The Catholic University of America

HSS204: Honors Social Science
“The Family and the Market: Social Scientific Perspectives”
Spring, 2010
Prof. Jerry Z. Muller
T, Th, 2:10-3:25pm
McGivney 004

Office Hours:
105 Cardinal Hall
W 2:30-3:30pm
Th 3:30-4:15pm, and by appointment
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Course Description

Using perspectives from a variety of social sciences, this course examines two of the major institutions of modern society: the market and the family. Issues explored include the changing size, shape, and role of the family; the cultural prerequisites and cultural effects of the market; the uses and limits of economic forms of explanation; and the nature of debates in the social sciences.

Course Requirements and Grading

A course of this sort depends upon the thoughtful participation of all students during each discussion. Students must come to class having not only read the assigned material, but having thought about it. The final grade will take your class contributions into account (25%). In addition, there are five written assignments due in the course of the semester (50%), and a take home final examination (25%). Assignments are due at the beginning of the classes under which they are listed.

Be sure to bring the assigned readings to class.

Course Schedule

Tu Jan.12: Introduction to the course
Thinking about the market, the family, and their interaction.

Assignment 1: Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of this essay. (3 pages)
Introduction to Cherlin


T Jan.26 – Cherlin, chapters 2, 3, 4

Th Jan.28 - Cherlin, chapter 7.
Assignment 2: How well do the generalizations put forward by Cherlin in the Introduction and chapter 1 of his book hold up in light of the evidence and analysis presented in this chapter? (3 pages)
Introduction to Banfield


Th Feb.4 - Banfield, ch. 7, “Schooling versus Education” and ch. 10, “The Future of the Lower Class.”

T Feb.9 Banfield, ch. 11, “What Can be Done?”
Introduction to Patterson.


Th Feb.18 Patterson, “The Present of Crisis of Marriage and Divorce” pp.53-132.

T Feb.23: No class (Administrative Monday)


T Mar.2: Assignment 3: Pretend that you are Orlando Patterson, and write a five-page essay, “What Kate Hymowitz got right about marriage and caste, and what she got wrong.”
Introduction to Herrnstein and Murray

T Mar.16 *The Bell Curve*, ch. 1 “Cognitive Class and Education, 1900-1990,” and chapter summaries (in italics) to ch. 2, 3, 4

Th Mar.18 - *The Bell Curve*, ch. 5 “Poverty,” ch. 6, “Schooling,” and chapter summary for ch. 7 “Unemployment, Idleness, and Injury.”


Th Mar.25 *The Bell Curve*, Ch. 13, and summaries of 14, 15. and essays by Gardner, Glazer, Nisbett, Appiah (distributed)

Tu Mar.30
NO CLASS – paper due
Assignment 4: Discuss which criticisms of *The Bell Curve* seem most well founded, which are least convincing, and why. (5 pages)

T Apr.6 Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life* (2005), ch. 1-2, and Appendixes A and B.

Th. Apr.8 *Unequal Childhoods*, ch. 3,4,5

T Apr.13 *Unequal Childhoods*, 6,7. 8.

Th Apr.15 *Unequal Childhoods*, ch. 12, “The Power and Limits of Social Class.”

T Apr. 20 Assignment 5: Compare the analyses of the relationship between family, social class, and economic achievement offered by Banfield, Herrnstein and Murray, and Lareau. What are the major areas of agreement and disagreement? (7-10 pages)
Introduction to Carneiro and Heckman

T Apr. 27: Carneiro and Heckman, “Human Capital Policy,” pp.148-181; 203-8. Consider this question: What are the major areas of convergence and divergence between Herrnstein and Murray on the one hand and Carneiro and Heckman on the other?

Th Apr. 29: Last Class

Th May 6: Take-home exam should be sent to Dr. Muller’s e-mail address by 5:00pm. (2 questions for a total of 12-15 pages.)
Reference Works

Among the useful general reference works that you may want to consult for this course in the Reference Room of Mullen Library are:

*Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*

*International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*

*The New Palgrave (on the history of economic thought)*

*Dictionary of the History of Ideas*

*Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*

Social Scientific Journals and Web Sites

Journals of social science and public policy written for a non-specialized and transdisciplinary audience, from a variety of perspectives, include:

*The American Prospect*

*Daedelus*

*Society*

Some websites for intelligent debate on public policy issues:

www.becker-posner-blog.com

www.j-bradford-delong.net

For data and perspectives on population, health and public policy see:

https://www.policyarchive.org/

www.prb.org

www.cdc.gov/nchs