

Sociology 412: **Sex, Love and Money:** The Family

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Analysis of the family as a social institution that meets specific social needs; as a social construction that is culturally bound and malleable, and as a source of social exchange and currency. This course presents an understanding of contemporary intimate life in the U.S. by examining the social history of families and current areas of concern.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

The study of families is an important specialty area within sociology, a political and religious hot button outside it, and of course, our own families are the site of some of our most profound and intimate experiences, good and bad.

Sociologists study the family as a social institution that meets specific social needs, as a social construction, something that is culturally bound and changeable; and as a source of social exchange and currency. As a substantive area, family overlaps with a lot of other specializations in sociology, such as race, ethnicity, nationality and immigration; sex and sexual preference; civil rights and sexual minorities, social class inequities; the sociology of education; demography (study of populations); and social history. The aim of this course is to present a better understanding of contemporary intimate life in the U.S. by addressing the following **learning objectives**, here, posed as question. By the end of the class, you should be able to answer these:

1. What do we mean by 'family'? How do sociologists study family via various theories? To what extent can we look at intimate relationships as relationships of economic exchange; as socially constructed; as functionally complementary or shot through with conflict?
2. How and when did the modern family emerge, beginning with the idealized European patriarchal family of the middle ages and the art of courtly love; etc?. What is the history of other family groups?
3. What's happening in contemporary families and households: what exactly does today's family look like? What myths do we have about family life, past and present?
4. How do families differ by social class and race and ethnicity? How do family members experience the family differently (based on their gender, age, birth order, etc.)?
5. What are the major life course transitions related to family life that most of us experience or observe [eg., courtship, marriage, parenthood, divorce, remarriage, and widowhood]?
6. What is the nature of family conflict and disruptions?
7. What is the future of the family? Is there cause for alarm?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Your final grade is based on in-class writing and small group participation, two midterms and a final exam, a series of short writing assignments responding to the texts (journals), and a formal writing assignment.

2 EXAMS (at 50 points each):	100 points
CLASS PROJECT	50 points
PARTICIPATION/IN-CLASS ESSAYS	100 points

Final grade will be assigned based on the university scale; this course will use the +/- designation where 97-100% = A+; 90-93% = A-; and everything in between is an 'A':

250-225 A	174-150 D
224-200 B	149 and below Fail
199-175 C	

An "A" represents exceptional work; a "B" is very good work; a "C" is acceptable/average work; a "D" is inadequate but passing, and an "F" is a failing grade.

Participation/in-class essays: During each week, time will be set aside for small group and entire group discussion. I will be assigning in-class writing or on-line writing as points for participation. Those assignments will not be announced in advance, and if you are not in class, you forfeit those points. Please note that in-class writing and participation at the end of the term is the equivalent of two exam grades. Therefore, yes, attendance counts!

Class Project Options: The class project will involve a mini-research library project. I will give you a more extensive handout explaining this assignment later on in the course, but for now, here's a brief synopsis:

Mini-Research Project will involve choosing a topic that interests you and researching the future, past or present of: stepfamilies, single parent households, gay marriage, childlessness, stay at home fathers, working at home and the family, virtual relationships, on-line dating, speed dating, etc. etc (see how many topics there are!), and writing a short research paper in response to a question you would pose. You should find at least 4 sources in scholarly journals like **The Journal of Marriage and the Family** or **Gender & Society** or **American Sociological Review** etc. More on this later.

Exams: Exams will include both objective (multiple choice, true/false) and short answer/essay items.

COURSE POLICY: (UNIVERSITY)

CSUCI Policy on Academic Dishonesty: In accordance with the CSU Channel Islands policy on academic dishonesty, students in this course who submit the work of others as their own (plagiarize), cheat on tests and examinations, help other students cheat or plagiarize, or commit other acts of academic dishonesty will receive appropriate academic penalties, up to and including failing the course.

Disabilities Statement: Students who have disabilities or special needs and require accommodations in order to have equal access to classrooms must register with the designated staff member in Student Affairs so that I might better accommodate those needs. Students are required to provide documentation of a disability when accommodations are

requested.

MY POLICIES: CLASS POLICY ON CELL-PHONES, BEEPERS, AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN CLASS: DON'T BRING THEM OR TURN THEM OFF! I EXPECT STUDENTS WHO ATTEND TO BE ATTENTIVE – THIS MEANS NOT READING THE NEWSPAPER, CARRYING ON A CONVERSATION, DOING WORK FOR OTHER CLASSES, EATING, DRINKING, POPPING GUM, PACKING UP BEFORE CLASS IS FINISHED, SURFING THE WEB ETC. YOU ARE EXPECTED TO BE IN CLASS ON TIME, AND CLASS WILL ALWAYS END ON TIME. IF YOU HAVE A CONFLICTING APPOINTMENT AND NEED TO LEAVE, PLEASE DO ME THE COURTESY OF LETTING ME KNOW IN ADVANCE. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP PACE WITH THE CLASS IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE AWAY FOR A UNIVERSITY-SPONSORED EVENT. IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS CANNOT BE MADE UP. EXAMS CANNOT BE RESCHEDULED EXCEPT IN CASE OF SERIOUS ILLNESS OR EMERGENCY. ALL MAKE-UP EXAMS WILL BE ADMINISTERED DURING THE FINAL EXAM PERIOD. FINALLY, COMING AND GOING ONCE THE CLASS HAS BEGUN IS DISRUPTIVE TO EVERYONE. DON'T DO IT.

Readings/Topics Syllabus**

- 1) 8/28 Introduction to Course/Administrative Stuff
Identifying Problem Areas. Why 'sex, love, and money?'
What is a family? Perspectives on the Family

Reading: Introduction and C. 1 in Ferguson; Prologue in Zelizer

- 2) 9/4 What is a Family? (continued)
Forming the modern family

Reading: C. 2, 3, 4 in Ferguson; Introduction, Montemurro

- 3) 9/11 Forming the modern family

Reading: C. 5, 7, 17 in Ferguson; C. 2 and 3, Montemurro

- 4) 9/18 Courtship and Romantic Love

Reading: C. 9, 11 in Ferguson; C. 4 and 5, Montemurro

- 5) 9/25 Marriage, Cohabitation and Partnerships
Guest Lecture

Reading: C. 12, 15, 16; C. 6 and 7, Montemurro

- 6) 10/2 Marriage, Cohabitation and Partnerships (cont)

Reading: C. 1 in Zelizer

- 7) 10/9 Parents and Children
Review for exam

Reading: C. 18, 19, 20, 21 in Ferguson

- 8) 10/16 Midterm Exam 10/16
No class 10/18

Reading: No new reading

- 9) 10/23 Family Issues: Time Bind

Reading: C. 40, 41, 42, 44 in Ferguson; C. 2 in Zelizer

- 10) 10/30 Family Issues: Divorce and Remarriage

Reading: C. 31, 34, 35 in Ferguson; C. 3 in Zelizer

- 12: 11/6 Family Issues: Poverty

Reading: C. 45, 46, 48 in Ferguson; C. 4 in Zelizer

- 13: 11/13 Family Issues: Violence

Reading: C. 37, 38, 39 in Ferguson

- 14: 11/20 Family Issues: Violence (cont.)

No Class 11/22: Thanksgiving...

Reading: C. 5 in Zelizer

15: 11/27 Aging and end of life family issues

Reading: C. 28, 29, 30 in Ferguson; C. 6 in Zelizer

16: 12/4 Class forum: The Past, Present and Future Family: discussion of research projects

Reading: no new reading

Final Exam Date: Thursday, December 13, 1-3 p.m.

ALL READING SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY CLASS TIME FOR THE WEEK
ASSIGNED...

**SYLLABUS IS TENTATIVE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE