

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, Spring 2019
Thursdays, 4:30-7:10 pm
Thompson Hall L004, Fairfax Campus

Faculty

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Prerequisites/Corequisites

HDFS 200

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. Offered by Graduate School of Education. May not be repeated for credit.

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 family policy research and analysis paper due 5/2/2019. The policy research and analysis paper will be completed through a draft/feedback/revision process. Your policy research tentative topic is due 1/31/2019. Your final topic selection is due 2/21/2019. Your abstract and paper outline are due 2/21/2019. The first draft of your paper is due 3/29/2019. I will provide commentary on the draft and the final version of your paper will be due on 5/2/2019. 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.

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* (3rd Ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

APA Publications Manual, 6th edition

Additional readings: See schedule below. Most other readings can be found on Blackboard.

Other Recommended Texts and Books

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

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

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

Walker, L. (2015). *Family law and public policy*. New York: Wolters Kluwer.

Course Performance Evaluation

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

Assignments	Due Dates	Percentage
Class Participation and Discussion Posts	Ongoing	15
Midterm Exam	March 7	20
In-Class and Homework Assignments	Ongoing	20
DRAFT (10 pts), Final Paper (30 pts) & Presentations (5 pts)	See Course Schedule	45
TOTAL		100

- **Assignments and/or Examinations**

I. Participation and Discussion Posts (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. Cell phone and laptop use related to coursework only, unless an emergency.
- 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.

Discussion Posts (5 pts each)

- **Students complete THREE out of FIVE discussion posts on Blackboard (BB):**
As **noted on the course schedule**, there are five opportunities to contribute to our discussion board on BB. Each week, a question will be posed for your consideration. You must complete three posts to get full credit. These posts are NOT regurgitations of the readings—they should be reflective, critical, and thoughtful responses to the questions posed. **The posts should be at least three paragraphs in length (or approximately 250 words) and checked for grammar and cohesion of thought.** 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 posts will NOT be accepted without express permission from the instructor.**

II. Midterm Exam (Total: 20 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.

III. Homework Assignments: (20 points)

Abstract and Detailed Outline: 5 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.

In-Class Exercises: 10 pts (see course schedule)

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. Family Policy Research Paper and Presentation (45 points total)

Policy Research and Analysis Paper

DRAFT: 10 points; FINAL: 30 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 (6th 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: 5 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):**

Bogenschneider, K., & Corbett, T. (2010). Family Policy: Becoming a field of inquiry and subfield of social policy. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72, 783-803.

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.

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.

- **Grading**

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.

See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/>

Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading/Assignment (all linked material on Blackboard)
Week 1 January 24	Introduction: Syllabus: Family Law and Public Policy An Overview of US Family Law and Policy	Syllabus Bogenschneider, CH 1-3
Week 2 January 31	I. Child and Family Policies in the US II. Government & Family Relations— Basics of government and legal system Review of relationship between federal and state governments AND families III. Defining Family: State and Federal approaches	*Mason et al. (2001). Child and Family Policies in the United States at the Opening of the 21 st Century. *Bogenschneider, CH 4-6 US Constitution: http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution.html VA Constitution: http://law.lis.virginia.gov/constitution DUE 1/31: Discussion Post #1 DUE 1/31: Tentative Topic
Week 3 February 7	Family Policy Evaluation and Family Impact Analysis (FIA)	*Bogenschneider CH 11-13 See: Family Impact Analyses DUE 2/7: Discussion Post #2
Week 4 Feb 14	Research & Theory as it Applies to Policy: Theoretical frameworks to guide policy development and analysis	*Trzcinski, “An ecological perspective on family policy” *Letiecq, Anderson, & Joseph. (2013). Social Policies and Families Through an Ecological Lens DUE 2/14: Discussion Post #3
Week 5 Feb 21	The Public Policy of Marriage and Marital Dissolution --History of Marriage; <i>Loving v. Virginia</i> --Defense of Marriage Act; Marriage Equality --Fault and No-Fault Divorce	Same-Sex Marriage: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/us/2014-term-supreme-court-decision-same-sex-marriage.html Divorce: https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/no-fault-divorce-vs-fault-divorce-faq.html DUE 2/21: 1st Draft Abstract/Outline/2 References DUE 2/21 IN-CLASS: Marriage/Divorce FIA

Week 6 Feb 28	Economic and Employment Policies and Family Well-Being (Welfare, ECEC, FLSA, Contingent workforce, FMLA, Health Care, Social Security, retirement) Family Leave Policies	https://www.newsweek.com/gavin-newsom-california-governor-2019-budget-family-leave-program-parental-1288053 DUE 2/28 IN-CLASS: FMLA FIA Midterm Exam Posted
Week 7 March 7	Wrap-up and Midterm Review Conducting YOUR policy analysis: Research, writing, and APA tips	DUE 3/8: MIDTERM EXAM
Week 8 March 14	Spring Break—ENJOY!	
Week 9 March 21	I. The Public Policy of Parent-Child Relations --Custody Determinations; Best Interests of the Child; Parental vs. Child Rights --Transgender children II. Conducting YOUR policy analysis: Final research, writing, and APA tips	Katherine A. Kuvalanka, Judith L. Weiner & Derek Mahan (2014) Child, Family, and Community Transformations: Findings from Interviews with Mothers of Transgender Girls, <i>Journal of GLBT Family Studies</i> , 10:4, 354-379, DOI: 10.1080/1550428X.2013.834529 Shannon Price Minter JD (2012) Supporting Transgender Children: New Legal, Social, and Medical Approaches, <i>Journal of Homosexuality</i> , 59:3, 422-433, DOI: 10.1080/00918369.2012.653311
Week 10 March 28	I. Legal Protections of Abused and Neglected Children A Focus on Kinship Care and the Law II. Conducting YOUR policy analysis: Final research, writing, and APA tips	Letiecq, Bailey, & Porterfield (on BB) Due 3/29: Revised Abstract and Draft Policy Paper
Week 11 April 4	FIA: Immigrant Families and Public Policy --Deportation Regimes, Family Separation, Illegality	Vesely, C. V., Letiecq, B. L., & Goodman, R. D. (2017). Immigrant family resilience in context: Using a community-based approach to build a new conceptual model. <i>Journal of Family Theory & Review</i> , 9, 93-110. Vesely Policy Brief on Immigration Policy

Week 12 April 11	FIA: Housing and Food Insecurity, Family Homelessness, and Public Policy	Readings TBD Excerpts from Desmond, M. (2017). Evicted.
Week 13 April 18	Different Approaches to Translating Family Research to Policy: Influencing the future of family law and policy—The role of educators, advocates, and activists	Bogensneider CH 14-16 Letiecq & Anderson (on BB)
Week 14 April 25	Student Presentations Final Paper Wrap-Up	Due 4/25: Letter to Policy Maker
Week 15 May 2	Student Presentations Course Wrap-Up: Course Evaluation	Due 5/2: Final Family Policy Paper (Hard Copy and on BB)
Week 16 May 9	Final Exam Period 4:30-7PM	Family Policy Paper Returned/Student Consultations

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

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 <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- 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 <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>.

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

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

HDFS 401
Assignment Rubric for Final Paper (30 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:

	No Evidence	Beginning (Limited Evidence)	Developing (Clear Evidence)	Accomplished (Clear, convincing, substantial evidence)	SCORE
CRITERIA					
I. Policy Overview: 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.) (7 points)	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. (6-7)	
II. Utilizes family theory or conceptual framework to guide investigation: Applies at least one family theory or conceptual framework in guiding policy analysis, using at least one theory-related source (1-2 pp.) (5 points)	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)	
III. Using FIA, examines the intended and unintended consequences of policy for family	Does not provide an analysis of policy impacts(0)	Attempts to discuss policy impacts but includes limited	Provides some discussion of policy impacts and/or uses fewer than two	Provides an in-depth discussion of policy impacts and uses two or	

well-being: Provides a clear analysis of impact of policy on family well-being. Uses 1-2 additional sources (2-3pp.). (5 points)		discussion and/or uses fewer than one additional source (1-2)	additional sources. (3-4)	more additional sources. (4-5)	
IV. Explores policy alternatives: Provides a clear discussion of possible policy alternatives to ameliorate unintended outcomes of policy for families and to promote family well-being. Uses a minimum of 1-2 additional sources (2-3pp.). (5 points)	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 (3-4)	Successfully provides an in-depth discussion of family policy alternatives using 1-2 sources to explain the issue (4-5)	
V. APA formatting: Student cites all articles used using correct APA formatting for both in-text citations and reference list. (5 points)	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)	
VI. Grammar and Spelling: Student's paper is error free. (3 points)	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 _____ **(out of 30 total)**