Work and Family  
Spring 2010  
Professor Carolyn Shapiro

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Office Hours: I do not have formal office hours, but I strive to be accessible to students who wish to meet or talk outside of class. The most reliable way to meet with me is by appointment. In addition, you should feel free to stop by my office, call or e-mail, or approach me after class. I encourage you to ask questions about things that you did not understand in class or in the reading and to pursue ideas or topics that interest you.

This course explores the challenges of work and family, as they play out with respect to employers, employees, families, and policymakers. We will discuss the law, but we will also discuss the structure, economics, and sociology of families and of the workplace. Themes and questions will include:

(1) How does government policy and law affect private decisions about work and family? What is the proper role of government?  
(2) How does the challenge of balancing work and family vary according to class and/or race? How does it vary according to family structure? For example, how do work family issues differently play out for single parents, same-sex couples, two-earner families, and heterosexual couples with traditional (male breadwinner, female homemaker) arrangements?  
(3) What role does gender play in families’, employers’, and government decisionmaking about work and family issues?  
(4) How do other countries approach work and family issues?

Course Requirements

This course is being offered as both a seminar and a class. The requirements will be different depending on which version you have registered for, as I will explain below.

For all students, **class participation is worth approximately 20% of your grade.** The class is a small group, and everyone’s participation is both expected and necessary to the class discussions. To facilitate this participation, I have two specific requirements.

First, each student must take two turns in preparing questions and issues for discussion. I will distribute a sign-up sheet and students can sign up for two weeks of class. For each of your weeks, you should prepare at least two questions for discussion raised by the readings. These should be submitted to me by 3 pm on the day before class. The questions can address, for example, ways the reading relates to your personal experiences and observations, weaknesses that you find in the author’s arguments or methodology, or
ideas about the implications of the reading for public policy, employer policy, or family structure. You should also be prepared to discuss your thoughts about the questions.

Second, attendance is required. Each student is allowed one “free” excused absence, which you can take for any reason and which you do not need to clear with me, although advance notice would be appreciated. However, if you then find that you need an additional absence for illness or other compelling reason, I will not excuse such an absence unless the first absence was for a similarly compelling reason. In other words, if you take your free absence to go to a Cubs game, I will not give you an additional excused absence if you get sick. Likewise, if you get sick and miss a class, that is your one excused absence; you do not get to bank your free absence for a future glorious spring day. (Of course, if you get sick a second time – or have another reason you need to miss class – the second absence will likely be excused.)

The criteria for evaluating your class participation include (but are not necessarily limited to): the quality of your contributions to and your willingness to engage in class discussion, including the questions you submit for discussion, and your regular attendance. Participation is important during the period when we are covering the assigned reading, and it is equally if not more important when the seminar students are presenting their work.

Requirements for Students Enrolled in the Class

For students who have registered for the course as a class, there is one additional class participation requirement. During the weeks when the seminar students are presenting their papers, I will ask each of you to take a turn at preparing questions to ask the presenters. This is not designed to be an opportunity to stump your classmates. Rather, I expect that you will ask thoughtful and constructive questions that are designed to help your classmates strengthen their work. This requirement is worth approximately an additional 5% of your grade.

The remainder of your grade (approximately 75%) will be based on a final exam. The exam will be a take-home exam that I will make available by the beginning of the Read Period (May 1) and which will be due by the last day of the exam period (May 14). You will not be expected to do any outside research for the exam.

Requirements for Students Enrolled in the Seminar

The seminar is designed to meet the senior seminar writing requirement. Therefore, seminar students are expected to write a serious research paper that is at least 25 pages long, not including footnotes. The paper will be worth 65% of your grade. The schedule and expectations related to the paper are as follows:

February 11 – A topic proposal is due by the beginning of class.

The proposal must consist of at least one paragraph describing the subject and tentative thesis that you are interested in exploring. (Both, of course, may evolve as you write the paper.) I strongly encourage you to talk to me while you are developing your proposal.
All topics must be approved by me, and if we have discussed it ahead of time, the approval process will likely go more smoothly. Students who wish to use this seminar to meet the requirements for the Certificate in Labor and Employment Law must select a topic that relates to labor or employment law.

March 11 – An outline is due by 3 pm.
The outline should set out the basic structure of the paper and highlight the main subjects to be covered. At the end of the outline, you should set out any questions, research challenges, or other issues that you have yet to resolve. I do not expect that the outline will be a completely thought-through or researched description of the paper. Rather, I expect that it will set out your thinking about the argument you are planning to make in the paper and that it will incorporate the research and analysis that you have done so far.

March 22 – First draft is due by 3 pm.
The first draft is not a rough draft. Rather, it should be a serious draft that reflects thorough research, serious thought and careful writing.

March 25 – No class.
Instead of class this week, I will be meeting with students to discuss their drafts.

April 15, 22, and 29 – Student presentations and discussions of papers.
Students will be expected to turn in their current draft by the Friday before their scheduled presentation so that it can be circulated to the class.

April 30 – Final draft is due by 3 pm.

All submissions should be made by e-mail to me.

This schedule is designed so that all of your obligations for this class will be completed by the beginning of Read Period, and the first draft is due just after Spring Break. The paper is worth 65% of your grade in this class. The process, as set forth above, is designed to help you produce the best possible paper. While I will grade the paper based primarily on the final product, failure to take the process seriously may negatively affect your grade.

Your presentation is worth an additional 15% of your grade. I will expect that you distill the paper to a 15-20 minute presentation, that you be prepared to answer your fellow students’ questions, to defend your thesis, and to raise any questions or issues that you think the class might help you with. (Students presenting earlier in the semester may want to emphasize such questions and issues; students presenting at the end of the semester may choose not to.) Criteria for evaluating the presentation include (but are not necessarily limited to): clarity and content of the presentation and ability to handle questions about the project.
POSSIBLE PAPER TOPICS:

Comparison of different state laws and legal regimes governing work and family

Comparison of different countries’ approaches to work and family

Exploration of work-family issues in the developing world

Legal incentives or requirements for employers to accommodate work and family

Aspects of family law relating to work and family

Welfare and/or other public benefits and work/family issues

Discussion of work/family issues in non-traditional families, such as same-sex couples

Labor law and work/family issues

Child care and public policy

Immigration law, child care, and work/family issues

Children with special needs and work/family issues

Same-sex couples and work/family issues

Exploration of work/family issues in particular industries (e.g. health care, law, manufacturing, etc.), or for particular socioeconomic and/or racial/ethnic groups

Exploration of efforts (actual or potential) to increase paternal/male involvement in homemaking and child care

SOME NON-TRADITIONAL RESOURCES

http://www.worklifelaw.org/ – WorkLife Law, a Center of Hastings College of Law, initiated by Joan Williams

http://www.catalystwomen.org – Catalyst: Expanding opportunities for women and business

http://www.9to5.org/ – 9to5, National Association of Working Women

http://www.awlp.org/ – Alliance for Work-Life Progress
Many more links are available at http://www.worklifelaw.org/LinksofInterest.html