

Family Issues Across the Lifespan

FMLY 1020

Course Syllabus

Welcome to FMLY 1020, Family Issues Across the Lifespan. Although most of us have some experience in a family setting, we do not often reflect on this experience in a systematic manner. What is “family”? Why does the concept of “family” have personal meaning to us? What factors have shaped our experiences in family relationships? How is our own meaning and experience different from that of others? We address questions such as these in this course by examining the scientific study of the family and by surveying key issues that affect the everyday lives of members of society’s most basic institution.

Contacting your instructor

For information on contacting your instructor as well as other important information from your instructor see the Instructor Welcome Letter in your course website.

Course description

The University of Manitoba Undergraduate Calendar provides the following description of this course:

(Formerly 062.102) Introduction to contemporary issues involving families across the lifespan. Topics include mate selection, marriage, parenthood, divorce, lone-parent families, work-family balance, family violence, families and older persons, and poverty in families. Not to be held with the former 062.114.

This course provides an introduction to the field of family social sciences and to the study of families. We will explore the ways in which social scientists approach the task of increasing our understanding about family life and review key research findings. This will include an examination of the factors that influence our relationships and how these relationships progress during the life cycle. The impact of a variety of factors that influence family life such as work, stress, family violence, divorce, and recoupling will also be examined.

Course goals

The general goal of this course is to introduce you to contemporary issues involving families across the lifespan. Specifically, the course materials should enable you to:

- develop a broad definition of *family*;
- recognize that issues studied in the field of family social sciences can be approached from different theoretical perspectives;
- examine research methods used to study families;
- identify variations in family forms and changes in family roles over time;
- identify ways that factors such as cohort, gender, and culture influence family relationships; and
- develop researching, writing, and critical thinking skills.

Course materials

Required textbook

The following required textbook is available for purchase from the [University of Manitoba Bookstore](#). Please order your textbook immediately, if you have not already done so. See your [Distance and Online Education Student Handbook](#) for instructions on how to order your materials.

Ward, M. & Bélanger, M. (2015). *The family dynamic: Canadian perspectives* (6th ed.). Toronto, ON: Nelson Education Ltd.

This textbook comes with an access code that provides students with 6-month access to CourseMate, a valuable on-line learning resource. CourseMate contains excellent learning tools in

chapter specific resources that include chapter overviews, flashcards for key definitions, and practice test questions. Accessing this resource is highly recommended.

Required readings

Kelly, J. B., & Emery, R. E. (2003). [Children's adjustment following divorce: Risk and resilience perspectives](#). *Family Relations* 52(4), 352–362.

Required videos

National Film Board of Canada (Producer). (1998). *A Love That Kills*.

This documentary tells the tragic story of Monica, a 19-year old woman who was murdered by her former boyfriend. Monica's mother recounts the abuse experienced by her daughter while she was in the relationship with an abusive partner and the other actors identify the warning signs of partner abuse. The content of this video supplements the material on family abuse in unit 5.

As you view this video, think about the following questions:

- What are the different forms of abuse that can be experienced in an intimate partner relationship?
- How did shame and fear influence Monica's decisions about her relationship?
- What are some of the signs that might indicate that someone is experiencing abuse in an intimate partner relationship?

Note: The video is available in the course website (unit 5). Check to see if you have the appropriate computer hardware, software, and communications to listen to this recording online.

Required hardware and software

You require the following items for your computer for this course:
Headset or speakers to hear audio in the video files.

Optional

Supplementary readings are suggested at the end of each unit. Some units also include suggestions for supplementary viewing through YouTube. CourseMate also contains a variety of multimedia learning tools and resources including exercises and videos; these tools provide an opportunity to analyze and reflect on family issues and to learn more.

There are a number of websites that contain valuable information relevant to this course. Some examples include:

The Vanier Institute of the Family is a Canadian Organization that promotes the well-being of Canadian families through such activities as research, public education, and policy advisement. Their website includes a virtual library that provides access to many publications. Visit their website at <http://www.vifamily.ca/>

Statistics Canada's website provides access to free information derived from social and census data. This includes information about family profiles and trends and research findings. Their website is located at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/>

Course overview

This course is organized in 6 units:

Unit 1 The Study of Families: Introduction to Basic Concepts, Theories, and Research Methods

In this unit we will examine the difficult task of defining families, the growing diversity among Canadian families, and the growing importance of expanding traditional definitions of family so that diversity is recognized. We will also examine the theoretical frameworks that are applied to the study of families and the various methods that researchers use in their efforts to place the family in the realm of scientific inquiry.

Unit 2 Forming Relationships

This unit examines the formation of long-term couple relationships. Social, cultural, and gender based expectations and influences will be reviewed.

Unit 3 Bringing Children into the Family

The basis of this unit is what is sometimes recognized as the most important function of families: procreation and the socialization of children. We begin with an examination of Canadian fertility trends and explore the reasons for changes that have been observed. We then explore the socialization of children and the role of parents, other family members, and the influence of schools and the media. Key issues experienced in lone-parent families are also reviewed.

Unit 4 Changes in the Family over Time

The changes that families experience over the life cycle are the focus of this unit. These include the changes and transitions associated with divorce and recoupling as well as changes associated with lifespan development.

Unit 5 Factors Influencing Families

This unit examines some of the multitude of issues that impact family life. We consider stress, employment, abuse, and poverty and recognize the resilience of families in the face of these demands and challenges.

Unit 6 Families in the Future

This unit ends the course with a review of the key trends and changes in families that have been noted throughout the course. The meanings of these changes and predictions for families in the future will be examined.

Getting started

For each unit, begin by reading the introduction and learning objectives found at the beginning of the unit in the course materials. Turn each learning objective into a question whose answer should be found in the content of the unit. The next step involves surveying the assigned readings for each unit. Approach the assigned readings one at a time. Once again, restate the learning objectives listed at the beginning of each chapter as questions so that you can search for the answer to these questions as you read. Pay attention to the headings in the chapter and also state them as questions. Now read the chapter to find the answers to the questions that you have formulated. Some students find it helpful to make brief notes that summarize the answers to these questions. These can be reviewed at the end of each unit and for the exam.

Within each unit there is additional commentary for textbook chapter(s) labelled “Study notes.” After you have read the chapter(s), read the accompanying study notes. Then proceed to the next assigned reading and repeat the process.

Learning activities

Learning activities are suggested for each chapter. Most of these consist of the Personal Assignments that are listed at the end of each chapter in the textbook. Try to complete at least one of these personal assignments for each chapter as they will allow you to reflect on and apply the material covered in that chapter. In addition, at least one final learning activity is included at the end of each unit. Once again, completion of these activities will help you to reflect on and apply the material covered in the unit and/or help you to organize the material covered in the unit for study purposes.

Self-test questions

Finally, each unit ends with self-test questions which serve as examples for the final exam. Completion of these questions will help you to test your grasp of the material covered in each unit and will also serve as practice for the final exam. The answers to the questions for each unit can be found in the appendix of the course material. It is also recommended that you complete the practice questions available for each chapter in CourseMate.

Evaluation and grading

The evaluation for this course is based on three assignments completed during the term and a final examination. The final examination will be scheduled by the Registrar’s Office.

Distribution of marks

Evaluation	Percentage
Assignment 1	10%
Assignment 2	20%
Assignment 3	30%
Final examination	40%
Total	100%

Note: All final grades are subject to departmental review.

Plagiarism, cheating, and examination impersonation

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Assignments

The three assignments and the marking keys are included in the assignment section in your course website. They include:

Assignment 1 Research article summary

For this assignment you are required to provide a short summary of a research article from an academic journal. The article should be a report of a study on a topic related to families that has been conducted by the authors of the article.

Assignment 2

There are two options for the completion of this assignment.

Option A: Reflection papers

For this option, you will be provided with four questions that relate to family issues covered in this course. You will independently write a one-page answer to each of the questions posed. The written answer should demonstrate that you have thought about the topic of the question and reflected on the material on this topic presented in the course. The answers to all four questions will be submitted at one time by the due date.

Although there is only one due date for all four of the answers to the questions, do not delay answering these questions. This is not meant to be an onerous or time-consuming assignment, provided that you begin answering the questions as soon as possible. Do not leave all four questions to be completed in one sitting.

Option B: Group discussions

For this option, students will participate in "discussions" with other students via the course website to discuss issues relevant to families. Students who indicate that they wish to participate in this option will be placed in groups for the discussion. The instructor will post a question or a topic to be discussed by members of the group. There will be five such discussions. Students will take turns in the roles of moderator and reporter. For each question, there will be a one-week period during which students can post messages to other students. For each question, you must make a minimum of **three contributions** that demonstrate critical thinking on your part and are approximately 100 words in length.

In order to participate in the group discussions you will need access to:

- the Internet; and
 - the required version of the browser software (i.e., Netscape or Internet Explorer).
- Students must choose between Option A and Option B by the end of the first week of the course. **If you wish to participate in Option B, you must e-mail the instructor at the e-mail address indicated in the letter of introduction to indicate your choice. If no e-mail is received, it is**

assumed that you are choosing Option A. As you make your decision about the option that you want to choose for this assignment, you can review the introductory activity found in the assignment for this course. This will help you to get a feel for online group discussions.

Assignment 3: Media critique

The requirement for this assignment is the preparation of a term paper that critiques/evaluates the portrayal of the family in the media. You will first examine the portrayal of the family in popular television programs, movies, commercials, comic series, children’s books, or popular press magazines and advertisements. Choose only one such medium. Prepare a five-page essay that evaluates the portrayal of the family in this particular medium with regard to a specified question. Comments made in the essay must be supported by academic references that illustrate the realities of contemporary family life.

More detailed instructions for each assignment are included in the assignment section in the course website.

Assignment due dates

Assignment	Sept.-Dec.	Jan.-Apr.	May-Aug.
1	October 9	January 31	May 29
2	November 6	March 1	June 26
3	December 4	March 30	July 23

Note: Review the information on assignment due dates in the *Student Handbook*. If you are unable to submit an assignment on time, contact your instructor well in advance of the due date, for we cannot guarantee that the instructor will accept late assignments.

Examination

The final exam will be conducted at the University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus or at an alternate location off-campus. **All students must declare** an exam location. The Registrar’s Office is responsible for scheduling the final exam. Once finalized, the exam date and time information will be posted on the University of Manitoba Exam site.

The final exam will consist of 100 multiple choice questions (worth 1 mark each). Sample questions are included at the end of each unit. The answers to these questions are included in the appendix. There are also practice test questions in CourseMate.

Grading scale

Letter grade	Percentage range	Description
A+	92 – 100	Exceptional
A	85 – 91.9	Excellent
B+	78 – 84.9	Very good
B	72 – 77.9	Good
C+	66 – 71.9	Satisfactory
C	60 – 65.9	Adequate
D	50 – 59.9	Marginal
F	less than 50	Failure

Please note: All final grades are subject to departmental review.

General guidelines for assignment and exam preparation

Assignments 1, 2 (Option A), and 3 must be typed and double-spaced, using 12-point font and one inch margins (paragraphs should be indented and no extra space should be left between paragraphs). A good resource for preparing academic papers and assignments is the Academic Learning Centre that can be accessed through the University of Manitoba Home Page under “Current Students” or through the homepage of this course under “Student Resources” and “Writing Assistance”.

Referencing for the bibliographic information for assignments and within the text of assignments must follow the formatting guidelines found in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 6th edition). Information on citing sources using APA format can be found online through the Academic Learning Centre or the University of Manitoba Libraries. You can also ask the Distance and Online Education Librarian to borrow a printed copy of the APA manual, or you may purchase a copy of the manual through the University of Manitoba Bookstore. **It is your responsibility to submit assignments on or before the due date and to ensure that the files submitted can be opened and read. Only Microsoft Word files should be used for assignments. Always keep a backup copy of your work.**

You will not be asked to repeat any of the author names or dates of these references on the final exam. However, the author names may be useful for searching for information on a particular topic that might interest you or for searching for references on a particular topic for assignments.

A word of caution about the assignments and the final examination

Some students find that they do very well on the assignments, but they do not do nearly as well on the final examination. While your grades on the assignments will give you some idea of how well you are mastering the material, they may not indicate how well you will do on the examination, because the examination is written under very different circumstances. Because the assignments are open book, they do not require the amount of memorization that a closed-book examination requires nor are they limited to a specific time period. Some students have told us that, based on the high marks they received on the assignments, they were overconfident and underestimated the time and effort needed to prepare for the final examination.

Please keep all this in mind as you prepare for the examination. If your course has a sample exam or practice questions, use them to practice for the examination by setting a time limit and not having any books available. Pay careful attention to the description of the type of questions that will be on your final examination. Preparing for multiple choice questions involves a different type of studying than preparing for essay questions. Do not underestimate the stress involved in writing a time-limited examination.

Key Terms

Within the textbook, definitions of key terms are included in the margin next to the paragraph in which the term is explained. Within the course material, new terms that are not included in the textbook will be in **bold** typeface the first time they are used in the Study notes. They are also listed as key terms at the end of each unit.

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Distance and Online Education (DE) Student Resources

In your course website there are links for the following:

- Contact Distance and Online Education Staff
- Distance and Online Student Handbook
- Distance and Online Education Website

Acknowledgments

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