

Centre for the Study of Social Systems
School of Social Sciences
Systems of Family and Kinship

Course No.:- SS623N

PhD optional: 2023

Credit: 4 (2 credits for term paper; 2 credits for Presentations)

Course teacher:- Amit Kumar Sharma

The course seeks to impart a theoretically grounded and methodologically nuanced understanding of the Systems of family and Kinship in the global Village today. It begins with the argument that family, marriage and kinship are not naturally given but culturally constructed. The key principles, basic concepts as well as classical theories to the study of Family and kinship will be discussed and critiqued, based on ethnographies of various communities in the world. Problems of theorization due to structural functional and regional variations in family, kinship and marriage 'system,' or the lack of it will be closely examined. The institution of family and household will be critically examined in terms of its structures, processes and gender relations. The emerging dimensions of family life, conjugality and kinship networks in contemporary India will be a challenging learning task of this course, given the diverse academic training of the students.

Course contents

I. Sociology of Family and Kinship

- A. Sociological approach-DHJ Morgan, AM Shah, TN Madan
- B. Anthropological approach- Claude Levi Strauss, Meyer Fortes, Jack Goody
- C. Cultural approach- David Schneider, Ostor et al, Ronald Inden and Ralph Nicholas.
- D. Psychological approach- PH Prabhu, Sudhir Kakar, Durganand Sinha
- E. Biological approach- E.O. Wilson, Robin Fox, Marshall Sahlins

2. Family and Household

- A. Structure
- B. Process
- C. Functions
- D. Changing Dimensions today

3. Marriage and kinship

- A. Regional Variation
- B. Cultural Variation
- C. Economic Dimensions
- D. Conjugal Politics

4. Family, Marriage and Social structure

- A. Caste, Tribe and peasantry (Beteille)
- B. Class
- C. Gender
- D. Religion
- E. Law
- F. Technology and popular culture

5. Contemporary dimensions of family and kinship in the age of digital capitalism in the 21st century

- A. Migration and adaptation
- B. Inter-and-intra generation tensions
- C. New forms of mating, marriage and households
- D. Problems of socialization
- E. Rise of tensions, ego clashes and dysfunctional family life and kinship

Core Readings

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