Instructor: Professor Rania Salem  
Time & Location: Thursdays, 10 am - 12 pm, Room 17146  
Office Hours: By appointment  
Email: rania.salem@utoronto.ca

Course Description & Objectives:

This graduate seminar will expose students to themes and debates in the literature related to the sociology of families. In our first session, we will evaluate the main theoretical perspectives found in the literature. We will spend the next ten sessions surveying broad trends in the literature dealing with a number of discrete substantive topics. Readings will focus on research conducted on contemporary high-income societies, and will span the fields of sociology and demography. Students will have the opportunity to read more deeply on a substantive area of interest in the course of writing a final paper, which they will present to their peers in the final session of the semester.

Requirements & Evaluation:

Participation: This course is organized as a seminar. While I will provide a brief overview of each session’s topic, class sessions will consist primarily of student presentations and discussions focused on the readings. Students’ class participation will be evaluated on the basis of the quantity and quality of their contributions to class discussion, their ability to actively listen and engage with other members of the class, and the level of understanding of the readings reflected in their contributions. (10%)

Critical Reviews: Over the course of the semester, each student will prepare a total of three critical reviews. These consist of short critical essays concerning the current week’s readings, and should be no more than 2-3 double-spaced pages in length. Critical review guidelines will be handed out separately. We will work out the schedule for each student’s reviews during the first class meeting. Students should submit their reviews on Quercus by no later than 5 pm on the day preceding the class session dealing with the readings they have been assigned to cover. (30%)

Presenting and Leading Discussions: Over the course of the semester, each student will lead 2 discussions on the assigned readings. Starting from week 2, the student will follow my overview by
presenting a critical assessment of the assigned readings (of no more than 10 minutes) and leading a discussion on those readings (for approximately 30 minutes). We will work out the schedule for each student’s presentations during the first class meeting. Please note that, depending on class enrollment, you may be working with another student on a given week’s presentation. Discussion leaders should submit a list of at least 5 discussion questions on Quercus by no later than 5 pm on the day preceding the class session dealing with the readings they have been assigned to cover. (20%)

**Final Research Paper or Proposal:** The course’s core requirement is the preparation of an original research paper or research proposal (of no more than 15-20 double-spaced pages). The paper should define a research question, review the existing literature, and either: a) analyze appropriate data and present the findings and their implications, or b) propose a detailed justification and strategy for conducting an original empirical research project. Students are encouraged to use this project to develop a conference paper, dissertation prospectus, or journal article. More detailed guidelines will be provided separately. A 3-4 page proposal is due on Quercus before week 6 on February 15th. Penultimate drafts of the final paper will be presented in a 12-15 minute oral presentation (5%) during the final session of the semester, when students will have the opportunity to receive feedback from their peers. The final paper will be due on Quercus on a date following week 12 that is to be announced (35%).

**Course Policies:**

**Academic Integrity:** By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university’s rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters) and [Code of Student Conduct](http://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/publicationsandpolicies/codeofstudentconduct.htm), which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University’s plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (https://uoft.me/pdt-faq).

**Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools:** Students may use artificial intelligence (AI) tools to gather information from across sources and assimilate it for understanding. This may be useful for critical reviews and for the final research paper. Students using AI to help understand course material must
submit, as an appendix with their assignments, any text produced by an AI tool, and the prompts used to generate the text. Students may not use AI tools to draft text for their assignments.

Keep in mind that AI tools often fabricate seemingly credible information. The best defense against this is having a solid understanding of the course material to correct AI misinformation. Students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit.

**Accessibility:** It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council “Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities” at http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppnov012004.pdf.

**Equity and Diversity:** The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated. Additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto is available at http://equity.hrandequity.utoronto.ca.

**Readings:**

You can access the course readings through the course’s Quercus site. Please click on “Library Reading List” in the menu to the left.

**Week 1: January 11th**

**A Selection of Theoretical Approaches to Studying Families**

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1998. “It’s All In the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation.” *Hypatia* 13(3):62–82. (20)


**Week 2: January 18th**

**Marriage**


**Week 3: January 25th**

**Cohabitation**


Week 4: February 1st
Divorce


Week 5: February 8th
Dating and Courtship


Lamont, Ellen. 2014. “Negotiating Courtship: Reconciling Egalitarian Ideals with Traditional Gender Norms.” *Gender & Society* 28(2): 189-211. (22)

Lamont, Ellen. 2017. “‘We can write the scripts ourselves’: Queer challenges to heteronormative courtship practices.” *Gender & Society* 31(5): 624–646. (22)


Week 6: February 15th
Family Structure and Child Outcomes


Week 7: February 29th
Fatherhood and Motherhood


Doucet, Andrea. 2004. ““It’s Almost Like I Have a Job, but I Don’t Get Paid”: Fathers at Home Reconfiguring Work, Care, and Masculinity” Fathering 2 (3): 277-303. (26)


Week 8: March 7th
Carework


Week 9: March 14th
Housework and the Gender Division of Labor


Week 10: March 21st
Beyond the Nuclear Family


Week 11: March 28th
Intimate Partner and Family Violence


Michaelsen, Sonia et al. 2022. “Service provider perspectives on how COVID-19 and pandemic restrictions have affected intimate partner and sexual violence survivors in Canada: a qualitative study.” *BMC Women’s Health* 22(1) 1-13. (12)


Week 12: April 4th
Student Final Paper Workshop