Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to Sociology 350, Work and Family Life. Below are some ideas from the course readings that illustrate the main themes of the course.

There is no question that the American workforce has changed. Women, and particularly mothers of children under 18, have reached a critical mass in American workplaces. Women are earning the majority of bachelors and advanced degrees... young women today are equal with young men in their desire to move to jobs with more responsibility... Attitudes about working mothers are more favorable today than ever before. In addition, husbands are more likely to be involved in family work, providing much needed support for working mothers... Men and women in dual-earner families especially are facing challenges in managing the day-to-day realities of their lives in a highly pressured 24/7 work environment. The current economic downturn adds to these pressures...

Galinsky et al., 2008, Times are Changing: Generation and Gender at Work and at Home

American women have not simply traded on mystique for another—moving from strictures about the “good” mother or the “good” wife to those embodied in the “good” worker; rather, many are trying to be it all—the good wife, the good mother, and the good employee. Growing numbers of American men are trying to be all as well—egalitarian husbands and caring fathers as well as productive and competitive on the job. They, too, find it almost impossible to do so... Very few men or women can live by the old rules. One job per family... is often a ticket to economic privation given that wages have not kept pace with inflation or living costs, the minimum wage is a poverty wage, and “middle class” today means something very different in today’s consumption economy.

Moen and Roehling, 2005, The Career Mystique: Cracks in the American Dream

There is little question that the way Americans work and live has changed in recent years. The fast-paced, global 24/7 economy, the pressures of competition, and technology have blurred that traditional boundaries between work life and home life. Furthermore, this new economy calls for new skills—skills like responding quickly to competing demands and jumping from task to task... Our[2001] study revealed that 1 in 3 U.S. employees experienced feeling overworked as a chronic condition... For a significant group of Americans, the way we work today appears to be negatively affecting their health and effectiveness at work.

Galinsky et al., 2004; Overwork in America: When the Way We Work Becomes Too Much

A central question for American democracy... is how to simultaneously enhance equality and ensure that adults can be productive at work, rear the next generation well, and participate in civic life. In theory, there are three possible approaches: (1) place the responsibility solely on individuals and families, (2) rely on the private sector alone, or (3) have the public sector also support families that work... The evidence to date provides a clear answer: all three groups need to be involved in finding a solution. Families play an essential role, and workplaces have critical responsibilities, but a balance between work and family needs will not be achieved without a public role.

Heymann and Beem; 2005; Unfinished Work: Building Equality and Democracy in an Era of Working Families
Course Description

The way we work and our relationship to work is changing dramatically in 21st century America. The global economy with an international workforce, the importance of information technology, and the decreased likelihood of secure employment frame our work lives today. Real wages have declined, minimum wage is not a living wage, and hours spent in the workforce have remained among the highest in the world. Increased inequality of opportunity has left the least advantaged Americans without credentials to get secure jobs, while those with high education typically work long hours in order to enhance their job security. The workforce is increasingly diverse in regard to sex, ethnicity, and age. The aging baby boomers have called into question the expectation of a long and secure retirement.

At the same time, there have been related changes in families. The last part of the 20th century saw the rapid increase of women into the labor force, more divorce and one-parent families, and increased tensions between men and women about the allocation of family work. Less time at home has had profound implications for the quality of family life as well as for the ability of families to provide care to dependents. Moreover, reliance on technology such as e-mail and cell phones have made it less possible to establish boundaries between employment and home.

Social policy has not yet addressed these problems in an effective way. Despite the greater intrusion of work into families, we still expect families to be self-sufficient financially and in regard to caregiving. As a culture, we do not acknowledge fully the incompatibility between employment and family life.

One way to think about these issues is that in American society, we have created a cultural contradiction in values. That is, our cultural values are clear that families need to have workers in order to survive as families; indeed, the ideal of the "self-sufficient family" is enacted in social welfare policy. However, our culture does not readily acknowledge that the economic institution also needs families in order for work to survive. It is much less acknowledged that the economic institution depends on the family institution to bear and raise the next generation of workers, and to care for present and past workers. There is little support in the workplace for workers to take time to care for families; indeed, "ideal workers" are defined as those without family responsibilities. Family work is not defined as "real" work, but rather as a "labor of love."

How do we, as a culture, manage to perform the essential tasks of caregiving on the one hand, and producing the goods and services necessary for survival, on the other hand? How did we come to this situation of incompatibility between two essential social institutions? And what might we do as a culture to change this incompatibility?

This course will consider these questions at length. The course organization and readings are designed to help us understand how families and the economy are interconnected social institutions, and how changes in both institutions, as well as in political trends, cultural values, and individual choices, have resulted in incompatibility between work and family life. We’ll discuss some possible policy responses that might help to change the incompatibility and the way we think about the place of both work and family in our lives.
Course Structure and Class Meetings

This semester, SOC 350 is being conducted as hybrid course, meaning that we’ll meet in person as well as online. Hybrid courses combine face-to-face (FTF) classroom instruction with electronic online platforms and resources. A significant amount of learning in a hybrid course occurs online.

In our course, we will meet face-to-face in the classroom on Mondays and Wednesdays, and you will spend another hour online each week completing a series of individual and group assignments. Most likely, this online hour will take place on Fridays.

Thus, if you are unsure about your ability to have consistent access to the internet and/or your ability to learn in an online format, you should think about whether or not this is the right course for you. To help you decide, our Sakai site includes an assessment of student readiness for online learning. Please note that if you decide to stay in the course, you will need to be online for at least one hour per week, most likely sometime each Friday. The good news is that you can be anywhere with an internet connection when you do this; the bad news is that there is no excuse for not doing it, and you will be held accountable for each week’s online assignment.

Why a hybrid course, you might wonder? There are several reasons I’ve chosen this format. First of all, a major advantage of a hybrid course is that it allows us to use time in the classroom to do activities best suited for face-face lecture and discussion, and use online time for learning experiences that can best be accomplished in an online environment. The content of this course requires a significant amount of both conceptual learning and data analysis. I think we can best do the conceptual learning in class, and the data analysis, using online data reports, online.

The second reason I’ve chosen this hybrid format is to help us all become more skilled in using online technology as an increasingly important type of skill to bring to the job market.

The final, and most important, reason I’ve chosen this format is directly related to the topic of this class, which is how the way we work needs to be redesigned to better facilitate our ability to be productive in our lives “off the job.” Technology holds much promise in designing ways that we can more effectively meet the requirements of both work and life. I’m very much looking forward to trying out this premise in our course! Think of us as a learning community experimenting with a promising way to better balance our lives.

In general, when we meet on Mondays and Wednesdays in our face-to-face format, I will usually present some information in a lecture format. However, usually we will spend at least some of our face-to-face time together discussing, both whole class and in small groups, the readings and our conceptual orientation to the course.

Our online component each week mostly will consist of a discrete assignment where you’ll examine the data reports that are provided in the Resources Tool in our Sakai site, and answer a series of questions that help you interpret the data. Toward the end of the semester, we’ll move into permanent groups where you will work on a series of assignments that will result in a final group project.
Help and Accommodations

Any student with a documented disability is welcome and encouraged to contact me as early in the semester as possible so that we may arrange reasonable accommodations and put them into place quickly. As part of this process, please be in touch with Disability Services for Students office at 330 Memorial Union. 874-2098. In general, please keep me informed of any special circumstances that affect your participation in this course.

If you are struggling for any reason with the reading or writing, first, please come and talk to me. Students in this class are welcome to visit URI's Writing Center—located on 4th floor, Roosevelt Hall at any time during the semester. Appointments are encouraged (call them at 874-4690), but you may also drop in and see if a tutor is available. For more information, go to the URI Writing Center’s website at:
http://www.uri.edu/artsci/writing/center/index.shtml

Books and Readings, and Their Place in the Organization of the Course

The two course books serve to provide the basis for the organization of the course and our discussions. The reader, edited by Jody Heymann and Christopher Been, is a result of the Work, Family, and Democracy Initiative at Harvard University, which was led by the book editors. This project’s goal was to provide ways of thinking differently about the incompatibility between work and family in the broader context of how to create a better society. I think it is a good, thoughtful collection of articles that will help us understand the history of work and family, the inequalities that cause people to have different experiences in work and family life, some obstacles to changing the way we “do” work and family, and finally, some possible solutions to this important problem.

The second book by Phyllis Moen and Patricia Roehling, is again, a thoughtful look at how we think about work, and how our thinking has affected our ability to lead fulfilling lives both on and off the job. The authors look at how work affects our lives throughout the life course, and offer some ideas about how we might think about changing the way we think about “the career mystique,” that is, our definition of a good worker and a good job.


In addition to these course books, there are a number of data reports about the status of work and family life available on Sakai in PDF format. These reports will be the basis of your Friday assignments. I may add other reports to our Sakai site as needed. You can also access most of these reports on the Families and Work Institute’s web site:
www.familiesandwork.org.
Course Requirements and Grading

There are five different types of assignments in this course that are designed to help you think about the readings, continue to improve your discussion and critical thinking skills, and write effectively. Each type of assignment is described below.

Reading Questions: As we read each chapter of Moen and Roehling’s *The Career Mystique*, I will distribute several questions for you to answer and turn in for a grade. Each chapter assignment will be graded on a scale from 1 – 10. There are eight chapters in all, and I will count seven of them in your final grade.

Because the purpose of these assignments is to keep you reading and critically evaluating, I will not accept any late assignments. These assignments are due in class, and must be typewritten. Together, seven of these assignments will constitute 15 percent of your course grade.

Article Analyses: As we read through the Heymann and Beem reader, *Unfinished Work*, you will be required to write analyses of four different articles, one from each section of the reader. We will decide in class who is responsible for each article, so that equal numbers of students are reading each article.

You will be asked to write an analysis of your article, which will be turned in and graded. The analysis should include the following information. First, you need to concisely state the main point of the article (in no more than a few sentences). After the main point of the article is briefly described, you should mention two or three things that you find interesting about the article, and discuss these points. The main purpose of these analyses, though, is for you to relate the article to the topic of the section of the reader, and also to discuss how the article reflects the course themes and class discussion. These analyses should be between three and four double-spaced, typewritten pages in length.

On the day these Article Analyses are due, we will meet in groups, where you will first, discuss your analysis with others who have analyzed the same article, and second, discuss your article with students who have analyzed different articles. Each student will summarize her/his paper to the group so that everyone will be able to understand all articles in each section. After your discussion, each group will make a report to the class about their discussion. As a class, we’ll discuss similarities and differences between each article and how each uniquely and similarly reflects course themes and class discussion.

These article analyses will be useful as you prepare your final course assignment, a White Paper (described below).

Each of these written Article Analyses will be graded on a 10-point scale. Papers are due in class on the dates listed. Part of your grade on these analyses will be based on your contribution to class discussion. Together, these analyses constitute 20 percent of your course grade.

Online Participation Activities: To enhance your abilities to understand quantitative data, we will devote our online class most weeks to analyzing and interpreting the data in the various reports from the Families and Work Institute. On those online class days, you will
work in groups to explore the data to answer specific questions that relate to other course readings. Groups will divide the work in an online discussion, and together compile and share answers to the questions. Each person will post answers to their questions on the Discussion tool, where members of the group can briefly comment on how the data fit together. Each person will be graded individually on her or his written answers and brief discussion comments. Together, these online assignments will constitute 25 percent of your course grade.

**Critical Review Essay:** You are required to write a critical review essay about *The Career Mystique*. This critical review is not a chapter-by-chapter book summary, but 6 – 9 page essay that attends to the analysis of the central themes of the book (through Chapter 6) and compare them to the Families and Work research reports. We will talk at length about this essay in class, but a few general guidelines are provided here.

The critical review essay asks you to compare *The Career Mystique* with the data from the Families and Work Institute’s research reports that we will have discussed. In this essay, I want you to compare Moen and Roehling’s ideas to the quantitative data found in the research reports. To do this, you’ll need to summarize the first two chapters of *The Career Mystique*, and then choose two of the next four chapters (Young Adults, New Parents, School Age Families, or Mid-life Families), and compare those chapters to the data found in the national studies done by the Families and Work Institute. Do the national studies extend and lend support to Moen and Roehling’s ideas? Are there contradictory findings? How does each source illustrate the themes of this course? Discuss the compatible and contradictory points from the perspective of public discourse about the work and family life. This comparative critical essay is due October 28. It will count 15 percent of your course grade. More specific guidelines are available in Sakai Resources. The ideas that you use in this critical review will be useful for your final writing assignment, the White Paper.

**White Paper Assignment:** For your final assignment, you’ll be placed in a somewhat fictitious situation: you are employed in a group of policy researchers who work for a member of Congress. In this scenario, a few years into the future, the incompatibility between work and family finally has resulted in an employment crisis, with resultant impacts on America’s economic health. Congress has been asked by the executive branch of government to create a policy framework about how to make work and family more compatible social institutions. Your boss (a member of the House of Representatives) turns immediately to your group, and asks you to work on this large issue by preparing a “White Paper” using sociologically-based thinking and research that results in recommendations for implementing a set of flexibility options to meet one specific set of problems workers face in trying to balance work and family life.

“White Papers” are background reviews that policymakers use to create policy. They are brief and to the point and make use of bullets and “bottom line” information. We will discuss the format of white papers at length during the semester, and there is a folder of information about how to write White Papers in our Sakai Resources.

Your group’s assignment is to choose a work-family incompatibility issue, and create a White Paper. Your group decides that the best way to prepare this background paper for your boss is to use information from *The Career Mystique* and from *Unfinished Work*, those books you all read in that work and families course you took so long ago. Thank goodness
you took that course, and isn't it a coincidence that you all ended up working together! As a group, you choose the problem and research a set of flexibility options that best addresses this problem. You can choose any phase of workers’ life course, and zoom in on a set of problems that affects workers at that particular time in their work career.

In your White Paper you can use your old course information to review the public policy and economic challenges to “moving forward” with an effective response to work and family issues, and suggest general strategies to address these challenges. You'll most likely have to integrate the course readings and discussions from class (thank goodness you all paid such rapt attention during that semester, and conveniently enough, you never sold your books back to the URI bookstore!), along with the data from the Families and Work research reports. So you decide that in the white paper, you'll review the situation of incompatibility between work and family, summarize the obstacles within American culture to addressing the incompatibility, and offer some solutions to a specific life-course stage problem of work-family incompatibility—some ideas about what different levels of government might do to make work and family activities more compatible for this particular life course stage.

These papers will reflect your ability to use your understanding of the policy implications of work-family incompatibility in a real-life way, and I look forward to reading them. The White Paper assignment is due December 19, and will count 25 percent of your course grade. Each person in the group will receive the same grade unless there is a problem with unequal work effort. Mechanisms will be put into place to ensure that everyone is graded fairly. However, it is acceptable to work alone on the White Paper assignment. Please let me know if you decide to work alone.

PLEASE NOTE: Both of your longer written papers (the Critical Analysis and your White Paper) must be grammatically perfect, and proofread. Pay attention to organization and to writing skills in general. If you need help with any aspect of writing skills, please let me know.

Grading Scale
Your course grade will be based on the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93.5 – 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>89.5 – 93.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>87.5 – 89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>83.5 – 87.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>77.5 – 79.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>73.5 – 77.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>67.5 – 69.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>69.5 – 73.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 59.5</td>
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Reading and Assignment Schedule

September 7 - 9

*Introduction to the course; general discussion of themes*

Assignment:
- 9/7 Syllabus; Overview of Books: Online Assessment
- 9/9 Online Assignment: Getting familiar with Sakai

September 12 - 16

*Defining work*

*Work-Family linkages in a “good society”*

Assignment:
- 9/12 Heymann and Beem: Introduction and Chapter 3
- 9/14 Chapter 3 class discussion/discussion of online assignments
- 9/16 Online Data Analysis: recent changes in work-family attitudes and behavior

September 19 - 23

*Historical Changes/The Way We Work Today*

Assignment:
- 9/19 Heymann and Beem: Chapter 1 or Chapter 2
- 9/21 *Article analysis due in class;* discussion
- 9/23 Online Data Analysis: family-friendliness; overwork

September 26 – September 30

*The Feminine Mystique versus the Career Mystique: gender issues in work and family*

Assignment:
- 9/26 Moen and Roehling Chapter 1
- 9/28 *Chapter 1 questions due in class;*
- 9/30 class discussion of “career mystique”

October 3 – October 7

*Life course issues: Young adults and new parents*

Assignment:
- 10/3 Moen and Roehling, Chapters 2 and 3
- 10/5 *Chapter 2 questions due in class*
- 10/7 *Chapter 3 questions due in class*
- 10/7 Online Data Analysis: National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW)
October 10 - October 14

**Life Course Issues: Parenting and Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment:</th>
<th>Moen and Roehling, Chapter 4 &amp; 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>No class: Columbus Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/12</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 4 questions due in class</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10/14</td>
<td>Online Assignment: (individual) Chapter 5 questions</td>
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October 17 – October 21

**Life course issues: Retirement**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment:</th>
<th>Moen and Roehling, Chapter 6</th>
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<tr>
<td>10/17</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 6 questions due in class</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/19</td>
<td>Data discussion: older workers, working in retirement, impacts of recession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/21</td>
<td>Online Data Analysis: Older Workers, Working in Retirement; impacts of recession</td>
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October 24 – October 28

**Summary of The Career Mystique and life course issues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment:</th>
<th>Summary and Discussion of Critical Review</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/24</td>
<td>Summary discussion of the Career Mystique</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/26</td>
<td>Summary discussion of Data Analysis assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/28</td>
<td>no online assignment; <strong>Critical Review Due</strong></td>
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October 31 – November 4

**Social Class Issues in Work-Family Linkages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment:</th>
<th>Heymann and Beem: Part 2 Chapters</th>
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<tr>
<td>10/31</td>
<td>Class discussion of Almeida and McDonald article (Part 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/2</td>
<td><strong>Article analysis due in class</strong></td>
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<td>11/4</td>
<td>Online Data Analysis: flexibility in different types of jobs</td>
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November 7 - 11 (online class Wednesday, Nov. 9; holiday Nov. 11—Veterans’ Day)

**Work, family, and caregiving**

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<tr>
<th>Assignment:</th>
<th>Folbre, Nancy, <em>The Invisible Heart</em> (online chapter) class discussion</th>
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<tr>
<td>11/7</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/9</td>
<td>Online Data Analysis: Eldercare study/childcare</td>
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November 14 – 18

Challenges to balancing family and economic institutions

Assignment: Heymann and Beem: Section 3
11/14 Lecture/Discussion of current issues in work and family
11/16 Writing assignment due in class (Section 3 article)
11/18 Online Data Analysis: Impact of the Recession, etc.

November 21 - 23 (no class November 25—Thanksgiving)
Assignment: Discussion of White Paper/ Group formation
11/21 White Paper Discussion
11/23 Online discussion of white paper; group decisions

November 28 – December 2
Policy responses

Assignment: Moen and Roehling: Chapters 7 & 8
11/28 Moen and Roehling Chapter 7 questions due in class
11/30 Moen and Roehling Chapter 8 questions due in class
12/2 Online White Paper formal progress report; data summary for white paper

December 5 – 12
Seeking Solutions

Assignment: Heymann and Beem: Section 4
12/5 Global perspective on work and family
12/7 Writing assignment due in class (Section 4 article)
12/9 Online White Paper formal progress report; outline
12/12 (Monday): course summary and conclusions

December 19
White Paper due