



**Florida State University**  
SYG 3100-01 **Family Problems and Social Change**  
MW 3:35 – 4:50pm  
BEL 180  
Spring 2009

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## **SYLLABUS**

Welcome to SYG3100 (Family Problems is a 3 credit-hour course). I extend this initial greeting to all of our twice-a-week meetings in the semester (28 total), during which we will learn about the theoretical and research findings pertaining to the institution of the family, its role in society, history, patterns, and trends. Hopefully, our working together will make us realize more that we and our families are both product and makers of the social world we live in. This syllabus describes the expectations, responsibilities, and content of the course. Retain it in your SYO 3100-01 folder and bring it to class. We will consult it as often as it is necessary to clarify, restate or change the above parameters of the course.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course entails a sociological approach (covering theory and research findings) to premarital, marital, and post-marital familial relationships. It deals with the variety of ideas and practices people have about dating, living arrangements, marriage, family communication, divorce, remarriage, and parenting. It explores the American family as a diverse, ever changing unit, with multiple challenges and choices shaping its twenty-first century composition and dynamics.

### **COURSE OUTCOMES AND GOALS**

At the end of the course you will be able to:

1. Identify, define, and illustrate basic concepts, theories, research techniques and findings about the family.
2. Compare and contrast the different theories and methods used to examine and explain family members' roles and interaction patterns as they affect intimate, courtship, marital, and familial relationships.
3. Critically examine the American family and the role it plays in reproducing, maintaining, and changing the structural factors of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class.
4. Acquire an increased awareness of the substantive issues confronting American society and their influence on American marriages and families.
5. Write and express referenced opinions via class discussions, term paper, and exams about the concepts, theories, and research techniques in the field.

### **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

1) Benokraitis, Nijole, 2005. **Marriage and Families. Changes, Choices, and Constraints.** (6<sup>th</sup>. Edition) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. This textbook is identified as B in the Course Outline. This text is available at Bill's and FSU Bookstore

2) Additional readings on specific topics (listed as \* on the Course Outline below) are posted on Blackboard or specific websites

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Reading Assignments:** Students are expected to have active and constructive class participation. **Hence, assigned readings should be read prior to and during the corresponding class dates as depicted in the Course Outline below.** Of course, additional reading is required before the midterm. The complexity of the reading materials is appropriate for college students. Thus, if at first you do not understand them, you must read them as many times as it is necessary to accomplish understanding. To ensure that you fully grasp the concepts and arguments presented in the readings come to the lectures prepared to ask questions about the particular issues that remain unclear. Make a habit of consulting a college-level dictionary and the glossary in the textbook to acquire familiarity with scientific terms and expand your vocabulary (do not use Wikipedia).

**Class Participation:** Family and marriage are synonymous to personal relationships. Each and every one of us has experience with the topic and can offer unique insight to enrich us all. However, the course involves moving beyond this personal knowledge to research-informed and more objective and rational examination of family relationships. The readings assigned for the course will inform us of how to do it. Hence, attend class having read the materials assigned and prepared to discuss it. My role is to generate and steer the discussion of the material always within a civil and respectful atmosphere, plus to assess your learning in the course. For this, you will be given a short-answer question every week about the readings and lectures, except for the weeks in which a mid-term exam is given and after Thanksgiving. There are six of these assessments in the semester with a total contribution of 20% to the final grade.

Do not fail to participate for fear of what others may think. Remember there are always other students who are in your same situation. If uncertainty and nervousness take over the class the course will be a total loss. Nothing will be gained from silence, passivity, apathy and lectures turned into monologues.

Ask questions, answer questions, volunteer your views, make comments, be attentive to what others say, avoid using the class as a forum for your own agenda. Overall, cooperate in building a supportive learning environment that benefits us all. Talk to me or the TA when you need assistance with course materials as soon as the problem arises.

**Term Paper:** The class will be randomly divided into two subgroups (Group 1 and Group 2) for submittal of a term paper at two different deadlines. Each group's paper will deal with the material covered in the first or second half of the semester, respectively. There is no advantage of one group over the other in terms of time, since each will have one month to work on the paper from the date of the posting of the instructions till the due date to submit it. The paper will be turned in on class as a hard copy. The roster for each group, instructions for the paper, and grading rubric will be posted on Bb as soon as the class roster is finalized (after the add/drop date). The instructions cover required content questions to be answered, page length, number of references, citation format, presentation and grammar standards, and organization.

Abide by the rules of honesty when doing your paper. Plagiarism will not be tolerated (see below for policy on academic honor and honesty).

**Exams:** In addition to the six weekly assessments, there are three 'mid-term' exams and one final. Each midterm exam covers the assigned material listed in the Course Outline below. All midterm exams are a combination of multiple-choice and true-false questions. The final exam has the same format but covers some specific issues of earlier themes previously seen in the course plus the last topics not yet evaluated by any previous exam.

All assigned readings and lectures are potential exam materials. To facilitate the learning process you will be given a set of study-guide questions at the beginning of each topic. Work on these questions since they are an important means to reach the objectives of the class and prepare you for the coming test. Use the class time and office hours to talk to me about your progress. The

study guide will not give you the specific questions of the test; however it incorporates the objectives and content used to assess the learning and quality of the course!

Rules regarding missing exams are discussed below

**Grading Method:** Each exam is worth 15% of the final grade; the term paper is 20% each; and the total six weekly assessments are 20%.

Regardless of content and format, all work is graded on a scale of 0-100.

The equivalent letter grade is shown as follows:

Exam Points	Letter Grade
95-100	A
90-94	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
59 and below	F

All tests, paper grades and announcements will be posted on SYG3100-01 Blackboard. Notify the instructor or the TA of any problems regarding your grades as early as possible. Make a habit of checking Bb and webmail daily to keep you informed about the class in addition to your class attendance.

***Talk to me or the TA when you need help as soon as the problem arises. Do not wait until the third month in the semester to request assistance.***

### **ESSENTIAL POLICY INFORMATION**

**Attendance:** Students are required to attend class on time. Attendance will be taken on a regular basis via the weekly tests, mid-term exams, and by asking students to write down their names on a piece of paper. Since lectures deal with material and viewpoints other than the textbook readings and are used for weekly evaluations, it is very important that you attend class, keep up with readings, do note taking and be aware of course-related announcements. I will allow up to three unexcused absences; **FOUR** or **MORE** unexcused absences will receive a grade of F for the course. You are responsible for the material you miss thus obtain lecture notes and information from your classmates. Everything dealt with in class is potential material for exam.

**Courtesy:** Class will start on time. Please make every effort to be in your seats by the start of class. Coming in late or leaving before class dismissal is rude and disruptive for all, more so in a mass class as this. Be courteous and avoid these behaviors.

A final rule concerns with the use of cellular phones, pagers, beepers, Ipods, blackberries, and laser pointers. Turn them off and abstain from using them while attending class. If you have to have a cell phone on due to a life-threatening family emergency, keep it on vibrate.

**Excused Absences:** The following **AND** only the following absences are eligible to be excused:

- Religious holidays specified by FSU administrators
- Representing FSU at official functions, including intercollegiate debating or varsity sports events
- Life-threatening emergencies

- Legitimate medical illnesses requiring continued treatment by medical practitioners because of its seriousness (i.e., colds, flu, stress, etc. do not qualify as medical illnesses. If you have a chronic illness that could affect your attendance, let me know at the beginning of class.

In order to excuse an absence you need to present documentation about the reason for your absence, such as, copy of obituary, doctor's note legitimating the seriousness of illness and need for continued treatment, court hearing date, or police citation.

**Makeup for Missed Mid-Term Exam:** **ONE and ONLY ONE** make-up exam will be given to a student **IF and ONLY IF** there is a legitimate reason (appropriate documentation is required) for missing the midterm test. It is your responsibility to notify the TA and me why you are not taking the test. Do so prior to or no later than the next class after the test. In order to justify an absence from the test, students need to show a legitimate document of its cause. This may involve an obituary, court order, doctor-signed prescription or a document from an agency signed by a legitimate authority that fully describes the emergency causing the student's absence. Get in touch with your TA to learn about the date, time, and location of the make-up exam. The make-up exam may have a different format from the original i.e., essay questions.

**Unexcused missed exam and assessments cannot be made up.**

**Student Conduct:** My many years of college experience, both as student and as instructor, have shown me that, for the most part students are bright, good-natured and amiable toward others. In general you are expected to comply with the FSU Code of Conduct at all time while participating in FSU-related activities. Your behavior during class should be courteous, respectful and professional. In short, anyone who ignores my authority to protect the integrity of the classroom will be asked to cease his/her disruptive behavior, may be asked to leave the classroom, and or to drop the course.

**Failure to abide by these rules can result in academic penalties ranging from a lowered grade, to dismissal, to failing the course.**

<http://e-soc.net/>

**Academic Honor Code:** Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code published in the Florida State University Bulletin and the Student Handbook. The Academic Honor System of The Florida State University is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility (1) to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student's own work, (2) to refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community, and (3) to foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the university community. Please see the following website for a complete explanation:

<http://www.fsu.edu/Books/Student-Handbook/codes/honor.html>

**Academic Dishonesty:** Students must abide by the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty will result in a "zero" for that particular assignment or an "F" for the course, at the instructor's discretion. Any student who plagiarizes, cheats on exams, or otherwise behaves in a dishonest way may be reported to the University Judicial Office for official adjudication.

<http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/forms/honorpolicy.pdf>

**Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; (2) bring me a letter indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. Please feel free to see me in case of any problems or concerns and I will be only happy to help! For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities contact:

Student Disability Resource Center, Dean of Students, 08 Kellum Hall  
Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306-4400, (850) 644-9566 (voice),  
(850) 644-8504 (TDD), [SDRC@admin.fsu.edu](mailto:SDRC@admin.fsu.edu),

<http://www.fsu.edu/~staffair/dean/StudentDisability/>

**Incomplete Grades:** Missing work or uncompleted assignments are not sufficient reasons for requesting an incomplete Grade. A grade of Incomplete is given only under extenuating circumstances at the instructor's discretion. Note that College of Social Sciences guidelines require that students seeking an "I" must be passing the course.

### COURSE OUTLINE

Dates of topics, objectives, assigned readings, term paper, and exams are depicted here. We will accommodate to this outline as much as discussion and participation allow it. Any needed changes made to the information below will be announced in class.

<b>Wk</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Learning Objectives</b> <i>(By the end of the class students will be able to):</i>	<b>Content</b> <i>(What will be covered during this time period?)</i>	<b>At Home</b> <i>(What will students do at home, prior to coming to class?)</i>	<b>Assessment</b> <i>(To demonstrate learning students will):</i>
1	Jan 7 <sup>th</sup>	Locate the objectives, content, and requirements of the course in the syllabus	Syllabus	Read through the syllabus and bring questions to class	Put forth queries and express any concerns about the syllabus. Sign up an agreement with the course syllabus
	Jan 12 <sup>th</sup>	Define and compare among basic concepts of social groups, group types and family, marriage, and family structure types. Discuss myth and reality about the structure, functions and gender/age roles of American family members.	B Ch.1, *Family Problems: Myth or Reality? on Bb Lecture Notes *Introduction to the Family” on Bb Lecture Notes	Read the chapters. Download and begin answering study guide questions #1	Participate in class Answer study guide questions on basic concepts of family
2	Jan 14 <sup>th</sup>	Summarize the normative patterns of current American families Summarize the historical changes of families in American society. Describe the structure of the family of the future	*Teachman, et al on Bb Readings B Ch 3, 18 *Immigration Policies and Groups” on Bb Lecture Notes	Read the article and chapters	Participate in class Answer study guide questions on family typologies and migration patterns Answer assessment
<b>3</b>	<b>Jan 19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>MLK Day Holiday. No classes</b>			
3	Jan 21 <sup>st</sup>	Distinguish the basic arguments of major Sociological perspectives on the study of marriage and the family	B Ch 2 pp: 30-46; *Coontz on Bb Readings	Read the chapter.	Participate in class. Answer weekly assessment
4	Jan 26 <sup>th</sup>	Identify the requirements for scientific research. List and describe several research techniques employed to analyze marriage and the family	B Ch 2 pp:46-56; *Research Methods” on Bb Lecture Notes	Read the chapter	Participate in class Answer study guide questions on theory and methods

4	Jan 28 <sup>th</sup>	Review for mid-term exam #1	B Ch. 1, 2, 3, and 18 *Bb Lecture Notes *Bb Readings by Teachman et al; Coonts: Race and Ethnicity	Read the chapters. Bring textbook, lecture notes, Bb handouts, and answers to study guide #1 to class	Participate in class discussion. Finish answering study guide questions
<b>5</b>	<b>Feb 2<sup>nd</sup></b>		<b>TEST #1</b>		
5-6	Feb 4 <sup>th</sup> - Feb 9 <sup>th</sup>	Define basic concepts of minority, race, and ethnic groups. Describe the extent of variation and commonality in family structure, marriage, and parenting patterns among ethnic American families Discuss the myths and reality about the status of ethnic American families	B Ch 4, pp:89-92 *Race and Ethnicity” on Bb Lecture Notes Ch 4 pp 92-116, Ch 9 pp:268-270, Ch 11 pp:325-326, Ch 12 pp: 361-364	Read the chapters. Download study guide #2	Participate in class Answer study guide questions on the concepts of minority, race, and ethnicity, and racism , prejudice, and discrimination  Answer weekly assessment
6-7	Feb 11 <sup>th</sup> – 16 <sup>h</sup>	Define basic concepts of gender, sex, gender roles, and sex roles. Define and describe the patterns, changes, and constraints in gender roles socialization Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical explanations on gender roles socialization	B1 Ch 5 pp:119-128; Ch 7, pp: 186-191; Ch 12 pp: 372-380; *Gender and Sex on Bb Lecture Notes B Ch 5 pp:129-152	Read the assigned material.	Participate in class Answer study guide questions on gender, sex, sexism, and the influence of sexism on family roles
7-8	Feb 18 <sup>th</sup> - 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Identify various meanings of love. Discuss the theoretical explanations on love relationships and the diversity of love and. sexual expressions	B Ch 6 and 7 *What is Love? On Bb Lecture Notes	Read the chapters	Participate in class Answer study guide questions on love and courtship Answer weekly assessment
8	Feb 25 <sup>th</sup>	Review for test #2	B Ch 4, 5, 6 and 7 *Bb Lecture Notes	Re-read the material. Bring textbook, Bb handouts, lecture notes, and answered study guide #2 to class	Participate in review to self-evaluate readiness for the test Finish answering study guide questions
<b>9</b>	<b>Mar 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Group 1 Term Paper</b>		<b>Turn in your paper in class</b>	
<b>9</b>	<b>Mar 2<sup>nd</sup></b>		<b>TEST #2</b>		
9	Mar 4 <sup>th</sup>	Describe the norms and patterns for selecting a partner/mate	B Ch 8 pp:223-248	Read the chapter	Participate in class
11	Mar 16 <sup>th</sup>	Discuss the reasons “To	B Ch 9, 10	Read the	Participate in class.

	- Mar 18 <sup>th</sup>	Marry Or Not To Marry”	*”Freedom to Marry” on Bb Readings *”What Women Should Know about Pre-Nuptial Contracts” on Bb Readings	chapters; download study guide #3 and begin work on the questions	write down a list of ranked factors deemed important in your selection of partner
12	Mar 23 <sup>rd</sup> - 25 <sup>th</sup>	Identify the reasons for and consequences of having or not having children	B Ch 11, Ch 12 pp:372-380	Read the chapters.	Participate in class. Answer study guide questions on who, why, and how people marry and become parents Answer weekly assessment
13	Mar 30 <sup>th</sup>	Identify the causes and consequences of marriage success and failure	B Ch 15 and 17 *Wolfinger on Bb Readings	Read the chapters; Bring materials to next class for the review	Participate in class Answer questions on divorce Answer weekly assessment
13	Apr 1 <sup>st</sup>	Class review	Bogus test #3		Self evaluation
<b>14</b>	<b>Apr 6<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Group 2 Term Paper Due</b>		<b>Turn in your paper in class</b>	Participate in class
<b>14</b>	<b>Apr 6<sup>th</sup></b>		<b>TEST #3</b>		
14 - 15	Apr 9 <sup>th</sup> – Apr 16 <sup>th</sup>	Examine the structure and dynamics of reconstituted families	B Ch 15,16, 17 Watch video and answer questions about it  B 15, and 17 *Bb Lecture Notes and Readings and video	Read the chapters; download study guide #4	Participate in class Finish answering study guide questions
16	Apr 20 <sup>th</sup>	Class review	Introductory class materials Bogus test #4	Read the chapters Bring answered study guide #4 to class	Participate in review to self-evaluate readiness for test
<b>17</b>	<b>May 1<sup>st</sup></b>		<b>TEST #4 Friday (3:00 – 5:00 PM)</b>		