

Cedar Crest College
The Family as a Social Institution
Spring 2010

SOC 321 60
Credits 3
Wednesday 4-6:30 p.m.

Instructor: Suzanne Weaver
610-606-4666, Ext. 3500
Room - Curtis Hall 233
slweaver@cedarcrest.edu

Course Domain:

This course encompasses a detailed examination of the family as a major social institution in every society and in its role as a critical agent of socialization. Various aspects of marriage will also be considered as historically the socially approved relationship upon which the family has been based. While the primary focus will be on marriage and the family in U.S. society there will also be course content on the family from a cross-cultural perspective.

Marriage and the family will be investigated in terms of their forms, functions, stages and varieties. Topics will include alternative family forms, sexuality, gender issues, parenting concerns, financial and emotional stresses on the family, divorce and remarriage, and the personal relationships connected with marriage and the family.

Theoretical/conceptual material developed in this course will be applied to contemporary issues and policies regarding marriage, the family, and personal relationships.

Course Objectives:

This course is designed to assist the student to:

1. Understand marriage and the family from sociology's theoretical and conceptual perspective.
2. Understand the dynamics underpinning the changing nature of the family in the U.S.
3. Understand U.S. marriage and the family patterns, practices and forms through critical comparisons with other cultures.
4. Use knowledge developed through this course in making conscious personal choices throughout one's life and in understanding the societal influences that affect those decisions.
5. Better understand oneself and one's family.
6. Analyze and discuss effectively and informatively controversial social issues regarding marriage and the family and, as a result, to make informed policy choices on those issues.
7. Work effectively in groups to accomplish task assignments.

Textbooks:

Lamanna, M., & Riedman, A. (2006). *Marriages and families: Making choices in a diverse society*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Schroeder, E. (2010). *Taking sides: Family and personal relationships*, (5th ed.). Dubuque, IA: McGraw Hill.

Course Outcomes:

Students will demonstrate understanding of the family as a social institution and the role the family plays as an agent of socialization.

Assessment:

Students will successfully complete written examinations.

Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills in understanding marriage and the family in terms of their forms, functions, stages and varieties.

Assessment:

Students will give an oral and written presentation on a topical contemporary issue regarding marriage, the family and personal relationships.

Students will apply the theoretical/conceptual material to understanding oneself and one's family.

Assessment:

Students will complete a personal journal integrating course work with an understanding of his/her own family.

Student Assignments:

Each student is responsible for:

1. Regular attendance at all class sessions. Attendance will be kept and graded.
2. Read all text assignments in advance of each class session to facilitate conceptual knowledge development and active, meaningful participation in class discussions.
3. Write a 350-400 informed personal opinion statement on each of the *Taking Sides* issues discussed each week in class. Each of the opinion papers must include:
 - reflection of your understanding of the yes/no position in the article
 - direct quotes and page citations from the author
 - your opinions and ideas related to the issue as well as any ideas the author did not adequately consider

The personal opinion statement is due on the day the issue is scheduled for discussion according to the daily class plan. Any written inadequately or handed in late will receive only half credit.

4. Each student will be responsible for facilitating class discussion on ONE of the *Taking Sides* issues. As facilitation, the student is responsible for:
- providing a lively and informed discussion
 - include all students in the discussion
 - facilitate discussion for no less than 30 minutes

5. Compiling a personal journal reflecting each week's textbook reading assignment. This journal assignment will attempt to integrate the course work with a student's understanding of his/her own family circumstances and dynamics.

Each student will record each week one entry that integrates course content and applications to their own family and/or marital situation.

The journals will be collected two times by the instructor. Grading will be based on the integration of coursework to life experiences. Subjective reactions of a student will not enter the grading process. Confidentiality will be maintained by the instructor.

Due: February 24
April 21

7. Successfully complete two multiple choice tests – designed to test the student's understanding and mastery of the material in the *Marriages and Families* text.

March 17
April 28

8. Note: All assignments are due on the dates indicated on the class schedule. Assignments turned in later than these due dates will be reduced by 1 grade for each day late including weekends. All assigned work must be submitted no later than the last day the class is scheduled to meet.

Social Work Program Attendance Policy

Social work courses typically meet only fourteen sessions each semester. In the interests of your development as a professional social work practitioner as well as the interests of your future clients, it is vital for you to attend these class sessions. Therefore, the Social Work Program's Attendance Policy is as follows:

- 1) You may miss two class sessions for whatever reasons without penalty.
- 2) If you miss a third class session the highest overall grade you can receive for the course is a "B".
- 3) If you miss a fourth class session the highest overall grade you can receive for the course is a "C".
- 4) Five or more class absences will result in your need to retake the course.

Cedar Crest College Classroom Protocol

Appropriate classroom behavior is implicit in the Cedar Crest College Honor Code. Such behavior is defined and guided by complete protection for the rights of all students and faculty to a courteous, respectful classroom environment. That environment is free from distractions such as late arrivals, early departures, inappropriate

conversations and any other behaviors that might disrupt instruction and/or compromise students' access to their Cedar Crest College education.

Furthermore:

Students are expected to have prompt and regular classroom attendance in accordance with the policy stated on the syllabus.

Faculty are expected to make clear on the first day of class reasons for specific classroom decorum and repercussions for noncompliance. Faculty should be aware of setting boundaries and procedures for exceptions to expectation stated in the syllabus.

Honor Policy

The Cedar Crest College Honor Philosophy is based upon the principle that, as a self-governing body, students have the ability to create an atmosphere of trust and support. Within this environment, individuals are empowered to make their own decisions, develop personal regard for the system under which they live, and achieve a sense of integrity and judgment that will guide them through life.

Grading:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Facilitation of Class Discussions | 20% |
| Informed Opinion Statements | 20% |
| Personal Journal | 20% |
| Tests (20% each) | <u>40%</u> |
| Total | 100% |

Course Outline:

- January 20 Course Overview
Chapter 1: Family Commitments
Chapter 2: American Families in a Social Context
Video – *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus*
- January 27 No Class
- February 3 Chapter 3: Exploring the Family
Issue #1, Is It Ever Appropriate to Spank a Child?
Video – *Family Communication #108: Family Stories, Messages & Meaning*
Chapter 4: Our Gendered Identities
Chapter 5: Loving Ourselves and Others
Issue #8, Should Parents Surgically Alter Their Intersex Infants?
Videos – *Falling Angels*
- February 10 Chapter 6: Our Sexual Selves
Issue #10, Should Same-Sex Couples Be Allowed to Legally Marry?
Videos – *Being Gay: Coming Out in the 21st Century* and *The Bisexual Experience*
- February 17 Chapter 7: Choosing a Marriage Partner
Issue #7, Should Parents Be Able to Select the Biological Sex of Their Children?
Video – *Trans America*
- February 24 Chapter 8: Marriage
Issue #14, Is Cybersex “Cheating”?
Video – *Tying the Knot*
Journal Due
- March 3 Chapter 9: Alternatives to Marriage
Issue #15, Are Open Relationships Healthy?
Issue #16, Is Pornography Harmful to Teenagers?
Video – *He Said, She Said*
- March 17 **Exam #1**
- March 24 Chapter 10: To Parent or Not to Parent
Issue #2, Should Adoptive Parents Adopt Only Within Their Own Racial Group?
Chapter 11: Raising Children in a Diverse Society
Video – *We Are Dad*
- March 31 Chapter 12: Work and Family
and Issue #9, Should Minors Be Required to Get Their Parents’ Permission in Order to Obtain an
April 7 Abortion?
Issue #5, Do Mothers Who Work Outside the Home Have a Negative Effect on their Children?
Video – *Kids & Divorce: For Better or Worse* – 3/31
Video – *Angela Shelton* – 4/7
- April 14 No Class

April 21 Chapter 13: Communication
Chapter 14: Power & Violence
Videos – *Staying at Home* and *The Double Shift: Women a True Story*
Chapter 15: Family Stress
Chapter 16: Divorce
Issue #3, Should Unhappy Couples Stay Together for the Sake of their Children?
Journal Due – 4/21

April 28 Chapter 17: Remarriages
Chapter 18: Aging Families
Chapter 19: Managing Family Stress and Crisis
Exam #2

Sign-Up Sheet: Taking Sides

| | | |
|-------|----------|--|
| _____ | Feb. 3 | Issue #1, Is it Ever Appropriate to Spank a Child? |
| _____ | Feb. 3 | Issue #8, Should Parents Surgically Alter Their Intersex Infants? |
| _____ | Feb. 10 | Issue #10, Should Same-Sex Couples Be Allowed to Legally Marry? |
| _____ | Feb. 17 | Issue #7, Should Parents Be Able to Select the Biological Sex of Their Children? |
| _____ | Feb. 24 | Issue #14, Is Cybersex "Cheating"? |
| _____ | March 3 | Issue #15, Are Open Relationships Healthy? |
| _____ | March 3 | Issue #16, Is Pornography Harmful to Teenagers? |
| | March 17 | No Issue -- Exam |
| _____ | March 24 | Issue #2, Should Adoptive Parents Adopt Only Within Their Own Racial/Ethnic Group? |
| _____ | March 31 | Issue #9, Should Minors Be Required to Get Their Parents' Permission in Order to Obtain an Abortion? |
| _____ | April 7 | Issue #5, Do Mothers Who Work Outside of the Home Have a Negative Effect on Their Children? |
| | April 14 | No Class |
| _____ | April 21 | Issue #3, Should Unhappy Couples Stay Together for the Sake of their Children? |
| | April 28 | No Issue -- Exam |