

Vanguard University
School for Professional Studies
Degree Program

**“MARRIAGE AND FAMILY
IN A SOCIAL CONTEXT”
SOC 220**

Student Guide

11/2010

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed as an overview of significant issues facing the American family. The course provides students with a sociological perspective of marriage and family living. We will focus on the changes presently occurring within the institution of the family such as definitional transitions, and demographic shifts that influence the individual experience of family life. Themes include: the social construction of gender and the consequences for relationships and social institutions; intimacy in family relationships; communication, conflict and stress in the family; the realities of parenting; integrating work and family life; separation divorce and remarriage; later life families.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Objectives for this course are related to the overall Educational Targets and Goals of Vanguard University of Southern California.

Intellectual Engagement

Students will . . .

- begin to think critically about the causes and the consequences of changes occurring within the institution of the American family.
- continue to develop analytic skills that will be applicable in multiple social contexts.
- become acquainted with contemporary sociological research literature that examines various aspects and concerns related to the American family.
- develop skills for managing information efficiently.
- present results of an academic literature review of family related research.

Spiritual Formation

Students will . . .

- reflect on the role of religion and religious commitment in family life.
- explore the responsibility of religious persons and organizations to the many apparent needs in families within one's own community and beyond.
- develop a model of interpersonal relationships that affirms, respects and nurtures the other.

Professional Excellence

Students will . . .

- become familiar theoretical frames that help to explain the structure, function and dynamics of family life.
- develop professional skills that will cross many contexts.
- gain competence in finding, summarizing, integrating and presenting information to colleagues.

Aesthetic Expression

Students will . . .

- gain an awareness and appreciation for the dynamics of interpersonal relationships.
- become sensitized to the inter-generational transmission of family patterns and dynamics.

- begin to see the family as a system of interacting members and understand many of the challenges inherent in family living.

Responsible Stewardship

Students will . . .

- be challenged to adopt a lifestyle that promotes the development of others.
- better appreciate the value of family for persons and for society.
- be challenged to become an advocate for family concerns.

Sociocultural Responsiveness

Students will . . .

- develop strategies to intervene in specific needs within various types of families within the larger community.
- develop a sense of personal responsibility for others and for social organizations.
- develop an appreciation for the diversity within the American family.

TEXTS AND MATERIALS

Required texts:

Benokraitis, N. V. (2011). *Marriages and Families: Changes, Choices, and Constraints*, 7th/e. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

STUDENT EVALUATION

Evaluations will be based on three criteria for a total of 1000 points:

Exams (open-book take-home)	600 points possible
Collaboration	200 points possible
Research paper	200 points possible

Percentages	Points	Grade	Significance	GPA
93-100%	930-1000	A	Exceptional	4.00
90-92.9%	900-929	A-		3.67
87-89.9%	870-899	B+		3.33
83-86.9%	830-869	B	Good	3.00
80-82.9%	800-829	B-		2.67
77-79.9%	770-799	C+		2.33
73-76.9%	730-769	C	Satisfactory	2.00
70-72.9%	700-729	C-		1.67
67-69.9%	670-699	D+		1.33
63-66.9%	630-669	D	Poor	1.00
60-62.9%	600-629	D-		0.67
00-59.9%	000-599	F	Failure	0.00

You may calculate your grade at any point after an assignment has been graded. simply use the points earned as the numerator and the points possible as the denominator. Divide the points earned by the total points possible

OVERVIEW

This course is designed as an introduction to many of the concerns related to the American family and takes a practical approach to the material. Therefore, the goals of the course go well beyond learning a given set of information to include the internalization and application of the material. The hope is that the student will gain knowledge and skills that enhance personal relationships.

Course Requirements

The class will meet for five weeks only. Your attendance and participation is essential and will contribute to your final grade in the course. Final grades will be based on several additional components including two open-book, take-home examinations, journal article reviews, presentation of library research, and a research paper.

1. **Exams (600pnts, 300pnts each).** There are two exams scheduled, both of which are take-home open-book exams. The exams are composed of multiple-choice items. Material for the exams will be reviewed but the structure of the class is somewhat problematic and will require that work on the exam begin before all of the material is reviewed. The midterm exam will be distributed at the end of session two, to be completed and returned at the beginning of session 4. The final exam will be distributed at the conclusion of session 3, and will be due at the conclusion of the course.
2. **Collaboration (200pnts).** This is an opportunity to work with other students in exploring a single topic. Students will be divided into groups. The number of students in the class will determine the number of groups formed—4 to 7 students in a group. Group topics might include, but are not limited to, communication and conflict in marriage, the realities of parenting, integrating work and family, divorce and remarriage, and later-life families. Grades for the collaboration are based on three components.
 - a. Participation (50pnts). We will dedicate time during two class meetings to discuss and share information about sociological research and to prepare for the in-class presentations. To obtain full credit, you must be present with a reviewed and summarized journal article (see 2. b. below) to share in the collaborative activity.
 - b. Two (2) Journal Article Outline-Summaries (50pnts, 25pnts each). These are to be outlines of academic journal articles dealing with some aspect of the American family. One of the points of this assignment is to assist you in developing a method for study and for professionalism—a significant tool for your future. To make the best use of this tool, determine to capture the essential information in

the most condensed form possible. (Refer to the handout as an illustration and as a reminder of the rationale.)

- c. In-class presentation of research (100pnts). The presentation should be professional quality with charts, diagrams, overhead transparencies, or any other supplementary material that will be useful in telling your story. Think about this assignment as a student lecture.
3. **Research Paper (200pnts)**. The paper is designed to assess your knowledge concerning the changing American family and your ability to apply that knowledge. Your task is to create a community based program designed to meet a specific problem faced by contemporary American families (your Church is an ideal setting). In your design, address the social and organizational issues that are likely to emerge by virtue of the general population demographics. Assuming a nationally representative community (e.g. age, class, race/ethnicity, gender, retired, education, family type and composition, etc., based on your personal focus) address the family needs that are likely to be present within the community. For example, what are the problems faced by single parents? How can the consequences be ameliorated? What are your recommendations? How will the intervention be implemented? Remember, theory should inform both descriptions of the problem and the development of interventions.

Your research paper must be typed, double-spaced, formatted with one inch margins, and using 12 point font. A penalty (3 percentage points) will be assessed for each class period the paper is late. The quality of your writing will affect your grade so take special care to proof-read, edit, and polish your papers before turning them in. Having a friend read over your paper is often an excellent editing procedure. If you need specialized help, go to the writing center located on campus.

COURSE POLICIES

DISABILITY SERVICES

- ❑ For students with documented medical or psychological disabilities, please contact the Coordinator of Disability Services to request reasonable accommodations. The Coordinator of Disability Services is located in the Counseling Center on the second floor of the Scott Academic Center and can be reached at extension 4489 or by email at disabilityservices@vanguard.edu
- ❑ For students with a documented learning disability who would like to request appropriate accommodations, please contact the Director of Learning Skills, located upstairs in Scott Academic Center at extension 2540 or by email at disabilityservices@vanguard.edu

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The School for Professional Studies intends to foster a Christ-centered community that promotes appreciation and respect for individuals, enhances the potential of all members, and values differences in gender, race, abilities, and generation. As such, we endeavor to communicate with honesty, to speak with encouraging and edifying words, and to create a safe environment in our classes and interactions.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Because this course meets only five times, it is important that students not miss class unless it is unavoidable. To receive the full participation points students must arrive on time to class with a working knowledge of each sessions assignments and they must actively engage in class discussions.

Students who miss more than one class meeting (or more than five class hours) in any given course will automatically receive a failing grade and need to retake the course to obtain a passing grade. Students who miss the first two class sessions will automatically be dropped and be required to retake the course.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK ONE

- Come to the first class session having read chapters 1-3 in Benokraitis: "The Changing Family," "Studying the Family," and "The Family in Historical Perspective."
- Think about your own family history. How has your family changed over the past few generations? Think about gender roles, family structure, family size, labor market participation, etc. How would you describe your current family structure, or the one in which you grew up? How might you explain the changes that you have observed? How do you interpret the changes that have occurred in the American family? Would you like to go back to the "good ole days" of family living? How does your family differ from families of other ethnicities?

WEEK TWO

- Come to class having read Benokraitis, Chapters 4-6: "Racial and Ethnic Families: Strengths and Stresses," "Socialization and Gender Roles," and "Romance, Love, and Loving Relationships."
- Spend some time thinking about the assumptions that you hold for other groups, particularly ethnic and gender groups. How do you see females as different from or similar to males? What is your image of an African American family, and how do you explain the image? What about Latino? Caucasian? How do your assumptions about these groups shape how you might act toward them?
- Journal Article Outline-summary #1 is due today.** Be sure that you submit to the professor a copy of the article along with your outline-summary. In addition, bring enough copies of your outline to distribute to the other students. We will spend part of the class period discussing the articles and preparing for the in-class presentation.
- The Midterm exam will be distributed at the conclusion of this class session.**

WEEK THREE

- Come to class having read Benokraitis, Chapters 8 and 10: "Choosing Others: Dating and Mate Selection," and "Marriage and Communication in Intimate Relationships."
- Journal Article Outline-summary #2 is due today.** Be sure that you submit to the professor a copy of the article along with your outline-summary. In addition, bring enough copies of your outline to distribute to the other students. We will spend part of the class period discussing the articles and preparing for the in-class presentation.
- Final exam will be distributed at the end of the class session.**

WEEK FOUR

- Midterm Exam: Chapters 1-6, 8 and 10 is due at the beginning of class.**
- Come to the class session having read chapters 11-14 in Benokraitis: "To Be or Not to Be a Parent: More choices, more constraints," "Raising Children: Promises and pitfalls,"

“Balancing Work and Family Life,” and “Family Abuse, Violence, and Other Health Issues.”

WEEK FIVE

- Research paper is due at the beginning of class.**
- Come to class having read chapters 15-17 in Benokraitis: “Separation and divorce,” “Remarriages and stepfamilies,” and “Families in Later life
- Library research paper is due at the beginning of the class period.
- Final Exam: Chapters 11-17 is Due at the end of the class session.**

LOGISTICS CHART

Hour	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
1	Introductions & Course Req’s	Review and introduce new material.	Review previous material	Midterm Exam is Due. Realities of parenting	Review. Remarriage and Step-families
2	Film: “The Changing Family”	Racial and Ethnic families.	Group interaction: “intimacy calling”	Families and Work	Later-life families
3	Studying family: Theory and Research	Exploring gender assumptions: The legacy of gender.	Communication and conflict.	The “Dark Side of Families”	Group presentations
4	Identifying and defining trends in the family—past and present.	Dating and Mating	Summarize, catch-up, and review for Midterm	Separation and divorce	Review exam material. Final exam is due

Ed Clarke: Readings in Family

Ross, C.E. and Van Willigen, M., (1996). "Gender, Parenthood, and Anger." *Journal of Marriage and The Family*, 58, 572-584.

Purpose: To examine the effects of gender inequality on anger. Assumption—gender inequality and being a parent lead to stress and frustrations that lead to anger. Basically that parental roles increase distress in the form of anger, that women experience more anger than men because of the inequitable distribution of parental responsibilities.

NOTE: "Parent" refers to people with children living in the household.

1. Gender inequalities and anger: These are inherently linked since anger is a social emotion. Anger "results from the assessment of inequality in social situations or relations, from perceptions of being treated unjustly, or from perceptions of violation of a fair social contract (Averill, 1983; Cenham & Bultemeier, 1993. .Pg. 573). The two following positions are compared.

- a. *Gender, parenthood, and Psychological distress*: When well-being is measured as the absence of particular human states (eg. depression, anxiety, distress. . .) children do not improve parents psychological well-being.
 - i. Children increase economic strain increasing depression (Ross & Huber, 1985)
 - ii. Mothers do disproportionately more child care services (Glass & Fujimoto, 1994 . . .) increasing depression.
 - iii. These conditions will increase anger.
- b. *Gendered response as an alternative position*: Argues that because anger is seen as a legitimate male expression of stress but illegitimate for women, women will respond with depressive symptoms; men with anger.
 - i. Mixed findings—women report anger as much as men but are more depressed because they don't express anger—depressed women are more angry.
 - ii. This position predicts that women and mothers have lower levels of anger than men because they are socialized toward nurturance.

2. Methods and Results

- a. *Sample*: "The work, family and well-being sample (WFW-BS)—telephone interviews with a person over 18 in household with most proximal birthday. 2,031 respondents.
 - i. Age: range 18-90; mean age 43.5
 - ii. Mean Education 13.2 (median 12)
 - iii. Identified as a broadly representative sample (see pg 575).
- b. *Measurement*
 - i. *Anger*: no. of days in 7 they felt annoyed, angry, or yelled at someone. The three were summed and averaged for a scale of 0-7 (~average 1 or 2 days a week: 1.63 days).
 - ii. *Parenthood*: no. of children in household <18. Range=1-6: 829 had ch.; 1202 did not.
 - iii. Sex: 1=female; 0=male
 - iv. *Economic hardship*: not having enough money in the last 12 months to (1) pay for medical care, (2) buy food, cloths or other necessities, (3) to pay the bills. Index is average response to the 3 items (see pg. 575)
 - v. *Child care*: % of child care respondent does; difficulty arranging child care; affordability of child care. Index used in regressions is the mean response to the last 2 items.
 - vi. *Controls*: age, educ., marital status, employment status, and race, emotional expressiveness.
- c. *OLS Regression Models*: "On average, parents report more anger than do nonparents (2.23 vs. 1.23) and mothers report more anger than fathers (2.42 vs. 1.80)" (pg. 576).
 - i. Women: more anger than men; each additional child significantly increases anger.
 - ii. Parents: more economic hardship than non-parents; mothers report the highest levels of economic hardship of any group (see Table 1, pg. 577).
- d. *Parents' covariance structure and measurement models*. Of the factors that emerge, economic hardship, child-care difficulties, and proportion of child care done are significant contributors to anger and explain the effects of gender and # of children on anger. Age significant diminishes anger.

3. Discussion: "Parenthood introduces two types of objective stressors into an individual's life: economic strains and the strains associated with child care. Women are exposed to both types of strain more than men" (pg 582). Of the four groups investigated non-parents have lower levels of anger than parents (men less than women); parents have higher rates of anger with women reporting the highest rates of all groups.

This is a copy of a journal outline/summary. I have tried several formats myself and have dealt with other formats when we graduate students exchanged reviewed articles (we often worked collaboratively). This is the most efficient format for my purposes. Let me explain what those are.

1. This is a tool for use. Each article summarized becomes a part of your repertoire of knowledge. I copy the article or book chapter and include a copy of my summary with it. I place reviews in a 3-ring binder for easy reference. I also include the summaries of others as long as they are well done and complete.
2. To make the system a bit more efficient, categorize the reading. You see at the top of the page that this is a reading in the family. Further classification is possible and probably preferable. I may for example include this article in a conflict-in-families notebook.
3. I am especially interested that the summary provide easy citation referencing. Citing and referencing articles is cumbersome if one has to return to the journal, book chapter, or book. I place the proper (according to the style you use) citation at the top of the page. Then if I am citing from a number of different articles I can simply use the summaries for citations and for the reference section without dragging books and articles to the computer.
4. The central concern of course, is to provide bare-bones information. For the summaries to be efficient all fluff should be excluded. Include only the important information—exclude all unnecessary words. I think it is most efficient when the information is presented in the same linear format used by the author(s). I simply use the same heading from the article in my summary. These headings represent important general topics to the author. The structure of the article remains clear.
 - a. The first thing that I look for in the article is an idea about the authors purpose. This provides the framework for the article. Everything that is included in the summary, therefore, should be directly related to the purpose. Place the purpose at the beginning in the most clear, concise and correct language possible. Sometimes the author will provide this for you (if you quote from the article be sure to include the page number). Look in the abstract and in the beginning section(s) of the article. If the purpose is not made explicit by the author, ask yourself “what is the problem the author(s) are addressing in this article.”
 - b. Spend some time with the literature review in the article. This is where a wealth of information resides. The author has spent a very long time reviewing other articles which relate to the purpose. The rationale for the paper becomes clear in this section. You may want to cite other articles in your summary. This is very helpful especially if you are building a literature review for something that you are writing. These citations become the foundation for your library searches, etc..
 - c. You can afford to be more brief with the methods. Some things to be sure to include are: sample size, method (questionnaire, interview, etc., sometimes this becomes self evident), some sample demographics, variables, analysis procedure, etc.. Let the author’s focus guide you. A NOTE ABOUT DISCIPLINES. Focusing on those elements that articles are generally critiqued on within the disciplines is a good idea. For example, sample size and composition is always a concern as is measurement. From that point let your discipline guide you.
 - d. The findings and the discussion can be very brief. Just get to the point of what was found. Don’t compare the findings with anything that you have included above—just the facts man. At the same time, be more informative than to say for example that “Hypothesis 1 was rejected/confirmed.” The discussion should include the connection between the introductory literature review and the findings. Be clear and correct.

You should feel free to create any structure that works best for you. I find that brief statements are easier to read than paragraph structure, so, for me outlining works best. I like to make sure that everything will fit on one page of outline (front and back if necessary). When you begin working with a number of different references, having single pages to keep track of is much easier than multiple pages.

I don’t include any critic in my summaries. I believe that keeping it clean is best—sort of less is more. That way, each time I approach this information I am less likely to limit myself to previous ideas, I am then freed up to make new connections and to have fresh concerns. Try it. It gets pretty easy.