

# HIST 343

## History of the U.S. Family

### Summer 2010, Fully Online

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Course website: <http://www.psuonline.pdx.edu/>

#### **Course Description**

This four-credit course will survey the history of the U.S. family from pre-contact to the present. We shall focus on the history of childhood, the history of marriage, and gender roles in a variety of cultures. All of the course work will be accomplished over the internet, so regular access to a computer with a reliable internet connection is crucial to your success.

#### **Course Objectives**

- To increase our knowledge of the history of the U.S. family
- To increase our empathy for people different from ourselves
- To enhance our engagement with and excitement over history
- To increase our ability to analyze primary sources
- To increase our skills at making and critiquing scholarly arguments
- To enhance our ability to work cooperatively
- To increase our ability to write clear and compelling prose
- To become proficient at using Blackboard
- To understand and follow directions

#### **Assessment**

5 Discussion assignments 25%

4 three-page papers 75%

Scale: 93% and above A; 90-92.9% A-; 87-89.9% B+, and so forth. Your final grade is determined by adding up your points for the above assignments. Grades (and feedback) for each assignment are mailed to students via Blackboard and posted on the grade book of the web site.

**Required Readings** (Available for purchase at the PSU Bookstore, and copies are on reserve at the PSU library.)

Anya Jabour, editor., *Major Problems in the History of American Families and Children*.

Paula S. Fass and Mary Ann Mason, editors, *Childhood in America*.

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812*.

Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

## Course Schedule

### Discussion #1

Read: Ulrich, entire; Jabour, chapters 2-3; Fass/Mason, readings (NOT page #) 1-2, 11-12, 21-23, 52-54, 62-66, 76-80, 94-95, 137, 157; Plymouth Colony Archive Project at this site:

<http://www.histarch.uiuc.edu/plymouth/index2.html>.

By midnight (the end of the day), June 27: Post answers of about 300 words to these two questions, using the readings for online #1 as evidence: 1) Does Martha Ballard's life indicate that women of her day were subordinate to or simply different from men? 2) Do the primary sources (choose from these options: court records, laws, and 17<sup>th</sup> century texts; probates/wills; architectural forms; material culture) indicate that women and men had dramatically different roles in the early Plymouth colony? By midnight, June 29: Read and critique two answers.

### Essay #1

Submit to the site's digital drop box by midnight, July 2. Write a three-page essay (maximum of 1,000 words) on one of these questions, using the readings from online assignment #1 as evidence: 1) Agree or disagree: The early American family was simply concerned with survival and therefore could not afford to pay much attention to people's emotional needs. 2) To what extent did women and children recognize and resist their subordination to men and parents, respectively?

### Discussion #2

Read: Jabour, chapters 4-7; Fass/Mason, readings 3-4, 13, 24-27, 35-37, 55-58, 67-70, 81-82, 96-99, 109, 125-126, 138, 158-159, 168, 174-175; at least two slave narratives from this site:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/index.html>.

By midnight, July 8: Post an answer of about 300 words to both of these questions, using the readings for online #2 as evidence: 1) Agree or disagree: Children's status improved dramatically during the nineteenth century. 2) Use at least two slave narratives, as well as the other assigned readings, to answer this question: What role did black families play in slavery? By midnight, July 10: Read and critique two answers.

## Essay #2

Submit to the site's digital drop box by July 14: Write a three-page essay (maximum of 1,000 words) on this question, using the readings from online assignment #2 as evidence: Agree or disagree: Working-class, immigrant, and non-white families tended to be more democratic and egalitarian within their families than did white, native-born, middle-class families in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (1800s to early 1900s).

## Discussion #3

Read: Jabour, chapters 8-10; Fass/Mason, Readings 14-15, 28-31, 38-41, 71-74, 83-85, 100, 110-112, 127-129, 139-144, 160-164, 166, 169-171; some pages from the two sets of manuscript census for evidence (<http://www.rootsweb.com/~cenfiles/ga/crawford/1900/ed01/ed001p01.txt> and <http://www.rootsweb.com/~orharney/1900/>): 1) The late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries included both broad social, cultural, and economic changes associated with industrialization and urbanization and major events, such as the Depression of the 1930s and two world wars. Which sets of changes more profoundly affected the nation's families, the broad, ongoing ones related to industrialization and urbanization or the events (the Depression and the wars)? 2) What can these censuses tell us about how occupation, race/ethnicity, education, region, or other variables affected family composition, including age gap between spouses, size of household, and types of people in the household?

By midnight, July 20: Read and critique two answers.

## Discussion #4

Read: Jabour, chapters 11-14; Fass/Mason, Readings 5-8, 16-20, 33-34, 42-51, 59-61, 75, 86, 88-89, 91-93, 101-108, 113-124, 130-136, 147-150, 155-156, 167, 172-173, 176-178; Youtube videos of performances by: Elvis Presley; the Beatles; Janis Joplin; Run-DMC/Aerosmith Walk This Way; Michael Jackson; Nirvana; a more recent musical group of your choosing.

By midnight, July 25: Post answers of about 300 words to these two questions, using the readings from online #4 for evidence. 1) Agree or disagree: The nation's families have been falling apart over the past half century. 2) Have these artists expressed emotions, feelings that appealed to youth, or has their appeal been wider? What has that appeal been? Have their appeals shared a common denominator, a shared message or emotional appeal?

By midnight, July 27: Read and critique two answers.

## Essay #3

Submit to the site's digital drop box by July 30. Write a three-page essay (maximum of 1,000 words) on this question, using the readings from online assignment #4 as evidence: Has the U.S. family become weaker over the past half century, or simply more diverse?

#### Discussion #5

Read: Angelou, entire, and another (book-length) autobiography that describes the childhood of someone who grew up in the U.S.

By midnight, August 6: Post a condensed version (about 300 words) of your essay #4.

By midnight, August 8: Read and critique two answers.

#### Essay #4

Submit to the site's digital drop box by midnight, August 12. Write a three-page (maximum of 1,000 words) essay comparing some elements of Angelou's childhood with the childhood depicted in the other autobiography you read.

## **Assignments**

### **Discussion Assignments**

The instructor's evaluation of your five sets of online discussions will be worth twenty (25%) percent of your mark. The answers should be about 300 words in length. You are required to post both answers to the posed questions and then, two days after, critiques of two answers. Your critiques should consist of more than "Good job!" Try to offer feedback that will help the writer to create a stronger paper. Does the answer have a clear thesis that answers the question? Does the body of the essay stick to it? Does it provide evidence to back up the thesis? Are the paragraphs coherent, with topic sentences that speak to the thesis followed by particular pieces of evidence that back up the topic sentences? Is evidence handled effectively? Can you follow the argument and the prose? The critiques should be about 50-100 words in length and should identify specific strengths AND weaknesses. Focus on the clarity and coherence of the essays rather than whether or not you agree with their arguments. The instructor will also focus his feedback and grading on those elements of the online essays. The online essays will be worth about 2/3s of your online assignments, the critiques about 1/3.

Please be sure to critique answers that have not yet been critiqued. That way every answer should get one critique.

Feedback on your online assignments will be sent via Blackboard mail.

### **Essays**

Do not feel compelled to stake out an extreme position in your essays—online as well as longer ones. A strong thesis is usually a nuanced one that recognizes that many questions do not lend themselves to simple answers, to complete agreement or disagreement, for example. Do not exceed the word limit for the essays. All of your essays (including the shorter online ones) should incorporate primary sources if suitable ones are available.

Essays should be submitted to the assignment box in the site (it has a small ruler on its icon). Feedback will be sent through that section, under the “graded” option.

### **Grading Rubric**

The instructor will assess your work by considering three broad sets of characteristics:

- 1) **Argument.** Your essays should have a clear thesis statement that answers the question in their first paragraph. The body of the essay should stick to that thesis. An excellent thesis will be nuanced, will demonstrate awareness that there are multiple ways of addressing the question.
- 2) **Evidence.** Your essays should use evidence from the course assignments to support its thesis. That evidence should be drawn from multiple sources, including primary sources (sources generated by historical actors rather than by historians) if they are assigned. An excellent essay will provide context for the evidence it uses and will utilize a lot of evidence.
- 3) **Style.** Your essays should be clearly written and should be free from factual errors and distracting grammatical, typographical, and spelling errors. An excellent essay will use concise and direct prose and will feature well-organized paragraphs with clear topic sentences followed by evidence that supports them.

### **Late Policies**

I do not ordinarily accept late discussion assignments or final papers unless you arrange for an extension before the due date. Turning in an assignment even a few minutes late will mean receiving no credit for that assignment. Late 3-page essays will be penalized 50% if they are turned in within 24 hours of the due date, no credit if turned in after that point.

Compelling personal reasons are of course grounds for extensions, with no late penalty. These reasons must be spelled out in writing before the assignment is due, and the instructor is reluctant to grant more than two per term.

All assignments must be turned in by the day and time of the final assignment. Requests for the grade of incomplete must be received by the

day and time of the final exam, and such requests will not necessarily be granted. Students must have completed at least one half of the course work to receive an incomplete. If you are unable to keep up with the work of the course before completing 50% of the course work, you should withdraw from the course as soon as possible.

### **Plagiarism**

It is cheating to pass off the work of others as your own. This includes using the words of scholars without attribution (using quotation marks and indicating the source of the words) and using the words of your fellow students. Your instructor takes such violations of the ethical code very seriously and will penalize violators as severely as the university allows. Consequences can include failing the class and having the violation noted on your permanent university record.