HDFS 525: THEORIES OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS  
FALL SEMESTER 2003  

INSTRUCTOR:  
Rukmalie Jayakody  
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MEETING TIME AND PLACE:  
Mondays 12:20-3:20; 110 Thomas Building  

I want to create a friendly, informal class atmosphere. I suggest that everyone bring a bag lunch to class and that people take turns bringing a snack for the break. I will do this on the first day, and send around a sign up sheet for subsequent days.  

COURSE DESCRIPTION:  
This course is designed to provide an interdisciplinary introduction to issues pertaining to family studies, including some of the major theoretical lenses through which scholars have examined families, the various methods researchers have employed, and the substantive foci that have held scholars' attention in recent years. The syllabus was designed to encompass at least some of the many important strands in contemporary family scholarship. In addition to substantive goals, I hope to encourage critical thinking and writing, integration, and lively discussion.  

READINGS:  
The weekly readings are all available from Penn State’s electronic reserve system. Some readings are also available through the course web site:  
http://www.courses.psu.edu/hdfs/hdfs525_rxj9  

In addition, the final exam question asks you to read a memoir and comment on it in light of the course. Three memoirs have been identified for this purpose. You should choose one of them and read it sometime during the Fall. Your final exam question will ask you to comment on it in light of what we have read and talked about all semester. These books, all paperbacks, can be purchased on-line or ordered through the local Barnes and Noble books store. A summary of the book from the Amazon.com web page is included under each title to help you make your selection:  

Editorial Reviews  
Amazon.com  
In *Wild Swans* Jung Chang recounts the evocative, unsettling, and insistently gripping story of how three generations of women in her family fared in the political maelstrom of China during the 20th century. Chang's grandmother was a warlord's concubine. Her gently raised mother struggled with hardships in the early days of Mao's revolution and rose, like her husband, to a prominent position in the Communist Party before being denounced during the Cultural
Revolution. Chang herself marched, worked, and breathed for Mao until doubt crept in over the excesses of his policies and purges. Born just a few decades apart, their lives overlap with the end of the warlords' regime and overthrow of the Japanese occupation, violent struggles between the Kuomintang and the Communists to carve up China, and, most poignant for the author, the vicious cycle of purges orchestrated by Chairman Mao that discredited and crushed millions of people, including her parents.

ISBN: 0679756760
Editorial Reviews
Amazon.com
Many individuals who grew up in the barrios, whether of Puerto Rico, Brooklyn, or elsewhere, may have found life to be one long, continuous struggle for survival. In Santiago's memoir, she lovingly recalls her own passage through childhood, when her mother moved her children away from their father and the humble dwelling they all shared in the country outside San Juan to a Brooklyn apartment adjoining the projects. For Santiago, who at age 14 was an exceptional student but still spoke little English, the ticket out of the cycle of poverty was acceptance to New York City's High School of Performing Arts. At once heart-wrenching and remarkably inspirational, this lyrical account depicts rural life in Puerto Rico amid the hardships and tensions of everyday life and Santiago's awakening as a young woman, who, although startled by culture shock, valiantly confronted New York head-on. When in the epilogue Santiago refers to her studies at Harvard, it is both a stirring and poignant reminder of the capacities of the human spirit.

ISBN: 0452271584
Editorial Reviews
Amazon.com
When we first meet Kai Ting, the seven-year-old hero of this compelling, autobiographical first novel, he has just been ground into the pavement by the neighborhood bully—the most recent incident in a long series of calamities. Kai Ting is the youngest child but the only son of high-born Chinese parents who, before his birth, fled China's Communist revolution, leaving their wealth behind. Kai Ting was born in the San Francisco ghetto where his family had relocated in the mid-1940s. Survival in this urban jungle is made all the more difficult for him by severely impaired eyesight and "a body that made Tinker Bell look ruthless." His mother, once his sole refuge from the ruffians on the street, has died of cancer, and his father has married a WASP who cannot abide anything Chinese—especially her husband's children. Their father turns a blind eye as his wife locks the children out of the house during the day; Kai Ting's return at night with bruises and torn clothes becomes an excuse for a second beating, this time at home. Redemption does come, after a fashion, but it is hard-fought and painfully won. This is the Chinese-American experience as Dickens might have described it, peopled by many rogues and a few saints. Lee's characters—blacks, Hispanics, whites and Asians—tend to extremes of good and evil, but, vividly drawn and intensely human, they are never stereotypes. His story is a primer on how to keep body and soul together in a world that is as gritty as the streets of his hero's neighborhood and seems often dangerously out of control.
REQUIREMENTS:
There will be four requirements for this class.
(1) The first involves **preparation for class and class participation**. A graduate class is successful only in so far as participants take the opportunity to read assigned readings carefully and critically and come prepared to discuss the readings and their own ideas, reactions, and questions about those readings. Individual students, or pairs of students, will be responsible for introducing the seminar each week. During the class session they are responsible for, they will give a **15 to 20 minute "set the stage" presentation** that puts the readings in context. Depending on the set of readings that you are introducing, you may want to present some complementary research that the class would find interesting, bring in some related material (as I will do in Week 2), show a relevant clip from a video and generate discussion about how it fits with the readings, conduct a poll about something relevant to the day's topics, present a measure used in family research on a relevant topic, present material about the phenomenon of interest from the point of view of a different culture, or integrate a session topic with a current political issue or debate. Exactly what you do is left to your imaginations! **However, this overview should in no way be a summary of readings**.... Rather, it should be a provocative, substantive, stimulating "kick-off" session. I will attempt to “model” what I have in mind at the beginning of the session on Week 2. You should meet with me to discuss what you have in mind before the class you are responsible for. In addition, you should come up with 3-5 discussion questions from the readings that you would like the class to think about and come ready to discuss. These questions should be emailed to the class by 3pm on Friday so everyone has a chance to look over them and think about them before class on Monday.
**Your general class attendance and participation is worth 15 points.**
**Your 10 to 15 minute introduction to one of the weekly sessions and questions are worth 10 points.**

(2) The second assignment is to write a series of “reaction papers” about the readings. These are short, two-page responses to questions that we will pose in advance. You are required to write a minimum of 5 papers; you can choose to write a 6th paper and I will drop the lowest grade. I would like everyone to turn in a reaction paper on September 22nd and September 29th so that I can give you early feedback on both your thinking and your writing. Please choose any three additional weeks based on your interest in the material and your schedule, to write reactions papers. Each paper is worth 5 points. **Thus, these papers are worth a total of 25 points.**

(3) The third assignment is a take-home midterm exam. I will hand it out on October 13th, and it is due in class on October 27th. It will take the form of two essays (you will have a choice of questions to answer). The entire take-home should be about 5 typed pages, double-spaced (no longer than 6 pages, please). **The midterm is worth 20 points.**

(4) The fourth assignment is a take-home final exam. I hope that this will be creative and fun! Please choose one of the books listed above. Read it at your leisure. Later in the semester, I will provide a handout that explains how I want you to approach this final paper. I have in mind about a 7-8 page, typed, double-spaced paper that comments on the book in light of the material from the course. It is due by noon to my office on December 10th. I want it to demonstrate your ability to think and write critically, to integrate material across topics and disciplines, and to
apply what you have learned to something new. **This paper will be worth 30 points.**

**Summary of Grading Criteria:**
- Attendance and Participation in Class: 15 points
- Introduction to one of weekly sessions: 10 points
- 5 Weekly Reaction Papers: 25 points
- Midterm Take-Home Exam: 20 points
- Final Take-Home Exam: 30 points

**Important Dates:**
- September 22: Reaction Paper 1 due
- September 29: Reaction Paper 2 due
- October 13: Mid-term exam handed out
- October 27: Mid-term exam due
- December 10: Final exam due
Monday, September 8
INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILIES


Monday, September 15
MATE SELECTION


Monday, September 22
SOCIOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES ON MARRIAGE

- Lerman, Robert. Should government promote healthy marriages? The Urban Institute.

Monday, September 29
MARITAL DYNAMICS: PERSPECTIVES FROM CLINICAL, SOCIAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY


**GUEST: Dr. Chalandra Bryant, Department of Human Development and Family Studies**

**Monday, October 6**

**WORK AND FAMILIES**


**GUEST: Dr. Ann Crouter, Department of Human Development and Family Studies**

**Monday, October 13**

**DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE**


**GUEST: Dr. Paul Amato, Department of Sociology**

**Monday, October 20**

**FAMILIES OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE**


Monday, October 27  *MID-TERM EXAM DUE *
PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL INVESTMENT (BIOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVES; HUMAN CAPITAL; SOCIAL CAPITAL)


GUEST: Dr. Alan Booth, Department of Sociology

Monday, November 3
CAREGIVING IN THE FAMILY


GUEST: Dr. Steve Zarit, Department of Human Development and Family Studies

Monday, November 10
PARENTING AND PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS

Monday, November 17

SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS OVER THE LIFE COURSE


GUEST: Susan McHale, Department of Human Development and Family Studies.

Monday, November 24

THE NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT OF FAMILY LIFE


GUEST: Dr. Linda Burton, Department of Human Development and Family Studies

Monday, December 1

FAMILIES, ECONOMIC INEQUALITY, AND PUBLIC POLICY