



SOC 335

Marriage and the Family

General Description

Welcome! I hope you find the journey through the Marriage and the Family course you are embarking upon a challenging and enjoyable experience. I have entitled the course manual *Lifemaps* for a reason. I believe living family life is a journey and a process, but one that we too often attempt with limited knowledge of where we're going or where others have been. That is, I hope to present to you in this course an overview of what professionals do know about married and family life at the personal and institutional level. Hopefully, you will understand by the end of the course the intricate connection between what is unique about *your* family but also what is common to *all* families.

One of the things I used to respect most about some of my professors in school was their willingness to share at least part of their personal lives with us students, since we only knew them in their public lives. It is harder to accomplish this in an Independent Studies course, but I will tell you enough of my background to let you judge my credibility in writing this manual and course.

I received my PhD in sociology in 1989 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ("UNKCHA" as my children refer to it). My interests have always been in women, children, and family, along with race and ethnic relations. My dissertation title (*Time in a Bottleneck: The Preferred Work and Family Time Investments of Employed Men and Women*) speaks for some of my interests. I went to undergraduate school at Georgia Southern University. I grew up in a small,

rural town in Georgia of about three thousand. The town installed its first traffic light about ten years ago. Enough said? I married my high school sweetheart when I was twenty (dumb, dumb, *dumb* idea) and divorced (no children) a few years later. While attending graduate school at UNC-CH a few years after that, I met my present husband, Tom, who is also a sociologist, and to whom I have been married for eleven years. We have three male children, who are ages two, seven, and nine as of this writing. We also have a cat named Lucy (after “I Love Lucy,” because she’s a nutty cat). We all have a good time together most of the time, but the place gets wild on occasion, as you can imagine. (I never knew being the only female in a house would require so much yelling about the lids of toilets!) Oops... I’m straying.

I have been teaching undergraduates at UNC-Chapel Hill since I finished my doctorate in 1989 and taught at NC State University before that. I love teaching, and I love the subject matter of sociology, so I hope my passion for sociology is reflected in my writing and choice of reading material.

One final note—my students often ask me where *I* stand politically on family issues. I tell them that it is hard to say, because I would be considered liberal on some issues (I am pro-choice) and conservative on others (religious issues and adults’ influences on children’s lives). Overall, I would place myself slightly left of center, which seems to describe as much about my off-kilter life as it does my political leanings! I have always been an advocate for children, however. A social worker before I returned to graduate school, I worked the “trenches”—dealing with spouse and child abuse—and I left that job with a sense of sadness for the helplessness and vulnerability of young children.

Basically, though, you have to decide for yourself how you feel about family issues. Conservative/liberal labels, as I hope you will find, often don’t do justice to the complexity of so many of the topics and discussions of married and family life, and many of you will find that it is the *issue* that determines your opinion, not necessarily your original political inclinations. Good luck with the course.



Textbooks

Rather than requiring you to order one large, expensive textbook, I have assigned several novels and academic books to supplement the *Lifemaps* manual I have written for the course. The books you will need are:

Edelman, Marian Wright. *The Measure of Our Success*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1992.

Edgerton, Clyde. *Raney*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1985.

Munsch, Robert. *Love You Forever*. Ontario: A Firefly Book, 1986.

Munsch, Robert. *The Paper Bag Princess*. New York: Annick Press Ltd., 1980.

Rubin, Lillian. *Worlds of Pain*. New York: Basic Books, 1992.

Sanders, Dori. *Clover*. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1990.

Tannen, Deborah. *You Just Don't Understand*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1990.

Tyler, Anne. *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. New York: Ivy Books, 1982.

You will also need to purchase the SOCI 30 coursepack of articles assembled for this course. The coursepack and texts may be purchased from the Higher Grounds bookshop at the Friday Center. A book order form can be found in this manual. However, except for the coursepack, all of these texts should be available in college or public community libraries. Remember to look for the Munsch books in the children's section. All of these books are available in paperback.

Course Requirements

In this course, you will be required to read a number of academic articles. The following are some suggestions for getting the most out of those articles.

Academic articles

1. *Always* read the title and abstract at the front of an academic article. The title will almost always give you an idea of the

theoretical argument or research variables that are being investigated. The abstract is a short summary of the article and its major findings.

2. Recognize the “order” of academic articles. Usually the write-up of the articles is organized in the following manner:
 - Introduction
 - Literature review
 - Data and methods
 - Results or findings
 - Discussion
3. Don’t worry about technical language, especially of the statistical sort, right now. You won’t understand much of the more sophisticated statistical analysis unless you have a lot of background in that area. But it is not necessary to understand all the statistics to get an idea of what the author or authors were doing. Go to the Results and Discussion sections to give you an overview of what was found and how the findings are being explained.
4. Finally, as you read the article, keep in mind or jot down the answers to questions such as the following:
 - What is the title of the article? Who is its author(s)? Where was it published (citation)?
 - What is the issue being researched?
 - What is the independent variable or “cause”?
 - What is the dependent variable or “effect”?
 - What theoretical perspective, if any, would you say the author is using?
 - What sample was used? How many? How chosen?
 - What were the major findings? Were major hypotheses supported or rejected?
 - What do *you* think of the quality of the article?

- What might you have done differently if you were writing the article?

Journal You will be required to keep a journal as part of the course. Your entries do not have to be formal and well-written; they can be jotted down as you're doing an assignment. These entries should consist of experiences you've had that are similar to course discussions or thoughts you have as you read the course material. For example, on the lesson dealing with divorce, if you have experienced divorce personally, or your parents have, you could note similarities and differences between your experience and those mentioned in the lesson discussion.

I recommend that you keep up your journal entries as you go along and keep the journal entries in one place, such as in a special legal pad or notebook. I do *not* want your individual entries at any time. I only want a final summary of what you learned from the entries. This write-up will be due at the end of the last lesson.

The following is what I will look for in grading your journal write-up:

1. Is there evidence to show that journal entries were made regularly and as the course progressed, rather than all at the end of the course?
2. How much does the write-up relate to course material? I do not want you to simply quote from the text. Instead, you should incorporate personal insight and experience with relevant readings.
3. Is your journal write-up logical and appropriate, from a sociological perspective? For instance, if you tell me that there has never been a divorce in your family and therefore you don't think there's a problem with divorce in our society, I will not think you have learned much in the course.
4. Is the write-up grammatically correct? Are words spelled correctly? Proofread your own paper or get a friend to do so. It is very difficult to read papers for quality when there are numerous run-on sentences, misspelled words, and paragraphs that seem entirely out of context.

5. Is there creativity and/or originality?
6. Your paper does not have to be typed, but if you write it by hand, please double-space between your lines so that I can make comments to you.
7. The journal write-up should be approximately four to five typed pages or eight to ten handwritten ones. I give you this much leeway, because people have very different writing styles.

Written Assignments

At the end of each lesson, you will find a written assignment that you must turn in for grading. The assignments are based on the readings, and most questions are objective or short-answer questions. The graded, returned assignments will be good review material for your final exam. Please answer the questions in your written assignments in complete sentences, using correct grammar and spelling. You do **not** need to rewrite the question itself (I know them). You can be brief but complete. If you have a listing question, such as “Please list three misperceptions of US family,” you could simply write:

“Three misperceptions of family life include:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Final Exam

You will be required to take one supervised exam at the end of the course. The following are some guidelines:

- You will need to schedule your final exam through the Self-paced Courses office. Use the form found at the end of this manual.
- Your exam will be a combination of multiple choice or matching, short answer, and short essay questions. One of the essay questions you can prepare for ahead of time. You need to bring in any article from the newspaper, a magazine, or book that discusses any aspect of the family today. You will be asked to write about the article, discussing any three concepts from the course you choose to discuss.

- In studying for the exam, concentrate on your graded and returned assignments. Make sure you know the basic trends of family life, such as dating patterns, marriage rates, divorce rates, and so on. Recognize the definitions of obvious concepts we have covered.
- Some sample questions are below:
 1. One structural explanation used to explain the differing marriage rates for whites and blacks is the
 - a. lack of marriage and family education.
 - b. greater importance whites place on a spouse.
 - c. sex ratio.
 - d. all of the above.
 2. Which of the following is most emphasized as the basis for a marriage partner in Western culture?
 - a. romantic love
 - b. economic success
 - c. parental approval
 - d. dependent love
 3. What is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood, or adoption or a sexually expressive relationship?
 4. Why can sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) be so dangerous, especially in women?
 5. What factors contribute to the high divorce rate in the United States today?

(Answers to the above: 1 (c), 2 (a), 3. family, 4. They affect fertility and pregnancy, 5. fewer social sanctions, greater independence of women, easier legally, and so on.)

Study Suggestions

Having taught for many years *and* having taken an Independent Studies course myself, here are a few suggestions that may help you finish on a set schedule.

1. Set aside a specific time, if at all possible, to work on your course. Treat it as if you were taking the course on a campus

and had to be in class at a certain time for a certain length of time.

2. Read the written assignments for a lesson or unit *first*, before you read the lesson and readings. The assignment will give you an idea of the questions and issues on which you need to focus, and it will alert you to certain terms and labels you need to know.
3. Mark in your *Lifemaps* manual. I know we were all told in school not to mark in books, but this is an exception. If you make notes, you can go back as you're doing your assignment. If you really are worried about marking the manual up, use pencil. You could always erase later.
4. Read the academic articles assigned for the course with an eye to analysis and evaluation rather than with an eye to entertainment or pleasure.
5. Read the assigned novels with a sociological perspective. I have provided a Study Aid for each novel in the lesson for which there are questions about the novel.
6. For your final exam, study returned and graded assignments and any notes you made in the margins of your manual.

Grading

Each of the eleven written assignment is worth 100 points. All eleven assignments, averaged together, make up 40 percent of your final course grade. Your journal write-up (the last and twelfth assignment) count as 10 percent of your final course grade. Your final exam counts as 50 percent of your final course grade. Thus your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Average of 11 written assignments	40%
Journal write-up	10%
Final examination	<u>50%</u>
Total	100%