

MYTHS OF THE FAMILY CONFERENCE SLATED FOR MARCH



The MARIAL Center is planning a spring conference to explore myths of the modern family. The meeting, to be held March 30 and 31, will feature speakers who will address myths of family life that exist in culture and history, the media, religion, and advertising.

Noted author Stephanie Coontz, who has written five myth-busting books on family history, is scheduled to speak. Coontz teaches family studies and history at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, and is the director of research and public education at the Council on Contemporary Families. Her books include *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy, or How Love Conquered Marriage*; *American Families: A Multicultural Reader*; and the award-winning best-seller *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*.

MARIAL Center Director Bradd Shore said the conference will provide “an overall assessment of myths of the family.” Speakers will address “not the family we live in, but the mythic family of expectations and ideals,” Shore added. “The question is where do these myths come from?” he said.

“We live in a society in which there are very specific institutions whose job it is to pump myths out. We have media. We have advertising. We have art. So the idea was to survey a variety of different sources of family myths.”

Planning began several months ago, when MARIAL fellows divided into six working groups and generated a list of possible speakers for such topics as popular culture, historical and cultural myths of the family, religion and family myths, the commercial basis of family myths, and exporting of the American family ideal.

Other confirmed speakers at press time include Barbara Fiese, a psychology professor at Syracuse University and director of the Family Research Lab; Penny Edgell, director of the Religion and Family Project at the University of Minnesota; Mary Ann Watson, professor of telecommunications at Eastern Michigan University and expert on the history of television; Lynn Schofield Clark, assistant research professor at the University of Colorado and director of the Teens and the New Media @ Home Project; and Ann Marie Leshkovich, a sociocultural anthropologist at College of the Holy Cross whose research focuses on gender, economic development, globalization, and fashion in Vietnam. ■

MARIAL
The Emory Center for

Myth and Ritual in American Life



A Sloan Center for Working Families

Phone: 404.727.3440
Email: marial@learnlink.emory.edu
Fax: 404.712.9520
www.marial.emory.edu



EMORY

Emory Center for Myth and Ritual
in American Life
Emory University
Briarcliff Campus
Suite 413E
Atlanta GA 30322



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