

Short course: Queer Families in Global Perspective

Instructor: Prof. Sara Friedman (Indiana University)

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Department: Dept. of Sociology, National Taiwan University
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Course Description

How do we define our families and the meaning of family ties? Who do we count as kin? How do our definitions compare with those instituted by governments, medical professionals, or cultural or religious communities around the world? This course examines the diversification of family in our contemporary era through the lens of queer family formation. It asks how different configurations of gender, sexual orientation, class, race and ethnicity, religion, and nationality affect how we create family, the significance of family ties, and the varied kinds of work that families do in our world today. We will also investigate how the spread of assisted reproductive technologies has transformed the significance of blood, bio-genetic relatedness, and heterosexual sex for family reproduction and demographic anxieties. The course covers diverse perspectives on the practices of “making” and “doing” family, and it introduces different theoretical and methodological approaches for understanding queer families.

Course Objectives

- to develop proficiency in speaking knowledgeably about issues related to family, reproduction, gender, and sexuality;
- to understand how family shapes global conversations about rights, resources, recognition, and inequality and what consequences those conversations have for gender and sexual minorities;
- to understand the relevance of interdisciplinary analysis for studying family diversity around the world

Assignments and Grading

1. Attendance and Participation (**30%**): You will be graded on your contribution to class discussion and evidence of having completed and digested the readings Most weeks will also require a short reading response submitted in advance of the class.
2. Analytic essay (**30%**): Following class 3, you will submit a short essay (3 pages) that analyzes a set of class readings. **Due March 17th**

3. Final essay and class presentation (**40%**): The final essay will be in the form of a family history that integrates class insights into your personal family history. You will be required to make a short presentation of key findings to the class during Class 5. **Final essay due April 3rd.**

Class Schedule

February 24: Class One: Setting terms: Kinship theory, kinwork, and doing family

Required readings:

- 1) Josh Gamson, "Introduction: Impertinent Questions." *Modern Families: Stories of Extraordinary Journeys to Kinship*, pp. 1-17.
- 2) Kath Weston, "Exiles from Kinship" in *Families We Choose*, pp. 21-41.

Recommended readings:

Janet Carsten, "What Kinship Does – and how". Pp. 245-51

March 3: Class Two: Normativity debates (In-class activity: category mapping exercises)

Required readings:

- 1) Duggan, Lisa. 2002. "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism." pp. 175–94.
- 2) Brainer, Amy. 2021. "Lesbian and Gay Parents, Heterosexual Kinship, and Queer Dreams: Making Families in Twenty-First Century Taiwan." *Positions* 29(3): 633-656.

Recommended readings:

Chen, Jung. 2024. "We are family: Taiwanese gay fathers' strategic normalisation decision-making in transnational reproduction." *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 19(3): 137–153.

Mizielińska, Joanna and Agata Stasińska. 2018. "Beyond the Western Gaze: Families of Choice in Poland." *Sexualities* 21(7): 983–1001.

Rubin, Gayle. 2006. "Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries." In *The Transgender Studies Reader*, eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, 471–81. London: Routledge.

White, Melissa Autumn. 2013. "Ambivalent Homonationalisms: Transnational Queer Intimacies and Territorialized Belongings." *Interventions* 15(1): 37-54.

March 10: Class Three: Queer family-making and relatedness: blood, choice, technology

Required readings:

- 1) Chen, Jung. 2024. "Taiwanese gay fathers' queer family making: Towards a temporal-relational path." *LGBTQ+ Family: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 20 (1): 35-54
- 2) Gamson, Josh. *Families: Stories of Extraordinary Journeys to Kinship*. Read one or both of the following: "Birth Control" (pp. 83-107) and/or "Queer Conceptions" (pp. 171-202)

Recommended readings:

Wei, Wei. 2021. "Queering the Rise of China: Gay Parenthood, Transnational ARTs, and Dislocated Reproductive Rights." *Feminist Studies* 47(2): 312-340

Clare, Stephanie. 2019. "Reimagining Biological Relatedness: Epigenetics and Queer Kin." *Signs* 45(1): 51-73.

Riggs, Damien W. et al, "Transreproduction: TransMasculine and Non-Binary People Negotiating Conception," pp. 1-3.

March 17: No class, Analytic essay due by 5pm via email. Please attach as a Word file and send to slfriedm@iu.edu

March 24: Class Four: Law, Recognition, and Justice

Required readings:

- 1) Mamo, Laura. 2018. "Queering Reproduction in Transnational Bio-Economies." *Reproductive BioMedicine and Society Online* 7, 24-32.
- 2) Friedman, Sara L. and Chao-ju Chen. 2023. "Same-sex Marriage Legalization and the Stigmas of LGBT Co-parenting in Taiwan." *Law and Social Inquiry* 48(2): 660-688.

Recommended readings:

Smietana, Marcin. 2025. "Italy faces backlash over surrogacy and LGBTQ+ families," May 19. *BioNews* 1289. https://www.progress.org.uk/newsletter_issue/bionews-1289/

Franchi, Marina and Giulia Selmi. 2020. "Same-Sex Parents Negotiating the Law in Italy: Between Claims of Recognition and Practices of Exclusion." In M. Digoix (ed.), *Same-Sex Families and Legal Recognition in Europe*, pp. 73-93.

Harder, Lois. 2021. "How Queer!? Canadian Approaches to Recognizing Queer Families in the Law." *Whatever: A Transdisciplinary Journal of Queer Theories and Studies* 4: 303-328

March 31: Class Five: Queer Families and Demographic Anxieties - In-class short presentation of family history

Required readings:

- 1) Silvia De Zordo, Diana Marre & Marcin Smietana. 2022. "Demographic Anxieties in the Age of 'Fertility Decline.'" *Medical Anthropology* 41(6-7): 591-599
- 2) Jhang, JhuCin Rita. 2024. "Assisted Reproductive Act Amendment: The Testing Ground for the New Taiwanese Parliament's Power Dynamics." *Taiwan Insight*, February 2.

Recommended readings:

Huang, Yu-Ling, and Chia-Ling Wu. 2018. "New Feminist Biopolitics for Ultra-low-fertility East Asia." In Adele Clarke and Donna Haraway, eds. *Making Kin Not Population*. Pp. 125-144.

April 3rd: Final essay due by 6pm. Submitted to professor's email as a Word attachment (slfriedm@iu.edu)