cherished notions of how family life should be lived
- Understand a broad range of concepts from the field of family sociology

Module Content:

This part of the module introduces students to some of the key ideas and debates in the sociology of the family. Family is central to all our personal lives. We are all variously positioned as members of families. We all hold, no matter how inchoate, some notions about family values. Many people aspire to someday form families of their own – either alike or different from those of their families of origin. Yet, as will be shown throughout the course, our ideas about the family, how family life should be lived, its size, and even who counts as a member of the family and who does not, are not the same across different countries, or across different historical periods. They change, even as some elements remain constant.

The course begins with an overview of 19th century discussions of family, then continues to more recent late-20th and early-21st century theoretical debates on the



family. Key sociological thinkers who have written insightfully about the family are introduced, including: Lewis Morgan, Frederick Engels, Talcott Parsons, Ernest Burgess, Anthony Giddens, Zygmunt Bauman, Arlie Hochschild, Carol Smart, Lynn Jamieson, and others.

Key ideas introduced include debates over the supposed decline of the traditional family and the rise of the modern family. But it is worth pausing and asking here: What might count as a traditional family? What as a modern one? The notion of family diversity is then discussed. Are we witnessing a fragmentation of the traditional nuclear family towards a range of different family forms in contemporary society? And in this process, are families becoming more democratic? Are they, in other words, detraditionalizing? And how might feminism challenge the patriarchal foundations of family life? Another central idea in recent debates about the family – intimacy – is then outlined. Is intimacy rather than biological relatedness or legal status the core organizing principle of family life nowadays?

Following this, how masculinity is constructed and the specific position men occupy in contemporary families is debated. Then, sexuality and sexualisation within families is discussed and how families continue to be prime sites of societal heteronormativity. Next the discussion moves on from an “ethnocentric” focus on families to consider families in a global, non-Western context. After this, the challenge migration poses to family life is considered – in a world where more and more people migrate and are on the move, how might family life be lived “transnationally”? A further important debate on “problem families” – families said to be on the margins of mainstream society – and the issue of domestic abuse within families is introduced. The role states play in promoting or discouraging couples to reproduce is then considered, and the example of Ireland’s recent repeal of the 8th Amendment is used to illustrate the pro-natalist/anti-natalist debate in family sociology. Finally, this part of the modules closes with a discussion on the future of the family.

Each week there are two one-hour lectures (times listed above), and student are assigned to a tutorial ground for each week. Note that tutorials begin in Week 2. Under the lecture outline for each week of the module is a list of recommended readings. The reading marked with an asterisk (*) is the tutorial reading for each week. They are a combination of classic and contemporary readings in family sociology. It is compulsory that you have read each week’s tutorial reading in advance of the tutorial.

Recommended Reading List:

The following books provide background information on most of the key themes and topics covered during the course:

- Callan, S. and L. McKie. (2012) *Understanding Families: A Global Introduction*. London: Sage



- Chambers, D. (2012) *A Sociology of Family Life: Change and Diversity in Intimate Relations*. Polity.
- Gray, J., Geraghty, R., and Ralph, D. 2016. *Family Rhythms: The Changing Textures of Irish Family Life*. Manchester. Manchester University Press.
- Morgan, D. (1996) *Family Connections: An Introduction to Family Studies*. Polity.
- Ribbens McCarthy, Jane and Rosalind Edwards. 2011. *Key Concepts in Family Studies*. London: Sage.

Additional relevant readings will be made available on blackboard as the course progresses.

The readings listed for each tutorial are required readings – you are expected to have read these in advance of your weekly tutorial. These readings are available to you on Blackboard. Tutorial discussion each week is motivated by two/three questions that come from the required readings of the last lecture's materials and designated tutorial reading. The TA will be responsible for all tutorials. Reading materials (required and optional) are provided weekly through Blackboard.

Main rules for the tutorials:

- Tutorial attendance is considered as compulsory
- You must attend a minimum of 60% of tutorials.
 - Students should come prepared for the tutorials and should be ready to participate in the discussion
- Failure to attend the required number of tutorials sessions will result in 10% deduction from your mark

Module Pre-Requisite:

Module Co-Requisite:

Assessment Details:

Assessment is by an end of term 2500-word essay.

Module Website: