

Soc496H1F
Households, Inhabitation, and Free Time
Department of Sociology, University of Toronto
Fall 2014

Time/Location: Tuesday 12:00 – 2:00pm, Sid Smith Hall, room 1078
Course website: <https://portal.utoronto.ca>
Instructor: Brent Berry, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology
Email: brent.berry@utoronto.ca
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4:00pm & also by appointment
Rm366 at Sociology Dept (725 Spadina Ave)

Summary

A 400-level special topics course is an opportunity for faculty to explore topics with students that don't fit neatly into existing categories.

We will first read and discuss several pieces that problematize contemporary life, focusing on problems with how free time is spent. Free time, often called leisure time, is spare time available for activities that you enjoy. It excludes time spent doing work, domestic chores, personal care, education, and sleeping. It is hard to discuss free time without discussing what constrains it. We will learn that lives, on average, are more work-centric than ever, with attention divided between various roles in ever more complex ways, affecting the quality and quantity of free time.

A number of observers raise concerns about the quantity and qualities of free time. Skidelsky and Skidelsky (2012) emphasize how capitalism has failed to return surplus free time to workers, instead creating a work centric life of insatiable consumer wants that keeps traditional notions of the “good life” out of reach. Hunnicutt (2013) suggests that a kind of collective amnesia has simply forgotten that free time was once core to the American Dream. Morozov (2013) reviews modern and post-modern views of distraction and information overload during free time, undermining capacity for uninterrupted contemplation. Gray (2011) and Henrick (2014) raise concerns about the loss of free time play for both children and adults.

The second part of the course is about how problems of free time manifest in aspects of home life and common household practices and habits we engage in at home.

Online and screen time at home

The growing prominence of “screen time” during leisure is largely confined to interiorized spaces at home, impacting physical activity, family relationships, and social activity outside the home (Putnam 1995; Berry 2007; Mesch 2009). Social class differences in how free time is structured for children has important implications for lifetime stratification and inequality (Lareau 2000, 2002)

Busyness, Gender, and work-life balance

The experience of free time varies by family, gender, and age. The most sizable body of research examines gender differences in the work-life balance for parents with young children, seeing how free time alone and with family are compromised and unequal. What are the free time costs of children, and how does the quantity and quality of free time vary

when work schedules are more flexible (Golden 2008), when childcare is available, and as children grow. How do parents identify quality free time. Our selective readings cannot do justice to this expansive literature.

Food Choice and Shared Meals during free time

Reductions in the quantity and quality of free time, along with changes households and in the food industry, have significantly affected food choices and shared meals at home. We will review what has happened as work has spilled over into food choices at home and the sociability of meals.

Household Type and Free Time: Going Solo, Coupled, or Married with Children

The type of household we live in, and the relationships we have with household members influences our free time choices. We will examine how free time varies for singletons versus other household types. What are the implications of household for important free time activities like cultural participation, civic involvement, and territorial functioning?

The Community Question and Housing Adaptations: Seeking More Fulfilling Free Time in the Ownership Society

We will conclude by speculating how homeownership, conspicuous consumption, and the rise of the “ownership society” have contributed to the free time problems. As a counter-movement critical of the limitations of contemporary community and conventional ownership restrictions, cohousing offers purposive social interaction. We will also discuss the rise of collaborative consumption and its influence on free time, as well as other intentional communities that seek alternative housing and household arrangements.

Evaluation

Grades are based on three components. First, class attendance and participation are worth 15% of your final grade. Second, each student is asked to submit a 1-2 page reaction papers (500 words) no later than 5pm the day before class. These reaction papers are worth 30% of your final grade. The remaining 55% of your grade is a research paper on an approved topic. Papers are due near the end of the semester. Choice of paper topics will be discussed the second week of class.

Readings

The readings are listed below. Some are directly available from the internet as web-links or e-books, others are posted in the “course materials” folder on our Portal webpage.

Email and the Course Webpage

In my courses, email and the ability to access the course webpage is important. I will use e-mail for reminders, clarifications, notifications, etc. Feel free to contact me via your utoronto e-mail account if you have any questions.

Accessibility Needs

If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/> as soon as possible.

Deadlines for Submitting Projects

Late work will not be accepted without proper documentation from a student's physician or college registrar.

Plagiarism

Cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offense face serious penalties. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly: practices acceptable in high school may prove unacceptable in university. Know where you stand by reading the "Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters" in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Comments on Writing

I encourage you to use the university's writing resources, which are described on their website. Subject to available time, the instructor is willing to read over drafts of your work during visits to office hours. I can help you more if you come early. All too often, students' papers are one or two drafts short of excellence when time expires.

Schedule

Sept 9 Introduction and Overview to the Course

Sept 16. Free Time Problems: Capitalism and Consumption

Readings:

- Keynes. 1930. "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren" Essay
- Skidelsky and Skidelsky. 2012. "In Praise of Leisure." Chronicle of Higher Education
- Kaplan. 2013. "The gospel of consumption" Orion Magazine

Sept 23. Free Time Problems: Historical Origins

Readings:

- Hunnicutt, Benjamin. 2013. *Free time: the forgotten American Dream*. Temple University Press [select chapters]

Sept 30. Free Time Problems: Compromised Attention, Household Relationships, Sedentary Lifestyle, and Interiorization of Life

Readings:

- Berry. 2007. "Disparities in Free Time Inactivity.."
- Mesch. 2009. "Family Relations and the Internet"
- Morozov. 2013. "Only Disconnect: Two Cheers for Boredom" (New Yorker piece)
- Putnam, Robert. 1995. "Tuning in, tuning out."

Oct 7. Free Time Problems: The Nature of Play

Readings:

- Gray, Peter. 2011. Decline of Play and the Rise of Psychopathology in Children and Adolescents
- Henricks, Thomas. 2014. Play as self-realization
- Lareau, Annette. 2000. Social Class and the Daily Lives of Children
- Lareau, Annette. 2002. Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childbearing in Black and White Families

Oct 14. Free Time Problems: The Nature of Time – Political and Cross-Cultural Perspectives

Readings:

- Bergmann, Werner. 1992. The Problem of Time in Sociology
- Clancy, Craig. 2014. The politics of temporality: autonomy, temporal spaces and resoluteness
- Raybeck, Douglas. 1992. The coconut-shell clock

Oct 21. Free Time Problems: Work-Life Balance and Family Free Time

Readings:

- Craig and Mullan. 2012 Australian fathers work and family time in comparative and temporal perspective.
- Craig and Sawrikar. 2009. Work and family: how does the (gender) balance change as children grow?
- Mattingly and Sayer. 2006. Under pressure: gender differences in the relationship between free time and feeling rushed.
- Roxburgh. 2006. “I wish we had more time to spend together...” The distribution and predictors of perceived family time pressures among married men and women.

Oct 28. Free Time Problems: Work-Life Balance and Adaptations in Family Life

Readings:

- Brown. 2011. Labouring for leisure? Achieving work-life balance through compressed working weeks.
- Hill, Tranby, Kelly, and Moen. 2013. Relieving the time squeeze? Effects of a white-collar workplace change on parents.
- Schieman and Young. 2014. Who engages in work-family multitasking?
- Craig and Powell. 2013. Non-parental childcare, time pressure, and the gendered division of paid work, domestic work and parental childcare

Nov 4. Time Scarcity and Family Food Choices: Finding Time for Shared Meals

Readings:

- Devine, et al. 2003. Sandwiching it in: spillover of work onto food choices and family roles in low- and moderate-income urban households.
- Jabs and Devine. 2006. Time scarcity and food choices: an overview
- Skafida. 2013. The family meal panacea: exploring how different aspects of family meal occurrence, meal habits and meal enjoyment relate to young children's diets.
- "The Magic of the family meal" Time Magazine. June 12, 2006.

Nov 11. Household and Free Time: Going Solo, Coupled, and Married with Children

Readings:

- Klinenberg, Eric. 2012. Going Solo: the extraordinary rise and surprising appeal of living alone. Penguin Press. [select chapters]
- Kraaykamp, van gils, and Ultee. 2008. Cultural participation and time restrictions: explaining the frequency of individual and joint cultural visits.

Nov 18 – fall break (no class)

Nov 25 – Free Time Problems: The Role of Homeownership and Disassociated Community

Projects due today!

Readings:

- Arai and Pedlar. 2003. Moving beyond individualism in leisure theory: a critical analysis of concepts of community and social engagement.
- Edwards, Mark. 2001. Home ownership, affordability, and mothers' changing work and family roles.
- Lauster. 2010. "Housing and the proper performance of American motherhood, 1940-2005."
- Williams. 2005. "Designing neighbourhoods for social interaction: the case of cohousing"

Dec 2. Housing Adaptations to Address Free Time Problems

Readings:

- Chiodelli and Baglione. 2014. Contextualizing cohousing within the global phenomenon of private residential communities
- Sargisson. 2012. Cohousing: a modern utopia?
- Todd. 2013. The 'Lacking' Narrative: Why intentional community members choose to live a more demanding lifestyle.
- "How the trailer park could save us all" PS Magazine 2013