Family: Private versus Public

- What is the traditional definition of a family?
- How was/is it confined to the private and public spheres?
- Who do we let in to the private sphere of the family? Doctors? Teachers?
- When does the state intervene in a family unit? Is it better not to have the state involved?
- When should a family make its own decisions about how to raise a child?
- Why are police ambivalent about taking domestic abuse calls?
- Is it therefore a fiction that the family is private?

Referring to Dorothy Robert’s article, “Punishing Drug Addicts who have Babies: Women of Color, Equality, and the Right of Privacy”

- Do crack-addicted mothers face racist/discriminatory punishments?
- Why is crack targeted?
- Should someone’s health problem (e.g., an addiction) be considered criminal?
- How does one’s race and economic standing affect one’s likelihood of being jailed for a substance abuse during pregnancy?
- Does this value the unborn child above the mother? How does this parallel the policy that slave children before and after birth were considered more important than the mother?

Dividing the work of the family

- What are the basic tasks required to maintain a family?
- How is society set up to divide these tasks by gender? What does society consider to be the “natural” division of work?
- How is the division of labour justified?
- Are women more prone to raise the children and clean because they are “naturally” more skilled? What kind of ‘cycle of inadequacy’ does this promote among men?
- What expectations do mothers create for themselves? What expectations are placed on them by society? Spouses? Other mothers?
- Why do men earn more money? How does a man’s mobility differ from a mother’s?
- Why was the “living wage” created?
- Should employers pay their employee as well as his/her spouse for the work s/he does in the house?
- How does one’s last name represent patriarchy?
- How are women more financially damaged by a divorce than are men? How do women’s fears about divorcing/becoming a single-mother affect their decisions to submit to their spouse’s wishes?
- How do the law courts perpetuate this fear?

Referring to Jennifer Saul’s article, “Politics of Work and Family”

- How does a child’s socialization affect his understanding of parent roles?
- Is it possible to overcome one’s socialization?
• Why do dads need encouragement? Do they?
• How does learned incompetence around family chores affect division of labour between partners?
• Where does the idea of “mamacita” (little Mama, in Spanish) come from? Does it relate to the idea that the little girl is undoubtedly going to grow up to be in a heterosexual relationship and bear children?

Referring to Lisa Dodson’s book, Don’t Call Us Out of Name
• What happens to one’s childhood when a child becomes a “mother’s helper”?
• Why is the experience of poor American mothers “hidden”?
• How does sisters’ assumption of mothering responsibilities affect male siblings?
• Why don’t more sons take on mothering responsibilities in the home?
• What are the consequences for boys, whose mothers do not hold the same household expectations for them as for their sister(s)?
• What things do children take for granted?
• According to Dodson, how is socialization – of being reared in a poor, minority, and or abusive household – internalized? What social consequences result for the mother’s helpers?
• How does the idea of betrayal factor into a child’s ability to leave home and further pursue an education or a career away from the family unit?
• How does the overwhelmingly white, middle class university environment affect a student coming from the backgrounds described on pages 14-49 of Don’t Call Us?

Balancing Inequalities
• Is childcare a solution for families where one parent is otherwise forced to quit a job? Why/why not?
• How can we make childcare egalitarian?
• How do a parent’s anxieties of “not doing it right” manifest and affect child rearing?