

HDFS-281 -Comparative Family Policy- Spring, 2007

Steve Wisensale, Ph.D.
E-mail:Steven.Wisensale@Uconn.edu

Phone: 486-4576
Office hrs: Tu.-Thur. 11-12

Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to various family policies in other countries and compare such policies to those in the United States. Although there is no prerequisite, students who have completed HDFS-274 (Public Policy and the Family) and/or HDFS-264 (Legal Aspects of Family Life) will especially benefit from this course.

Covered in the course will be a brief overview of American family policy and how it compares to policy in other countries, a review of comparative policy analysis methods, and an identification of major world trends with respect to families.

Specific topics will include, but are not limited to, family planning, the economics of family life, work and family issues, the rights of children and youth, world population aging, child care and family leave policies, and family law. Students will be expected to develop and apply a framework of comparative policy analysis throughout the course.

Course Objectives:

There are at least four major objectives for this course:

1. To develop an analytical framework in comparative policy analysis that can be applied to family policy in particular.
2. To effectively compare U.S. family policy to family policies in other countries according to distinct categories.
3. To identify specific strengths and weaknesses of family policies in the United States and other countries.
4. To produce and consider particular policy recommendations that may benefit America's families.

Required Reading:

Maureen Baker (2006). *Restructuring Family Policies: Convergences and Divergences*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

Doris Buss and Didi Herman (2003). *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Kathy O'Hara (1999). *Comparative Family Policy: Eight Countries' Stories*. Ottawa, ON: Renouf Publishing Co. **Note: This book can be downloaded free online.**

To download O'Hara book: You can download this 80+ page book/research report by going to <http://www.cprn.org/en/doc.cfm?doc+442#>. Don't forget the little # sign at the end. This download is free. You can print it out or read it off the screen. First click on "Search" and then type first and last name (Kathy O'Hara) of the author and you will find the book.

Required listserv subscription: You are required to subscribe to UN Wire. This is a daily listserv that sends you information that relates to what we cover in this course. To subscribe, go to http://www.smartbrief.com/un_wire/. The two topics you want to check off as "areas of interest" are Children's Health and Women and Population. You may also want to check off Human Rights. With respect to which region you are interested in, select "Global."

Note: This course will be taught as a Vista course and a number of required readings will be placed on Electronic Course Reserve. They are so designated on the syllabus as **(ECR)** in bold type. It is important that you check your Vista mail regularly.

The web sites listed below are three of the best resources on international family policy. You may be referred to them throughout the course but you should also feel free to visit them as a means for satisfying your own intellectual curiosity.

- 1) The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth and Family Policies – <http://www.childpolicyintl.org>
- 2) The Vanier Institute of the Family – <http://www.vifamily.ca/>
- 3) Australian Institute of Family Studies – <http://www.aifs.org.au/>

Course Requirements and Evaluations:

There will be 3 exams, including the final, which will total 80% of the final grade. The lowest score of the three exams will count 20%; the other two exams will count 30% each. The remaining 20% of the grade will be based on class participation/attendance and the completion of various assignments and exercises, including a short paper.

Grading will be as follows: 93-100 (A), 90-92 (A-), 87-89 (B+), 83-86 (B), 80-82 (B-), 77-79 (C+), 73-76 (C), 70-72 (C-), 67-69 (D+), 63-66 (D), 60-62 (D-), below 60 =F.

A Statement Concerning Severe Weather:

Please note that I drive one hour to get to campus. During periods of severe weather conditions I may not be able to make it to class. Be sure to check the Vista site by 8:30 AM to see about the status of class. If there is no message, the class is on.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments for HDFS-281

Week 1 - Jan 16th and 18th – Introduction and Overview of Family Policy

Introduction to the course: Why study comparative family policy?
 The importance of political culture
 Introduction to comparative studies
 Comparative Policy Analysis

Readings:

Shirley Zimmerman, "Political Culture: Definitions and Variations
 In 50 States" pp. 21-42. In Zimmerman's *Understanding Family Policy:
 Theoretical Perspectives (ECR)*.

Week 2 - Jan 23rd and 25th - Overview of U.S. Family Policy

Readings:

Bruce Jansson, "Why Has the American Welfare State Been Reluctant?"
 pp. 407-443. In Jansson's *The Reluctant Welfare State (ECR)*.
 Steve Wisensale, "The Family and American Politics," pp. 29-51 (ECR).

Week 3 – Jan. 30th and Feb. 1st – Changing Demographics and the Restructuring of Family Policies

Readings:

Baker, Chapters 1 and 2.

Week 4 - Feb. 6th and 8th - Comparing Welfare States and Family Policies

Readings:

Baker, Chapter 3
 O'Hara, Chapter 2

Week 5 - Feb. 13th and 15th – International Organizations and Families : The UN

Readings:

Baker, Chapter 4
 UN – IYOF and Human Development Index (visit all 3 sites)
<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/majortrends.htm>
http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UN_Human_Development_Index
<http://www.infoplease.com/pa/A0778562.html>

Week 6 - Feb 20th and 22nd – International Organizations and Families: The EU

Readings:

EUROPA – The European Union at a Glance
http://europa.eu/abc/index_en.htm

Note: Exam #1 is scheduled for Thursday, February 22nd

Week 7 – Feb 27th and March 1st - Reproductive Health and Childbirth

Readings:

Baker, Chapter 5
 G. Neyer (2003). “Family Policies and Low Fertility in Western Europe.” Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research.
http://www.ipss.go.jp/webj-ad/webjournal.files/population/2003_6/3.Neyer.pdf

Week 8 – March 6th and 8th – **No Class! Spring break!**

Week 9 – March 13th and 15th – Work, Parenthood, and the Care of Children

Readings:

Baker, Chapters 6 and 7

Week 10 – March 20th and 22nd – Economic Well-being of Children and Families

Readings:

Baker, Chapter 8
 S. Kamerman (2003). “Welfare States, Family Policies, and Early Childhood Education, Care and Family Support.” A paper presented at a conference in Budapest, Hungary.

Week 11 - March 27th and March 29th - Marriage and Divorce from an International Perspective

Readings:

Baker, Chapter 9

Week 12 – April 3rd and April 5th - Child Protection from an International Perspective

Readings: Materials will be provided in advance or during class.

Note: Exam #2 is scheduled for Thursday, April 5th

Week 13 - April 10th and 12th – Globalizing Family Values

Readings:

Buss and Herman, Introduction and Chapters 1-3

Week 14 - April 17th and 19th - Globalizing Family Values

Readings:

Buss and Herman, Chapters, 4-6

Week 15 – April 24th and 26th - The Future of the Family in Global Terms

Readings:

Baker, Chapter 10

E. Leeder, Chapter (2004) “The Future of the Family in Global Perspective,” pp. 259-272 **(ECR)**.

A. Lowenstein and V. Bengston (2003). “Challenges of Global Aging in the 21st Century,” pp. 327-354 **(ECR)**.

S. Wisensale – “Aging Societies and Intergenerational Equity Issues: Beyond Paying for the Elderly, Who Should Care for Them?” In A. Prouty Lyness, *The Politics of the Personal in Feminist Family Therapy* (2006), pp. 79-107 **(ECR)**.

“A Family Strategy for the European Union” (2004). The Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community **(ECR)**.

Final Exam: The final exam for this course is tentatively scheduled for the first week of May in our regular classroom. This date will be confirmed later.

Additional Resources

International Year of the Family - 2004 represents the 10th anniversary of the first International Year of the Family. Special events and conferences are held throughout the world. The IYF web site: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/TenthAnv/10th_anvrsry.htm

Child and Family Policy Career Guide - Web site - <http://www.igpa.uillinois.edu/cfp/>
This site provides information graduate school programs and possible careers in family policy.

Free the Children - Web site – <http://www.freethechildren.org/>. This organization was started by a twelve-year old boy in Canada about ten years ago. It now has more than 20 branches throughout the world. It fights child labor, abuse, poverty, children in war, and supports children’s rights worldwide.

