

Course Outline

Sociology of the Family Soci 3364

Kennesaw State University
Spring 2014

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Course Description: The American family is an institution in transition. Some say it is obsolete; some say it must be radically restructured. This course will explore the nature of marriage and the family in its present and historical contexts. As such, it will deal with issues such as love, sexuality, and childrearing. Of special interest will be the evolving character of voluntary intimacy. Why do people get married? Why do they stay married? Why have divorce and cohabitation become so prevalent? The course will also explore the nature of courtship customs and how individuals select potential mates.

Required Texts:

Benokraitis, Nijole V. 2011. Marriages and Families: Changes, Choices, and Constraints. New York: Prentice-Hall.

Pines, Ayal Malach. 2005. Falling in Love: Why We Choose the Lovers We Choose. New York: Routledge.

Recommended Texts:

Fisher, Helen. 2004. Why We Love: The Nature and Chemistry of Romantic Love. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Bogle, Kathleen A. 2008. Hooking Up: Sex, Dating, and Relationships on Campus. New York: New York University Press.

Whitehead, Barbara Defoe. 1996. The Divorce Culture: Rethinking Our Commitments to Marriage and Family. New York: Random House.

Edin, K. and Kefala, M. 2005. Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Waite, L.J and Gallagher, M. 2000. The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially. New York: Doubleday.

Buss, David M. 2003. The Evolution of Desire: Strategies of Human Mating. New York: Basic Books.

Wallerstein, J.S., Lewis, J.M and Blakeslee. 2000. The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce. New York: Hyperion.

Course Outline:

Week I. 1/8 Introduction: An overview of the course. The Family in Trouble. Is the family obsolete? If so. Why?

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt. 1.

Week II. 1/13 -1/15 Defining the family. Types of families and functions of theories. A theoretical overview of the family.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt. 1 & 2

Week III. 2/22 History of marriage and the family, beginning in pre-history, moving through hunter-gatherer and feudal times, reviewing early American institutions and concluding with the modern American family.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt. 3.

Week IV. 1/27 – 1/29 Functions of the family, in the past and in the present. Social class differences, with special attention to the need for self-direction in the middle class.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt. 1 & 2.

Week V. 2/3 – 2/5 Gender issues. The nature-nurture debate. Traditional versus feminist views. Current realities.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt. 5.

Week VI. 2/10 – 2/12 Sexual Issues. The nature of sex differences and their impact in intimate relationships. Gay, lesbian and bisexual issues.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt 7.

First Exam 2/12

Week VII. 2/17 – 2/19 Choosing a mate. The courtship process. The nature of love versus sex. Romance versus love.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt 6, 8.

Week VIII. 2/24 – 2/26 Falling in Love Choosing the appropriate partner. Romantic love in long-term relationships. (Travel break)

Readings: Pines, Parts 1, 2, & 3.

Week IX. 3/3 – 3/5 Personal growth within relationships. The connection between emotional maturity and intimacy.

Readings: Pines, Part 3.

Week X. 3/10 – 3/12 Alternatives to the traditional family. Single parenthood, gay marriages, and cohabitation.

Readings: Benokraitis, Chapt. 9.

Second Exam 3/12

Week XI. 3/17 – 3/19 Voluntary intimacy. Learning to cope with differences. Developing a workable division of labor. Collaborating on shared goals. Negotiating.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt 10.

Paper Outline Due 3/19

Week XII. 3/24 – 3/26 Childrearing. Deciding to have children. Parental responsibilities. Discipline and self-direction. Social class variations.

Readings: Benokraitis, Benokraitis, chapt 11 & 12.

Week XIII. 4/7 – 4/9 Childrearing continued.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt. 11 & 12.

Week XIV. 4/14 – 4/16 Problems and challenges. Balancing family and work. Avoiding abuse. Racial and ethnic issues.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt. 4, 13, & 14.

Week XV. 4/21 – 4/23 Separation and divorce. Process and effect, especially regarding children.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt. 15 & 16

Paper Due 4/23

Week XVI. 4/28 – 4/30 Divorce continued. Remarriage.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt. 15 & 16

Final Exam 5/7 1:00PM

Course Paper:

Students will research and write a 10-12 page paper about marriage and the family. The emphasis must be on the changing nature of the family. How is it changing? Why is it changing? What is likely to be the end result? Defend your conclusions with evidence from the literature.

A paper outline will be due three weeks before the paper itself. This should include anticipated references.

Grading criteria will include: organization, documentation, and originality.

Please note: The paper should be double spaced 10 or 12 point font Times Roman, with margins of no more than 1.25 inches. The Reference page does not count as a page, nor does the title page. (Nor do pictures). Please number pages.

Because of the possibility of plagiarism, the professor reserves the right to require that the paper be submitted to turnitin.com..

The Course Grade will depend equally on the three (3) examinations, and the course paper. (Value 25% each). Exam and paper grades will be graded in a letter format, which for purposes of the final grade will be translated into a four point system with A = 4.00, A- = 3.67, A-/B+ = 3.5, B+ = 3.33, B = 3.0, etc. Class attendance and participation will be monitored and will influence the course grade as to be explained in class. Attendance is further encouraged because the examinations may incorporate materials covered only in class.

I would appreciate hearing from anyone who has a special need which may be the result of a disability. I am reasonably sure we can work out whatever arrangement is necessary, be it seating, testing, or other accommodation. Please see me after class, as soon as possible, if you have such a need.

Academic Integrity: Every KSU student is responsible for upholding the provisions of the Student Code of Conduct, as published in the undergraduate and graduate Catalogs. Section II of this Code addresses the University's policy on academic honesty, including provisions regarding plagiarism and cheating, unauthorized access to University materials, misrepresentation/falsification of University records or academic work, malicious removal, retention, or destruction of library materials, malicious/intentional misuse of computer facilities and/or services, and misuse of student identification cards. Incidents of alleged academic misconduct will be handled through the established procedures of the University Judiciary Program, which includes either an "informal" resolution by a faculty member, resulting in a grade adjustment, or a formal hearing procedure, which may subject a student to the Code of Conduct's minimum one semester suspension requirement.