

# Reproducing Inequalities: Families in Latin American History

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Milbank 325

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This course exams the history of Latin America, from the colonial period to the present, through the lens of family. In Latin America historically, family and kinship have been fundamental cultural categories, central to political power and economic activity, elite domination and plebeian survival, honor culture, the agrarian order, labor systems, entrepreneurship, and migration, among other social formations. This course will explore changing structures and meanings of family and how they intersect with these social formations in the Latin American past.

At least two dominant themes inform our exploration. The first is the enduring tension between “prescription” and “reality” in the history of families in Latin America. Prescriptive models espoused by the Catholic Church, the state, economic elites, and other societal authorities mandated the formation of patriarchal families based on formal, indissoluble, endogamous marriage, legitimate procreation, and careful control over female sexuality. Yet Latin American families have historically borne little relation to this model: marriage rates were often low, illegitimacy endemic, and female-headed households common. Why, historically, have so many families diverged so starkly from prescriptive norms? And what are the consequences of this divergence?

A second and related theme concerns the articulation of family with inequality. Latin American societies have been and continue to be characterized by some of the most dramatic economic and social disparities anywhere in the world. How have family practices and beliefs articulated with those disparities? How have they reproduced them? How have public policies targeted at social and economic modernization, development, and the reduction of poverty and inequality historically targeted family? With what results? It appears obvious that a course concerned with family will need to deal with gender, but why must it also necessarily deal with class and race?

As we probe these questions, our narrative will be roughly chronological, beginning with colonial society and ending with contemporary transnational families and households. Readings and lectures will cover such diverse topics as sexuality, children and childrearing, marriage and non-marriage, “official” and “vernacular” kinship, patriarchy and female headship. Ultimately, the purpose of the course is not simply to familiarize ourselves with the historical scholarship on families, but to think about how viewing Latin American history through the lens of family can enrich, complicate, or challenge our view of that history.

Along the way, we will also gain an understanding of how scholars study family. What sources and methods are available to family historians? How has historical scholarship defined “family” in the first place? And how have other disciplinary traditions approached

this subject? To assess this last question, our readings, especially for the twentieth century, will incorporate scholarship by anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, and political scientists. Note: Are you reading this syllabus? There's actually a reason professors give you syllabi. There is crucial information contained here, not just about assignments and due dates but also about how and why the course is organized as it is. If you are reading this, please send me an email with your favorite cookie in the subject heading.

Finally, in the last month or so of the course we consider contemporary legal trends, public policies, and social practices. Here the intention is not to leave the past behind: on the contrary, it is to think carefully about how the history we've traced continues to shape the present. This section of the course makes an implicit case for why history, and historical perspective, can be profoundly useful for contemporary social analysis.

This advanced lecture course presumes some background knowledge of Latin American history and society (such as W3661). If you feel you need additional background, consult John Charles Chasteen's succinct text, *Born of Blood and Fire*. I have noted which chapters of this book correspond roughly to our weekly readings in case you would like some background reading.

### **Required texts:**

There are no books for purchase for this course. All readings are in the form of articles and book chapters available through e-reserves and Courseworks class files. In general journal articles are on e-reserve and book chapters are on Courseworks, but not always. Please check BOTH LOCATIONS CAREFULLY before concluding that a reading is missing!

### **Course Format:**

This course will be a mixture of lecture and discussion. *Regular attendance and timely completion of reading assignments is essential to your success in this course.* The readings form the heart of this course, and exams and papers will be based on a critical understanding of and engagement with them. Note that the reading load is NOT especially heavy: earlier renditions of the course assigned as many as three articles per class meeting! The load has been slimmed down to one to two articles per meeting with the expectation this will allow you to read more comprehensively and carefully. Please take advantage of this fact.

In addition to actually *doing* the reading, it is expected you will participate in the classroom exchange of ideas. This is not, therefore, a "passive" lecture course but one that will require your active participation—not unlike a seminar. If you are shy and not a talker, this small course is an excellent opportunity to become more confident. Please come see me and we can discuss strategies to make this happen.

We will begin some class with a brief free-writing exercise. This exercise helps your brain to start working and also gives me a sense of whether people are doing the reading, and how well. If discussion lags or it's clear class participants are not doing readings, I reserve the right to institute additional assignments

## **Course Requirements and Evaluation:**

Your grade for the course will be based on the following assignments, which will be weighted as indicated:

Midterm Exam/ Oct 20: 25%  
Paper (8-10 pages)/ Dec 12: 25%  
Final Exam/ Dec 20 (projected): 25%  
Participation: 25%

- The midterm and final will ask you to synthesize and evaluate the contents of readings and lectures or to compare and contrast theoretical or methodological approaches exemplified in the readings.
- The paper will ask you to explore in greater depth one or more of the themes of the course. It is a “thought piece” and is not intended as a research paper.
- Exam dates and paper deadlines are *not negotiable*. Please ensure that you will be able to complete the work for this course in keeping with the dates specified on this syllabus. If you anticipate conflicts, *please do not take this course*. Cases of illness or personal emergency must be accompanied by verification from a dean. *The date of the final cannot be changed to accommodate end-of-the-semester travel; please do not make travel plans until you have verified the finals exam schedule.*
- “Participation” includes regular class attendance and oral participation. It also includes brief, informal reading responses administered in class that are designed to facilitate class discussion. If you miss class, you cannot make up these responses. If you are sick and miss a class, don’t worry about missing a response. If you consistently do not attend class and/or your reading responses suggest you have not done the reading carefully, your participation grade *will* be affected.

## **A brief but firm word on academic honesty:**

I have a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism. Suspected cases of academic dishonesty will not be dealt with “in-house”: they will be immediately forwarded to the relevant administrative authorities. Thus, violations will have serious consequences not only for your grade in the course but for your academic standing as well.

## **Graduate Students:**

Graduate students are welcome in this course. You will be given alternative course assignments; please make sure to clarify these with me in the first weeks of the semester.

Consult with your respective program on how to register for the course, as procedures may differ across programs.

***Abbreviations for readings schedule:***

**AHR:** American Historical Review

**EIAL:** Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina

**SMCL:** Asunción Lavrin ed. *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, U of Nebraska Press, 1989

**GWLAWW:** John French and Danny James, eds. *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers: From Household and Factory to the Union Hall and Ballot Box*. Duke U Press, 1997

**HHGS:** Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux, eds. *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State*, Duke U Press, 2000

**JFH:** Journal of Family History

**JSH:** Journal of Social History

**LSR:** Law and Society Review

## **Weekly Schedule of topics and readings**

### **Week 1**

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**Tuesday, Sept 6**                      **Introduction to the course**  
*Discuss course expectations and content.*

**Thursday, Sept 8**                      **A Brief History of Family History: Concepts and Methods**  
*Does family have a history? How have historians, and in particular scholars of the U.S. and Europe who have sent the agenda for this field, gone about conceptualizing it? How do we define “family” anyway? What sources, methods, and analytic frameworks characterize this field?*

**Steve Mintz and Susan Kellogg**, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life*, Appendix I: Historical Perspectives of the Family and Appendix II: The Language of Family History, 245-252

**Philippe Ariès**, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (1960). Excerpts.

### **Week 2**

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**Tuesday, Sept 13**                      **Family History in Latin America**  
*What is “family” in the Latin American context and how does this definition differ from the North American and European contexts? How have historians written about family? What can family teach us about society and social relations in Latin America in the past and present?*

**Nara Milanich**, “Whither Family History? A Road Map from Latin America,” *AHR* 112:2, April 2007, 439-458

**Thursday, Sept 15**                      **Adventures in Cross-Cultural Analysis: A Cautionary**  
*What is the criticism that Ahmed offers about Western feminists’ study of the harem? What cautionary can we draw from Ahmed’s critique for our evaluation of family in Latin America?*

**Leila Ahmed**, “Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem,” *Feminist Studies* 8: 3 (1982), 521–34

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**Week 3**    *Background: Chasteen, chapters 2 and especially 3*

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**Tuesday, Sept 20**                      **In-class exercise: Reading primary sources**  
*Today we will also do an in-class exercise. Read in advance the primary documents from Chile available on Courseworks.*

**Thursday, Sept 22**                      **Colonial Sexuality and Family: Norms vs Practices**  
*What legal, cultural, and religious norms governed family, gender and sexuality in colonial Latin America? What challenges did colonial society present to their enforcement?*

**Ann Twinam**, “Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America,” in *SMCL*

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**Week 4**    *Background: Chasteen, chapter 4*

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**Tuesday, Sept 27**                      **Family and the Colonial Management of Inequality**  
*How are class and racial hierarchies implicated in the persistent divergence between prescriptive norms and actual practices surrounding family? How and why did the crown seek to manage race and other forms of inequality by regulating family?*

**Susan Socolow**, “Acceptable Partners: Marriage Choice in Colonial Argentina, 1778-1810” in *SMCL*

**Thursday, Sept 29**                      **Families From Colonies to Republics**  
*What did independence mean for family structures and the role of family in society? How did the constitution of newly established independent republics remake, or reinforce, patriarchal relations of gender and generation?*

**Nara Milanich**, *Children of Fate: Childhood, Class and the State in Chile, 1850-1930*, Duke, 2009, chapter 1

**Tuesday, Oct 4****Family and Slavery in Brazil: Two Views**

*Today's readings present two views of master-slave relations in very different slave societies in Brazil. Both are broadly concerned with family, albeit very different dimensions: Graham explores the household and Schwartz godparentage. How does the concept of household differ from that of family, what is "fictive" kinship, and to what extent are these useful concepts for thinking about social relations of power in Brazil?*

**Sandra Lauderdale Graham**, *House and Street: The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro*, Texas, 1988. Excerpt: "The Social Landscape of House and Street."

**Stuart Schwartz**, "Opening the Family Circle: Godparentage in Brazilian Slavery" in *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery*, Illinois, 1992

**Thursday, Oct 6****Slavery, Emancipation, and Naming in Cuba**

*Today we continue our discussion of family and slavery, moving now to Cuba. How did family names mark slave status and "make" race in Cuba?*

**Michael Zeuske**, "Hidden Markers, Open Secrets: On Naming, Race-Marking, and Race-Making in Cuba," *New West Indian Guide/Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 76: 3-4, 2002: 211-41

**Tuesday, Oct 11****Family, Class, and the Nineteenth-Century State**

*How did elite kinship politics structure political and economic power in nineteenth-century Latin American societies? How did family constitute a resource for people of different social statuses? How has "family" constituted a form of class entitlement?*

**Nara Milanich**, "From Domestic Servant to Working-Class Housewife: Women, Labor, and Family in Chile," *E.I.A.L* 16:1, 2005

**Thursday, Oct 13****Female Headship in the 19th Century**

*How did capitalist modernization affect family structure and households? What is the significance of female-headed households in nineteenth-century Brazil? Does the existence of such households reflect women's autonomy—or their lack of bargaining power?*

**Elizabeth Kuznesof**, "The Role of the Female-Headed Household in Brazilian Modernization: 1765 to 1836," *JSH* 13:4, 1980, 589-613

## Week 7

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**Tues, Oct 18**

**NO CLASS MEETING. Study for exam.**

**Thursday, Oct 20**

**MIDTERM EXAM**

## Week 8

*Background: Chasteen, chapter 6*

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**Tuesday, Oct 25**

**Latter-Day “Family Values”: Modernizing Patriarchy**

*Our readings this week explore the “modernization” of patriarchy and political struggles over family in twentieth-century Latin America. How have modernizing states sought to shape families? In what ways are such efforts similar to or different from the endeavors of colonial or nineteenth-century authorities? How did family and gender come to assume meanings related to “modernity” and “development”?*

**Mary Kay Vaughan**, “Modernizing Patriarchy: State Policies, Rural Households, and Women in Mexico, 1930-1940” in *HHGS*

**Thomas Klubock**, “Morality and Good Habits: The Construction of Gender and Class in the Chilean Copper Mines” in *GWLAWW*

**Thursday, Oct 27**

**Gender, Race, Nation, and the Science of Reproduction**

*In this reading we consider the intersection of race, gender, nationhood, and eugenics. What do we learn about the family and its public functions by viewing it through the lens of eugenic science?*

**Alexandra Minna Stern**, “Responsible Mothers and Normal Children: Eugenics, Nationalism, and Welfare in Post-Revolutionary Mexico, 1920–1940.” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12:4, 1999: 369–97

## Week 9

*Background: Chasteen, chapter 7, 8*

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**Tuesday, Nov 1**

**Revolutionizing the Family?**

*How have revolutionary governments sought to reshape families? With what results?*

**Alfred Padula and Lois Smith**, *Sex and Revolution: Women in Socialist Cuba*, Oxford, 1996, Excerpts: chapter 12 (“Family and Revolution”) and chapter 13 (“Family Dynamics”), 144-167

**Thursday, Nov 3**

**Dictatorship: Sex and the State**

*What are Htun's conclusions about the relationship between democracy, dictatorship, and family policies? How do the analytic perspectives of a political scientist enrich our discussions of family? What's missing from this approach?*

**Mala Htun**, *Sex and the State: Abortion, Divorce, and the Family Under Latin American Dictatorships and Democracies*, Cambridge U Press, 2003, Excerpts: chapters 1 and 4

## Week 10

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**Tuesday, Nov 8**

**Election Day Holiday: VOTE!!!!!!**

**Thursday, Nov 10**

**Resisting Dictatorship: The Politicization of Family Roles**

*How do family roles become politicized? How have women used their prescribed status as wives and mothers to mobilize in the public sphere? With what results?*

**Marysa Navarro**, "The Personal is Political: Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo," in *Power and Popular Protest*, Susan Eckstein, ed, California, 1989

## Week 11

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**Tuesday, Nov 15**

**Children and Circulation: The Local and the Global**

*Child circulation—the rearing of children in non-natal households—is a long-standing cultural practice in many Latin American societies. How do family practices reflect “survival strategies” in contexts of poverty and inequality? How do local, national, and international norms of child welfare and childrearing interact? With what consequences for children and families in local communities?*

**Claudia Fonseca**, "Inequality Near and Far: Adoption as Seen from the Brazilian Favelas." *LSR* 36: 2, 2002, 397-432

**Thursday, Nov 17**

**Deprivation and Sentiment**

*One of the classic debates in family history revolves around the issue of parental sentiment. Simply put, this debate asks, “Were children objects of love and care in the past as they are now?” Anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes’ controversial examination of maternal sentiment among impoverished slum-dwellers in contemporary northeast Brazil implicitly revisits this debate. In what ways does it answer this question—or pose new ones?*

**Nancy Scheper-Hughes**, “M(O)ther Love: Culture, Scarcity, and Maternal Thinking” in *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*, California, 1989, 340-99



## Week 12

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**Tuesday, Nov 22**

### **Female Headship Revisited**

*Much recent development literature has emphasized the impact of neoliberal economic policies on family structure. In particular, social scientists have studied the role of this economic model in fomenting the “feminization of poverty” and female-headed households. What social and ideological aspects of female headship are new? In what ways does contemporary female headship recapitulate older patterns?*

**Helen Safa**, “Free markets and the marriage market: structural adjustment, gender relations, and working conditions among Dominican women workers,” *Environment and Planning* 31, 1999, 291-304

**Thursday, Nov 24**

**Thanksgiving: No class**

## Week 13

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*Background: Chasteen, chapters 9,10*

**Tuesday, Nov 29**

### **The Maternalization of Anti-Poverty Programs**

**Maxine Molyneux**. “Mothers at the Service of the New Poverty Agenda: Progres/Oportunidades, Mexico’s Conditional Transfer Programme.” *Social Policy & Administration* 40:4 (2006): 425–49.

**Thursday, Dec 1 Where are the Fathers?: The Politics of “Responsible Paternity”**

*Historically, public policy has treated “family” as synonymous with women and children. This week we consider how and why fathers have become increasingly central to social policy and public discourse in Latin America. To what extent are the tensions between social and biological definitions of paternity explored in nineteenth-century Chile (week 4) still with us?*

**Claudia Fonseca**, “Following the Path of DNA Paternity Tests in Brazil,” in *Reproduction Globalization, and the State*, Carole Browner, ed. Duke, 2011

## Week 14

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*Background: Chasteen, chapter 11*

**Tuesday, Dec 6**

### **Transnational Families and Households**

*We might think of households and families as spatially fixed, but in fact they can span continents and hemispheres. How has the experience of transnational migration among Latin American migrants altered or reinforced the familial practices we have discussed thus far? How might transnational migration alter the working definitions of family history? Or do aspects of this apparently unprecedented phenomenon in fact recapitulate patterns and practices we have already encountered?*

**Ninna Nyberg Sorensen and Luis Guarnizo**, “Transnational Family Life across the Atlantic: The Experience of Colombian and Dominican Migrants in Europe” in *Living Across Worlds: Diaspora, Development and Transnational Engagement*, Sorensen, ed, IOM, 2007

**Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila**, “I’m Here, but I’m There”: The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood in *Women and Migration in the U.S-Mexico Borderlands: A Reader*, Denise Segura and Patricia Zavella eds., Duke, 2007

**Thursday, Dec 8**

**Last Day**

*Final discussion/summation; discussion of final exam*

**\*Final Paper: Monday, December 12 by 5pm to my office\***

*Please turn in a hard copy.*

**\*Final Exam: Tuesday, December 20, 9am-noon (PROJECTED DATE)\***