Family Relationships
HD 2304, Fall 2011

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Required Books
Frances & Joseph Gies, Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages
Stephanie Coontz, The Way We Never Were
Arthur Miller, Death of A Salesman

Few things are as basic to our lives as family relationships, yet formal study of family systems is less than a hundred years old. Family relationships can also be difficult to study because most of us believe, having grown up in them, we naturally understand them. Yet unless we have been in therapy with a family systems therapist for some time, or are possessed of unusual insight, most of us have little understanding of the patterns and processes which have shaped the families to which we belong, which in turn have helped make us who we are.

Few of us also have much understanding of how all families’ structures and dynamics have changed through history, or the social forces that have changed them. “Families” as we think of them today have not always been as they are now, and the changes that have affected them can be traced back not simply to factors such as industrialization in the seventeen and eighteen hundreds or the enfranchisement of women and minorities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but more pointedly to social changes in the influence of the western church in the lives of its parishioners in the Middle Ages, changes we will consider in some depth.

Hey wait a minute! I didn’t come here to take some ancient history class!

Easy, easy. We’ll keep it simple. This is not so much about memorizing dates as learning why we do the things we do today – how the past controls much of what we think of as “modern.”

We will also look at the ways, more recently, families and couples never were, as Stephanie Coontz puts it in her study of American families from the early days of American history to the modern era.

By the end of our study, you should have a clearer understanding of the forces that have shaped families in contemporary life, as well as tools for understanding family relationships in a wide variety of forms. You may also have a better grasp of the kind of relationships you would like to experience in your own family life, both your family of origin and, if you so choose, of procreation.

Honor System
All work should be done according to the Honor System. This means doing your own work, not downloading papers from the Internet or cutting and pasting someone else’s text into your own paper.
Assignments
I expect everyone to keep up with the required readings, and will also give out a list of recommended readings and films I would encourage you to read or watch. There will be two graded exams and a graded paper. In the paper I will ask you to explore the dynamics in either a real or a fictional family as may be portrayed in a film or book. It should be 5-6 typed double spaced pages, and employ the concepts and theories we will be learning during the term to explore the family system or systems you have chosen. Will discuss these assignments in more detail in class.

Attendance
Everyone is strongly urged to attend classes regularly, to contribute to discussions, and to advise me in advance when you cannot attend. Students who miss three or more classes may have their final grade lowered. It is also important that if problems arise you at least try to stay in contact. I can only be of help if I know there is a problem.

Schedule
August 22th
Course overview

August 24th
Tools of the Trade: Genograms

August 29th
Tools of the Trade: Systemic Theories
Family Systems Theories (online)

August 31st
More Genograms & Theories
Family Systems Terms (online)

September 5th
Enmeshment and Fusion
Emotional Cutoff

September 7th
Pursuit and Distance
Caretakers and Wounded Birds

September 12th
People of the Forest

September 14th
Intergenerational Transmission

September 19th
Projective Identification
September 21st  
**Historical Perspectives**  
*Marriage & Family in the Middle Ages - Chaps 1-4*

September 26th  
**Historical Perspectives**  
*Marriage & Family in the Middle Ages - Chaps 5-10*

September 28th  
**Historical Perspectives**  
*Marriage & Family in the Middle Ages - Chaps 10-14*

October 3rd  
**Historical Perspectives**  
*The Way We Never Were - Introduction - Chap 3*

October 5th  
**Historical Perspectives**  
*The Way We Never Were - Chaps 4-7*

October 10th  
**Historical Perspectives**  
*The Way We Never Were - Introduction - Chap 7-end*

October 12th  
*An American Family*

October 17th  
**Social Intervention in Families**  
*Orphan Trains*

October 19th  
**Social Intervention in Families**  
*Domestic Violence*

October 24th  
**Social Intervention in Families**  
*Marital Institutions*

October 26th  
**Social Intervention in Families**  
*Marital Institutions Continued*

October 31st  
**Mid Term Exam**
November 2nd
Family Roles
*Death of a Salesman*

November 4th
Family Roles
*Death of a Salesman*

November 7th
Family Roles
*Real Women Have Curves*

November 14th
Family Roles
*Real Women Have Curves*

November 16th
Family Life Cycles
“My Man, Bovanne”

Thanksgiving Break

November 28th
*Rachel Getting Married*

Thanksgiving Break

November 30th
Contemporary Issues
Paper Due

December 5th
Contemporary Issues Continued

December 7th
Final Exam Review