# Anthropology of the Family

Professor Eric Silverman
Office: Longwood 10
Office phone: 617.879.2423
Office Hours: posed outside my office--and by appointment, of course.

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W, F 10:00-11:15
Email: esilverman@wheelock.edu

## Course Description

Few topics in contemporary America are more contentious than the family. Almost everybody believes the family is in crisis. And as the family goes, so does everything else! If only we could somehow return the family to its rightful, truthful, natural, god-given, old-fashioned configuration, then all our woes and troubles would vanish. The country would emerge strong and safe again. Virtue would reign supreme!

Okay, so the above is a slight caricature. Still, we can all surely agree that the plight of the family is a central debate today. Everybody seems to believe that the family is somehow falling apart, and that the restoration of the "traditional" family and traditional "family values" would prove the best defense against general societal decay. But what exactly *is* this traditional family? And when did it exist? And is there, as so many politicians and pundits claim, any natural or universal type of family, marriage, and child-raising? Do human families everywhere, from New Guinea to New Jersey, have anything in common? This class will answer these questions.

Unfortunately, the rhetoric of family values that permeates our cultural and political landscape is clouded by fantasy and ignorance. Most Americans have a poor historical understanding of the American family. How has the American family changed? Were families in the 1950s really perfect? When, and why, did the ideal American family become small, private, united through love, and self-sufficient? Why do we see the family as the central institution of society? Are there valid ethnic or racial differences among families in the US? What forces shaped our view of child-raising, motherhood, and fathering? Why do we look to the family for emotional security, stability, and comfort? That is, what does the family symbolize today? For as John Gillis writes in his book *A World of Their Own Making*, we all live in *two* families: the families with live *with*, or actual people, and the families we live *by*, or the values, ideals, fears, and nostalgia that shape how we think about families. We need to explore both dimensions.

Likewise, the most vocal proponents of "family values" exhibit the poorest understanding of families around the world. Indeed, perhaps the single greatest error most people make concerning the family is to assume the existence of "*the*" family—some singular, timeless, often divinely-appointed, and universal configuration of parents and children that everywhere and always exists as the bedrock of human society.

In fact, this course begins with the assumption that there is *no* such thing as "the family." The idea and ideal of "the family" is a dangerous form of intellectual essentialism—a concept we will discuss. And essentialism frequently leads to ethnocentrism, racism, sexism, inequality, bigotry, and imperialism as well as intellectual sloppiness. Rather, the empirical evidence of anthropology leads to the inescapable conclusion that there exist many different variants of the family, both within and between cultures, and that families serve different functions. The mission of Wheelock College (you know this, right?) is "to improve the lives of children and families." This course will help you fulfill that charge by unapologetically showing that "families" in the Wheelock credo can only refer to social reality if it denotes not just many families, but many different *kinds* of families—both here and globally.

An anthropological lens expands our understanding of family to encompass broad arrangements of relationships. In many societies, the family is largely inseparable from wide networks of relatives or kin. The stereotypical American family is largely separate from the rest of society. But in small-scale societies, the family or kinship *is* society. And in many small-scale societies, families assume myriad forms: women marry ghosts and female husbands; spouses rarely interact; children are closer to their

mothers' brothers than to their fathers; a bride marries a group of brothers; everybody has several mothers and fathers; child-raising is shared by the entire village; and so forth. None of these configurations is "moral" according to US law—but they are wholly moral in their local contexts. By looking at other societies, we gain a sense of perspective on our own families. And we can better prepare ourselves to work professionally in accordance with the Wheelock credo.

## Course Objectives

- broaden your knowledge of families, kinship, and childhood in other societies,
- acquire an appreciation for ethnic and cross-cultural differences,
- study the history, ideologies, and structures of families and childraising in American society,
- master the analytic tools of kinship,
- study why families take the form they do,
- think critically about American beliefs and practices in regard to families and childhood,
- enhance your writing and research skills.
- learn to formulate academic arguments.
- harness anthropology to the mission of Wheelock College.

All aspects of the course are intended to achieve one or more of these objectives. If you are ever uncertain about the relevance of any portion of the course, re-read these goals.

## Moral Vision of the Course

The course has three moral goals befitting of a college that aspires to graduate responsible, ethical, action-oriented citizens at home in the US and the wider global community.

First, I want you to gain an appreciation and respect for how people in other cultures create meaningful, valid forms of childhood and families that nonetheless, as in our own society, contain various tensions, problems, and conflicts. You cannot fully commit to enhancing the well-being of children and families if you lack an adequate understanding of how and why childraising and families vary cross-culturally.

Second, I want you to grapple with the enormous changes occurring around the world as other cultures try to integrate their own local lifeworlds with Western models of childhood and families. The brute economics of the world system means that my Iatmul friends in Papua New Guinea must adopt to American or Western norms for childraising and family life far more than you need to act like Iatmul. So, I not only want to you to understand global diversity in regard to families and children—I also want you to realize how that diversity is changing because of us.

Third, I want you to deepen your critical and historical understanding of the family and childhood in America. Specifically, we will explore how family values and institutions, especially in regard to gender and race/ethnicity, have changed throughout American history, from the early Puritans to single, urban mothers today.

## Course Texts

The following four books are available at the Wheelock online bookstore (Wheelock.textbookx.com):

Margery Wolf. 1968. *The House of Lim: A Study of a Chinese Farm Family*. A famous anthropological account of a traditional yet changing Chinese family in Taiwan.

Alma Gottlieb. 2004. *The Afterlife Is Where We Come From: The Culture of Infancy in West Africa*. A wonderful study of childhood among a West African society.

Steven Mintz. 1989. *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History Of American Family Life*. A history of the American family.

Kathryn Edin & Maria Kefalas. 2007. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. An exploration of the reasons why so many poor, urban women in American diverge from the typical middle-class ideal and have children out of wedlock.

Please bring the relevant book to each class session. A copy of the books will be placed on library reserve. But it is obviously impractical for you to expect that the library copy will be available when you want to read it for class. If you wish to read the library reserve copy, my advice is that you do so far in advance. It is *not* excusable to come to class unprepared because you were unable to check out the library copy. (I must also add that I am unable to lend my own books. Sorry.) It is the primary requirement of this course that you are prepared for each class, and part of this preparation is that you have read the material. On this point, there are no exceptions. You must always read.

## Student Commitment

These are the requirements for this course. None of these items is a recommendation or option: they are mandatory. And they are not unique, but more or less applicable to all college-level courses. I expect you to do the following:

- attend class
- be prepared for each class, as I discuss below
- participate actively in discussions
- ask questions (and tell me when I fail to answer them)
- read the texts carefully and on time
- synthesize course materials and think critically
- work regularly and insightfully on your assignments
- complete the assignments on time

The course incorporates a variety of learning styles: lectures, small group discussions, images, films, tests, essays, and different types of readings. It is possible that not everything we do in the course will appeal to all of you all of the time--but I hope to reach all of you more of the time.

## Class Participation

Class participation is vital to the success of this course. Class activities are not "bullshit sessions." Class participation may include sharing homework, group discussions, non-graded quizzes, swapping outlines, note cards, and structured conversations. I expect to hear your voice! Your final grade for class participation will reflect the quality and frequency of your "voice." I keep daily notes about who actively participates, and who does not. Additionally, I will call upon you at times to speak during class—to comment on the readings, to answer questions, to offer insights. You cannot succeed in this class unless you are willing to speak.

And willing to speak you must! At several times during the semester, I will ask you each to make a 2-3 minute oral presentations to the class about the reading. You must do more than mere summary. You need to evaluate the reading, offer new ideas, grapple with troublesome points, agree, disagree, and so forth. We will begin these presentations in small groups, and work our way to the entire class.

Class participation requires you to be attentive and prepared. It is, to repeat, a requirement that you speak. You will notice that class participation accounts for 20% of your final grade. I know that some of you are reticent about speaking in front of the class. But public speaking is an important skill, one you will need in your professional lives (especially if you plan to teach!), and you should work to overcome any anxiety about public speaking. We will all work together to create an environment in which we all feel comfortable speaking.

## Classroom Etiquette

I will absolutely treat you with respect, fairness, courtesy, and professionalism. I expect you to do the same to me, to the course, and especially to your classmates. There is a proper way to comport yourself in a college classroom. You must be attentive, prepared, respectful, and willing to talk and engage the material. It is *not* okay to do any of the following—all of which I have experienced while teaching at Wheelock: nap, read material and work on assignments for other courses, scan the newspaper, chat with your neighbor, daydream, talk on your cell phone, fail to switch off your cell phone ringer, text-message, email, habitually arrive late, leave early, toss "attitude," loudly yawn, be disruptive, pack up your things before the end of class, habitually visit the restroom during class (unless you have a medical condition), snack audibly, and so forth. I make note of these disrespectful and disruptive behaviors, and they will negatively influence your final grade for the course (as they would negatively influence your professional career if you so conducted yourself in the workplace). Basic courtesy is an important social skill.

Lately, students increasingly email and text during class. (And they often erroneously think they can do so without my noticing—say, by holding the phone under the table.) Please refrain from these activities. To repeat: you will not do email and texting in my class. Other professors may permit you to do so, but I do not. Unless you anticipate an immediate life-and-death decision, I see no reason to read or send text-messages during class, to speak on your cell phone, or to leave the room to do likewise. I put my phone on "silent" during class; you will do likewise. I do not check my text-messages during class; you will do likewise. Again, basic courtesy is an important social skill. If you do these activities, you can expect your final grade for class participation to reflect this discourtesy.

Respect for others is essential to this class. I will not tolerate any intolerance in the classroom—nor will I tolerate any insults, nastiness, shaming, and so forth. We all have different, unique, and frankly limited experiences—experiences not often of our own making. Few college students actively choose their family, income, race, ethnicity, religion, neighborhood, and the body of their birth. If someone in the class does not fully understand your plight, experiences, outlook, and arguments, then you should find a compassionate, calm, and respectful way of conveying those differences.

Please bring all relevant materials to class, including paper, writing implements, and course texts for the day. Likewise, please complete all assignments before entering the classroom. It is absolutely crucial that you read in accordance with the schedule.

In short, I expect you to act the way a reasonable person would expect someone to act in a college classroom. (And you, of course, should me to act the way a reasonable person would expect a college professor to act.)

## Diversity in the Classroom

I want to add a note about diversity in the classroom—about ethnic, racial, religious, class, gender, and sexual differences. The official values of Wheelock College include "multiculturalism and diversity" (http://www.wheelock.edu/about/abomission.asp). We are a diverse community. We infuse what we do with an appreciation for diversity, and we seek to learn about diversity.

But diversity is an awkward topic, to be sure, especially in the classroom where, to say the obvious, there are often majority and minority groups (say, 20 students from Fiji, but only 2 Papua New Guineans). We all need to make certain that everybody in the class is treated equally as a person. You should not listen less closely, or more closely, to what someone says *because* of their identity. ("Gee, she's Latina, and I really want to know how *those* people think.") You should listen equally closely to what *everybody* says! We must treat each student as an *individual*, and respect each student for what she or he is—not for what you think they represent. We must *never* make assumptions about a person based on the groups they appear to belong in. ("She looks Asian, so I guess she, like, eats dogs." Or "he is black so I guess he, you know, speaks Ebonics or something." Or "she is Brazilian so I guess she is an illegal." Or "he is gay so I guess he's, like, not good at sports." Or "she is Jewish so I guess she's rich." Or….) Make certain that your language is inclusive. Make certain that you refer to other groups respectfully. (Don't know how to refer to a group? Ask the class! Maybe somebody can answer. You might feel awkward asking, but one moment of discomfort today can help you avoid major embarrassment later!) Make certain that when you speak about, or envision, a "generic" person, that your "generic" person, unless otherwise qualified, is relevant to all members of the class. (Don't assume that everybody celebrates Christmas, for example, unless you are trying to make a point about the hegemony of Christianity in American society; don't assume that everybody grew up in a suburban home, or is heterosexual, and so forth.)

Nevertheless, I want you to feel that you can say what you want to say, and ask the questions you want to ask, without fear of ridicule or an angry response. We are all here to learn. We *must* censure ourselves from *intentionally* offending others, but we do *not* want to censor learning—even topics that are likely to inflame passions and anger. Any and all questions can be phrased respectfully. If you are not sure how to ask a question, please speak with me, and we can work on generating appropriate phrases.

Please, too, ask your questions to the entire class—do not direct a particular question, say about Samoan identity, to the one Samoan student in the class. He or she does not "speak" on behalf of all Samoans! He or she is not the elected representative of Samoa. Please do *not* put anybody on the spot. ("Heh, you're Jewish. What do Jews think about that?") Try not to make students feel as if they must act or say something on behalf of "their people." How do you think the Samoan student feels when everybody passively listens to the white student, but then turns and stares at him when he speaks? Everybody enrolled in this class to learn; nobody enrolled as the spokesperson for an ethnic group. We must be careful not to implicitly frame somebody's comments as representative of a particular group. And we certainly should not assign guilt or responsibility to students for historical events. We all inherit legacies not of our own making. Some of us may benefit more than others from history, but we ourselves did not create that history. And when we are discussing a particular ethnic group, do not expect a person from that group to necessarily want to comment. Likewise, the fact that each of you belongs to one or more groups does not really give you the privilege of speaking on behalf of that group—even if you want to do so. No group is homogenous. Every group, especially in the US, contains vast differences in wealth, experience, and outlook. You may be African-American. But you surely cannot speak for all other African-Americans.

We must also be sensitive to the fact that, in a highly multicultural and diverse society such as our own, it is almost impossible for any one person to be aware of all the ways she or he can offend someone who is different. We all have different experiences—and our experiences are all limited. It is one thing when a person intentionally says something offensive. But it is something entirely different when a person inadvertently says something distasteful due to limitations in their personal experiences. When this occurs, we can use the utterance as a "teaching moment," and respectfully and helpfully guide the person and all of us to a new level of understanding.

What I am trying to say is that we want to enlist diversity in the classroom to enhance learning—to broaden our experiences. But we want to do so in ways that are courteous, respectful, and sensitive. This is not easy. But it is necessary.

A final note. If you are ever uncomfortable with the tone of class discussions, or how you are being treated by others in our classroom, please speak with me privately. We will work together to improve the situation…and I will do so in a way that maintains, if you wish, your anonymity.

## Balancing Analytic Rigor with Emotional Self-Discovery

You were all children once. You all have families of one sort or another. And most of you will probably have kids, and form your own families. So, in this obvious sense, the course is personal. Additionally, none of you live in a Disney family. Some of you might come from families of great financial means. Some of you might see your family as a refuge of emotional comfort. But the reality is that most people come from complex families—families with all sorts of emotional entanglements, legacies, anxieties, frustrations, hopes, dreams, tears, and tragedies. And some of you may come from families with violence, abuse, terrible hardships, and painful secrets.

I want you to bring your family experiences—to the extent you feel comfortable—into the class and your coursework. But our class is not a therapy session. We still need maintain analytic rigor. I cannot give you any recipe for how to achieve this balance. But I would be happy to discuss your struggles. I would also be happy to suggest other resources on campus should you feel the need or desire to explore further certain aspects of your family and childhood that are important but not appropriate for the classroom. Additionally, as I discuss below, please seek out the Counseling Center if you feel the need to talk more personally with someone about difficult issues within your family situation.

## Grades

Your final grade will be determined from the following:

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|---|---|
| Test 1 | 5% |
| Essay 1: Explaining American Childhood to the Beng | 20% |
| Essay 2: Analyzing children's toys, clothing, and products | 20% |
| Test 2 | 15% |
| Take-home final exam essays | 20% |
| Class participation | 20% |

I may also give quick pop-quizzes periodically, to be factored into your "class participation" grade. For these, there are no make-ups.

There are no extra-credit assignments.

Note that the dates on which I have scheduled the tests and assignments, as well as the films and readings, are liable to change if we need additional time to cover thoroughly the material.

Attendance is required at all class sessions. I view class participation as a crucial gauge of your commitment, preparation, and engagement with the course. Silence is not an option. Perfect attendance alone will not constitute satisfactory participation (and active participation will not compensate for poor attendance). If you must miss class (life often entails unforeseen contingencies), please inform me as soon as possible by email. There are reasonable and unreasonable absences. Reasonable absences arise from illness, emergencies, ill children who must stay home from school, snowstorms, deaths in the family, and so forth. For unreasonable absences, and more than just a few reasonable absences, I reserve the right to lower your final grade by one-half or one-full letter grade. I am kind and reasonable but, to be fair to all students, I must penalize absenteeism. If you miss more than the equivalent of two weeks of class, you may not be capable of receiving a passing grade.

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain the material from other students. Moreover, it is unwise to email your professors with the question, "did I miss anything important?" Of course you did!

Anything said or done in class is 'fair game' for the tests and quizzes. All material is important.

I like to think of each class as having two components. We will discuss the assigned reading. But I also want you to leave each class with new insights not from the reading. Hence, I will often give mini-lectures. But you should think of this class as a seminar. A seminar requires you actively to engage and discuss the material. The operative word here is "active." By enrolling in this class, you agree to become an active participant, not a passive spectator. I see my goal mainly to provide clarification and enhancement of the readings, to facilitate discussions, and to offer additional case-studies and topics.

We will discuss and review each assignment during the semester. If my expectations are ever unclear, please ask—and please do so early during the assignment.

## Grading and Honor Code

Grading entails both subtraction and addition. I eliminate points for errors and deficiencies, and I award points for insightful statements, critical thinking, and imaginative thought. A correct essay or response does *not* guarantee an excellent grade. Some responses are correct. Other responses are correct *and* show evidence of synthesis, insight, and creative thinking. I also expect your writing (in the essays) to communicate clearly your ideas. If your grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary contain numerous errors, thus making it difficult to understand fully your ideas, then I must factor those errors into your grade for that assignment. Clear writing is a crucial skill for college and your professional careers, and I would be remiss as a professor if I did not expect and promote a certain level of quality.

Generally speaking, grades in the A-range reward for exceptionally high achievement. Grades in the B-range correspond to superior work. C grades indicate basic achievement.

Please read the Honor Code of Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook, which states:

> As a citizen of the Wheelock College community, I am committed to acting honestly and with integrity in all aspects of academic life. I pledge to conduct myself ethically in my academic endeavors. I accept responsibility for what I write and what I say. In the spirit of trust, I will not misrepresent my academic work. I will not cheat and I will work toward creating a fair academic environment for all.

If you are *ever* uncertain about potential plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and questionable borrowing of ideas, it is *your* responsibility to speak with me or an appropriate on-campus academic resource. This is your only warning: all work in this class is your own. You may *not* cut-and-paste from the internet. Under *no* circumstances are you to consult *any* additional sources, persons, or coursework without permission. *Any* instance of plagiarism will result in an F for the assignment, and the lowering of your final grade by one whole letter grade. (As a policy, I file Academic Dishonesty Forms whenever I encounter an instance of plagiarism or cheating. You can see the form on the Wheelock website at http://www.wheelock.edu/affair/acaddishonest.pdf). You must fully acknowledge *any* and *all* sources that contribute to your essays. Forgetting to add a bibliographical endnote is *not* acceptable. I would be happy to chat about this issue further in class or individually.

Your work should represent your best effort. It should communicate that you are taking your studies seriously, and that you respect your professors, you education, and yourself. Your work should convey the values of effort, thoroughness, seriousness, care, and importance. If your work appears frivolous, then it suggests that you have a frivolous approach to your studies. Please do your best.

Late assignments will be accepted for only three extra days. I will also reduce your grade by one full letter. This policy ensures fairness to all students. The only exceptions are serious medical illnesses and related unforeseen events of considerable import. Conflict with an assignment in another class is not a valid reason for an extension—nor, for that matter, avoidable technological failures. Back-up your essays regularly and consistently as you write them.

If you miss an assignment, it is *your* responsibility to initiate conversation with me. Likewise, if I request, when I hand back an essay or quiz, a meeting with you, it is *your* responsibility to follow-up.

I do not give incomplete grades except for truly serious and extenuating circumstances—circumstances that require consultation by you with the Dean, Academic Services, or health/mental health professionals.

You should familiarize yourself with the policies and dates for drop/adds, withdrawals, pass/fail options, incompletes, and so forth, all in the Course Catalog.

## Essays

I will, of course, provide detailed instructions for each of the essays. But here are preliminary thoughts.

The first essay will ask you to write a manual, in a sense, about the norms and conventions of American childhood today. But I do not want you to write for an American audience. Instead, I want you to write for a Beng readership. Our second course text, *The Afterlife is Where We Come From*, seeks to explain childhood among the West African Beng, a people living in Côte d'Ivoire, to an American readership. Your task in the first essay is to return the favor.

The second essay will ask you to analyze images, messages, ideals, and anxieties about contemporary American parenting and childhood by exploring American parenting or childhood magazines, greeting cards, and toys. Part of this assignment will require several "fieldwork" trips to toy stores, Wal-Mart, Target, and so forth. All of these products and commodities frankly seek either to enhance, or to resist, corporate profits. But what do they reveal about how Americans think about children, parents, and families?

The third essay will actually comprise several smaller essays as part of the take-home final exam. One essay will ask you to respond to the final course text, Promises I Can Keep, with a scholarly argument. What is the author's thesis? Do you agree, or not? Defend your position.

We will, of course, discuss each assignment in detail as the semester unfolds.

## Email and Office Hours

I will regularly communicate with the class by email. Please read your email regularly (but not in class!). My office hours are posted outside my office (Longwood 10). I also invite you to schedule an appointment to discuss the course, anthropology, American Studies, Human Development, and your own program of study.

## Academic Support Services

Wheelock College provides free academic support services to all students.

- **Peer Tutors** provide academic help with specific courses or with general academic skills such studying or time management. Contact Julia Mears at ext. 2179 or at jmears@wheelock.edu

- **Writing Consultants** work with students on writing assignments on a drop-in basis most afternoons and evenings until 10 p.m. on the second floor of the library Contact Jenne Powers at ext. 2122 or at jpowers@wheelock.edu
- **Peer Coaches in Oral Presentation** is available to all students. Contact coaches at speakout@wheelock.edu or Ellie Friedland at efriedland@wheelock.edu or ext. 2172.

## Other Campus Services and Important Information

I recommend that you seek when needed the services of the Counseling Center in the basement of Riverway House (Rooms 13, 14 and 15; for an appointment, you can phone 617.879.2413). The Counseling Center offers compassionate, well-trained professionals who can assist you with relationship issues, sexuality and sexual orientation issues, adjustment to college, moving into more adult roles, grief and loss, depression and anxiety, body image and eating concerns, etc. All services are free for Wheelock students. Counseling services has an excellent website with important information and useful resources (http://www2.wheelock.edu/wheelock/Student_Life/Health_and_Wellness/Counseling_Center.html).

College is a time of stress and anxiety. I sympathize with the emotional plight of college students. It is vital that you have some sort of emotional support system in college—friends, family, and so forth. The Counseling Center can assist you with finding an emotional support system. Please do not take offense if, after a conversation, I suggest that you visit the Counseling Center. We all need assistance from time to time getting grounded, working through issues, grappling with tensions.

Wheelock College Student Health Services is operated in conjunction with Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, affiliated with Harvard Medical School, located a short walk from campus. For more information on services available to Wheelock students, visit the Harvard Vanguard web site for Wheelock students (http://www.harvardvanguard.org/Wheelock/WheelockHome.asp#map).

You should also familiarize yourself with our college Policies Against Harassment at:
http://www.wheelock.edu/hr/POLICY%20AGAINST%20HARASSMENT.pdf#search=%22harassment%22

If you drink, don't drive. If you have sex, do it safely. Both the Counseling Center and Health Service can direct you to resources for sexuality and reproductive health matters, including contraception, pregnancy consultations, and professional advice on what to do after rape. If you do not know what constitutes consensual sexual relations, please contact Student Health Services for more information.

## Disability Services

It is the policy of Wheelock College to provide appropriate, reasonable accommodations to students who have documented learning, physical, cognitive, or psychiatric disabilities.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to meet with the course instructor. To receive appropriate accommodations students **must** request services. Please contact Paul Hastings, Director of Academic Assistance and Disability Services in Library 205, ext. 2304 or at phastings@wheelock.edu

## How to Read and Take Notes

When reading, do not just underline or highlight text in book (and never do so in a library book). You need also write notes on the reading, and to bring them to class. Your notes can be brief—a few sentences, key phrases, important terms, responses, questions, etc. You can type your notes, or scrawl them on paper, but address at least some of the following:

- What are the key themes, terms, and concepts of the reading. What is the author's point? Summarize each chapter or sub-chapter.
- What is unclear?
- What is particularly persuasive or insightful?
- What did you learn?
- Can you offer alternative interpretations of the material?
- Do you think the author erred, or missed something crucial?
- Did you read something shocking or objectionable? Were you uneasy? Why?
- How does the reading relate to other course ideas, discussions, and readings—and even material from other courses?
- How does the reading pertain to class assignments? Can you tie it to your essays?

Your notes will become the basis of group discussions and class presentations.

## Course Schedule

Note: Anticipate that this schedule will change. In addition to possible errors in the schedule, some topics may require more time (or less) than I anticipated to address your questions, uncertainties, and interest.

**W Sept 2**. Introduction to the course. Writing exercise: What is the Family? Describe your family? What does the family do?

**F Sept 4.** Begin discussing the traditional Taiwanese family. Classic anthropological theories on the family.
Reading: Wolf, *The House of Lim*, chps 1-4.

**W Sept 9**. Taiwanese family (continued). Kinship diagrams. Patrilineal descent groups (including ghost marriage and woman-woman marriage).
Reading: Wolf chps 5-7.

**F Sept 11**. Taiwanese family (continued). Matrilineal descent groups and the potential clash between male authority and female structure.
Reading: Wolf chps 8-10.

**W Sept 16**. Finish the Taiwanese family. Introduce the Iatmul family in Papua New Guinea (where your instructor conducts research).
Reading: Wolf chps 11-14.

**F Sept 18**. Test 1.

**W Sept 23**. Begin discussing childhood among the Beng, West Africa. Each class, we will meet in small groups to review the reading, and also to compare Beng childhood with American norms—keeping an eye on the first essay. Continue, too, discussing the Iatmul of Papua New Guinea.
Reading: Gottlieb, *The Afterlife Is Where We Come From*, chps 3-4.

**F Sept 25.** Beng children (continued). Shared parenting in India and Melanesia. Over the next day or so, we will view some films made by Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson in the 1930s about children in New Guinea, Bali, and America.
Reading: Gottlieb chp 5.

**W Sept 30**. Beng children (continued). Double, bilateral, and cognatic descent.
Reading: Gottlieb chp 6.

**F Oct 2**. Beng children (continued). Marriage: how, and why, do people marry around the world? And why are Americans so fearful about marrying their cousins? We may also see a short film about the Na of China, *Without Fathers or Husbands*.

Reading: Gottlieb chps 7 & 9.

**W Oct 7**. Beng children (continued). We will also begin viewing a film about rural Chinese women, *Small Happiness*.

Reading: Gottlieb chp 8.

**F Oct 9**. Beng children (continued). Finish the film, *Small Happiness.*

Reading: Gottlieb chp 10.

**W Oct 14.** Finish discussing Beng childhood. We will also begin seeing a film about the extended family and the complex mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship in northern India, *Dadi's Family*.

Reading: Gottlieb chp 11.

Note: Only one week left until your first essay is due.

**F Oct 16**. Today, we begin discussing the history of the American family. Each day, I will also add additional information on the reading and aspects of the American family and childraising, such as the rise of teenage sexuality, shifting notions of gender, history of fatherhood, adoption, and new reproductive technologies. We will also, today, finish viewing *Dadi's Family.*

Reading: Mintz, *Domestic Revolutions*, chps 1-2.

**W Oct 21**. American family.

Reading: Mintz chp 3.

Turn in Essay 1.

**F Oct 23**. American Family.

Reading: Mintz chps 4 & 5.

**W Oct 28**. American family.

Reading: Mintz chps 6 & 7.

**F Oct 30**. American family.

Reading: Mintz chps 8 & 9.

**W Nov 4**. American family.

Reading: Mintz chps 10 & Epilogue.

**F Nov 6**. Today we begin discussing single motherhood in contemporary America: Why do many women choose motherhood before marriage?

Reading: Edin & Kefalas, *Promises I Can Keep*, Introduction.

**W Nov 11**. No class: Veteran's Day.

**F Nov 13**. Test 2.

**W Nov 18**. Single motherhood (continued). Over the next week or so, I will present each day information on the history of American parenting that will assist you as you work on your second essay.

Reading: *Promises* chp 1.

**F Nov 20**. Single motherhood (continued).

Reading: *Promises* chp 2.

Note: Your second essay is due in just over a week.

**W Nov 25, F Nov 27**. No class. Thanksgiving.

**W Dec 2**. Single motherhood (continued). We will also view a film about gay parents and children.
Reading: *Promises* chp 3.

**F Dec 4**. Single motherhood (continued).
Reading: *Promises* chp 4.
Hand in Essay 2.

**W Dec 9**. Single motherhood (continued).
Reading: *Promises* chp 5.

**F Dec 11**. Finish single motherhood, and conclude the course.
Reading: Promises chp 6.

The final essays, which I will give you the last day of class, are due by the end of the day on Friday, December 18.