"All happy families are like one another; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."

Leo Tolstoy *Anna Karenina* (1877)

"Two general and interrelated types of infant and childhood experience may be especially important in forming the structure of childhood character: (a) The impact of the social constellations of the family and the child's reactions to them; and, (b) the sanctions and regulations of such organic functions as feeding, excretion, and the sensations of sex....The combination of modern marriage with love is a contribution of the rising middle classes."

Hans Gerth & C. Wright Mills
*Character and Social Structure: The Psychology of Social Institutions* (1954)

**Course Objectives:** How do we define "family"? The answer may seem obvious: A family consists of parents and children related by blood, marriage, or adoption who live together and whose ties endure after the children have grown. Though this definition is minimally useful, it contains assumptions which leave out the many variations on family life which have existed throughout history and which are emerging today. Single-parenting by choice or forced by circumstances, parenting in gay and lesbian couples, formations of family around priorities other than raising children, and other societal and psychological factors require us to see "family" as a more flexible arrangement than it is traditionally assumed to be. Among the influences on and aspects of family life which we will examine are race, class, gender, dual career households, sexual orientation, domestic violence, and the wedding industry. We will approach these issues from the sociological perspective that family is a socially constructed institution whose meaning and form is determined by collective action.

**Main Topics:**
- Historical Perspectives
- Ethnicity's Influences on Family Structure
- Working Couples
- Homeless & Impoverished Families
- Domestic Violence & Psychological Abuse
- The Wedding Industry
- Nontraditional & Alternative Family Structures
Dr. Churchill’s Web Site: Go to http://stacweb.stac.edu/~cchurchi/ for links to this syllabus (bottom of page), additional course material, and for links to sociology web sites and other sociology courses.

Final Grade: Participation = 15%
Essay Test = 15%
Response paper #1 = 25%
Response paper #2 = 25%
Final Exam = 20%

NOTE: Any work which you do not complete will be worth 0 points.

Important Dates:
Feb. 14 (Thurs.): Essay Test
Feb. 28 (Thurs.): Response paper #1
April 10 (Thurs.): Response paper #2
April 29 (Tues.): Final Exam

NOTE: These dates are subject to change at the professor’s discretion.

Office Location: Maguire 12

Office Hours:
Mon.: 11:15-12:15
Tues.: 11:15-1:15
Wed.: 11:15-12:15

Office Telephone #: (845) 398 – 4387
E-mail: cchurchi@stac.edu

Required Texts (available in STAC bookstore):

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. The Second Shift. (case studies; 1989)
LeBlanc, Adrian Nicole. Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble, and Coming of Age in the Bronx. (case study; 2003)

NOTE: Additional photocopied readings will be distributed in class.

Other books relevant to this course (on reserve in library):

Allison, Dorothy. Bastard Out of Carolina. (novel; 1992)
Ingraham, Chrys. White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture. (social criticism; 1999)

NOTE: Additional photocopied readings will be distributed in class.
Films & Documentaries:

Capturing the Friedmans (Director: Andrew Jarecki; 2003; 108 min. Documentary)

The Friedman’s seem to be a typical family from affluent Great Neck, Long Island. One Thanksgiving, as the family gathers for a quiet holiday dinner, a police battering ram splinters the front door and officers rush inside. The police charge Arnold and his son Jesse with hundreds of shocking crimes. As police investigate, and the community reacts, the fabric of the family begins to disintegrate, revealing questions about justice, family and finally the truth.

Daddy and Papa (Director: Johnny Symons; 2002; 57min. Documentary)

A documentary exploring the personal, cultural, and political impact of gay men who are making a decision that is at once traditional and revolutionary: to raise children themselves. Taking us inside four gay male families, this documentary traces the critical issues that inevitably intersect their private lives, the ambiguous place of interracial families in America, the wonder and precariousness of surrogacy and adoption, the complexities of marriage and divorce within the gay community, and the legality of their own parenthood.

Family Fundamentals (Directed by Arthur Dong; 75 min.; 2002 Documentary)

What happens when fundamentalist Christian parents have children who are homosexual? "Family Fundamentals" is filmmaker Arthur Dong's personal attempt to answer that explosive question. Armed with a digital camera, Dong takes viewers into the private and public lives of three families who have responded to gay offspring by actively opposing homosexuality. "Family Fundamentals" is a battlefield report from America's profound and disquieting culture war over gay issues.

Let’s Get Married (Produced & Dir. Ben Loeterman; Written by Ben Loeterman and Alex Kotlowitz; 60 min.; 2002 Documentary)

Marriage is in trouble. Over the past half-century the number of single-parent households has skyrocketed to one-third of all U.S. families. The traditional American family structure appears to be crumbling. President Bush and a growing marriage movement think it’s time to take action. They are promoting marriage -- especially among the poor. Get people married, the thinking goes, and poverty will be reduced. Stem the tide of divorce and we'll solve many of society's ills. But is it that simple? Should the government have an activist role in personal relationships? And does marriage, in fact, really matter? In "Let's Get Married," author and FRONTLINE correspondent Alex Kotlowitz explores these questions. "During my reporting, I became convinced that marriage, this most private of institutions, has very public consequences," Kotlowitz says. "And yet we have such a tough time talking about it. Why is that? This was kind of a personal journey for me -- an effort, in part, to answer that question -- and to figure out a way to talk about marriage and its critical place in our social framework."

Once Were Warriors (Director: Lee Tamahori; 1995; 102 min. Fiction)

In a poor suburb of Auckland, Jake and Beth Heke live a life defined by drunken parties, unstable friendships, and confrontations with authorities. Jake, a complex man with a rascal's charm, is weighted down by a quick temper, alcoholism, and an evil streak of male entitlement. Beth's beauty has been scarred by broken dreams and Jake's beefy fists. Yet her inner strength and desire to save her family make her the solid center around which this story of tragedy and hope is constructed.

The Smith Family (Director: Tasha Oldham ; 2002; 55 min. Documentary)

In this poignant and intimate documentary of the Smiths, a Mormon family living in Salt Lake City, the family is initially shattered, then ultimately strengthened by their love for each other following Steve's admission of multiple sexual encounters with other men, and his subsequent death from AIDS.
Requirements & Policies:

1) **Participation:** You are required to make comments, ask questions, and participate in debate during class sessions.

2) **Special Accommodations:** If you are entitled to special accommodations such as extra time for testing, in class note takers, etc., it is your obligation to let me know in advance of **each** test or relevant assignment and to show me proof of your entitlement each time.

3) **Reading:** To be done as assigned.

4) **Tests:** Tests will include elements of reading covered and not covered in class.

5) **Papers:** See next page for guidelines. Papers are acceptable in hard copy only.

6) **Attendance:** Be in class. If you cannot attend, explain why. More than three absences will harm your grade. Students who engage in disruptive behavior, who read newspapers, or who sit in a manner indicating they are asleep during class will be marked absent. Coming into class late and leaving early will also be noted and will harm your grade.

7) **E-mail:** Do not email me with questions about assignments, scheduling, or grades. These must be addressed to me directly in class or during office hours.

8) **Cell phones and laptops:** Use of cell phones or any other electronic means of communication (email, text messaging, etc.) are prohibited in this class. If you have a laptop which you plan to use during class, you are not permitted to use it for anything other than taking class notes; connecting to the Internet during class is prohibited. If you plan to use a laptop during class for note taking, you are required to see me about this at the beginning of the semester. **Five (5) points will be deducted from your overall semester participation grade for each infraction of these rules.**

9) **Grading:** The standard in grading all student work in this course can be found in the St. Thomas Aquinas College Catalog; it is duplicated on the next to last page of this syllabus. These standards will be adhered to strictly. It is your obligation and to your advantage to be completely familiar with them. While the STAC grading scale does not include minuses (e.g. A −, B −, C −), my own scale does include these designations. See back of this syllabus for a conversion chart.

All grade questions must be discussed with me in person, not by telephone or by email. Athletic obligations and vacation plans are your burden to accommodate. Tests and due dates will not be altered to fit these external activities. A test missed because of a valid, documented excuse will be replaced with a make up test. Absences without a valid excuse during a test result in 0 points for that test.
RESPONSE PAPER GUIDELINES

During this semester, you will write two response papers (see page 2 for due dates). The topic is up to you to choose and define. Requirements are:

- Papers must be 4-6 pages (but no longer than 6 pages). Title page, bibliography, and footnotes do not count toward page length.

- Papers must adhere to the technical requirements described in the Writing Guide provided toward the end of this syllabus.

- Each paper must be a critical response to at least two of the readings we have covered prior to the due date for each paper. (For the second paper, you must select from readings done after the first paper was handed in.)

- Papers must provide your original perspective and be an outgrowth of the readings, not a summary of the readings. Papers which are merely summaries will earn at best a C+/4. For a clear explanation of grading criteria, refer to end of this syllabus.

- Students are encouraged to see me during office hours to discuss their paper topics if they are having difficulty defining them. However, the topics are ultimately the student’s responsibility.

NOTE: Web sites are NEVER acceptable sources for papers. Any paper that lists web sites in its bibliography or cites a web site as a source in its text will be marked down 5 points. If you feel you have a legitimate exception to this rule, see me in advance. Exceptions will not be granted after the paper’s due date.
WRITING GUIDE

The most important rule to remember in writing papers is to be clear and to the point. If you read your paper aloud to yourself, you will hear whether what you have written is clear or garbled. Reread your written work a couple of times before handing it in. Any sentences or paragraphs which do not make sense to you will make even less sense to me. An excellent guide for clear writing is *The Elements of Style* by Strunk & White. This is a slim and inexpensive paperback available in most bookstores.

The following rules apply to all writing:

1) **Plagiarism: DO NOT PLAGIARIZE.** Plagiarism is a serious offense. If you use anyone else’s writing in your papers without quoting and citing them properly, you will receive an F on your paper and you may receive an F for the entire course. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated under any circumstances in this course.

2) **Format:** All papers must be typed and double-spaced. Do not use excessive margins or font sizes to extend the length of your paper. If you do, your grade will suffer.

3) **Cover Page:** All papers must have a cover page which contains the following: (a) paper title, (b) your name, (c) the course and section for which the paper is written, and (d) the date on which the paper is handed in. The cover page does not count toward the length of the paper.

4) **Numbering:** Number all pages except for the cover page.

5) **Contractions:** Do not use contractions. For example, instead of writing “don’t” or “haven’t” write “do not” or “have not”. Contractions are informal and do not belong in academic writing.

6) **References and Citations:** Any time you quote or reference work which is not your own, you must provide a full citation for that work in a footnote or endnote as well as provide a full bibliographical reference. This pertains to any printed or spoken idea or words you are using which are not your own. If you are quoting a source from the Internet, you are required to provide proof that the source is reliable (that is, show me that it is an academic or mass media source). It is your obligation to prove that any Internet site is a legitimate source of information.

For footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies, use the guidelines of the Modern Language Association (MLA), *Chicago Manual of Style*, or American Psychological Association.
STAC Grading Standards
(Excerpted from College catalogue; emphasis added.)

**A (94-100%)**
Excellent. Indicates *unusually high achievement*. Students who merit A, in addition to fulfilling the minimum requirements, give evidence of the *ability to work independently, read rather widely on their own initiative*, organize the materials of the course in relation to its wider implications, give evidence in skill subjects of habitual *errorless mastery*.

**B+ (87-93%)**
Very good-superior. Indicates achievement *demonstrably above average* and an intelligent fulfillment of course requirements in a manner that *approaches the excellence of the highest grade*.

**B (80-86%)**
Good. Signifies a *consistently high level of achievement* and indicates that the course requirements have been fulfilled in an intelligent and *above-average* manner.

**C+ (75-79%)**
Very satisfactory. Signifies a more acceptable degree of understanding and consistent achievement than a C. Indicates that a student *has mastered the basic course material, attended classes regularly, fulfilled assignments as required*, and given evidence of *mastery* of the skills required for the course.

**C (70-74%)**
Satisfactory. Signifies *acceptable understanding & consistent achievement* of quality that satisfies the required graduation grade.

**D (65-69%)**
 Inferior-passing. Indicates understanding and achievement *below the average level* expected of students and therefore warrants only minimum approval.

**F**
Failure. Indicates that the student’s work does not merit a passing grade.
### GRADING CONVERSION CHART

**STAC to Dr. Churchill**

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*NOTE:*

If you hand in work which earns an F, the percentage equivalent for that F is usually 64%. If you fail to hand in an assignment, the F you receive for it has the percentage equivalent of 0%. In the latter case, the F is technically worth far less than an F for a completed assignment and will have far more damaging consequences for your overall grade. **In all cases of plagiarism and cheating, an F is worth 0% and the violation is recorded in a permanent file in the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.**