

21A230<THIRD WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

This assignment is an exercise to get you to think comprehensively about policy-making and families. You are to construct a model of a much better, or perfect, family system for the U.S., to come about by the year 2007. What, in your opinion, would the most optimal family system look like?

The concept of “family system” refers to the system made up of present-day families, including the opinions held by the majority of citizens about families as they ought to be. Of course none of us has full knowledge about every aspect of either actual families or what people think would be ideal families. Don’t worry about the incompleteness of your knowledge, just begin your discussion of present-day families and Americans’ notions about ideal families by saying something like “the following is my impression of what the present-day family system in the U.S. looks like, and what the majority of Americans believe families ought to look like.”

International students: don’t worry that you know less than native-born Americans; if you use the class readings you’ll do fine.

The bulk of your paper will be an assessment of what needs to be changed in families currently—a critique of the present-day family system. Because you’ll discuss the main faults, shortcomings, and defects of our current system (including what’s wrong with Americans’ notions of the ideal family), your critique will constitute the backdrop for your proposed model of a much better, if not perfect, family system.

Your model of a better, or optimal family system should include descriptions of:

1. The major structural changes required to bring about your much-improved or perfect family system.
2. The important cultural changes required to ensure that a majority of people freely accept, value, and are willing to make sacrifices to maintain this utopian family system.
3. A brief description of how these changes would be instituted—how they would come about. In the schools? In the mass media? In the legislature? Through the efforts of elected officials like the president? In other institutions? If you include legislation, remember that it can be state or municipal as well as federal.

While you don’t have to cite sources when describing your much-improved/utopian family system (you may, though), you do need to cite sources during the part of your paper describing and critiquing the present-day family system.

Don’t worry about the impossibility of bringing such changes to pass in 2 years. The deadline is set at 2007 so you won’t spend too much time predicting what the country will be like.

Your model needs to be internally consistent and logical. The changes you make must be consistent with the information you have acquired in this class about families in the U.S. at present. That is, if you arrange for all mothers (or fathers) to be at home taking care of their children up to age 14, then you must discuss the implications of this change regarding family income, husband-wife interaction, etc.

Discuss the larger context. Do not speak exclusively of individual nuclear families as if each one were an island in the ocean, unconnected to the larger society.

It's OK if your model seems unlikely to come about. However, your model must be possible. For example, you cannot build in Martian day-care providers or solve problems by having the federal government award each family \$100,000 per child.

Your model does not have to be of the "one-size-fits-all" type. However, if you include more than one model, you must describe each one comprehensively.

You should provide some discussion of how your model accommodates families in different social classes, minimally the middle and working classes. Extra points if you include the upper classes and the extremely poor (sometimes called the underclass, or the "truly disadvantaged").

7+ pp.

Please cite at least six class readings in your exposition.

Handed out: April 13

Due in class: May 4

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