

**HIST 4831/6831:  
History of the American Family  
Spring 2011, Online course**

**Course Syllabus**

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Mitchell 111  
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Office hours: Mondays, 11-12, and by appointment

**Course Description:**

This course will interrogate the history of diverse American families, paying particular attention to the roles of gender, race, and class in shaping family life. We will examine changing structures of power and authority within families, and the changing relationship between the family and the state. We will also consider how the emotional meaning ascribed to family relationships has changed over the course of American history.

This course has two primary goals: 1) Students will be able to describe the key changes in the American family since the colonial period, and will be able to articulate how social differences of race, class, and gender intersect with these transformations. 2) Students will practice reading and analyzing both primary and secondary texts. Students will gain experience interpreting primary sources in historical context. They will also consider historical evidence and argumentation in secondary texts.

**Books:**

The following books have been ordered at the University of Memphis Bookstore (though I encourage you to purchase them used, and at the cheapest price you can):

**REQUIRED:**

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (Vintage, 1991)

Harriet Jacobs and Jennifer Fleischner, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself: With Related Documents* (Bedford/St. Martins, 2009) (You may purchase any edition of this text, as long as it is unabridged.)

Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Mass Market Paperback, Dell, 1992)

Jason DeParle, *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation's Drive to End Welfare* (Penguin, 2005)

**RECOMMENDED:**

Steven Mintz, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (Free Press, 1989)

A number of required readings are also posted under "Content" on the course website.

**Overview of Assignments and Evaluation:**

Your grade will be calculated based on your performance on a range of assignments in this course. These are:

*Weekly quizzes, 100 points, due weekly*

*Participation in online discussion, 100 points, due weekly*

*Midterm paper, 200 points, due at 11:55 PM on Monday, March 12*

*Final paper, 300 points, due at 11:55 PM on Wednesday, April 25*

*Final exam, 300 points, due at 11:55 PM on Wednesday, May 2*  
*Extra credit, 30 points, part I due at 11:55 PM on Sunday, April 1, part II due at 11:55 PM on Sunday, April 22*

For a full description of and grading rubric for each assignment, please refer to the “Undergraduate Student Assignments” document under Course Content, Module 1.

You can earn a total of 1030 points in this course. Grades will be translated into letter grades on the following scale: A: 930-1030; A-: 900-929; B+: 870-899; B: 830-869; B-: 800-829; C+: 770-799; C: 730-769; C-: 700-729; D+: 670-699; D: 600-669; F: 0 -599

#### *Graduate Students:*

Graduate students are expected to complete all of the readings and assignments as the undergraduates (except for the final paper, which for graduate students will be longer and on a different topic). In addition, a separate list of graduate student readings and assignments is posted on the course website under Module 1 in the “Graduate Student Assignments” document.

#### **A note about technology:**

This course takes place entirely online. You should prepare your browser for use in this course by visiting <http://www.webjam.com/alcelearning/ecourseware> (scroll to browser preparation in the middle of the page). You should only take this course if you have regular access to a reliable computer and the internet and are a competent user of ecourseware, podcast central, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft Powerpoint. You should also be able to navigate webpages and surf the internet.

Even the most skilled user of technology, however, occasionally runs into technical difficulties. As a precautionary measure, I urge you to always complete your assignments in advance of the deadline so you have some leeway should you encounter technical problems. You should also always *save a copy of your work* just in case you should lose a document into the internet abyss. Be sure to save all of your papers to a USB drive, UMDrive, or the hard drive on a personal computer before posting them in the dropbox. Public computers, like those at the library, delete all files when you log out, so make sure you have a saved copy for yourself. You may also draft your discussion responses into Microsoft Word, save the document, and then cut and paste it into the discussion board.

If you do miss a deadline to submit a paper or project due to a technical difficulty and the dropbox is closed, email me your paper *immediately* and explain the problem. It will be at my discretion as to whether to accept the paper at all, and/or to penalize you for lateness by deducting points.

Should you encounter a problem using University of Memphis-supported software (which includes ecourseware, turnitin.com, and podcast central), you should contact the IT Helpdesk. Their phone number is 901.678.8888.

#### **Students with Disabilities:**

Any student who may need class or test accommodations based on the impact of a disability is encouraged to contact me to discuss your specific needs. Students with disabilities should also contact Student Disability Services (SDS) at 110 Wilder Tower, 678-2880. SDS coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

#### **Contract:**

We both have rights and responsibilities in this course.

#### **By taking this class you agree to:**

- Always be respectful to your colleagues and to me in all of our interactions, be they online, on the phone, or in person. We are on this intellectual journey together, and we will treat each other fairly and kindly to make this a rewarding experience for everyone. I will penalize rude or disrespectful behavior in the discussion portion of your grade and remove you from this class if necessary.
- Complete all assignments on time. I will not accept late weekly quizzes or discussion posts. For your midterm paper and final paper, I will deduct 10 points for every day the assignment is late.
- Adhere to the University of Memphis Code of Student Conduct regarding academic misconduct, which “defines academic misconduct as all acts of cheating, plagiarism, forgery and falsification.” For the details of this policy, please see the “University of Memphis Code of Student Conduct – Academic Dishonesty” online at <http://saweb.memphis.edu/judicialaffairs/dishonesty/definitions.htm>. For more information and for guidelines on how to appropriately cite materials written by other authors in your work, please see the History Department’s policy on academic misconduct ([http://history.memphis.edu/misconduct\\_policy.html](http://history.memphis.edu/misconduct_policy.html)) and the Department’s “Advice about plagiarism and using sources” ([http://history.memphis.edu/misconduct\\_plagiarism.html](http://history.memphis.edu/misconduct_plagiarism.html)). You should also feel free to talk to me if you have questions about my policies and expectations for the papers. If you commit academic dishonesty I will report the infraction.

**By teaching this class, I agree to:**

- Do my very best to make this course worth the time and energy you put into it.
- Pose interesting and meaningful questions that will challenge you to think critically and creatively about the material we are learning and will teach you the skills of an historian.
- Respect your opinions and listen to your feedback.
- Be available to answer your questions, provide prompt and constructive feedback on your work, and address your concerns to the best of my ability. I want to help you succeed in this course, so please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

**Ways to reach me:**

- Email: [spotter1@memphis.edu](mailto:spotter1@memphis.edu) or use the email inside ecourseware
  - These are the best ways to reach me. I check my email and ecourseware frequently throughout the week and will respond as quickly as I can to you. If you email outside of ecourseware, please be sure to write from your University of Memphis email account. Emails from other address might be filtered by the spam/junkmail filters, so I might not receive your message.
  - Please keep in mind that emails are professional correspondence, and should include a salutation (Dear or Hi Dr. Potter) and your reason for writing in complete, grammatically correct sentences. Emails should close with a “Thank you,” your name, and the number/name of this course.
- Phone: 901.678.1713
  - You may call or leave me a message in my office, but this is **NOT** the best way to reach me, particularly if you need to speak with me urgently. I am rarely in the office and often do not get these messages quickly.
- Office hours: I hold office hours every Monday from 11:00-12:00 PM during the semester, and by appointment.
  - You may reach me by phone during my office hours, or stop by to meet me in person at 111 Mitchell Hall. You may also email me to set up another time to talk on the phone or meet in person. I will accommodate your schedule as best I can.