Course Description

How do societies organize tensions between sexuality, reproduction, and caregiving? Through families and kinship structures. This course maps those connections and contradictions in the U.S. and asks: what economic and social conditions shape family forms? How do family experiences vary by gender, class, race/ethnicity, migration status, and sexual orientation?

We will explore the transformation in the meanings of kinship, caregiving, and sexual practices, and examine how demographic shifts, including immigration, have shaped contemporary family possibilities. The course grapples with the complex structural forces that shape kinship and sexuality, the multitude of ways families are organized, and how they come to be socially and legally recognized. It pays particular attention to the different experiences of men and women in their relationships with each other in courtship, the division of household labor, childrearing, intimate relations, and the economy.

Oral Communication

This course fulfills a university requirement for oral communication competency. Students will have training in how to do an effective presentation and how to actively listen. Because the course emphasizes oral and written communication, there will be multiple short assignments. Students will be involved in an active listening exercise, learn to conduct oral histories, and will make presentations on a HistoryMakers Digital Archive subject. Later in the term, they will make a longer presentation on their oral history research work-in-progress.

Experiential Learning

This course is designated as an Experiential Learning course. This means that students will be reflecting on the families in which they grew up as well as actively engaged in thinking about patterns of contemporary kinship through reading and research. They will be actively learning through thoughtful interrogation of the course readings and collaborative facilitation of student-led discussion on weekly topics. Students will also attend two public lectures or performances (on campus) about families, kinship, or sexuality and write reflection paper about their connection to the class.

The primary semester project involves conducting original research through interviews with live subjects or analyzing oral histories in the HistoryMakers Digital Archive. Students will be
trained to conduct an oral history and how to analyze it in the context of the course readings. They will then present their main findings to the class and exchange feedback with fellow students on their presentations.

### Required Readings

Hertz, Rosanna and Margaret Nelson, *Random Families: Genetic Strangers, Sperm Donor Siblings, and Creation of New Kin* (Oxford University Press, 2019)


### Recommended:


Dreby, Joanna, *Divided by Borders: Mexican Migrants and Their Children* (University of California Press, 2010)


Turabian, Kate, *Manual for Writers* (University of Chicago Press)

This course has a [LATTE page](http://latte.brandeis.edu). Articles listed below with an asterisk (*) can be found there.

### Course Requirements

Students are expected to do the reading for the week before class, attend lectures, and thoughtfully participate in class discussions. The course grades are based on:

- **Class participation** 15%
- **Oral Presentations** 30%
  - Listening exercise (10%)
  - Presentation on HistoryMakers subject (10%)
  - Presentation on research project (10%)
- **Reaction papers** 10%
  - AAAS conference speaker (5%)
  - Arlie Hochschild lecture (5%)
Class Participation grades are determined by class attendance and thoughtful contributions to discussion. Students are expected to post on Latte about readings for at least 8 weeks. Posts should include at least two questions for discussion about the readings.

Oral Presentations will include a listening exercise, a presentation on a HistoryMakers Digital History subject and a presentation on the student’s oral history research project. See guidelines for each of the assignments, posted on Latte.

The Oral History paper will utilize oral histories from the HistoryMakers Digital Archive or from an oral history conducted by the student. The initial prospectus for the project is due March 1. The paper will be 6 to 8 pages, including an introduction, analysis and conclusion about a theme related to course readings. Students will make presentations on the subject of their work-in-progress in weeks, and the final paper is due in class, Tuesday, April 30.

Students will write a take-home essay final exam due on Wednesday, May 8. Study questions will be distributed one week in advance and will challenge students to synthesize the readings and lectures.

A reminder that each 4-credit class is expected to carry a minimum of 9 hours of workload outside of class. All work is expected on time, the day it is due, in hard copy. Late papers and assignments will be graded down one-third of a grade per day. Please see me in advance if you are having trouble meeting the deadlines.

Learning Goals for the Course:
Students who take this course report learning the skill of conducting an interview, the content they discovered in conducting an interview, the diversity of family forms in U.S. history and contemporary society, and how they might define and structure their own families.

1. Identify and analyze basic assumptions underlying contemporary debates about families;
2. Identify and evaluate the theoretical claims, sources of evidence, and methodology used by an author;
3. Sharpen analytic skills to identify and assess demographic and qualitative data about families;
4. Read BOOKS critically, as culmination of large research projects;
5. Synthesize ideas and data concerning the social structural forces shaping the contours, dynamics, and challenges of families;
6. Communicate (orally and through writing) the central argument and point of view of
each author and develop probing and effective discussion questions;
7. Develop oral communication skills through in-class discussion and presentations on student’s research;
8. Conduct research using HistoryMakers Digital Archive and social science resources in the library, and write a cogent paper based on the research.

Accommodations for Disabilities:

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability you should contact me, and present your letter of accommodation, as soon as possible. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations you should contact Beth Rodgers-Kay at Undergraduate Academic Affairs (x63470, brodgers@brandeis.edu) or the appropriate person in the Graduate School office. Letters of accommodations should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

A Note on Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person – be it a world-class philosopher or your lab partner – without proper acknowledgement of that source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by another student. See Kate Turabian, *Manual for Writers*, for questions about proper citation.

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity (see [http://www.brandeis.edu/st-udentlife/sdc/ai](http://www.brandeis.edu/st-udentlife/sdc/ai)). Faculty may refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to, failing grades being issued, educational programs, and other consequences. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, you must ask for clarification.

Course Outline

Week 1: January 15 & 18—Introduction: What is Kinship?

Friday—Defining Families and Kinship

Guest speaker: Maric Kramer, Reference Librarian, Vershbow Room in Goldfarb Library

Week 2: January 22 & 25—Kinship as Bio-genetic vs. Social

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22 IS A BRANDEIS MONDAY—NO CLASS

Friday—What is Random about Kinship?
Hertz, Rosanna and Margaret Nelson, Random Families, pp. 1-48; Appendix A & B

*Guest Speaker: Rosanna Hertz, Professor, Wellesley College

I. KINSHIP, AFFILIATION, AND BIO-GENETIC TIES

Week 3: January 29 & February 1—To Whom are You Related?

Tuesday—To Whom are You Related?

Friday—Family as a Practice
Hertz, and Nelson, Random Families, pp.


*In class listening exercise
Week 4: February 5 & 8—Theorizing The Commodity Frontier

*** Julianna Richardson Interviews Angela Davis  
Friday, February 8 @ 5:00 – AAAS 50th anniversary

**Tuesday—Alternatives to the Market? Reciprocity and Transnational Caregiving**
* Lan, Pei-Chia, “Remaking Family through Subcontracting Care: Elder Care in Taiwanese and Hong Kong Immigrant Families,” in At the Heart of Work and Family, Ch. 15.  
Jewish Women’s Archive, on conducting Oral Histories: https://jwa.org/

*In Class: Workshop on conducting oral history interviews

**Friday—Slavery, Commodification, and Kinship**
* Jones, Jacqueline, "My Mother was Much of a Woman: Slavery," Families, 677-708  
  
  *In Class: Workshop on how to give a compelling presentation with Dan Pearlman

**II. STRUCTURES OF INEQUALITY**

Week 5: February 12 & 15—Law and Racial Hierarchies

**Tuesday—Racial-ethnic categories and Family Background**
* Kibria, Nazli, “The Globalization-Family Nexus: Families as Mediating Structures of Globalization,” At the Heart of Work and Family, Ch. 19  
  Lee, Fictive Kinship, pp,

***Due: Reaction paper #1– to Richardson/Davis lecture (Feb 80)

*Student presentations on HistoryMakers subject

**Friday—Family Reunification**
  Lee, Fictive Kinship, pp,
*Student presentations on HistoryMakers subject

Week 6: February 19 & 22 – **WINTER BREAK—No classes**

Week 7: February 26 & March 1—**Framing Race and Ethnicity**

**Tuesday---- Defining Race, Nation, Kinship**
Lee, *Fictive Kinship*, pp,
*Baca Zinn, Maxine, “Family, Feminism, and Race in America,” Families, 33-40

*Guest speaker, Maxine Baca Zinn, Professor Emerita, Michigan State University (invited)

**Friday—Capitalism, the Family Wage and “Modern” families**
*D’Emilio, John, “Capitalism and Gay Identity”

Statistics on Marriage and Divorce

Week 8: March 5 & 8—**Parenthood**

**Tuesday—Motherhood and Mothering**


***Due: Proposal for Oral History research paper due in class

**Friday—Fathering and Fatherhood**


Recommended:

*Edin, Kathryn and Timothy Nelson, “Daddy, Baby; Momma, Maybe: Low-Income Urban
Fathers and the ‘Package Deal’ of Family Life”

Week 9: March 12 & 15-- The Division of Household Labor

Tuesday— Gender Strategies & Housework

Friday— Economy of Gratitude and Exercise of Power

Recommended:

Week 10: March 19 & 22—Caregiving and Its Consequences

Tuesday—Changing it Up

Friday—The Costs of Caregiving
*Mason, Mary Ann, Marc Goulden, and Nicholas Wolfinger, *Do Babies Matter?* selection on Caregiving and wage gap.

Week 11: March 26 & 29-- Inter-Generational Transmission of Class and Culture

Tuesday-- Ethnography and Inequality
Lareau, Annette, *Unequal Childhoods*, Chapters 1–2,
Appendix A: “Methodology: Enduring Dilemmas in Fieldwork,”

Friday—Reproducing Class or Race?
Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods*, Chapters 3-7

Week 12: April 2 & 5-- Reproducing Inequality
*Arlie Hochschild Lecture – Thursday, April 4 @ 3:30, Rapaporte Treasure Hall

**Tuesday—Parenting and Class**
Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods*, Chapter 11

**Friday—Long Term Consequences**
Appendix B: “Theory: Understanding the Work of Pierre Bourdieu”

**Week 13: April 9 & 12—Intimate Partner Violence**

**Tuesday—Violence as Control and Power**
*Ptacek, James, Why do Men Batter their Wives? Families, 619-633*
http://www.emergedv.com/

*Guest speaker from Emerge, Ted German (invited)*

***Due: Reaction paper re: Hochschild lecture (April 4)***

**Friday—Debating Corporal Punishment**
*Straus, Murray, “Ten Myths that Perpetuate Corporal Punishment,” Families, 641-650*

*Student presentations on final paper work-in-progress*

III. CHANGING STRUCTURES OF CLASS & ADULTHOOD

**Week 14: April 16 & 19—Family and Class in Young Adulthood**

**Tuesday—Family and Class in Young Adulthood**
Silva, *Coming up Short*

*Student presentations on work-in-progress*

**FRI DAY APRIL 19 – SPRING BREAK BEGINS—NO CLASS**

**Week 15: April 23 & 26 – SPRING BREAK—NO CLASSES**
Week 16: April 30 & May 2—Meanings of Class and Kinship

Tuesday—Meanings of Class in Adulthood
Silva, Coming up Short

*Student presentations on work-in-progress

Thursday May 2 is a BRANDEIS FRIDAY – CLASS IN SESSION

Thursday—Reassessing Kinship, Commodification, and Exchange
Silva, Coming up Short

***Oral History Papers due in class
*Hand out final exam essay questions

Recommended:

***TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM due Wednesday, May 8***