RELC 4559 Wednesdays 3:30-6:00

John Portmann, Gibson 361 (M 3:30-4:20, W 6:10-7:30) GIBSON 341

**>FAMILY VALUES<**

Exploration of family structures and norms, specifically of what came to be known in the United States as “family values” in the early 1970s, with particular attention to the Family Research Council and James Dobson’s “Focus on the Family” today. How are family values enforced and transmitted through religious communities, social pressures, and laws? What shaped prevailing attitudes toward: adoption, abandonment, child abuse, neglect, wife beating, incest, and sexual regulation in general? How, if at all, do television shows such as *Modern Family*, *American Dad*, and *The Simpsons* reinforce or undermine traditional “family values”? How have American politicians manipulated social anxiety about professional women, childhood depression, welfare, “dead-beat dads,” busing, the inheritance tax, the “hook-up culture,” Internet porn, and gay people?

**Introduction 15 January**

*Biblical traditionalism dictates a normative view of the “moral family.”*

Focus on the Family, Family Research Council

Definition: “Family values are how we live and what we believe regarding sexuality, marriage, and parenthood.” (Institute for American Values)

*Reynolds v. United States* (1878)

Defense Of Marriage Act (1996)

**I. History 22 January**

*We hear regularly that American families are in crisis today. How did we get here? Was American childhood before the 1960s in fact more protecting, more nurturing, more fun?*

Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood*

**28 January**

MAKE-UP CLASS // Clemons 407, 5:00-7:30pm

Terence Malick, *Days of Heaven*

*If you cannot make this session, simply submit to me a 4-6-page critical response to the film –and the way it reflects the Mintz reading-- by 12:00pm, 14 February*

**29 January**

Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (cont’d)

*Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971) (re: school busing)

**II. Parental / Filial Duties 5 February**

*Do you find Coontz compelling? Would it be fair to say that Family Values advocates whitewash the history of American families, of American morality?*

Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American* *Families and the Nostalgia* *Trap*

Jane English, “What Do Grown Children Owe Their Parents?”

*Levy v. Louisiana* (1968) (what do fathers owe their illegitimate children?)

**13 February [\*first reading exam\*]**

Hendrick Hartog, *Someday All This Will Be* *Yours: A History of Inheritance and Old Age*

*What do economics and hard cash have to do with family values? Can the poor afford to focus on family values? In a contest between money and values, which would win?*

**19 February**

NO CLASS (made-up 28 January)

**III. Sex Regulation**

*In what specific ways have family values determined individual behavior? Is it fair to say that the Supreme Court creates values?*

**26 February**

Moran, from *Teaching Sex*

*Roe v. Wade* (1973)

*South Park*

Fessler, from *The Girls Who Went Away*

Crocker, “Meddling with the Sexual Orientation of Children”

*Reno v. ACLU* (1997) (Internet porn)

**5 March**

*What does* ***divorce*** *have to do with family values?*

Mary Anne Glendon, from *Abortion* *and Divorce in Western Law*

Judith Wallerstein, from *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*

Mavis Heatherington, from *For Better or For Worse*

[8-16 March 2014: Spring Break]

**18 March**

*Do lesbian and gay Christians simply fool themselves when they insist their religious communities embrace them? that God loves them as they are?*

Jeff Chu, *Does* *Jesus Really Love Me?*

National Council of Catholic Bishops, “Always Our Children”

**25 March**

*How does disease affect the traditional marriage vows of Jews and Christians? Need a long-term marriage always be defined by sexual exclusivity?*

John Portmann, *The Ethics of Sex and Alzheimer’s*

**2 April**

*What happens when sex regulation and parenthood go wrong? What happens to family values when individuals find themselves in family crisis? Beyond that, to what extent can films rival Scriptures as a source of moral knowledge?*

Lester Hunt, “Motion Pictures as a Philosophical Resource”

Almodovar, *Volver*

**IV. Alternative Families 9 April**

*Can social outcasts (such as gays and lesbians) really create their own families? If so, how? What should our attitude toward such arrangements be?*

Judith Butler, “Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?” from *Undoing Gender*

Surrogacy / sperm donations: *The Kids Are All* *Right* (film)

Martha Minow, “All in the Family and In All Families: Membership, Loving, and Owing”

**V. Media 16 April**

Media presentations: Two separate groups will show and critically evaluate a television show about family values

1960s: *Ozzie and Harriet* (1952-1966), *Leave it to Beaver* (1957-1963); *The Andy* *Griffith Show* (1960-1968)

1970s: *All in the Family* (1971-1979), *Family* (1976-1980), *The Jeffersons* (1975- 1985)

1980s: *Family Ties* (1982-1989); *The Cosby Show* (1984-1992); *Married, with* *Children* (1987-1997); *The Simpsons* (1989-present)

2000s: *American Dad* (2005-present); *Modern Family* (2009-present)

For further viewing: *Gone with the Wind; Magdalene Sisters; Il Gattopardo; Long Day’s Journey into Night; Little Miss Sunshine; Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*

**VI. Wrap-Up 23 April [\*second reading exam\*]**

*No reading assignment today. You are to bring to class the first paragraph of your paper or, if you prefer, the outline for your paper. We will critique projects in groups.*

Paper Workshop

-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=

**GRADING**: Naturally, attendance in seminar is mandatory. Two or more absences will result in the automatic lowering of your course grade (which is not to say that a single absence makes no difference).

Every student will make one class presentation (15-20 minutes), summarizing the day’s readings and raising pertinent critical questions. For the rest of that day, you will remain “on call”; you will field questions from anyone in the class on the readings.

You are expected to formulate a topic on your own. If you stray from the syllabus, you would do well to clear the topic with me – either after seminar, in my office hours, or in the Paper Workshop.

class participation 20%

2 reading exams (each at 15%) 30

16-23pp. final paper 50

The Registrar has scheduled our final exam on Tuesday, 6 May. Your final paper will be due at 5:00 pm on 5 May as an email attachment. I will deduct ½ a grade from your mark for each day your paper is late (that is, starting at 5:01 pm on 5 May). If you would like to receive written comments on your final paper, you must submit the *final paper* (not a draft) to me by 5:00pm on 1 May. In no way will you be penalized for submitting your paper on 6 May.

No one will be allowed to make up a reading exam without a justifying note from a physician.

The only class participation that counts toward your grade is that which occurs in seminar and over the class listserv. The Garrett Hall “Take a Professor to Lunch” program, laudable as it is, does not count. Nor does speaking to me after class on in my office count toward class participation. A “chip shot” in seminar will not help you (a “chip shot” sounds like, “I really liked this article” or “I agree with what she just said” – that is, a comment lacking substance or irrelevant to the assigned texts). If you feel uncomfortable speaking in front of your peers, then this seminar is not for you.

N. B. This is a 4000-level seminar. You are expected to exhibit intellectual independence: I am happy to talk through your paper topic with you, but you must devise the topic on your own. *Your final paper is to be critical, analytical* – not descriptive (as in a book report or a literature summary). If you haven’t already written analytical papers, then this seminar is probably not for you.

**FOR FURTHER READING**:

Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood:* *A Social History of Family Life*

Juliet Schor, *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*

William Eskridge, “Beyond Lesbian and Gay ‘Families We Choose’”

Natalia Sarkisian, *Nuclear Family Values*

Andrew Solomon, *Far From the Tree*

Dorothy Brown, *The Poor Belong to Us: Catholic Charities and American Welfare*

Abandonment, Adoption: Linda Gordon, from *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*;John Boswell, from *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance*

Inheritance: Michael Gratz, *Death by a Thousand Cuts: The Fight Over Taking Inherited Wealth*; Jens Beckert, from *Inherited Wealth*

Ostracism: Ann Fessler, *The Girls Who Went Away: The Hidden History of Girls Who Surrendered Children in the Decades before* Roe v. Wade

*Now, Voyager* (film) (on disobeying a domineering parent)

*The Bridges of Madison County* (film) (on judging an adulterous parent)

Gays and lesbians in Orthodox Jewish communities: *Trembling Before G-d* (documentary)

Miscegenation: *Loving v. Virginia* (1967); *Guess Who’s Coming to* *Dinner?* (film)