

Economics 209  
St. Lawrence University  
Economics of Gender and the Family

Professor Steven Horwitz  
101 Hepburn Hall  
229-5731 (office)  
Email: shorwitz@stlawu.edu

Fall 2015  
MW 8:50 – 10:20am  
12 Hepburn Hall

Office Hours: T 1:00 – 3:00pm; W 10:30am – 12:00pm; and by appointment

It is sometimes hard to imagine that it has been fewer than 100 years since women in the United States acquired the right to vote and have had anything close to the protection of their rights to contract and acquire property that men have had historically. The 20<sup>th</sup> century will be remembered as a time when the political, cultural, and economic roles of women expanded and changed in remarkable ways. Those changes have been paralleled by, and are surely related to, similar remarkable changes in the structure of family life. The obvious fact that more women, especially middle-class white women, entered the labor force led to enormous changes for society and for the family. Despite all of these changes, and despite the numerous gains that women have made over the last few centuries, there remain differences in how men and women experience the worlds of market and household production. We will explore the history and causes of these changes and critically assess the ways in which both market and household production remain patterned by gender.

Being an economics course, we will make use of the tools of economics to do our history, examine our causes, and make our critical assessments. Economic theory can help to understand the benefits and costs of marriage and child-bearing. It can shed light on how families divide up their market work and home work, and why those divisions often take place in gendered ways. Economics can, of course, offer explanations for why men and women pattern their market work in the ways they do. For example: why are some jobs primarily male and others primarily female? Why do men, on average, have higher incomes than women do? There are a variety of explanations for those outcomes, and economics can critically analyze whether discrimination alone can account for all of these differences. Economics has something to contribute to understanding the ways in which gender interacts with class, race, and sexuality in exploring issues such as the feminization of poverty, the condition of the African-American family, and the legalization of same-sex marriage. Like any discipline there are limits to what economics can say, and we will explore those limits with contributions from other disciplines that look at many of the same issues that we will explore using economics.

This course will put a premium on critical thinking skills and significant class discussion. We will also make use of economic tools you studied in intro, as well as adding a few more to your toolkit. If you like to discuss controversial issues, especially around gender, and if you're interested in what economics can say about them, then this is the class for you.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Your grade for this course will be based on three exams, two short papers, an electronic journal, and class participation/attendance. The three exams will each cover a different section of the course, with the third taking place at the assigned time for the final. It will focus on the last third of the course but will also include cumulative material. The first exam is worth 15% and the other two are worth 20% of your grade. The exams will be short answer/essay format.

The short papers will be no more than 4 pages long and will ask that you apply the ideas from class. We will talk more about these assignments as they get closer. Each is worth 10% of your grade.

The interactive electronic journal requires that you create a Word file that includes your reactions/responses to one of the readings or to the class discussion and send me that file via email so that I can respond to you and send it back. More on this assignment can be found in a separate handout. Over the course of the semester, this will be an intellectual journal of your experience in this course, as well as a way for us to interact one-on-one. I will grade your journals at mid-semester and again at the end, for a total of 15%.

In addition, class participation and attendance will count 10%. There will be plenty of time for discussion and debate in this course. In addition, there will be a few times during which you will be working in small groups, and your contributions to those discussions count as part of your class participation grade. Being in class and contributing to class discussions is central to you succeeding in the course and to the course being an interesting and enjoyable one.

Grading breakdown:			Grading scale:	
Exam #1	Wed Sept 23	15%	4.0 (94-100)	2.25 (77-78)
Exam #2	Mon Nov 9	20%	3.75 (92-93)	2.0 (74-76)
Exam #3	Thurs Dec 17	20%	3.5 (89-91)	1.75 (72-73)
Short paper #1	Wed Oct 14	10%	3.25 (87-88)	1.5 (69-71)
Short paper #2	TBA	10%	3.0 (84-86)	1.25 (67-68)
Electronic Journal	7% / 8%	15%	2.75 (82-83)	1.0 (60-66)
Class participation/attendance		10%	2.5 (79-81)	0.0 (0-59)

The grading scale represents the worst case from which any curve will be computed. Treat this syllabus as a contract - it is the final court of appeal for all disputes. Late assignments are subject to a 5 points (out of 100) per day penalty. All requests for extensions must be made at least 48 hours in advance. Any changes to the syllabus will be announced in class and by email, and it is your responsibility to be aware of them.

**As I have several travel obligations this semester, there will be some days on which class is canceled. I will try to make those days up by adding a couple of FRIDAY classes at our usual 8:50 – 10:20 time slot. See bolded info below. I will remind you as they approach.**

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE  
(J – Jacobsen)

Topics and dates	Reading
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**INTRODUCTION (Aug 26 – Sept 2: 3 class days)**

Introduction/syllabus	
Getting started: home work and market work	J (1)
Review of some basic theory	J (1 – appendix)
A look at the data	J (2)

We begin by getting a sense of what the issues are, and reminding ourselves of some of the tools of economic analysis we'll need in order to explore those issues. Of particular importance is getting a sense of the differences that exist between men and women in the labor force and the economy as a whole.

**FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS (Sep 7 to Sept 21: 5 class days)**

The family and the formation of households	J (3)
The economics of marriage	Adshade
An economic history of the family	Pember Reeves (pp. 21-45; 146-58;176-94); Horwitz

One of the uses of economic reasoning that is most relevant to gender and the family is helping us understand the formation of households, which normally occurs through the institution of the family. Here we'll look at the costs and benefits of marriage (and household formation more broadly), as well as taking a historical look at the evolution of the family and the economic factors that have affected it. We will also discuss the costs and benefits of having children, and see what economics can contribute.

**NO CLASS on Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup>**

**MAKE UP CLASS on Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Exam #1 – Wednesday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>**

**LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND FAMILY FORM (Sept 28 to Oct 5: 3 class days)**

Labor force participation patterns	J (4)
Labor force participation and family structure	J (5)

The relationships among gender, market work, and home work are at the core of understanding the economics of gender and the family. In this section we will look at changes in the labor force participation of men and women, and how those changes have, in turn, affected the form of the family. As more and more women are working full-time, what have been the effects on family?

## LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND THE FAMILY IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

(Oct 7 – Oct 14: 3 class days)

The last 100 years	<i>1900 House</i> episodes 2-3 Pember Reeves (pp. 46-74)
“The Quiet Revolution”	Goldin
Gender patterns in household production	Connelly and Kimmel Pember Reeves (pp. 159-75)

Understanding the causes and effects of both changes in female labor force participation rates and the evolution of the family requires a look back at some history. We start this section with a look back at how families dealt with household production and how it was patterned by gender in the late Victorian era. We’ll then turn to an overview of the causes of women’s increased labor force participation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and then we look at how these changes have affected the ways in which couples deal with market and household production. Economics has some interesting things to say about such issues, but often begins to run aground when socialization and gender roles become relevant.

## GENDER AND THE ECONOMICS OF THE LABOR MARKET (Oct 19 – Nov 4: 6 class days)

Gender patterns in the world of market work	J (6)
Why is market work patterned by gender?	
<i>Human capital</i>	J (7)
<i>Compensating differentials</i>	J (8)
<i>Discrimination</i>	J (9)

One of the central policy questions involving economics and gender is the issue of why women earn less than men do in the market. One answer is that women are discriminated against. And while we will certainly explore the degree to which that answer is also a correct one, there are also other explanations for those differences in earnings. In this section, we will explore what those differences are, and examine three possible (and not mutually exclusive) explanations for them: differences in human capital, compensating differentials in employment, and discrimination. Don’t expect any easy answers here, but do expect to gain some theoretical tools to help you ask better questions.

**NO CLASS on Wednesday, October 21<sup>st</sup>**

**MAKE UP CLASS on Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>**

**Exam #2 – Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>**

RACE, CLASS, AND SEXUALITY (Nov 11 – Dec 7: 4 class days)

Women in the economic history of the US	J (14)
African-American family forms	Stack
The economics of gay identity	D’Emilio
Same-sex marriage and the constitution	<i>Obergefell v. Hodges</i>

Issues of gender also cross-cut with issues of race, class, and sexuality. There is an unfortunate tendency to take “women” to mean “middle-class white women.” The issues that face poor women, or women of color, are often very different and analyses that assume a certain type of woman, whether explicitly or implicitly, can lead to wrong or oversimplified results and policy implications. We will explore some of these issues by looking at Carol Stack’s classic late 1960s ethnography of poor, urban, African-American families *All Our Kin*. Economics has a lot to say about the ways in which the families in the book adjust to their economic and social circumstances and it will be a very interesting and informative way to both see economics in action and to understand the policy complications that the intersection of poverty, race, and gender raise. We will conclude this section with a discussion of the role of economic factors in the increased economic viability, and visibility, of living one’s life as openly gay and lesbian.

**NO CLASS – Wednesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>**

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS (Dec 9: 1 class day)

We will wrap up the semester with some considerations of the broad issues we have explored.

**Exam #3 – Thursday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 8:30am**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books:

Jacobsen, Joyce P. 2007. *The Economics of Gender*, third edition, New York: Blackwell.

Stack, Carol B. 1974. *All Our Kin: Strategies For Survival in a Black Community*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

### Readings:

Adshade, Marina. 2013. *Dollars and Sex: How Economics Influences Sex and Love*, San Francisco: Chronicle Books, chapter 4.

Connelly, Rachel and Jean Kimmel. 2010. *The Time Use of Mothers in the United States at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Kalamazoo, MI: W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, chapter 2.

D'Emilio, John. 1993. "Capitalism and Gay Identity," reprinted in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, Henry Abelove, et. al., eds., New York: Routledge.

Goldin, Claudia. 2006. "The Quiet Revolution That Transformed Women's Employment, Education, and Family," *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings* 96, v. 2, pp. 1-21.

Horwitz, Steven. 2015. *Hayek's Modern Family: Classical Liberalism and the Evolution of Social Institutions*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, Chapter 4.

*Obergefell v. Hodges* 2015.

Pember Reeves, Maud. 1914. *Round About a Pound a Week*, London: G. Bell and Sons, second edition.

### Videos:

*1900 House*: episode 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SHDJH874bs>  
episode 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQE4vEeSAZc>