URES 197 – Project description

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Department and Discipline SOAN / Sociology

Brief Description of the Project:

**Who's Watching TV's Children? The Presentation of Child Care Arrangements on Television**

In this project, we will analyze the child care arrangements that have been portrayed in a sample of family television dramas of the last four decades, comparing these portrayals to real-life counterparts. Students will be quantitatively coding the programs using largely archival data about the shows (from the internet and published sources). This involves looking at specific variables such as parental occupation and type of child care for a larger sample of television programs. Second, we will select a smaller sample of shows (based on availability) and qualitatively coding the programs for their social construction of child care (that is, we will watch the shows carefully for repeated themes related to various child care arrangements and problems).

Requirements (e.g. hours per week, student abilities, etc):

For three URES credits, the student is expected to work nine hours a week. We will have one research team meeting a week with all team members involved (this will probably be last 1-2 hours). At the beginning of the semester, we may spend more time working together, but as we progress, you will be working more and more independently on the project (watching the shows, coding data, writing research memos, etc.). I expect each student to prepare a separate paper; potential topics within the research project include historical portrayals of family arrangements on television, parental occupations as related to types of child care, child care “dilemmas” faced on television and how they are solved, etc.). I expect students to present papers publicly in some forum on or off campus.

I am looking for students with attention to detail and excellent writing skills. Experience with qualitative social science research (ethnography, content analysis, observations) is highly desirable. Familiarity with televisions programs is not necessary, but desirable.