In the first two modules of this class, we have given special attention to the development of gender norms that emphasize gender role specialization (Talcott Parsons and Robert Bales); the specific social conditions of the 1950s that supported gender role specialization (Stephanie Coontz); the continuing impact of the older gender norms on families, (e.g., Arlie Hochschild, Kathleen Gerson, Brigid Schulte). Older gender norms have been especially challenging for families as broad social support for caretaking work (in the form of the stay-at-home mother) has declined since the 1950s. As Hochschild, Gerson, and Schulte have shown, older gender norms often remain part of family life, even as the material foundations for these norms weaken. In this essay, explain why it is important to understand the ideology of gender role specialization in social context. What greater insights into family dynamics might be gained from taking a sociological perspective on gender role norms? How might a family benefit from a more flexible understanding of gender norms? In the body of your essay, you should address the following issues: How Parsons and Bales’ study of the family contributed to our understanding of families in socio-economic context; Why Parsons and Bales specifically thought gender role specialization would be the best way to organize families, especially as a way to stabilize adult relations; What made it possible for most families to adhere to this style of organization in the 1950s and 1960s (Coontz); What social changes made this style of family organization less feasible for most families (Coontz and Hochschild); What are the consequences for families (esp. the “stabilization of adult relations”) when gender ideologies justify significant inequalities in adult partners’ contribution to family life (Hochschild, Schulte) OR adult partners adopt more flexible gender norms in creating their family life (Hochschild, Gerson) Make sure your essay includes a discussion of the work of the three major scholars we have covered so far: Parsons/Bales, Coontz, and Hochschild. References to Schulte or Gerson can be used for supporting evidence. Review the supporting materials posted in the Midterm I module on B-course. Note that this essay is NOT a criticism of male breadwinner/female caretaker families. Rather, we are looking at social and economic factors that have made this arrangement less feasible for many families. Contemplation of these issues is also a way to understand some of the unnecessary stresses placed on home life if we as a society do not truly value and support the caretaking work done within families. Submission Guidelines Your essay should be about 1500 words in length, typed and double-spaced. Word count should be posted on the top left side of your essay. You may go over the word limit by another 150 words (1650 total), but we will deduct points if essays exceed 1650 words. Essays are to be submitted online under the “Assignments” section on b-course. Please submit attachments in either WORD or PDF format (we cannot open other formats, e.g., “Pages”. If WORD or PDF formats are not available to you, you may paste your essay into the text section on the Assignments page The essays are due Tuesday, February 18. Grading Criteria In terms of grading, the readers and I will want to see a clear central argument and evidence of learning. Essays are very much an “exam” in that we are specifically looking for references to ideas and facts from the class readings and lectures. Think strategically about this assignment to show what you have learned since the start of this semester. By “clear central argument”, we are looking for such things as an identifiable thesis statement in the beginning of the essay; use of evidence to support sub-themes that are related to your main thesis in the body of your letter; use of transitions and development of links so we can see how your argument holds together; a conclusion that gives us a deeper understanding of the initial argument presented in your introduction. By evidence of learning, we are looking for such things as concise summaries that accurately reflect the work of Parsons and Bales, Coontz, and Hochschild (our 3 major scholars); substantiation of claims with references to specific works and/or direct quotes from the readings; proper in-text citation of key ideas and quotes. An ‘A’ paper is often close to a B paper in terms of evidence of learning and organization. An ‘A’ paper, however, has a strong, well-developed argument that reflects your creative voice as a writer. To the extent that you can organize your information so that it supports your broader argument, the better your grade is likely to be. When evaluating “creative voice” the readers and I are not expecting you to present a profoundly original perspective in this essay, but we would like to see that you have given the topic enough thought to make the material your own. Works Cited Page It is not necessary to attach a Work Cited page to this essay unless you refer to material not assigned in the course readings. It is not recommended that you refer to unassigned readings, as the point of this assignment is to show that you have understood course content.