Sociology 315: Marriage and Family
Fall 2015
Activity Center West, Rm. 128
Wednesdays, 3:00-5:30

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Course summary

What is the significance of the family from a sociological perspective? How has the family as a social institution changed over time? What are some of the most important issues and problems that modern-day families and couples face? How do social class, race, and gender intersect in marriage and family life in the United States? In this course, we will explore these and other questions related to the role of marriage and family in society, drawing on the scholarly work of sociologists and other social scientists. You will develop a critical, sociological perspective on marriage and family through active engagement with readings, discussions, in-class activities, and writing.

Course objectives

This course is designed to help you gain knowledge and develop skills that will aid you in becoming a critical thinker, a successful student, and an informed, engaged member of society. Specifically, in this course you will:

- gain knowledge of how society operates on the micro and macro levels
- learn how to interpret your and others’ experiences using a sociological framework
- gain an understanding of the role of marriage and family in society and society’s role in shaping marriage and family
- discuss social issues in an informed, critical, and civil manner
- write well-organized paragraph responses, essays, and a paper that demonstrate an understanding of key sociological issues and concepts
- conduct an in-depth interview and in the process develop a new research skill
- gain experience presenting your work to an audience of peers

Overall goal

I want you to learn something new in this class. Sounds simple, right? Well, in my experience, this isn’t always such an easy task. We all have so many taken for granted assumptions about how the world works, what constitutes reality, why people behave in certain ways, etc., that it is sometimes difficult for us to recognize when “what we’ve always known” is keeping us from knowing more. I think that all of us—teachers and students alike—need to continually challenge ourselves to learn more about the world in which we live. I believe the way to accomplish this is by questioning status quo interpretations of reality, seeking out information that will help us answer our questions, and understanding that we can always learn more about any given topic. You should do well in this class if you approach the material with this in mind.
**Required readings**

1. The following required book is available at the LCSC Bookstore and from various booksellers online:


   *Please note: It is imperative to get the 16th edition, because other editions do not have the same readings.*

2. The second required book is available from various booksellers online, and there is also a copy on reserve in the library:


There are also quite a few online articles that are required reading. The authors and titles of these readings are noted in the course schedule (on the last few pages of this syllabus), so you can find them yourself with a quick Google search, and I’ve also posted them on Blackboard.

**Assignments and grading**

Your grade in this course will be based on the following:

**Class Participation and Pop Quizzes - 25% (50 pts.)** Class participation will be an important part of your experience in this class, so be sure to be prepared for class each week by doing all of the readings. Your participation will include small and large group discussions, activities, and in-class writing exercises. Also, a pop quiz may await you in class on any given day. These quizzes are my way of ensuring that you are keeping up with the assigned readings, and they may also test your knowledge of previously covered lecture material. *In-class writing exercises, activities, discussions and pop quizzes cannot be made-up; you must be present in class to receive credit for these assignments and activities.*

**First Exam - 25% (50 pts.)** The exam will consist of short answer and essay questions. You will demonstrate your ability to integrate readings, lectures, discussions, and films.

**Second Exam – 25% (50 pts.)** The second exam will follow the same general format as the first exam.

**Life History/Trajectory Paper - 25% (50 pts.)** You will write an 8-10 page paper in which you situate, compare, and analyze your life trajectory and an older family member’s life history within the context of larger socio-historical trends and processes. This will involve you interviewing an older member of your family to gain a detailed understanding of their life history. More details and specific instructions for the paper will be discussed during the first few weeks of the semester. During Week 14, you will present some of your key findings to the class as part of a peer-review and brainstorming exercise to help you extend your analysis further. Your paper will then be due the following week on the last day of class.
Grading scale:

- **A** = 91-100% (181-200 pts.)
- **A-** = 90% (179-180 pts.)
- **B+** = 89% (177-178 pts.)
- **B** = 81-88% (161-176 pts.)
- **B-** = 80% (159-160 pts.)
- **C+** = 79% (157-158 pts.)
- **C** = 71-78% (141-156 pts.)
- **C-** = 70% (139-140 pts.)
- **D+** = 69% (137-138 pts.)
- **D** = 61-68% (121-136 pts.)
- **D-** = 60% (119-120 pts.)
- **F** = 59% (118 pts.) or below

Evaluation criteria

With regard to your paper, you will be graded according to the thoroughness with which you have explored key, sociologically relevant aspects of your life and your family member’s life; the extent to which you offer a critical, sociological analysis/interpretation; the extent to which you have integrated course readings and, if applicable, other scholarly sources of information to help you construct this analysis/interpretation; and the quality of your writing.

Your exams will be graded according to the thoroughness with which you have addressed the questions posed; the correctness of your answer; the extent to which you offer a critical, sociological analysis/interpretation; the extent to which you have integrated course readings, lectures, and discussions; and the quality of your writing.

In terms of the actual grades assigned to your writing assignments (i.e., the paper and exams), “A”s are reserved for truly superior work that illustrates depth, breadth, and nuanced comprehension of the course material and nearly flawless writing. “B”s are assigned to above average, well-written work that fulfills/answers the assignment/question posed in a sociological manner. “C”s are an indication that more detail and analysis are needed and/or your writing needs significant improvement. “D”s are a sign that you did not adequately meet the requirements of the exam/paper and/or your writing is unacceptable. “F”s are an indication that you have not met the requirements of the exam/paper and your writing is unacceptable.

For the participation component of your grade, you will receive points for in-class writing assignments, activities, and attendance. You will also receive grades on brief pop quizzes. There may be two of these quizzes or there may be ten – no way to know except by coming to class. In addition to these points, which you will accrue over the course of the semester, at the end of the semester I will assign you an overall participation grade that will be based on such things as your overall attendance, your contributions to class discussions, your level of attention in class, etc. This grade will consist of 5-10 points and will be factored in with the other 40-45 participation points that you accrue over the entire semester, for a total of 50 points (as noted above).

**Classroom etiquette**

By coming to class, you are agreeing to abide by the following basic norms of courtesy, which are aimed at providing a productive learning environment for all students:

- Be on time, and do not leave early. Coming in late or leaving early, even by just a few minutes, can be highly disruptive. If you know that you need to leave early one day for a legitimate reason, let me know at the start of class, but this should not be a regular occurrence.

- Please do not interrupt others or talk to your neighbor while others are speaking.
- Address your fellow classmates respectfully, whether or not you agree with them.

- Turn off cell phones and any other little beeping, buzzing, or music-making devices before you come to class. If you are a parent or otherwise need to be available for family members, please put your phone on vibrate mode.

- Don’t be tempted to text in class. You may think you can multi-task well, but trust me, you can’t. None of us can. You are not encoding and retaining information if you are texting while I’m lecturing or while you’re engaging in a group activity. Plus, it’s distracting to everyone around you when you’re poking at your phone.

- Do not read the newspaper, work on an assignment for another class, or otherwise be disengaged from what is going on in the classroom.

- Finally, please, no internet use in class. Despite the fact that that cute man/woman you’ve been obsessing over has just IM’d you or sent you a message on Facebook, please do not read or respond to emails in class, all the while pretending to take notes. If you use a laptop computer for note taking, you will need to sit in the front row of the classroom.

**Academic integrity**

Any instance of plagiarism, cheating, or other form of academic dishonesty will be dealt with in a manner that is unpleasant for all involved. Specifically, if you plagiarize or otherwise cheat on an exam, paper, or assignment, you will automatically receive a zero on that exam/paper/assignment, which will lower your overall grade substantially. I also reserve the right to simply assign you a failing grade for the course in such situations. Please do not ruin your academic future by engaging in such foolish behavior. If you have any questions about what is meant by the term “academic dishonesty,” please see me for an explanation or clarification.

**Attendance**

I believe very strongly in the benefits of regular class attendance. As you can see by looking at the percentage of your grade that comes from participation, you will not do well in this course if you do not come to class on a regular basis. My advice? Come to every class. If you do miss a class, please do not ask me, “What did I miss?” or, my personal favorite, “Did I miss anything?” Instead, get the notes from a fellow classmate, keeping in mind that s/he may or may not be a good note taker. But why take that risk? Just come to every class.

**Policy on make-ups**

*In-class writing exercises and activities cannot be made up.* By definition, you must be present in class to receive credit for these assignments.

*Pop quizzes cannot be made up.*

*Make-up exams will be given in very rare circumstances* for students with legitimate reasons who make arrangements with me well in advance. Vacations and other optional absences are typically not legitimate reasons for rescheduling an exam. Emergency situations or acute
illnesses may, of course, warrant an exam make up, but you must contact me prior to class on the exam day in order for me to consider a request for a make-up.

Papers not turned in by the start of class on the due date will receive a 10% deduction; those not turned in my 9:00 a.m. on the day following the due date will receive a 20% deduction, and those not turned in by 3:00 on the day after the due date will receive a zero. Exceptions to this policy due to extreme, unforeseen hardship will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Additional notes

Documented disabilities
If you have a documented disability or other issue that may affect your performance in this course, please let me know during the first week of the term, and we will work together to figure out appropriate accommodations.

Audio/video recording
Any type of picture taking or audio/video recording of this class is prohibited. We cover sensitive and controversial issues in this course, and everyone should feel free to discuss such issues in an open manner without fear that their words will be taken out of context. Any type of recording, even for seemingly benign note-taking purposes, has the potential to diminish the classroom experience. If you have trouble listening and taking notes at the same time, we can find a solution through a combination of practice/skill-building on your part and supplemental notes from another student if necessary.

Contacting me
If you have questions about the course material and/or would like to further discuss any of the topics we are covering, please talk to me after class or come chat with me during my office hours. If you need to contact me otherwise, the best way to reach me is via email at leearles@lcsc.edu. I check email most weekdays. You can also try calling my office phone during office hours. Please be aware, however, that if you leave a message at any other time on my office phone, I may not get it until the following office hour, so if you need to be in touch with me in a timely manner, use email. If/when you email me, if your query requires more than a brief two- to three-sentences reply, please include a phone number where you can be reached, so I can call you if necessary. All this being said, please use email sparingly. I would much rather talk with you in-person after class or during my office hours.

Course schedule

The course schedule is subject to change depending on our progress in covering the material. Any changes will be announced in class and/or via email and Blackboard, so please check your lcmail account regularly. It is your responsibility to know what is announced in class, whether or not you are present when it’s announced.

Your active engagement with each week’s assigned readings is key to your success in this class. The readings listed for each week include readings from the Skolnick and Skolnick book, chapters from Coontz’s book, and online readings. All readings should be completed prior to class on the weeks for which they are listed. Please come to class each week with at least one key passage selected from each of the readings that seems especially striking and/or relevant to you, and be prepared to discuss your chosen passages’ significance if called upon to do so.
Week 1 (8/26): Introduction to the course

Week 2 (9/2): Why study the family from a sociological perspective?

Readings: Coontz, “Introduction” and Ch. 1; Skolnick and Skolnick: “Introduction,” “The Changing Family,” and Readings 1 (Goode) and 2 (Giddens)

Week 3 (9/9): Is there a “crisis” occurring in modern families?

Readings: Coontz, Ch. 7; Skolnick and Skolnick: Reading 5 (Giele); Online readings: Coontz: “Marriage is Not Antidote to Poverty”

Week 4 (9/16): The intersection of gender, social structure, and history in the study of marriage and family

Readings: Skolnick and Skolnick: Pp. 81-85 (introduction to Part II: Sex and Gender), and Readings 6 (Jackson) and 7 (Collins); Coontz, Ch. 3; Online readings: Mills, “The Promise,” Coontz, “There is No Such Thing as the ‘Traditional Male Breadwinner,’” and Shulte, “Nearly 40 percent of mothers are now the family breadwinners, report says”

Week 5 (9/23): Sex, dating, and relationships (not necessarily in that order)

Readings: Skolnick and Skolnick: Readings 9 (Bailey), 10 (Bogle), and 11 (Talbot); Coontz: Ch. 8

Week 6 (9/30): Modern coupling: Cohabitation, marriage, and/or…?

Readings: Skolnick and Skolnick: Readings 8 (Gerson), 12 (Casper and Bianchi), 13 (Kefalas et al), and 14 (Cherlin); Online reading: Bolick, “All the Single Ladies” and Khazan, “The Luxury of Waiting for Marriage to Have Kids”

Week 7 (10/7): First Exam and work-in-progress day

Readings: None. The exam will be given during the first half of class, and the second half of class will be individual or small-group time dedicated to your papers.

Week 8 (10/14): Happily ever after? Sometimes yes, sometimes no

Readings: Skolnick and Skolnick: Readings 15 (Skolnick), 16 (Friedman), and 17 (Rutter); Online reading: Miller, “The Divorce Surge is Over, But the Myth Lives On,” and Gadoua, “Three Reasons Why You Shouldn’t Marry for Love”
Week 9: (10/21): Parenting (or not)

Readings: Skolnick and Skolnick: Readings 19 (Cowan and Cowan) and 20 (Marsiglio); Coontz, Ch. 9; Online reading: Valenti, “Not Wanting Kids is Entirely Normal,” and Overall, “Think Before You Breed”

Week 10 (10/28): Childhood and family life in the contemporary U.S.

Readings: Skolnick and Skolnick: Readings 21 (Mintz), 22 (Lareau), and 23 (Furstenberg)

Week 11 (11/4): Family, work, and the economy

Readings: Skolnick and Skolnick, Readings 25 (Hochschild) and 26 (Stone); Online reading: Coontz: “Why Gender Equality Stalled”

Film: Two American Families, PBS Frontline (1st half)

Week 12 (11/11): Family, work, and the economy (continued…)

Readings: Skolnick and Skolnick, 27 (Rubin), 28 (Presser), 29 (Newman and Chen), and 30 (Warren and Tyagi)

Film: Two American Families, PBS Frontline (2nd half)

Week 13 (11/18): Second Exam and work-in-progress day

Readings: None. The exam will be given during the first half of class, and the second half of class will be individual or small-group time dedicated to your papers

***Thanksgiving Break (11/23-11/27)***

Week 14 (12/2): Presentation and discussion of papers

Readings: None. Bring a detailed outline and/or solid draft of your paper to class, and be prepared to present your key points/themes.

Week 15 (12/9): Course wrap-up: What have we learned this semester?

Readings: Coontz, Ch. 11 and Epilogue (pp. 255-288)

*Life History/Trajectory Papers due at the start of class*
Consumer Information
In 2008, the federal government required all post-secondary institutions offering federal financial aid programs to provide key data to both prospective and current students. To comply with this requirement, Lewis-Clark State College has developed a consumer information page, which may be accessed at http://www.lcsc.edu/student-consumer-information/

Disability Accommodations
Students requiring special accommodations or course adaptations due to a disability and/or a health-related issue should consult their course instructors and the LCSC Student Counseling Center immediately (RCH 111, 792-2211). Official documentation may be required in order to provide an accommodation and/or adaptation.

Student Rights and Responsibilities
Students have the responsibility for knowing their program requirements, course requirements, and other information associated with their enrollment at LCSC. Students should review the LCSC General Catalog (http://webdev.lcsc.edu/catalog) and the LCSC Student Handbook (http://www.lcsc.edu/media/1152314/13-14-Student-Handbook-Revised.pdf) for more information.

Accidents/Student Insurance
Students participating in LCSC classes normally must look to their personal health insurance policy (Student Health Insurance Plan or comparable private coverage) should an accident occur. In the event of an accident, please seek medical help, if necessary, and report the incident to LCSC Security (792-2226). Fieldtrips or other special student activities may also require students to submit a signed participation waiver (forms can be obtained from the supporting Division Office).

Enrollment Verification/Attendance
Students who are not actively pursuing their classes may have to repay part or all of their financial aid awards depending upon the circumstances.

Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty, which includes cheating and plagiarism, is not tolerated at LCSC. Individual faculty members will impose their own policies and sanctions regarding academic dishonesty. Students who are accused of being academically dishonest may be referred to the VP for Student Affairs for official disciplinary action.

Illegal File Sharing
Students using LCSC’s computers and/or computer network must comply with the college’s appropriate use policies and are prohibited from illegally downloading or sharing data files of any kind. Specific information about the college’s technology policies and its protocols for combating illegal file sharing may be found on the VP for Student Affairs’ web page (http://www.lcsc.edu/student-affairs/student-code-of-conduct/).

Diversity Vision Statement
Regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, national origin, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation, you will be treated and respected as a human being.

Disclosures
During this course, if you elect to discuss information with me that you consider to be sensitive or personal in nature and not to be shared with others, please state this clearly. Your confidentiality in these circumstances will be respected unless upholding that confidentiality could reasonably put you, other students, other members of the campus community, or me in danger. In those cases or when I am bound by law to report what you have told me, such as incidents involving sexual assault or other violent acts, I will submit a report to appropriate campus authorities.