

SOCI # 220

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

Required Texts:

Benokraitis, N. V. (2008) *Marriages and Families: Changes, Choices, and Constraints*. 6th edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall. ISBN: 10: 0132431734

Course Description

This on-line course is designed as an overview of significant issues facing the American family. The on-line 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.

Technological Competence

Student will...

- demonstrate and recognize approaches and techniques for creating opportunities for success in one's academic life.
- demonstrate a competence use of computers and other technology to enhance knowledge.

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 with 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.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS

1. WEEKLY CHAPTER REVIEWS: (250 points total)

Write a 1-page reaction to each chapter that read and assigned throughout the class. In the paper include topics such as: agreeing/disagreeing with the author(s) and or theorists, was the chapter an interesting read for you, and can you apply this material learned to your personal life? We will discuss these reviews weekly in small groups and these chapter reviews will be due every class session, for 5 weeks.

Each week you will post a 250 word reaction to the assigned chapter readings and online lectures on the discussion forum. In your reaction you are to include topics such as: agreeing/disagreeing with the author(s) and or theorists, was the chapter an interesting read for you, and can you apply this material learned to your personal life? Once you have posted your reaction, read the response of at least one other classmate and respond to his/her post.

2. VIDEO WRITE-UP: (100 points)

Pick a movie/video to watch that shows a family dynamic of society today. What are some of the stressors, frustrations, fears, and joys that the family encounters throughout the film? Does the family come together, break apart, or accomplish goals independently. Analyze the film from a Family Systems Perspective. The video write-ups will be shared in class together. This will be a 1-2 page write-up.

3. FAMILY MEMBER INTERVIEW: (100 points)

Interview an immediate member of your family of origin and discuss the “roles” that he or she played within the family environment. What did he or she like/not like about the structure of the family make-up. What did this family member desire to do differently once he or she began to start his or her own family? Some sample questions to ask this person might be:

- -What was your perception of mom?
- -Did you feel that you were treated fairly as the oldest sister?
- -What is your favorite/worst family memory?
- -Did you ever want to model your childhood into starting your own family?
- -Did you become the father that your father was to you?

This is a 1-2 page paper that can include the questions asked to the family member and your own response to the interview that was conducted. If you cannot meet face-to-face, over the phone or via email will also be acceptable. If you are not able to interview a family member within your immediate family, please discuss this with me individually and you will be permitted to interview another family outside that of your own.

4. FINAL PAPER: (500 points)

Write a personal experience paper looking at your own family of origin from a child to being that of an adult. To understand other families we first need to understand our own families. In all the topics that have been covered throughout the 5 weeks, what had stood out to you as important to implement into a family environment? What is essential to growing together and what are some issues that you think families spend too much time worrying/stressing about? When did you feel closest to your nuclear family and when did you feel the furthest? Write this paper including the Family Systems Perspective. This paper will be a 5-6 page paper and will be due one-week after week five ends.

Grading Criteria:

Weekly Chapter Reviews	250 points (50 points each)
Family Member Interview	100 points
Video Write-Up	100 points
Final Paper	500 points
Participation	50 points

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	Above Average	3.00
80-82.9%	800-829	B-		2.67
77-79.9%	770-799	C+		2.33
73-76.9%	730-769	C	Average	2.00
70-72.9%	700-729	C-		1.67
67-69.9%	670-699	D+		1.33
63-66.9%	630-669	D	Below Average	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.

*** All papers written will be held in the utmost of confidentiality and will be never reproduced or shared with others without your permission. The final paper and all papers will be graded within a timely manner.

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE AND TARDY POLICY

You must attend class on time and remain present until dismissed. Class attendance is necessary in order to complete the course. The School for Professional Studies relies on the dynamics of class interaction and group processing in order to integrate and apply the learning of academic content. This model also emphasizes the development and practice of interpersonal communication skills and teamwork (e.g., group problem solving and negotiation). The format therefore necessitates class attendance. In practical terms, one course session is equivalent to three weeks of traditional semester course work.

Due to the concentrated scheduling and the emphasis upon participatory learning, students need to be in attendance every week. 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. If an instructor deems that a student's second absence was under extremely unavoidable and unusual circumstances (i.e., an auto accident), the professor may file an academic petition on behalf of the student to the Dean of SPS. If the academic petition is approved, the

instructor may give the student a “W” (Withdrawal) grade in place of a failing grade. The student will still be required to retake the course.

Students who arrive late disturb the class. At the professor’s discretion, students who arrive late may not receive participation points for the unit covered. Students who are habitually late may be asked to drop the course.

Attendance in the online course is gauged according to participation in the discussion forums. Each discussion forum has an open and close date. Late postings will not be accepted. In order to receive full credit for the chapter reviews, students must post their initial reaction and then respond to at least one other classmate’s post.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Students must achieve a minimum grade of C- for all major course requirements. Any major course in which the student receives a grade below C- must be retaken.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Work submitted for assessment purposes must be the independent work of the student concerned. Plagiarism, or copying and use of another’s work without proper acknowledgment, is not permitted. Nor is it permissible for any former or present student to allow another student to refer to, use as a sample, or in any way copy or review their work. If a student needs guidance, he or she must seek the Professor’s assistance.

SUBMISSION OF FINAL EXAMS / PAPERS

The School for Professional Studies office does not assume responsibility for any final papers. No homework or final papers will be accepted for professors in the SPS office, nor will final papers be returned to students through the SPS office.

The method for the submission of homework and the final exam or final paper will be determined by the professor. The professor will discuss the method which will be employed during the first night of class. All exchanges of papers will be between the student and the professor.

WEEKLY STRUCTURE/ASSIGNMENTS

Week	Online Lecture	Textbook Readings	Assignments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Intimacy: Framing the Discussion 	Chapters 1-3 from Benokraitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter Review questions Due (1-3)
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploring Relationships in Today’s Society <p>Marriage and Sex</p>	Chapters 4,5& 8 from Benokraitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter Review questions Due (4,5& 8)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication and Dating 	Chapters 9-12 from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Chapter Review questions Due (9-12)

Rethinking the Traditional Family		Benokraitis	--Video Write-Up Due
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Issues: Stress, Change and Divorce 	Chapters 13-15 from Benokraitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Chapter Review questions Due (13-15)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life After Divorce: Creating Success 	Chapters 16-18 from Benokraitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Chapter Review questions Due (16-18)
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Paper Due