

Sociology 355 – Queer Families – Fall 2019

Chambers 2130 – M 1:30-4:20

Gayle Kaufman, *she/they*

Course description

This course disrupts traditional notions of “the family.” More specifically, we will challenge binaries that exist regarding gender, sexuality, and family. We start with the general assumption that there is not one acceptable or even dominant family form. This includes decentering heteronormativity and drawing on queer family theory. We draw on case studies to deconstruct family in the US, South Africa, and China. We consider shifts in opinions surrounding marriage and marriage equality and how the movement for same-sex marriage has changed these attitudes. We focus on trans families and (re)producing trans families through the case of cisgender women and transgender men. We focus on the potential of polyamory and polyqueer sexualities in breaking down sexist and racist assumptions about relationships. We examine intersectionality across different cases, with a particular focus on Black lesbian mothers, queer Latinas, and queer families in Taiwan. We also consider challenging gender through raising trans kids. The class itself will be discussion-based with occasional workshops focused on research projects.

Fulfills: Justice, Equality, and Community (JEC) requirement, Social-Scientific Thought ways of knowing requirement, Sociology major requirement, Gender & Sexuality Studies major and minor requirement

Learning outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Describe constructions and deconstructions of queer families.
2. Analyze gender, sexuality, race and class dynamics in queer families.
3. Critically evaluate research on queer families.
4. Conduct original research.

Outside the classroom

Drop in office hours – no appointment necessary

- Mondays 10:30-12:00 in Preyer 104
- Wednesdays 12:30-2:00 at Commons (Sociology table)

Scheduled office hours – please **email** to schedule an appointment during these times

- Tuesdays 2:30-4:30
- Fridays 2:00-5:00

Contact me:

- [gakaufman@davidson.edu](mailto:gakaufman@ davidson.edu)
- 704-894-2485

Email is the best way to contact me outside of class and office hours. I will do my best to respond to you within 24 hours Monday through Friday. I may take longer to respond over weekends or breaks.



Required texts

- ❖ Acosta, K. (2013). *Amigas y amantes: Sexually nonconforming Latinas negotiate family*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- ❖ Brainer, A. (2019). *Queer kinship and family change in Taiwan*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- ❖ Hart-Brinson, P. (2018). *The gay marriage generation: How the LGBTQ movement transformed American culture*. New York: New York University Press.
- ❖ Moore, M. (2011). *Invisible families: Gay identities, relationships, and motherhood among Black women*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- ❖ Pfeffer, C. A. (2017). *Queering families: The postmodern partnerships of cisgender women and transgender men*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- ❖ Schippers, M. (2016). *Beyond monogamy: Polyamory and the future of polyqueer sexualities*. New York: New York University Press.
- ❖ Stacey, J. (2012). *Unhitched: Love, marriage, and family values from West Hollywood to Western China*. New York: New York University Press.
- ❖ Travers, A. (2018). *The trans generation: How trans kids (and their parents) are creating a gender revolution*. New York: New York University Press.
- ❖ Reserve readings on Moodle (indicated with M)

The books are available for purchase at the bookstore and on reserve at the library. The readings are on electronic reserve, which can be accessed through Moodle.

Course Requirements

Class participation (20%)

This is a seminar and as such class meetings will largely be driven by discussion, both of the readings and your research project. Regular attendance is important, especially since we will only meet once a week. Our class will benefit greatly if everyone is in class and ready to fully participate in every aspect of the class. The first part of our class time will be devoted to discussion of the reading material and the second part will be used as a workshop to discuss your research projects. This means that preparation and participation will be key components to a successful class. Steps to successful participation:

- Before class
 - Read!
 - Write your pre-discussion paper (see below).
 - Do the research assignment for the week.
- During class
 - Listen to discussion leaders and others when they talk.
 - Answer questions posed by the discussion leaders and engage in discussion (ask yourself: am I contributing to the discussion?)
 - Be prepared to talk about your research progress and listen to others when they talk about their research.
 - Provide useful comments about others' research that will help them improve their projects and consider suggestions and questions from others about your research.

Discussion leader (20%)

In groups of 2-3 people, you will be responsible for leading two class discussions during the semester. You will take on two roles:

- 1) Background – provide background statistics/trends, explain concepts/theories, outline major points, and/or bring in relevant examples from news, media, etc. There is no need to cover every point. Choose the highlights.
- 2) Discussion – facilitate discussion by posing questions, planning activities, etc. Feel free to be creative!

Please look closely at your calendar and let me know if you have any preferences for/against particular dates. I will bring a sign-up sheet to class September 2.

Pre-discussion papers (30%)

You will write a paper each week starting September 2 and continuing through until November 18. These papers are meant to help you digest the readings more fully and to help class discussions to be more informed by the class readings. In these papers, you should provide your critical evaluation of the reading assigned that week. These are short papers so you need not cover all the material. Guidelines:

- Clearly state/explain 3 important concepts/findings.
- For each point, you should provide your own analysis. For example, you might consider the strengths and weaknesses of an argument, the implications of a study's findings, and/or the application of a finding within your own experiences.
- Papers should be 500-750 words.
- Papers are due by the beginning of class. **You should submit your paper via Moodle each Monday by 1:30 pm.**
- Papers submitted after the deadline will earn partial credit.
 - After Monday at 1:30 until Tuesday at 1:30 – 80%
 - After Tuesday at 1:30 until Wednesday at 1:30 – 70%
 - After Wednesday at 1:30 until Thursday at 1:30 – 60%
 - Papers will not be accepted after 1:30 on Thursday.
- You have 2 freebies during the semester, meaning you can choose to not write a paper two times, or I will delete your lowest grades (i.e., this grade will be based on your 9 highest grades).

Research project (30%)

You will conduct original research based on your own data collection (observations, interviews, survey). In the first few weeks, we will discuss potential topics and you will start reading the literature on your specific topic. You will then design your research methodology and submit an IRB application. You will then collect your data. You will then analyze your data. Finally, you will make connections to previous theory and literature and consider the implications of your findings.

You may work in groups to collect data. You may work in pairs to write the final paper.

Length: approximately 20-25 pages double-spaced (including references, abstract, etc.). I encourage use of the Writing Center.

Presentation: You will make a presentation of your findings to the class during the last week of classes. I suggest using PowerPoint or Prezi and treating this as an opportunity to develop your professional speaking skills. I also encourage use of the Speaking Center

Assessment

4 means of assessment:

- 1) Class participation = 20%
- 2) Discussion leader = 20%
- 3) Pre-discussion papers = 30%
- 4) Research project = 30%

Grading scale:

- A = 93-100
- A- = 90-92
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 83-86
- B- = 80-82
- C+ = 77-79
- C = 73-76
- C- = 70-72
- D+ = 67-69
- D = 60-66
- F = <60

RESEARCH PAPER FORMAT

Title Page – title, name(s), course number/name, date

Abstract – include the research problem/topic, description of the data, and summary of important findings. Approx. 150 words

Introduction – state the research question, discuss the significance of your research, and outline what will be covered in your paper.

Literature Review – summarize previous findings related to your research. Organize this section thematically and use subheadings. At the end of this section, you should note where your study fills in gaps in the literature and the specific research questions and/or hypotheses to be addressed.

Methods – provide details about your sample, data collection, questions, and analytical strategy

Results – report findings, based on your data analysis. You should include direct quotes for qualitative research or figures/tables for quantitative research

Conclusion – link your findings to the literature review. Are your findings consistent with or contradictory to previous research, and what might explain these findings? Describe the limitations of your research. Discuss the implications of your research for policy and/or future research in the area

References – all citations in the text of your paper should be included in the reference section, and vice versa. Use APA style

Appendix – any supplementary material (survey, interview questions, coding sheet)

Access Statement

The college welcomes requests for accommodations related to disability and will grant those that are determined to be reasonable and maintain the integrity of a program or curriculum. To make such a request or to begin a conversation about a possible request, please contact the Office of Academic Access and Disability Resources, which is located in the Center for Teaching and Learning in the E.H. Little Library: Beth Bleil, Director, [bebleil@davidson.edu](mailto:bebleil@ davidson.edu), 704-894-2129; or Alysén Beaty, Assistant Director, albeaty@davidson.edu, 704-894-2939. It is best to submit accommodation requests within the drop/add period; however, requests can be made at any time in the semester. Please keep in mind that accommodations are not retroactive.

Davidson College Honor Code

Each Davidson student is honor bound to refrain from stealing, lying about College business, and cheating on academic work. Stealing is the intentional taking of any property without right or permission. Lying is intentional misrepresentation of any form. Cheating is any practice, method, or assistance, whether explicitly forbidden or unmentioned, that involves any degree of dishonesty, fraud, or deceit. Cheating includes plagiarism, which is representing another's ideas or words as one's own. Each student is responsible for learning and observing appropriate documentation of another's work. Each Davidson student is honor bound to report immediately all violations of the Honor Code of which the student has first-hand knowledge; failure to do so is itself a violation of the Honor Code.

<http://www.davidson.edu/about/distinctly-davidson/honor-code>



Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading	Research
Aug 26	Welcome and introductions		
Sept 2	Queer theory and queer families	Acosta, Allen & Mendez, Fish & Russell	Selecting a topic and framing a research question
Sept 9	Deconstructing family	Stacey	Collecting sources and refining your question
Sept 16	Shifts in marriage	Hart-Brinson, ch. 1-3	Writing a literature review
Sept 23	Marriage consensus or paradox	Hart-Brinson, ch. 4-7	Designing interview/survey questions
Sept 30	Trans families	Pfeffer, ch. 1-3	IRB applications
Oct 7	(Re)producing trans families	Pfeffer, ch. 4-6	Begin data collection
Oct 14	<i>No Class: Fall Break</i>		
Oct 21	Polyamory and polyqueer sexualities	Schippers	Transcribing interviews and inputting/cleaning survey data
Oct 28	Black lesbian mothers	Moore	Coding interviews/analyzing survey data
Nov 4	Queer Latinas and family	Acosta	Continue analysis
Nov 11	Queer families in Taiwan	Brainer	Writing up findings
Nov 18	Raising trans kids	Travers	Writing an introduction
Nov 25	Writing workshop		Writing a conclusion
Dec 2	Writing workshop		
Dec 9	Presentations		
Dec 18			Final paper due by 6 pm

Readings

September 2

- Acosta, K. L. (2018). Queering family scholarship: Theorizing from the borderlands. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 10*, 406-418.
- Allen, S. H., & Mendez, S. N. (2018). Hegemonic heteronormativity: Toward a new era of queer family theory. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 10*, 70-86.
- Fish, J. N., & Russell, S. T. (2018). Queering methodologies to understand queer families. *Family Relations, 67*, 12-25.

September 9

- Stacey, J. (2012). *Unhitched: Love, marriage, and family values from West Hollywood to Western China*. New York: New York University Press.

September 16

- Hart-Brinson, P. (2018). *The gay marriage generation: How the LGBTQ movement transformed American culture*. New York: New York University Press.

September 23

- Hart-Brinson, P. (2018). *The gay marriage generation: How the LGBTQ movement transformed American culture*. New York: New York University Press.

September 30

- Pfeffer, C. A. (2017). *Queering families: The postmodern partnerships of cisgender women and transgender men*. New York: Oxford University Press.

October 7

- Pfeffer, C. A. (2017). *Queering families: The postmodern partnerships of cisgender women and transgender men*. New York: Oxford University Press.

October 14

- Fall Break

October 21

- Schippers, M. (2016). *Beyond monogamy: Polyamory and the future of polyqueer sexualities*. New York: New York University Press.

October 28

- Moore, M. (2011). *Invisible families: Gay identities, relationships, and motherhood among Black women*. Oakland: University of California Press.

November 4

- Acosta, K. (2013). *Amigas y amantes: Sexually nonconforming Latinas negotiate family*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

November 11

- Brainer, A. (2019). *Queer kinship and family change in Taiwan*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

November 18

- Travers, A. (2018). *The trans generation: How trans kids (and their parents) are creating a gender revolution*. New York: New York University Press.

November 25

- Writing workshop, part I

December 2

- Writing workshop, part II

December 9

- Presentations