FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN AMERICAN HISTORY, 1600-1900

The course examines the social, economic, and cultural history of American families—across socio-economic classes, and among multiple racial, ethnic, and cultural groups—exploring the changing relationships between families and both their particular communities and the larger society. The course begins with the assumption that changes in the structure, function, and relationships of families and communities offer an indicator of changes in the larger society. Thus, the study of family and community has the potential to revise our understanding about the process—and periodization—of American history.

The course offers a focused survey of the social history of the United States between 1600 and 1900. Within a chronological framework, the course is organized topically. We will examine continuities, changes, and variations in gender relationships; family and community ideals and functions; the purpose and expectations of marriage; philosophies of child-rearing; demography and family structure; the organization of work and leisure time; the relationships between nuclear families and kinship networks, neighborhoods, and communities; and the effects of industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and social and geographic mobility on patterns of family life and community organization.

Course requirements: The course consists of two class meetings each week. The reading assignments for each class should be completed by that class meeting. The “further readings” listed in the syllabus and the Reading Guide are not required. You are expected to attend class and to come to all class meetings and discussion sections prepared to discuss and analyze the readings [20% of final grade]. The History2128/GSWS 2248 Reading Guide on Blackboard provides questions to help focus your reading for the class discussions. All reading assignments are available either through e-reserve (use the Library Reserves link on Blackboard or the e-reserves link on the Reading Guide), or by link to a database (JSTOR or SAGE Premier) or an online source from the Reading Guide (RG). If you miss a discussion section meeting, you are expected to write a thoughtful evaluation (2-3 pages) of the assigned monograph. You are strongly encouraged to print the assigned articles and to purchase the assigned texts from the bookstore; a copy of each of the assigned books is on reserve in the library.

The essay assignments are an integral part of the course. Two critical analyses of primary documents (5 pages each) will be due during the semester [together, 40% of final grade]. A final take-home essay (10–12 pages) is due by the scheduled final-exam date for the course [40% of final grade]. The Extension, Deadline, and Grading Policy for the course can be found on the course home page.

All students are expected to read, understand, and abide by the Bowdoin College Academic Honor Code and by the rules of citation (When to Cite and How to Cite) described on the Bowdoin College Academic Honesty and Plagiarism website at http://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/academic-honesty/index.shtml.

John Mack Faragher, Women and Men on the Overland Trail (1979, 2nd ed. 2001)
Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives (1890; Penguin Classics reprint 1997)

The History 2128/GSWS 2248 Reading Guide and other online sources can be found on Blackboard or at http://www.bowdoin.edu/faculty/s/smcmahon/courses/hist248/index.shtml
Week 1.
9/1  INTRODUCTION

Week 2.
9/6  PATRIARCHAL FAMILIES IN ENGLAND AND EUROPE

Colonial America
9/8  NEW ENGLAND TOWNS IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES: The Intensification of Familiar Ideals and the Seeds of Change
document: Plymouth Colony, “Mayflower Compact,” (1620), (RG)

Guidelines for Writing a Critical Analysis of a Primary Document. (RG)
History 2128/GSWS 2248 Primary Document Collections. (RG)
Extension Policy; Brief Guides to Footnote Citations and Correction Marks (RG)

Week 3.
9/13  DISCUSSION: Puritan Families and Well-Ordered Communities

9/15  WHITE SOCIETY IN THE CHESAPEAKE, 1607-1750
document: “A Declaration of the State of the Colony and Affairs in Virginia” (July 22, 1620) (RG)
readings: Kevin Kelly, “In Dispers'd Country Plantations: Settlement Patterns in 17th century Surry County, Virginia,” in Thad Tate, ed., The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century (1979), 183-205. (e-reserve)

Week 4.
9/20  AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES AND CULTURE IN THE COLONIAL SOUTH: The Origins of the Slave System

9/22  NATIVE AMERICAN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

First critical analysis (document written between 1600 and 1800) due
Week 5.

The Revolution and the Early Republic

9/27 THE REVOLUTIONARY ERA: The Rise of New Domestic Values and the End of the Old Hierarchy

9/29 DISCUSSION: Family, Community, and the Law on the Massachusetts Frontier in 1806

Week 6.

10/4 CHILD REARING AND EDUCATION IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD AND THE EARLY REPUBLIC

The Nineteenth Century

10/6 THE RISE OF THE CITY: New Forms of Community

Week 7.

10/11 Fall Break

10/13 MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES IN THE NORTHEAST: Urbanizing Families and “Provincial” Folks
readings: C. Dallett Hemphill, “Manners and Class in the Revolutionary Era: A Transatlantic Comparison,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Ser., 63.2 (2006), 345-372. (JSTOR)

Week 8.

10/18 INDUSTRIALIZATION: New Technologies, the Reorganization of Production, and Cultural Change and Conflict for Workers

10/20 DISCUSSION: Rural Families and Communities in an Industrializing World
Week 9.
10/25 NEW IDEALS AND REALITIES: Womanhood and Manhood

10/27 CULTURAL FRONTIERS IN THE RURAL MIDWEST AND WEST

Week 10.
11/1 DISCUSSION: The Transmission of Ideals to the Trans-Mississippi West

11/3 UTOPIAN ALTERNATIVES TO FAMILY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Week 11.
11/8 UTOPIAN ALTERNATIVES TO COMMUNITY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
readings: TBA

*Second critical analysis* (document written between 1800 and 1900) due: November 11

11/10 SLAVERY AND THE SHAPING OF ANTE- AND POST-BELLUM SOUTHERN SOCIETY

Week 12.
11/15 DISCUSSION: African American Families and Neighborhoods in Urban Society

11/17 IMMIGRATION, ASSIMILATION, AND NATIVISM: Becoming “American” in the Nineteenth Century?

Week 13.
The Late Nineteenth Century
11/22 DISCUSSION: “How the other half lives”
11/24 Thanksgiving break

Week 14.

11/29 Strains in Middle Class Family Life in the Late Nineteenth Century

12/1 Family, Welfare, and the State

Week 15.

12/6 Suburbanization, Segmentation, and Consumerism: The Evolution of Mass Culture in America

12/8 The Changing Boundaries of Family and Community

Final take-home essay due: Sunday, Dec. 18, 5:00 pm.