Psychology 464: Psychology of Marriage and the Family
Michelle Ramos, Ph.D.
Fall, 2012

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Lectures: THH 102, Monday & Wednesday 8:00-9:50am
Final Exam: Wednesday, December 12, 2012, from 8:00am–10:00am in TBD

Course description and goals:

This course is designed to examine scientific study of and scholarship on family relationships. Individuals develop within a complex network of relationships, with family relationships being highly significant due to their centrality and longevity. This course focuses on the psychological theories and methods that have been used to examine fundamental issues in family relationships as well as psychotherapeutic interventions for working with couples and families including:

- how intimate relationships develop and change,
- how marriage and parenting influence one another,
- how culture serves as an important context for families,
- what are precursors and outcomes of family violence,
- how families are affected by the special needs of individuals,
- what is the impact on individual family members when family relationships end due to divorce or death, and
- what are current psychotherapeutic interventions for working with couples and families and how are these interventions used to address a wide array of individual and relational difficulties.

The interface between individual development and family development is a theme that spans these various topics.

The course has three major goals: (a) to give students in-depth exposure to psychological theories and contemporary psychological research on the family; (b) to increase students’ understanding of research methods used to study the family; and (c) to enhance students’ abilities to think critically about psychological issues related to the family.
**Assigned Reading:**

Readings for the course will come from three sources: two textbooks and readings drawn from psychology journals and professional books that are available on-line through the USC library. Links will be provided for the readings available through the USC library. Reading the assigned material prior to each class is strongly recommended since class discussion is encouraged and expected, and students can earn extra credit points for their written reactions to the readings.

**Required Texts:**


**Course Policies:**

*Blackboard* – I will use Blackboard to post slides, assignments, announcements, and exam grades as promptly as possible. Please monitor your scores and keep all returned, graded assignments until final grades have been determined. You will need to bring a graded assignment in as proof if it was incorrectly entered into Blackboard. All score corrections must be requested prior to the scheduled final exam period. No changes will be made after that date and time.

*Exams*: Exams must be taken on the scheduled day at the scheduled time. Exceptions will be made only in cases of family hardship or verifiable medical problems and then only at the professor’s discretion.

*Papers and Assignments*: All written assignments are to be handed in AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CLASS PERIOD ON THE DATE THEY ARE DUE. Any papers handed in after the papers have been collected will be considered late and will be marked down. For each day that a paper is late, at least 10 points will be deducted per day (including weekends) from the total points. Papers are NOT to be handed in or left at the 5th floor Psychology Office. If, for some reason, you cannot attend class on the day that a paper is due, it is your responsibility to hand the paper directly to the professor or teaching assistant PRIOR to the class period.

**Course Requirements:**

*Exams*: The mid-term exam will cover the first half of the course. The final exam will cover the second half of the course. Each exam will assess your understanding of the concepts discussed in lecture sessions as well as in your reading assignments. Questions will be based primarily on material covered during lecture and will emphasize understanding of major conceptual issues. Each exam will be a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

*Reaction Papers*: Two reaction papers (each limited to 3 double spaced typed pages maximum, in 12-point font such as Times New Roman or Arial, and 1-inch margins) are to be submitted in class. The first reaction paper is due September 24, and the second reaction paper is due October 31. More detailed information regarding the reaction papers are in the Directions for Written Assignments section below.
Annotated Bibliography/Research Proposal Paper: An annotated bibliography and research proposal is assigned to explore a topic from the course in depth. The topic selected should be an extension of a topic that appears on the syllabus. The topic and a 1-2 sentence description of the topic need to be submitted in writing to your TA for approval by September 19. The annotated bibliography and research proposal are due on November 19. The annotated bibliography should include full references (APA style) and one paragraph descriptions of each of the 5 articles. The research proposal (maximum length = 6 double spaced pages) should include a clear statement of the problem, an integrated review of the 5 articles, and a brief description of methods of your proposed research study. More detailed information about this project is in the Directions for Written Assignments section below.

Class Participation: Participation in break-out groups during class discussion will be awarded.

EXTRA CREDIT: There are two extra credit opportunities, each is worth 10 total points. You can earn a maximum of 10 points of extra credit for this course.

1) Written comments on the readings and lectures: Brief written comments, replies, and questions about course material will accepted at the beginning of each class. Submissions must be turned in within the first 15 minutes of each class period in order to receive credit. Each submission is worth up to 2.5 points per class and can be submitted for 4 classes (total possible points = 10). Two submissions will be accepted prior to the midterm and two submissions will be accepted following the midterm. When submitting your comments, you must include your name, your student ID number and the number of the submission (1, 2, 3, or 4) in order to receive credit.

2) Participation in research being conducted in the psychology department through the on-line subject pool: You can earn extra credit points by participating in research being conducted in the psychology department; there is a current list of opportunities at http://usc.sona-systems.com. You will earn 1 point for each hour of participation in an experiment, and you can earn a maximum of 10 points for this course.

Grading:
You final grade in the course will be based on a weighted average of exams and assignments using the scales below:
Weights for exams and assignments:
Exams (150 points each X 2): 300
Reaction papers (25 points each X2) 50
Annotated bibliography 50
Research proposal 75
Class participation 25

Total possible points: 500

Grading scale (grades are rounded to the nearest percent):
A (93%+)  A- (92-90%)  B+ (89-88%)  B (87-83%)  B- (82-80%)  C+(79-78%)
C (77-73%)  C- (72-70%)  D (69-60%)  F (59% or lower)
**Academic integrity:**
Cheating during an exam will result in a score of 0 on that exam. A score of zero will be assigned if a student has displayed a test for others to see, looked at another student’s exam, or attempted to communicate in any manner with another student during the exam. You are not allowed to leave the testing room and return once the exam has been distributed. No cell phones, pda’s, computers, or other electronic devices may be out or on during an exam.

Gross dishonesty on any graded portion of the course, including exams, papers, and written assignments, will result in a grade of F for the entire course. Gross dishonesty includes behaviors such as, but not limited to, using tests, notes, or answer sheets during an exam, having someone else take an exam for you, or submitting written assignments which are not solely your own work. If you have any questions about what practices are acceptable, ask the professor before an assignment is due.

**Disability services and programs statement:**
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to your TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. DSP’s phone is (213) 740-0776.

**For-Profit Non-USC Websites:** Course slides/overheads are the intellectual property of the instructor. The instructor expressly does not consent to these overheads or their content being posted on a non-USC, for-profit website.
DIRECTIONS FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

General Note: All written assignments are to be handed in AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CLASS PERIOD ON THE DATE THEY ARE DUE. Any papers handed in after the class beginning will be considered late papers and will be marked down. If, for some reason, you cannot attend class that day, be sure to hand the paper directly to the professor or TA earlier than the specified class period.

Reaction Paper #1
DUE: September 24, 2012

Identify a television show or movie that portrays a family. Consider how this show portrays families. Then address the following:

1) Describe this family using one of the family theories discussed in the readings or in class. Try to explain the effectiveness and usefulness of the theory as you relate it to the family.
2) Using what you have learned about family systems, briefly describe the family in terms of structure, boundaries and rules.
3) One or more focus issues to consider: (Note: These questions need not be answered directly, they are only meant to help focus and develop your reaction to the reading/course material):
   • How do television/movie images contribute to myths about the family?
   • How do definitions of family influence individuals, family and/or society?
   • How do changes in society and history affect family?

Limit your paper to 2 to 3 double-spaced pages, using 12-point font such as Times New Roman or Arial, with 1-inch margins.

Reaction Paper #2
DUE: October 31, 2012

To Divorce or Not to Divorce?
Consider carefully what you have read on the effects of divorce and discuss how you would react to the following situation: You have a friend (same sex as you) who is married and has a 4-year-old child. The friend tells you that she/he is in a terrible marriage (with no physical violence) and wonders whether she/he should get a divorce given the possible impact on the child. In your paper, weigh the evidence in favor vs. against divorce and clearly specify whether your advice to your friend is “for” or “against” divorce. The purpose of your advice is to help your friend make an informed decision based on the literature.

Limit your paper to 2 to 3 double-spaced pages, using 12-point font such as Times New Roman or Arial, with 1-inch margins.
Annotated Bibliography/Research Proposal Paper  
Due November 19, 2012

Annotated Bibliography
The purpose of the annotated bibliography is to gain background knowledge about your paper topic. The bibliography is to summarize 5 readings about your topic, all of which must be academic readings, either professional journal articles or book chapters.
For each article:
   A. Provide a complete citation (APA style) including author/s, date, title of article, journal title, pages
   B. Provide a hard copy (printout/photocopy) of the first page of the article
   C. Summarize in bullet points:
      1. The author’s main purpose or research question
      2. The theory used to guide the thinking about the research question
      3. The method/s used to gather data relevant to the questions – does the article report an original study or only review findings from previous studies?
      4. The major findings – are they consistent with the author’s expectations?
      5. The implications of the article for understanding your primary topic; what new information or what contribution does it make to the literature on your topic?

Research Proposal
(maximum length 6 double-spaced pages, 12-point font such as Times or Arial, 1-inch margins)
In this brief research proposal you are to formulate what you think would be an interesting and meaningful research idea to add to the scholarly literature on your topic. You will 1) integrate the empirical content of the 5 sources from your annotated bibliography and 2) define one area that we do not yet know about based on your 5 sources and propose a study to examine this idea/question.

The proposal should be written in a format similar to the journal articles that you are reading but will include only two sections: an **Introduction** and a **Methods** section. Do not be constrained by practicality (e.g., if a particular group of participants should be used, propose using those participants – do not be constrained by whether or not you actually could conduct the study). Your goal is the best possible study.

**Introduction**: The purpose of the Introduction is to summarize the previous research. The first paragraph of the introduction states your question and why it is an important one. The next few paragraphs should summarize previous research that is relevant to your topic. You should primarily draw upon the literature in your annotated bibliography (the 5 articles you selected) but you may also use other readings from class or elsewhere. Please do not simply summarize each article and describe each one in order. You should integrate the sources and paint a coherent picture of the state of the previous research. Then go beyond what you’ve learned from your sources and suggest one more issue/idea that should be considered in the area you are reviewing. When you mention a particular study, use the APA format for referencing literature in text (author/s last name, year of publication). End your introduction with the specific hypotheses of your research study.
**Methods:** The purpose of the Methods section (which can be written in outline form) is to specify:

A. **Participants** – who will be the participants, include characteristics such as age, sex, marital status, age/sex of children, etc. and how many participants will be included;

B. **Methods** – what types of assessments methods will you use; if you are using questionnaires, interview, direct observation, etc., describe what type of information will be collected

C. **Procedures** – if you are using specific tasks, describe how these will be carried out.

In general, the methods should offer enough detail so that someone else could replicate your study.
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/27</td>
<td>Introduction and course overview Definitions of family</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8/29</td>
<td>The family as a system</td>
<td>A&amp;S Ch. 1-4</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9/3</td>
<td><strong>Labor Day: No Class</strong></td>
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<td>9/5</td>
<td>Methods for studying families</td>
<td>B&amp;K Ch. 2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>Evolutionary perspectives on the family</td>
<td>B&amp;K Ch. 3, pp. 96-106</td>
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<td>9/12</td>
<td>Attachment theory</td>
<td>B&amp;K Ch.3, pp.106-117</td>
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<td>Cultural influences on the family</td>
<td>A&amp;S Ch. 5</td>
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<td>Last day for approval of topic for Annotated Bibliography/Proposal</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>9/24</td>
<td>Transition to early adulthood</td>
<td>A&amp;S Ch. 6</td>
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<td><strong>First Reaction Paper Due</strong></td>
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<td>9/26</td>
<td>Mate selection</td>
<td>A&amp;S Ch. 7 B&amp;K Ch. 5</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>10/1</td>
<td>The transition to marriage</td>
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<td>Marriage &amp; marital satisfaction</td>
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<td>10/8</td>
<td>Marital dysfunction and marital conflict</td>
<td>A&amp;S Ch. 10&lt;br&gt;B&amp;K Ch. 3, pp. 117 – 142&lt;br&gt;B&amp;K Ch. 8, pp. 315 – 342</td>
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<td>10/10</td>
<td>Intimacy, sex &amp; infidelity</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>10/15</td>
<td>Marriage, stress, and health Exam review</td>
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<td>10/24</td>
<td>Parent-child relationships</td>
<td>A&amp;S Ch. 12</td>
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<td>10/31</td>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>A&amp;S Ch. 16&lt;br&gt;Amato, P. R. (2000). The consequences of divorce for adults and children. <em>Journal of Marriage &amp; the Family</em>, 62(4), 1269-1269.&lt;br&gt;Amato, P.R. (2011). Reconsidering the “Good Divorce”. <em>Family Relations</em>, 60, 511-524. (links will be posted on Blackboard)</td>
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<td>11/5</td>
<td>Single parent families, remarriage &amp; stepfamilies</td>
<td>A&amp;S Ch. 17 &amp; 18</td>
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<td>11/7</td>
<td>Mid- &amp; later-life families</td>
<td>A&amp;S Ch. 13 &amp; 14</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>11/12</td>
<td>Death and family processes</td>
<td>A&amp;S Ch. 15</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Reading</td>
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B&K Ch. 12 |
| 12/12  | Final Exam | 8:00am - 10:00am |