

SOCL 220: Marriage & Family

Contact Information:

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Course Description

The sociology of families is deceptively hard to study. The topic of family is familiar, as most everyone spends time in a family. Because of this familiarity, the family may seem easy to study – you can call on their own personal experiences and personal knowledge of this subject. To be sure, your insight into the social forces that shape your personal experiences of family is a worthwhile objective. However, this familiarity may fog ideas and perceptions of the family. It is therefore important to draw on personal experiences of the family as a beginning point only. As a class, a sociological lens through which we will ultimately understand the family, as a larger social concept, will be developed. We will evaluate families as both public and private institutions full of diversity.

As young scholars, we will initially approach this course from an elementary level. However, by the end of the semester, you will be able to

- define “family,” and describe the implications of such a definition;
- explain the historical context from which the family has evolved;
- describe the major demographic processes of the American family & justify why they are important; &
- analyze families and family processes from a sociological perspective.

Course Policies

Respect:

The climate of this class should be open, warm, and professional. No racist, homophobic, sexist, or other alienating comments will be tolerated.

Technological professionalism:

You are required to check any assignments that you upload to BB to make sure that it uploaded correctly. Corrupt files will result in a zero for the assignment. Additionally, if you claim to have a technology problem during an exam or when an assignment is due, I will check with IT to see if BB had any issues and check whether you were logged in. You are responsible for all of your work online. While I recognize that there are problems with technology at times, you need to make sure that these problems are minimized by using a reliable computer and internet service, having all required software and checking that they are updated, and completing work early to avoid these issues.

Communication Policy:

Email is the best way to get in touch with me. I will respond to questions within 48 hours during the week during the academic semester (questions posted after noon on Fridays

may not receive a response until Monday). Response time may be longer during university breaks.

Grading Policy:

As per OnDemand rules, I have two weeks to grade assignments. When grading assignments, I often use the Track Changes feature in Word to make edits and comments on the document. I will post those with your grade. As such, I don't write many comments in the feedback box in Blackboard. Please review posted documents with my comments and let me know if you have any questions.

Note about Email:

Please send proper emails. Make sure to put "SOCL 220 OD" or "Marriage & Family OD" in the subject line and to include your full name in the text. Also, use proper capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. Emails should come from a wku.edu address (emails from other accounts will not be opened).

Writing Guidelines for Typed Work:

I will only accept work through BlackBoard. All papers are to be typed in Times New Roman 12 point font, double-spaced, and with one inch margins. You must have page numbers. **Papers that do not follow this format will be docked points!!!!** *Note that these are not the default setting in Microsoft Word so you will to change them.* Grammar, spelling, and punctuation count; points will be deducted for more than a few errors. I strongly encourage you to consult the Writing Center or the Learning Center for help on improving your work.

Policy on Academic Dishonesty:

The academic dishonesty policy prohibits cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. I take academic dishonesty VERY, VERY seriously. Students who violate this policy will automatically receive a failing grade for the course and will be reported to their academic dean for disciplinary action.

From the Office for Student Disability Services:

In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services in DUCA-200 of the Student Success Center in Downing University Center. Please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

The Learning Center (TLC):

Should you require academic assistance with your WKU courses, [The Learning Center](#) (located in the Downing University Center, 2141) provides free supplemental education programs for all currently enrolled WKU students. Please call TLC @ DUC at (270) 745-5065 for more information or to schedule a tutoring appointment. www.wku.edu/tlc

Title IX, Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct:

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy (#0.2070) at <https://wku.edu/eoo/documents/titleix/wkutitleixpolicyandgrievanceprocedure.pdf> and

Discrimination and Harassment Policy (#0.2040) at https://wku.edu/policies/hr_policies/2040_discrimination_harassment_policy.pdf.

Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, Andrea Anderson, 270-745-5398 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121.

Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are "Responsible Employees" of the University and **MUST** report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center at 270-745-3159.

Required Text and Materials

Technology:

- **You are required to have your own computer for this course.** You need to be able to access the course on a regular basis and will need to be on the computer to do work for extended periods of time, therefore, using another person's computer or a publically available (e.g., library) may not allow you the time and flexibility for reliable access to the course or to programs needed to do work. There are also a number of software programs you may need to download, which you may not be able to do on someone else's computer or a public computer.
- You are **required** to have a word processing program. I suggest Microsoft Word but other programs may work as well.
- If you do not have Microsoft Office, I **require** you to download the readers for Word, Excel, and PowerPoint at the WKU IT website for free. Also download Adobe Reader for free.
- Log into BB and click on IT Training (at the top of the screen). If you have not already done so, please complete the BlackBoard Student Training on the left. This will help you learn how to navigate BB so that you feel more comfortable using BB.
- For your course project, you will **need** to use the program Mediasite. **A webcam and microphone are required.** You do not need to download anything as it is a plugin in BB. Click on Mediasite at the top of your BB screen to go there. Go to the IT Training page and watch the tutorial on how to use Mediasite.

Textbooks: There are two required textbooks for this course, available for purchase at the WKU Bookstore or online retailers:

Cherlin, A. (2013). *Public and Private Families: An Introduction 7th Edition*. McGraw-Hill: New York, NY. (C)

Risman, B., & Rutter, V. (2015). *Families as They Really Are. 2nd edition* W.W. Norton Company: New York, NY. (R)

Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard in the folder for that unit (see schedule) (BB).

Course Requirements

Exams (20% each X 3 = 60% total)

The class will consist of three examinations. Each exam will predominately cover material from the readings; however questions may be drawn from supplemental materials such as videos. All exams will consist of multiple choice questions. *In order to take the examinations, you must close every program on your computer and then open the Lockdown Browser. You may then log into Blackboard from the Lockdown Browser and take the exam.*

Family Research Project (20%)

You will research and present on a family-related sociological topic (a topic that we have NOT covered during the course). A list is provided below. *You will need to email me your choice before you begin work on the project.* You will be responsible for researching the chosen topic – for example, the history of the topic, demographic profiles, the current issues/problems related to the topic, the policies surrounding the topic, and other such subtopics. You will *prepare a brochure* on your topic to be posted to Blackboard (it is recommended that you use a program such as Microsoft Publisher). Your brochure must include a complete and accurate citation list, so be sure to leave space for this during the design stage. Your brochure should highlight key points from your research and should be formatted both creatively and clearly. You will also *present your research* by recording an uploading a video presentation using Mediasite (presentations should use PowerPoint or Prezi and be approximately 10-15 minutes). Your presentation will expand on your brochure by including examples and illustrations from your research, as well as highlighting your research findings. *Both your brochure and presentation cannot be turned in until you have completed all other course material.* Your research should concentrate on academic and scientific sources (try the library first), rather than popular sources (magazines, newspapers, or websites, although you may use these sources to support your other research). You may not use Wikipedia or dictionaries/encyclopedias. *You must have at least seven sources and at least four of those must be academic in nature.* This project will be graded based on the accuracy and quality of the information included in the brochure and presentation, and the clarity and creativity of your work (grammar, spelling, formatting, etc.). You are strongly encouraged to start this project early.

Topics (these topics are meant to be broad – feel free to focus your research within these broad topics but discuss with me first):

The Effects of Parent's Imprisonment on Children
 The Sociology of Domestic Violence
 The Effects of Childbearing on Marital Quality
 Adoptive Families
 Teen Pregnancy: Current Trends, Causes and Consequences
 Foster Families
 Families in Amish Culture
 The Role of the Family in Elderly Caregiving
 The Rise in "Gray Divorce": Divorce among the Baby-Boom Generation
 Family Policy in Sweden: What Can the U.S. Learn? (Sweden is the most progressive country in the world when it comes to family issues)
 Sex Ratios in China: A Result of the One Child Policy
 HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Effect on Families
 Japan's Shrinking Population: What About the Elderly
 Military Families

Reading Responses (20%)

We will cover 14 topics during the course. At the end of each topic, in the Reading Responses tab on Blackboard, you will find a prompt to answer. Select **SIX** chapters and write a 2-4 page response answering the questions for that topic. Be sure to draw from the readings and cite your sources. All reading responses should be typed (according to the Writing Guidelines), proof read for grammar and spelling errors, and contain the date, your name, the topic, and course name in the heading. I would like the prompt stated (in bold) and then your answer stated directly underneath it. While you have some choice in which topics you respond to, you have to complete at least 2 before you can take Exam 1, at least 2 more before you can take Exam 2, and complete them all before you can take Exam 3.

Weight of the Course Requirements:

Exams (3 X 20%)	60%
Family Research Project	20%
Reading Responses (6 X 3.33%)	20%
Total	100%

A note about grading: I grade everything based on 100% - I do not grade on points. However, Blackboard is set up in terms of points (each assignment, exam, etc. has a point value associated with it). Therefore, you will see that everything you do in this class is based on points (usually 100) in Blackboard but in the gradebook it will be shown as a

percentage. This is confusing for some students because the smallest assignment and the largest assignment may both be out of 100 points. Essentially it is the same thing:

Example: Assignment out of 10 points: 9 out of 10 points = 90%

Assignment out of 100 points: 90 out of 100 points = 90%

So if an exam is out of 65 points and you get 55 points, that means you got a 77% on the exam. If a reading response is out of 100 points and you get an 80, that means you got an 80% on that journal assignment. It does NOT mean that the single journal assignment counted more than the exam – a single exam accounts for 20% of the final course grade whereas a single reading response accounts for only 3.33% of the final course grade.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Topic	Reading	Tasks
Course Introduction	Syllabus Watch Welcome Video Review all content on the First Day tab	<i>Syllabus Quiz and Getting to know you and your family journal</i> – You cannot access the rest of the course until these are completed!
Defining the Family	(C) Intro, Ch. 1 (R) 1, 8, 10, 11	<i>Reading Responses:</i> select at least two from these five topics <i>Topic preference for project</i> – It is never too early to start thinking about your project. Look over the topics and email me about it soon! <i>Exam 1</i> – to be completed after you have completed the reading for these five topics and submitted at least 2 reading responses
Introduction to Studying Families	(R) 2, 3, 4, CCF Brief: The Trouble with Averages (p. 26), In the News: When Numbers Mislead (p. 31)	
History of the Family	(C) Ch. 2 (BB) The Way We Never Were (R) 5, 6, In the New: A “Golden Age” of Childhood? (p. 68) (BB) In the News: How We Took the Child Out of Childhood	
Gender and Families	(C) Ch. 3 (BB) “Doing Gender” by West and Zimmerman; Coltraine, S., & Adams, M. (2008). “Chapter 1: The social construction of gender and families.” (R) 34; 28	
Sexuality	(C) Ch. 6 (R) 17, 19, 15 (BB) Amicus Brief – Same Sex Marriage; Fact Sheet: Myths & Realities about Same-Sex Families	
	Continued on the next page	

Intimate Relationships, Cohabitation and Marriage	(C) Ch. 7 (R) The Coolest Thing about Online Dating Sites (p. 196); CCF Facts: Women's Education and Their Likelihood of Marriage: A Historic Reversal (p. 609), In the News: Women Say "I Do" to Education, Then Marriage (p. 615); In the News: How to Stay Married (p. 321); 12 (BB) Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman, 2006; Manning & Cohen, 2012	<p><i>Reading Responses:</i> select at least two from these five topics</p> <p><i>Exam 2</i> – to be completed after you have completed the reading for these five topics and submitted at least 2 reading responses from these four topics</p>
Divorce	(C) Ch. 12 (R) 21, In Other Words: Silver Linings Divorce Trend (p. 341) (BB) Briefing Paper: "The Impact of Divorce on Children's Behavior Problems" by Li	
Step Families	(C) Ch. 13 (R) 22 (BB) Brown & Manning, 2009	
Family Diversity	(C) Ch. 5 (R) 7, 9, CCF Brief: Changes in Interracial Marriage, CCF Symposium: Why Interracial Marriage is Good for Black Women, and Experts in Response (p. 182) (BB) Crowder & Tolnay, 2000	
Work, Gender, & Families	(C) Ch. 8 (R) CCF Brief: Equal Pay Symposium: 50 Years Since the Equal Pay Act of 1963 (p. 648), In Other Words: Still A Man's World: The Myth of Women's Ascendance (p. 666); 36, 14, 37	
	Continued on next page	

Family Inequality	(C) Ch. 4 (R) 20, CCF Brief: Promoting Marriage among Single Mothers: An Ineffective Weapon in the War on Poverty? (p. 324), In the News: No, Marriage is Not a Good Way to Fight Poverty (p. 327); 31, CCF Brief: Unequal Childhoods: Inequalities in the Rhythms of Daily Life (p. 539), 33	<p><i>Reading Responses:</i> select at least two from these four topics</p> <p><i>Mediasite Tutorial and Practice Video</i> – To start thinking about your project and preparing to create your video, look over the Mediasite materials in the folder and make a practice video (see instructions)</p> <p><i>Exam 3</i> – to be completed after you have completed the reading for these four topics and all reading responses have been submitted</p>
Parenthood	(C) Ch. 9 (R) CCF Facts: Myths of Later Motherhood (p. 405); 32; In other words: More similarities than differences in study of race and fatherhood (p. 550); (BB) Blazoned, M. (2014). The Default Parent. Huffington Post. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/m-blazoned/the-default-parent_b_6031128.html	
Young Adulthood	(R) 35, 24, In The News: Lean Times Force Many Bay Area “Boomerang Kids” To Return Home as Adults (p. 402), CCF Brief: Homesick Kids and Helicopter Parents: Are Today’s Young Adults Too Emotionally Dependent on Parents (p. 70)	
Looking to the Future	(R) 38	
Project		<i>Brochure and Mediasite Video Presentation</i> - Uploaded to BB