

221 – Families and Society

Course: Soc/A 221
Instructor: Nancy Feather
Email: nfeather@mix.wvu.edu

Days: M
Time: 5:00-7:50
Location: 503 Eisland

Course Objectives

The objectives of this course are to provide a wide variety of theoretical positions and research findings on the institution of the family and the dynamics of family life. The major focus will be on modern U.S. families, however, we will also consider historical forms and understandings of families. Particular attention will be paid to the diversity of families and family experience based on the interconnecting categories of gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation.

Expected Learning Outcomes

- to understand and apply the major theoretical understandings of families and family life
- to probe issues of family life and family policy which are under discussion in contemporary societies
- to understand families within a specific social and historical context
- to provide a safe environment in which students from a diversity of experiences and backgrounds can openly share, discuss, and debate

My office is located in Knapp Hall, Room 200. I may be reached by email- nfeather@mix.wvu.edu
If you need to speak with me, you may phone 293-5801 x3223, though, email is probably the best way to get in touch with me. Office hours will be Wednesdays from 4:00-5:00 and Fridays 3:00-4:00. If you are unable to meet during scheduled office hours, other times may be arranged.

Required Text- *Marriages and Families- Changes, Choices, and Constraints* (6th edition) by Nijole V. Benokraitis Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Grading

There will be a total of 400 points for the course. Grades will be based on the following point scale:

A= 360-400
B= 319-359
C= 278-318
D= 237-277
F= 236 and below

Exams

There will be 3 exams worth 100 points each for a total of 300 points. Exams may consist of fill in the blank, true/false, matching, multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions.

Assignments

There is one assignment during the semester. This assignment is worth 16 points and is due on February 11. This is an assignment which allows creativity. Students are required to make a written or otherwise artistic presentation about the meaning of love as they see it. The meaning of love or characteristics of love must be clearly shown. It must be done neatly. Pictures, poems, artwork, etc. may be used for this assignment. Photos must be labeled. This creative presentation may not be any larger than 11 inches x 15 inches.

Quizzes

There will be **4 quizzes** worth **16 points each** for a total of **64 points**.

Quizzes are scheduled for March 10, April 7, April 21, April 28.

If students are not present on days when quizzes are given in class, it will result in a “0” for each missed quiz.

Attendance

You are expected to attend class, and you will benefit from doing so. Not attending class causes students to miss out on class discussion, videos, and, yes, LECTURE. On random days throughout the semester, attendance will be taken. There will be a total of **20 possible attendance points** by semester’s end. Attendance points are part of the credit for this course and, thus, will be added on to students’ point total when determining final grades. There will be **no excuses for missed days without official university documentation.**

Tentative Class Schedule

January 14

Chapter 1- The Changing Family

Marriage and family
Functions of a family
Myths about marriage and family
Three perspectives on the changing family

Chapter 2- Studying Marriage and the Family

Why family research?
Understanding families from Sociological Perspectives

January 21

Martin Luther King’s Birthday recess

January 28

Chapter 3- The Family in Historical Perspective

American families throughout history

Chapter 4- Racial and Ethnic Families

Diversity of U.S. families
Race and ethnicity
Prejudice and discrimination

February 4

Chapter 5- Gender Roles and Socialization

Sex and gender
Learning gender roles
Benefits and costs of traditional gender roles

Chapter 6- Love and Loving Relationships

What is love?
Functions of love and loving
When love goes wrong

February 11- continued

“Love” assignment due

Chapter 7- Sexuality and Sexual Expression Throughout Life

Sexual orientation
The sexual double standard
Sex the first time
Sex in committed relationships
Sexuality throughout life

Infidelity
Gay, lesbian, and bisexuals
Sexually transmitted diseases

February 18- **EXAM 1- Chapters 1-7**

Chapter 8- Choosing Others: Dating and Mate Selection

Why date?
Forms of dating
Choosing whom we date
Harmful dating relationships

February 25

Chapter 9-Singlehood, Cohabitation, and Other Nonmarital Options

Single and why
Who cohabits and why
Benefits and costs of cohabitation
Gay and lesbian couples

Chapter 10- Marriage and Communication in Committed Relationships

Why marry?
Prenuptial agreements
Health of married couples
How marriages change throughout the life course
Sex differences in communication
Communication problems
Dealing with conflict

March 3- **continued**

March 10

QUIZ

Chapter 11-To Be or Not to Be a Parent: More Choices, More Constraints

Birth Control
Pregnancy
Childbirth
Infertility
Adoption

March 17

Chapter 12- Raising Children: Prospects and Pitfalls

Theories of child development
Parenting approaches
Disciplining children
Parenting and social class
Parenting across the life course
Non-parental child care
Foster care

March 31- **EXAM 2- Chapters 8-12**

Chapter 13- Families and Work: Facing the Economic Squeeze

Poverty
Homelessness
Working women
Family social policies

April 7

Chapter 14- Family Violence and Other Crises

Marital and intimate partner violence
Cycle of domestic violence
Why women stay
Violence against infants and children
What is child abuse
Sexual abuse and incest
Elder abuse
Explaining family violence
Other family crises

QUIZ

April 14

Chapter 15- Separation and Divorce

Phases of separation
Process of divorce
Who is apt to divorce and for what reasons?
Effects of divorce
How to help children after divorce
Some positive outcomes of divorce

Chapter 16- Remarriage and Stepfamilies: Life After Divorce

Remarriage
Remarriage effects
Stepfamilies
Characteristics of successful stepfamilies

April 21- **continued**

QUIZ

April 28

Chapter 17- Aging and Family Life: Grandparents, the Widowed and Caregivers

Changes in Physical, Mental and Social Status
Retirement
Grandparenting
Dealing with death and dying
Caregiving

QUIZ

Review for Final Exam

******May 10- FINAL EXAM----8:00-10:00******

Have a safe and fun summer break!
MAKE SMART CHOICES!!!!!!!!!!

Conditions For Giving an “I”

Students are expected to complete course work in the semester in which the course is taken. From time to time events that are clearly beyond the control of the student may prevent the timely completion of a course. Should you find yourself facing such circumstances, you may wish to discuss this with your instructor to determine if an incomplete should be given until the late work can be completed. Faculty are not required to give an incomplete and would not be expected to do so where there are not compelling reasons to justify the request.

Social Justice

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700). The instructor of this course concurs with West Virginia University's commitment and expects to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication and mutual respect.