Course Outline

Sociology of the Family
Soci 3364

Kennesaw State University
Spring 2016

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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 Some say it is obsolete; some say it must be radically restructured.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:


Recommended Texts:


Course Outline:

Week I. 1/11 – 1/13 Introduction: An overview of the course. The Family in Trouble. Is the family obsolete? If so. Why?

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt. 1.

Week II. 1/20 Defining the family. Types of families and functions of theories. A theoretical overview of the family.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapts. 1 & 2

Week III. 1/25 – 1/27 History of marriage and the family, beginning in prehistory, moving through hunter-gatherer and feudal times, reviewing early American institutions and concluding with the modern American family.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt. 3.

Week IV. 2/1 – 2/3 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, chapts. 1 & 2.


Readings: Benokraitis, chapt. 5.


Readings: Benokraitis, chapt 7.

First Exam 2/15

Week VII. 2/22 – 2/24 Choosing a mate. The courtship process. The nature of love versus sex. Romance versus love.

Readings: Benokraitis, chapt 6, 8.

Week VIII. 2/29 – 3/2 Falling in Love Choosing the appropriate partner. Romantic love in long-term relationships. (Travel break)
Readings: Pines, Parts 1, 2, & 3.

Week IX. 3/7 – 3/9 Personal growth within relationships. The connection between emotional maturity and intimacy.

Week X. 3/14 – 3/16 Alternatives to the traditional family. Single parenthood, gay marriages, and cohabitation.

Readings: Benokraitis, Chapt. 9.

Second Exam 3/16


Readings: Benokraitis, chap 10.

Paper Outline Due 3/23


Readings: Benokraitis, Benokraitis, chaps 11 &12.

Week XIII. 4/11 – 4/13 Childrearing continued.

Readings: Benokraitis, chaps. 11 & 12.


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


Readings: Benokraitis, chaps. 15 & 16

Paper Due 4/27

Week XVI. 5/2 Divorce continued. Remarriage.
Readings: Benokraitis, chaps. 15 & 16

Final Exam 5/4 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 paper will also be submitted to turnitin.com. (on drop box)

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.