

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**  
**College of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
Human Development and Family Science

HDFS 401 (001) - Family Law and Public Policy  
3 Credits, Fall 2017  
Wednesday/ 4:30pm-7:10pm, East Room 134, Fairfax Campus

**Faculty**

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**Prerequisites/Corequisites**

None

**University Catalog Course Description**

Examines contemporary family life and the impact of government laws, policies, and programs on families over time and across contexts and cultures. Explores the intended and unintended consequences of policies for diverse families across a variety of policy matters, from anti-poverty and social welfare policies to health and environmental policies.

**Course Overview**

This course fulfills the **Writing Intensive** requirement in the HDFS major. Please note the writing requirements for the course throughout the syllabus to include the 15-page policy research and analysis paper due 11/29/17. The policy research and analysis paper will be completed through a draft/feedback/revision process. Your policy research topic is due 9/13/17. Your abstract and paper outline are due 10/11/17. The first draft of your paper is due 11/1/17. I will provide commentary on the draft and the revised draft will be due on 11/29/17. We will discuss this writing assignment throughout the course. All students are expected to meet with me at least once during the semester to discuss your writing approach and outline for the paper.

**Course Delivery Method**

This course will be delivered using a lecture and discussion format. All course materials can be accessed via Blackboard. You can upload all assignments via Blackboard as well.

**Learner Outcomes or Objectives**

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Develop an understanding of the ways in which families and government interact

2. Gain an understanding of family laws and policies that explicitly and/or implicitly impact families in US society by using policy research and analytical tools
3. Comprehend the definitions, approaches, and issues involved in family policy impact analysis and policy evaluation
4. Gain an understanding of family laws and policies in terms of their sensitivity to and supportiveness of diverse families using policy impact analyses
5. Develop an ability to apply a family perspective to policy-making and policy analysis
6. Expand their understanding of US policy by comparing and contrasting US family laws and policies to those of other countries
7. Improve their ability to utilize course concepts and tools in their research of family policies
8. Expand their intellectual curiosity, interest, and understanding of the ways in which policies impact or will impact their individual and family functioning

### **Professional Standards (National Council on Family Relations)**

Upon completion of this course, students will have met the following professional standards: This course is aligned with the standards established by the National Council on Family Relations, focusing specifically on the “Family Law and Public Policy” content area, to include “an understanding of the legal issues, policies, and law influencing the well-being of families.”

### **Required Texts**

Bogensneider, K. (2014). *Family policy matters: How policymaking affects families and what professionals can do* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Huntington, C. (2014). *Failure to Flourish: How law undermines family relationships*. NY: Oxford.

APA Publications Manual, 6<sup>th</sup> edition

Additional readings: See schedule below.

### **Recommended Texts**

Polikoff, N. D. (2008). *Beyond (straight and gay) marriage: Valuing all families under the law*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Krause, H.D., & Meyer, D.D. (2007). *Family law in a nutshell* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.). St. Paul, MN: Thompson West.

### **Course Performance Evaluation**

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, Tk20, hard copy).

- **Assignments and Examinations**

- I. Participation and Reading Summaries (15 points)**

**Because active participation and engagement are imperative for optimal learning, preparation for and participation in in-class activities will be evaluated based on the following criteria:**

- Students attend class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class period.
- Students complete readings and prepare for class activities prior to class as is evidenced by their ability to discuss and write about the concepts presented and examined in the texts as well as participate fully in related activities.
- Students are actively involved in in-class and online learning experiences as is evidenced by (1) participating in all activities in a professional and respectful manner, (2) engaging in small and large group discussions and in-class exercises, (3) completing written work related to the activities, and (4) supporting the participation and learning of classmates.
- Students show evidence of critical reflective thinking through in-class and online discussions, activities, and written reflections. Go to mymason, <http://mymason.gmu.edu>, to login to Blackboard 9.1.

### **Reading Summaries**

- **Students complete FOUR summaries of the readings as follows:**

As noted on the course schedule **with an asterisk\***, there are four summaries due early in the semester on the assigned readings. These summaries are NOT regurgitations of the readings—they should be reflective, critical, and thoughtful. You might question some of the ideas raised in the readings or bring in materials from other classes to refute points. Rather than offer opinions, you might consider searching the web for alternative perspectives offered up by think tanks or professional organizations.

**The summaries should be typed, single-spaced, checked for grammar and cohesion of thought, and should NOT exceed two pages.** Summaries are solo efforts and should not be worked on in groups. They are to be your own original work. If you use ideas from other sources, you should cite those sources throughout (e.g., “According to \_\_\_\_”). Plagiarism will be dealt with according to university conduct codes. **Late summaries or email attachments of summaries will NOT be accepted without express permission from the instructor.**

- II. Exams (Total: 50 points)**

- 1. Midterm Exam: 25 points**

There will be one mid-semester multi-choice/short-answer/essay exam in this course to examine your comprehension of family policy terms, historical underpinnings, conceptual frameworks, and family policy matters. A discussion of the exam and review of key issues will be held prior to the examination.

## **2. Final Exam: 25 points**

There will be an **optional** final exam that wraps-up the course and asks you to think back over the semester and reflect on what you have learned. You will be asked to select a family law or policy that is of interest to you, answer a number of questions about that policy/law, assess the policy regarding family impacts, and discuss policy implications for families. We will discuss this exam in greater detail in class.

## **III. Homework Assignments: (15 points)**

### **Abstract and Detailed Outline: 10 points**

As noted on the syllabus schedule, please submit a 150-word abstract detailing your paper topic and a brief outline of the tentative contents of your final paper. The abstract/outline will likely change as you research your topic and further develop your ideas. However, this effort will facilitate forward movement with your work and will allow for our continued dialogue. All students are strongly encouraged to meet with me individually about your topic/paper outline.

### **Letter to Policymaker: 5 points**

Select a cause, program, or pending legislation that is of interest to you. Write a 1-page letter to the appropriate public official at the local, state, or federal level to express your views and to ask for his/her support. Mail the letter and turn in a copy to the instructor. As an alternative, talk personally to this public official about your views. Attach his/her business card to your description of your communication (i.e., main points discussed, official's response). An example letter will be offered in class prior to this assignment. If you want to complete this assignment before the due date—especially if the issue is pending in Congress and you want to act in a timely manner—please see me to discuss.

## **IV. Final Paper and Presentation (45 points)**

### **Policy Research and Analysis Paper: 35 points**

- Select a family policy or social problem in need of policy attention. Review the literature relevant to your topic to identify the historical, social, and political issues which might impact your policy topic (e.g., political movements, social trends, philosophies). Provide a description of the policy and activities associated with it and consider the impact of the policy on families (e.g., consider the intended and unintended consequences of your chosen policy for family functioning and well-being). Use the evaluation tools and family policy impact questions provided in class as a framework for conducting this analysis.
- Your paper should be typed, double-spaced (using 12-point font) and up to a maximum of **15 pages** in length (including title page, abstract, and references). **You are required to use a minimum of 10 professional sources (e.g., refereed journal articles, chapters from edited volumes)\*.** It is critical that you cite all sources (including government, think tank, and other related websites); understand what plagiarism means and how to avoid it. All citations should be referenced using APA format (6<sup>th</sup> edition)—if you are not familiar with this format, see me early on for pointers. This paper should be your own work, not a collaborative effort. Acts of

plagiarism—whether intentional or unintentional—will be dealt with following GMU policy.

Below is an example format that your research paper might follow; however, recognize that each topic will most likely require additional or alternative subject headers, etc.

- Page 1: Title page—following APA style guidelines
- Page 2: Abstract (150 word summary)
- Pages 3-14: [You might include some of these elements...]
  - Policy Overview: Brief description of the policy under investigation
  - Review of Literature
    - Theoretical framework relevant to the topic
    - Historical and contextual underpinnings related to policy
    - Changing trends in family life/political climate
    - Family values—perspectives from the Right and Left
  - Analysis: Impact of Policy on Families
    - [Theoretical framework guiding analysis]
    - Research findings related to policy evaluation/family impact assessment—intended and unintended consequences for families
  - Discussion and Recommendations for future
- Pages 15: References in APA format (May be single spaced)

### **Student Presentations: 10 points**

Students will present the findings of their research paper in brief to the class. These presentations will be informal. We will discuss this requirement in more detail in class.

### **\*Examples of professional sources (e.g., refereed journal articles, chapters from edited volumes):**

- Bogensneider, K., & Corbett, T. (2010). Family Policy: Becoming a field of inquiry and subfield of social policy. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72, 783-803.
- Anderson, E. A., & Feldman, M. (1993). Family-centered health policy. In S. Price & B. Elliott (Eds.), *Vision 2010: Families & health care* (pp. 38-40). Minneapolis, MN: NCFR.
- Bubolz, M. M., & Sontag, M. S. (1993). Human ecology theory. In P. Boss, W. Doherty, R. LaRossa, R. W. Schumm, & S. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach* (pp. 419-448). New York: Plenum.
- Cherlin, A., Frogner, B., Ribar, D., & Moffitt, R. (2009). Welfare reform in the mid-2000s: How African Americans and Hispanic families in three cities are faring. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 621, 178-201.
- Coltrane, S., & Adams, M. (2003). The social construction of the divorce “problem”: Morality, child victims, and the politics of gender. *Family Relations*, 52, 21-30.

Gais, T., & Weaver, R. K. (2002). State policy choices under welfare reform (Policy Brief No. 22). In I. Sawhill, R. K. Weaver, R. Haskins, & A. Kane. (Eds.), *Welfare reform and beyond: The future of the safety net* (pp. 317-342). Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

Huang, Z. J., Yu, S., & Ledsy, R. (2006). Health status and health service access and use among children in U.S. immigrant families. *American Journal of Public Health*, 96(4), 634-640;

Kerschner, P. A., & Hirschfield, I. S. (1975). Public policy and aging: Analytic approaches. In D. S. Woodruff & J. E. Birren (Eds.), *Aging: Scientific Perspective and Social Issues* (pp. 391-408). New York: Van Nostrand.

Mason, M. A., Fine, M. A., & Carnochan, S. (2001). Family law in the new millennium: For whose families? *Journal of Family Issues*, 22(7), 859-881.

- **Other Requirements**

- Written Assignments**

- All formal written assignments will be evaluated for content and presentation. The American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition (APA) style will be followed for all written work. All written work unless otherwise noted must be completed on a word processor and should be proofread carefully. (Use spell check!) If students are not confident of their own ability to catch errors, they should have another person proofread their work. When in doubt, they should check the APA manual. Portions of the APA manual appear at the Style Manuals link on the Mason library web guide at <http://library.gmu.edu/resources/edu/>. Students may consult the Writing Center for additional writing support.

- Students will do the following:

- 1. Present ideas in a clear, concise, and organized manner. (Avoid wordiness and redundancy.)
    2. Develop points coherently, definitively, and thoroughly.
    3. Refer to appropriate authorities, studies, and examples to document where appropriate. (Avoid meaningless generalizations, unwarranted assumptions, and unsupported opinions.)
    4. Use correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

- **Course Performance Evaluation Weighting**

Assignments	Due Dates	Points
Class Participation and Reading Summaries	Ongoing	15
Exams (Midterm = 25 points; Final = 25 points)	10/4 Midterm; 12/13 Final	50
Homework Assignments	Ongoing	15
Final Paper & Presentations	Draft due 11/1 Final paper due 11/29	45
TOTAL		125

- **Grading Policies**

97-100	A+	87-89	B+	77-79	C+	60-69	D	Below 60	F
93-96	A	83-86	B	73-76	C				
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-				

All CEHD/CHSS undergraduate and graduate students are held to the university grading policies as described in the Academic Policies section of the current catalog, which can be accessed at <http://catalog.gmu.edu>

### **Professional Dispositions**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

### **Core Values Commitment**

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

## GMU Policies and Resources for Students

### *Policies*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

### *Campus Resources*

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/>.
- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing (see <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>).
- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance (see <http://caps.gmu.edu/>).
- The George Mason University Office of Student Support staff helps students negotiate life situations by connecting them with appropriate campus and off-campus resources. Students in need of these services may contact the office by phone (703-993-5376). Concerned students, faculty and staff may also make a referral to express concern for the safety or well-being of a Mason student or the community by going to <http://studentsupport.gmu.edu/>, and the OSS staff will follow up with the student.



For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/>.

For the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, please visit the website <https://chss.gmu.edu/>.

## Class Schedule

### Course Topics and Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READING/ASSIGNMENT (ALL LINKED MATERIAL ON BLACKBOARD)
<b>WEEK 1</b> Aug 30	<b>INTRODUCTION:</b> Syllabus: Family Law and Public Policy <b>WHAT IS FAMILY LAW &amp; POLICY?</b>	Syllabus Bogenschneider, pp. ix-57
<b>FAMILY LAW &amp; PUBLIC POLICY: HISTORICAL UNDERPINNINGS, FAMILY VALUES, &amp; THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES</b>		
<b>WEEK 2*</b> Sept 6	<b>AN OVERVIEW OF US FAMILY LAW AND PUBLIC POLICY:</b> Marriage (including same-sex marriage), divorce, child custody, adoption, remarriage, stepfamilies, grandparent rights, etc.  <b>GOVERNMENT &amp; FAMILY RELATIONS—</b> Basics of government and legal system Review of relationship between federal and state governments AND families	*Bogenschneider, pp. 58-80; 121-157  US Constitution: <a href="http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution.html">http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution.html</a>  VA Constitution: <a href="http://law.lis.virginia.gov/constitution">http://law.lis.virginia.gov/constitution</a>
<b>WEEK 3*</b> Sept 13	<b>HISTORICAL UNDERPINNINGS:</b> US as global laggard in child and family policies; Example 1: Welfare and its reform Example 2: FMLA	*Huntington, pp. 1-54 *Bogenschneider, pp.223-242  <b>DUE 9/13: TENTATIVE POLICY TOPIC</b>
<b>WEEK 4*</b> Sept 20	<b>THE POLITICS OF FAMILY VALUES AND THE STATE'S ROLE IN RELATIONSHIPS:</b> How do values inform family law and policy? Culture wars?	*Bogenschneider pp. 81-118; 191-222 *Huntington, pp. 55-112 See also Letiecq, Anderson & Joseph (BB)
<b>WEEK 5*</b> Sept 27	<b>RESEARCH &amp; THEORY AS IT APPLIES TO POLICY:</b> Theoretical frameworks to guide policy development and analysis;	*Trzcinski, "An ecological perspective on family policy"

	Challenges to research-based policymaking	
<b>WEEK 6</b> Oct 4	Wrap-up and Midterm Review <b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	<b>DUE 10/4: MIDTERM EXAM</b>

<b>FAMILY LAW &amp; POLICY: VALUING ALL FAMILIES?</b> <b>INTENDED AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF US SOCIAL POLICY FOR FAMILIES</b>		
<b>WEEK 7</b> Oct 11	<b>FAMILY POLICY EVALUATION AND FAMILY IMPACT ANALYSIS (FIA)</b> See Purdue University's Family Impact Institute	*Bogenschneider pp. 158-187, 245-293 See: <a href="#">Family Impact Analyses</a>  <b>DUE 10/11: ABSTRACT AND OUTLINE</b>
<b>WEEK 8</b> Oct 18	<b>CONDUCTING YOUR POLICY ANALYSIS:</b> Research, writing, and APA tips <u>Useful websites:</u> USGAO, Urban Institute, Brookings Institute, Future of Children, ChildTrends, KidsCount	<b>BRING LAPTOPS IF POSSIBLE:</b> <b>IN-CLASS WORK SESSION</b>  <b>DUE END OF CLASS 10/18:</b> <b>REVISED ABSTRACT AND OUTLINE</b>
<b>WEEK 9</b> Oct 25	<b>EXAMPLE FIA:</b> Marriage and Gender: Influence of the Women's and Gay Rights Movements <u>Useful websites</u>	<b>[FILM: TYING THE KNOT]</b> Review this website: <a href="http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/civil-unions-and-domestic-partnership-statutes.aspx">http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/civil-unions-and-domestic-partnership-statutes.aspx</a>
<b>WEEK 10</b> Nov 1	<b>EXAMPLE FIA:</b> TBD based on class interests	<b>DUE 11/1: DRAFT POLICY RESEARCH PAPER</b>
<b>WEEK 11</b> Nov 8	<b>EXAMPLE FIA:</b> TBD	<b>IN-CLASS WORK SESSION</b>
<b>WEEK 12</b> Nov 15	<b>Guest Lecture</b> TBD	<b>**Finalize Policy Research Paper**</b>
<b>WEEK 13</b> Nov 22	No Class: Thanksgiving Break	<b>**Finalize Policy Research Paper**</b>
<b>WEEK 14</b> Nov 29	<b>FLOURISHING FAMILY LAW</b> A new vision for family law and its implementation <b>PARTICIPATING IN THE POLICY PROCESS:</b> Influencing the future of family law and policy—The role of educators/advocates and activists	Huntington pp.113-223 Letiecq & Anderson (BB)  <b>DUE 11/29: FINAL POLICY RESEARCH PAPER</b>
<b>WEEK 15</b> Dec 6	<b>STUDENT PRESENTATIONS</b> <b>COURSE WRAP-UP:</b> Papers returned; Discussion of Final Exam & Grades; Course Evaluation	<b>DUE 12/6: LETTER TO POLICY MAKER</b>
<b>FINAL EXAM</b> Dec 13	<b>FINAL EXAM -- 4:30-7:15PM</b>	<b>DUE 12/13: FINAL EXAM—OPTIONAL</b>

**\*DUE: Summary of readings assigned for the week. Students complete 6 out of 10 summaries for full credit.**

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

**Assessment Rubric(s)**

**HDFS 401  
Assignment Rubric for Final Paper (35 points possible)**

**NCFR Content Area:** Family Law and Public Policy, to include an understanding of the legal issues, policies, and law influencing the well-being of families.

**Name:**

	<b>No Evidence</b>	<b>Beginning (Limited Evidence)</b>	<b>Developing (Clear Evidence)</b>	<b>Accomplished (Clear, convincing, substantial evidence)</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
<b>CRITERIA</b>					
<b>I. Policy Overview:</b> Provides a comprehensive overview of the selected family policy topic and relevant historical, social, political, economic climate surrounding policy. Student should use a minimum of three separate sources in this section (2-3 pp.) <b>(8 points)</b>	Does not include a comprehensive overview of policy topic (0)	Includes some discussion of the policy topics as defined but uses fewer than three sources (1-3)	Provides a discussion of the policy topic as defined and cites at least three peer-reviewed empirical articles. However, section may not be well-integrated or necessary details are not included. (4-6)	Provides a well-integrated, thoughtful discussion of the policy topic and policy climate and cites three or more peer-reviewed empirical articles. (6-8)	

<b>II. Utilizes family theory or conceptual framework to guide investigation:</b> Applies at least one family theory or conceptual framework in guiding policy analysis, using at least one theory-related source (1-2 pp.) <b>(5 points)</b>	Does not discuss any family theories or conceptual frame (0)	Attempts to apply family theory and/or uses less than one source (1-2)	Applies one family theory or conceptual frame using less than one source to explain the issue (3-4)	Successfully applies one or more family theories or conceptual framework using 1-2 sources to explain the issue (4-5)	
<b>III. Using FIA, examines the intended and unintended consequences of policy for family well-being:</b> Provides a clear analysis of impact of policy on family well-being. Uses 1-2 additional sources (2-3pp.). <b>(7 points)</b>	Does not provide an analysis of policy impacts(0)	Attempts to discuss policy impacts but includes limited discussion and/or uses fewer than one additional source (1-2)	Provides some discussion of policy impacts and/or uses fewer than two additional sources. (3-5)	Provides an in-depth discussion of policy impacts and uses two or more additional sources. (5-7)	
<b>IV. Explores policy alternatives:</b> Provides a clear discussion of possible policy alternatives to ameliorate unintended outcomes of policy for families and to promote family well-being.	Does not discuss any family policy recommendations (0)	Attempts discuss family-based policy alternatives and/or uses less than one source (1-2)	Provides some discussion of policy alternatives using less than one source to explain the issue (3-5)	Successfully provides an in-depth discussion of family policy alternatives using 1-2 sources to explain the issue (5-7)	

Uses a minimum of 1-2 additional sources (2-3pp.). <b>(7 points)</b>					
<b>V. APA formatting:</b> Student cites all articles used using correct APA formatting for both in-text citations and reference list. <b>(5 points)</b>	Does not provide references and/or in-text citations (0)	References and in-text citations are not in APA format (1-2)	References and in-text citations are in APA format but they include more than two minor errors (3-4)	References and in-text citations are in APA format and they contain no more than two minor errors (4-5)	
<b>VI. Grammar and Spelling:</b> Student's paper is error free. <b>(3 points)</b>	Contains more than 10 errors in spelling and grammar (0)	Contains five to ten spelling or mechanical errors (1)	Contains three to five spelling or mechanical errors (2)	Contains less than two spelling or mechanical errors (3)	

**Total points**

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