

## **HDFS 653: CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH IN FAMILY STUDIES SPRING 2011**

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**Course Meeting Time:** Thursday, 1:00-3:50 pm, Stone 246

### **Blackboard Course Web Page:**

A web page for the course can be accessed through Blackboard, <http://blackboard.uncg.edu>. The website contains a variety of information, including a copy of the syllabus, course readings, student grades, handouts, and several links to other sites relevant to this class.

### **Course Description:**

This course is designed to provide an interdisciplinary introduction to issues pertaining to family studies, including the substantive foci that have held scholars' attention in recent years, the theoretical lenses scholars have used to frame their research, and the various methods employed to study families. In addition to these goals, I hope to encourage you to think critically about family research through writing, integrating readings, and lively discussion.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Synthesize, critically analyze, and apply major conceptual and substantive findings and identify key methodological issues in the study of families.
2. Identify, critically analyze, and apply the contributions of at least five major family studies scholars.

These goals will be evidenced through both your written work and oral contributions in class.

### **Readings:**

- Course readings are located in the Readings folder in Blackboard.
- Optional Text: Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition.

## **Course Requirements:**

**Seminar Format** Class will be conducted in a seminar format. That means that we will do a lot of reading and discussing. Although I will be in charge of leading discussion (assuming the role of integrator and facilitator), I expect that you will come to class having read the assigned materials and prepared to engage in discussion. I expect students to demonstrate professional responsibility by attending class and being ready to begin class on time. Class participation will be part of how you are evaluated, so it's important that you keep up with the readings, ask good questions, think critically about the readings, and contribute your thoughts to class discussion.

I recommend the following process to adequately prepare for class:

- a. Read each article the first time without taking extensive notes; highlighting the major points can be helpful, but the focus is on getting a general sense for the material including the purpose of the article and key findings/points.
- b. Now go over each article a second time with the goal of taking notes by outlining the content of the article and/or summarizing the required information. Using a chart or template can often be helpful for this step, and I've provided templates to use in the "Reading Research Articles" sub folder of the Course Materials folder in BB.
- c. Once your notes/templates are complete, review them for the key trends in topics, findings, gaps (e.g., what has and had not been studied), discrepancies in the readings, etc.; identify any questions that have resulted for you from this review.

Through reading in this manner and using a seminar format, the course emphasizes the development of three fundamental skills. The ability to:

- summarize and evaluate theoretical perspectives and empirical research in family studies;
- critically analyze and synthesize across a variety of readings; and
- communicate ideas in a variety of oral and written formats.

**Course Prerequisites** There are several prerequisites for this course: (1) a vivid scholarly imagination — that is, being able to think, read, and write like an advanced student of human development and family studies; (2) an awareness of how to do research in human development and family studies — that is, being familiar with a range of research methods and analysis techniques; (3) an intellectual curiosity with a passion for learning new ways of thinking, doing, and being, (4) and the desire to grow as a scholar and independent thinker.

**Class Participation** Class meetings are designed with the primary purpose of offering an opportunity to discuss key issues raised in the readings and make inquiries into the assigned topic. Class participation is a very important part of the learning process in this course. For each class, you are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the reading assignments and to be *actively* involved in class discussions. You are expected to contribute insightful, integrative comments and thoughtful questions, while respecting the rights of other class members as participants. Relevant theoretical and applied issues should be raised. Class attendance is mandatory. Each of

you is required to contribute to the learning of your colleagues. It is impossible to do this without being in class. In the event of an absence you will be required to write a two-page (single-spaced) paper summarizing the content of the week's material. If it is a planned absence, the paper is due to me the day of class. If it is an unplanned absence, the paper is due by the following class period. Missing more than one class during the term or habitual tardiness represents a serious deficiency and will result in a grade reduction.

**Reading Assignments** Reading assignments are given to facilitate a basic foundation for the material and to stimulate further inquiry and investigation. As such, everyone is expected to read and take careful notes on all assigned material. You should be prepared to discuss the reading materials in class, particularly the underlying issues/themes addressed by the material, and the utility of the content for the study of family relationships. To understand the readings in the manner requires more than a cursory glance of skimming of the articles. Adequate preparation requires giving yourself enough time to read the articles closely, take notes on the articles, and think in advance about the main points of the readings and how they fit together.

### **How will you be evaluated?**

This course is intended to be a rigorous academic experience. You will be expected to master substantive scholarship, as well as to hone your skills of critical thinking and oral and written expression. The following exercises are designed to both develop and assess your understanding of the concepts and issues examined throughout the course and to illustrate that understanding through reference to the assigned readings and class activities.

There will be four types of assignments as part of this course.

(1) The first type of assignment involves **attendance, preparation for class and class participation**. A graduate course is successful only in so far as participants take the opportunity to read assigned readings carefully and critically and come prepared to discuss the readings and their own ideas, reactions and questions about the readings. Depending on your background you may have to go over the readings several times.

One method of generating discussion in a seminar course is to bring ideas and questions that you have about the readings to the attention of others in the class. To facilitate discussion and to encourage you to read the course materials thoughtfully, I will require that you hand in **“Reflection Memos”** for each set of readings on days that you are not turning in a reaction paper. These memos, which should be *no longer than 2 paragraphs*, are intended to provoke you to think seriously about the readings and to thoughtfully prepare for class discussion. You may submit either (1) a brief list of the central questions, thoughts, and debates raised by the readings, or (2) a short analysis of the main arguments and debates. **The memos are due via email by 9:00 am on the day of the corresponding class session.** I ask that you also bring a hard copy to class as the memos will be used as guide for class discussion. As the course moves along, I will be especially interested in memo content that pulls together ideas across readings and topics that we are covering. Reflection memos *will not be accepted late*. (Note: Computer problems are not an acceptable excuse. Plan ahead and don't wait until the last minute to email your assignment.) Reflection Memos will be graded on a  $\sqrt{-}$ ,  $\sqrt{}$ ,  $\sqrt{+}$  basis and will be factored into your class discussion grade.

Good participation includes commenting on or raising questions about the material, introducing related information from this course, other courses, or other relevant experiences, and responding to others' comments (e.g., asking for clarification/ elaboration, agreeing, disagreeing, etc). My expectation is that every student participates in each class to some extent. Participation will be graded based on both the *quality* and *quantity* of active class participation. A high level of class participation (attendance plus good comments, questions, integration and synthesis across readings, and other demonstrations of critical thinking, etc.) is important. If you need to miss more than one class during the term, it will present problems in terms of passing. I believe missing 6 hours of class experience presents the potential for a serious deficiency. **Attendance, preparation for class, and participation in class discussion is worth 10 points.**

(2) Part of my job this semester is to teach you how to be an independent scholar, thinker, leader, and facilitator. Learning how to lead class discussion at a level that encourages critical thinking and discussion is a skill that you will develop over time but will begin tackling this semester. To help you develop this important skill, students will be responsible for **introducing the topic for the day and leading discussion** (with my assistance) for one class session. In this role, you will be responsible for giving a 10-15 minute “set the stage” introduction that puts the readings in context. Depending on the set of readings that you are introducing, you may want to present some complementary research that the class would find interesting, show an example of popular press or on-line discourse on the topic and compare/contrast with our readings, present a measure used in family research on a relevant topic, present the material about the phenomenon of interest from the point of view of a different culture, or integrate a session topic with a current political issue, policy issue or debate. I leave this to your imagination but do ask that this introduction in no way be a summary of the reading...which we all will have read. Rather, it should be a provocative, intellectually engaging, substantive, stimulating “kick-off” session to our discussion. Following this, I will give a brief introduction to the readings, providing some background and my take on what the main points are. You will be in charge (with my help) of leading discussion.

Leading discussion means thinking in advance about where you want the conversation to go and making sure it goes there. Be sure that your plan is clearly relevant to the topic and readings at hand. I suggest you start by having students: 1) reflect on the major contributions of the readings to our understanding of families and 2) discuss the most exciting, surprising, or interesting aspects of the readings. (Note: If the empirical articles include sophisticated research methodology or statistics, you should plan to spend some time clarifying these details with my help.) For this initial segment of class discussion, I'd like us to focus on the positive elements of the articles—eliminate criticism. However, after we've nailed down the contributions of the readings, the discussion may indeed turn critical. To further facilitate discussion you may want to come in with a list of questions or provocative comments to use if the conversation lags or gets off track. I especially want us to be putting together ideas from various parts of the course, so your questions should be designed in part to encourage that. **I would like to meet with each facilitator to get a sense of your plans in person or via email no later than the Friday prior to your class. This means that you need to have completed the readings prior to your meeting with me and have a plan (outline draft) in place that we can discuss. You must turn in the final outline of your plan for facilitation and copies of any visual aids at the end of the class**

**session you facilitate. Your class introduction and discussion leader exercise is worth 10 points.**

(3) **Reaction Papers:** To further develop your critical thinking skills, the second assignment is to write a series of reaction papers about the readings. These are short, two-page integrative and critical responses to all the readings assigned for a given week. **You are required to write 3 of these papers.** These papers are not to be a summary of the articles, rather they should include thoughts, ideas, and questions about the readings and how they fit together. You may consider comparing or contrasting the results of various studies, note the strengths and weaknesses of the research and how weaknesses might be addressed, point out questions that the readings raised for you or ideas for future research, draw connections between the current readings and previous readings or current events in the media, point out implications for clinical work with families, program development, policy, your own research, etc. Be creative, but in doing so be sure that you integrate each of the readings and clearly demonstrate mastery of the material. (A grading rubric is available for you to view and download in BB.) **I would like everyone to hand in (via email by 9:00 am) a reaction paper for the week of February 10<sup>th</sup> to ensure timely progress on meeting this requirement and to ensure that I provide early feedback on both your thinking and your writing. Please choose any two additional weeks (before or after this date), based on your interest in the material and your schedule, to write the remaining reaction papers. Each paper is worth 10 points and due no later than 9am on the day of the corresponding class session. These papers are worth a total of 30 points.**

(4) **Paper and Presentation Project:** Throughout the semester, I would like each of you to be working on a project comprised of two parts.

- a. First, a **15-20 page integrative review paper** is required. This paper provides an opportunity for you to thoughtfully examine and critique current research that addresses a particular area of family studies that you find intriguing. You are encouraged to use this paper as an opportunity to focus your thesis or to pursue a topic of professional interest. Alternatively, you may choose to focus your review on one of the key figures in the field of family studies, comprehensively review what he or she has written over the course of their career, get in touch with the person (if possible) and interview them about how they got interested in the area, where his or her work is going in the future, etc. Examples include (but are in no way limited to): Paul Amato, Cheryl Buehler, Rosemary Blieszner, Vern Bengtson, Pauline Boss, Alan Booth, Ann Crouter, Dave Demo, Glen Elder, Mark Fine, Ted Huston, Mike Johnson, Larry Kurdek, Harriet McAdoo, Velma McBride Murray, Bob Milardo, Mark Roosa, Cathy Surra, and Alexis Walker. (You may check the NCFR website for a list of “Fellows” who are selected by the organization for their outstanding contributions to the field of family studies.)

Regardless of the format you choose, the review paper should highlight the theoretical underpinnings, key findings, and critiques of the research on your topic or the body of work undertaken by your chosen family scholar. You will identify a research problem/question, provide an overview of relevant theories, and summarize and critique relevant research. The final paper should be 10 to 15 pages of text (plus references), be in APA format (typed, 12pt font, 1 inch margins, appropriate title

page, headings, and references), and include at least 15 references, minimally 12 of which must be empirical articles. You are expected to cite articles from peer-reviewed sources such as: *Child Development*, *Developmental Psychology*, *Family Relations*, *Journal of Family Issues*, *Journal of Family Psychology*, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, etc. The paper should be a polished piece of work (i.e., correct grammar and spelling, logical, easy to read) that resembles the introduction of an empirical article.

Your topic should be broad enough to be of interest, but narrow enough that you can focus in on a tightly related set of empirical articles for review and get into some depth about relevant theory and research. The crux of your grade will be based on your ability to summarize, explain, critique, and integrate original empirical articles. Be sure to address the underlying mechanisms/processes that explain reported associations, point out controversies, acknowledge the limitations of prior research, and identify next steps for research. (A grading rubric is available for you to view and download in BB.) **Your integrative review paper is worth 30 points.**

- b. The second part of your assignment is to complete a 10 - 12 minute **oral presentation**. The focus of this presentation should stem from your review paper and highlight theoretical underpinnings, key findings, critiques and future direction regarding the research on your topic. You will be expected to create a PowerPoint presentation for your oral presentation. **Your presentation is worth 10 points.**

**Presentations will occur on April 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. Your paper is due via email on April 28<sup>th</sup> by 1:00pm.**

In order to facilitate your work on the project, you will be required to **hand in a 1-2 page topic prospectus and rationale on February 17<sup>th</sup> via email attachment due by 1:00pm, followed by a detailed outline and reference list on March 17<sup>th</sup> (via email attachment, due by noon). Your prospectus/rationale and outline/reference list are each worth 5 points.**

Taken together, these assignments account for 50% of your final grade.

### **Grading Summary**

Class Preparation and Participation	10 points
Introducing and Leading Discussion	10 points
3 Weekly Reaction Papers @ 10 points each	30 points
Rationale/Prospectus	5 points
Detailed Outline/Reference List	5 points
Integrative Review Paper	30 points
Oral Presentation	<u>10 points</u>
TOTAL	100 points

## Summary of Dates to Remember:

February 10: Reaction Paper due  
February 17: Paper Rationale/Prospectus due  
March 17: Paper Outline/reference list due  
April 14 & 21: Presentations  
April 28: Final Paper due

Assignments handed in any time after the due date and time will be automatically docked 5 percentage points for each day (including weekend days). Late is defined as work that is turned in anytime after the assigned deadline (e.g., noon, 5:00 pm, etc.).

## Assigning Grades

Grades will be determined by the following criteria:

C level work:

1. Demonstrated comprehension and clearly written and verbally articulated understanding of important substantive, theoretical, and methodological concepts, but a failure to critically and accurately apply these concepts.

C-: C level work but one of the following: 2 or more instances of inaccuracy; poorly written material such that the key points cannot be ascertained.

C+: C level work but the material is particularly well-written or excellent examples are given.

B level work:

1. Demonstrated comprehension and clearly written and verbally articulated understanding of important substantive, theoretical, and methodological concepts.
2. Ability to compare and contrast the characteristics of substantive, theoretical, and methodological concepts as well as to understand them and represent them clearly in writing and speaking.
3. Demonstrate the ability to select the most salient content (based on theory and research) and to critically integrate and discuss it.

B-: B level work but 2 or more instances of inaccuracy or some unclear articulation within the body of describing key points.

B+: B level work but the material is particularly well-written or excellent examples are given. Also might show a particularly strong justification for the selection of content for critical analysis and discussion.

A level work:

1. Demonstrated comprehension and clearly written and verbally articulated understanding of important substantive, theoretical, and methodological concepts.
2. Ability to compare and contrast the characteristics of substantive, theoretical, and methodological concepts as well as to understand them and represent them clearly in writing and speaking.

3. Demonstrate the ability to select the most salient content (based on theory and research) and to critically and integrate and discuss it.
4. The ability to synthesize and apply contemporary concept knowledge in ways that enable the student to propose new theoretical relationships, potential areas for substantive focus and application to a given context, applied setting, or research methodology.

A-: A level work but 2 or more instances of unclear articulation within the body of describing key points.

Students can earn an F through chronic late work, poor attendance, or poorly written work that shows almost no comprehension of the course material.

### Grading Scale Cutoffs

#### Grading Scale (Percentage Based)

93-100	A
90-92.99	A-
87-89.99	B+
83-86.99	B
80-82.99	B-
77-79.99	C+
73-76.99	C
70-72.99	C-
less than 70	F

### Course Policies

1. *Academic Integrity* is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception and is an educational objective of this institution. Violating academic integrity is considered a serious offense by the university and is treated accordingly. Professional guidelines will be followed in instances of academic dishonesty. These include the assignment of the professorial penalty of “F” for the course and the report of the offense to Student Affairs. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on exams, having unauthorized possession of exams, fabricating information or citations, facilitating the academic dishonesty of others, submitting work that was previously submitted in another class (i.e., identical papers, etc.), and plagiarism. Plagiarism includes using someone’s work as your own and using published material without adequate referencing. See me if you are concerned about the definition of plagiarism. Students are expected to read, sign and hand in the “Academic Integrity Statement” found on Blackboard.
2. *Disability Accommodations*: Disabilities that require special accommodation will be addressed after I receive verification from the Office of Disability Services. After seeing this office, please let me know what I can do to facilitate your comfort and learning.

3. *Emergencies:* If you have any emergency that interferes with your ability to complete the work in this course, please see me immediately. If you cannot come for a scheduled appointment, please contact me ahead of time. My office phone number and email address is listed on the front page of the syllabus.
4. *Extra credit:* Given the extensive opportunity to be graded in a variety of formats in this course, extra credit is not an option. If you attend class regularly and come prepared to discuss the readings you will have ample opportunity to earn points that will contribute significantly to your overall grade.

**HDFS 653: CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH IN FAMILY STUDIES  
AGENDA AND READINGS\***

**\*Reading posted for weeks 1 & 2 only. All other readings will be posted in BB after the start of the semester.**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE AND PARTICIPANTS**

**WEEK 1**

JAN 13

Allen, K. R. (2000). A Conscious and Inclusive Family Studies. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62: 4–17. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00004.x

Walker, A. J. (2000). Refracted knowledge: Viewing families through the prism of social science. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62, 595-608.

**CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILY STUDIES:  
TRENDS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

**WEEK 2**

JAN 20

Burton, L. M., Bonilla-Silva, E., Ray, V., Buckelew, R. and Hordge Freeman, E. (2010). Critical Race Theories, Colorism, and the Decade's Research on Families of Color. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72: 440–459. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00712.x

Cherlin, A. J. (2010). Demographic Trends in the United States: A Review of Research in the 2000s. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72: 403–419. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00710.x

Coontz, S. (2000). Historical perspectives on family studies. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 283-297.

O'Brien, M. (2005). Studying individual and family development: Linking theory and research. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 880-890.

**FORMING PARTNERSHIPS**

**WEEK 3**

JAN 27

**Student Facilitator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**COHABITATION AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

**WEEK 4**

FEB 3

**Student Facilitator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MARRIAGE**

**\*\*\*REACTION PAPER #1 DUE BY 9 AM VIA EMAIL \*\*\***

**WEEK 5**  
FEB 10

**Dr. Helms facilitates**

**NO CLASS SESSION/QUINT STATE CONFERENCE**

**\*\*\*TOPIC PROSPECTUS/RATIONALE DUE BY 1:00PM VIA EMAIL\*\*\***

**WEEK 6**  
FEB 17

**DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE AND PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS**

**WEEK 7**  
FEB 24

**Student Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_**

**PARENTING AND PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS  
ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE**

**WEEK 8**  
MAR 3

**Student Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_**

**WEEK OF MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup>: SPRING BREAK**

**HOW DOES THE GENDER OF PARENTS MATTER  
FOR PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS?**

**\*\*OUTLINE AND REFERENCE LIST DUE\*\***

**\*\*VIA EMAIL ATTACHMENT BY NOON\*\***

**WEEK 9**  
MAR 17

**Student Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_**

**UNDERSTANDING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN DIVERSE CONTEXTS I**

**WEEK 10**  
MAR 24

**Student Facilitator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**UNDERSTANDING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN DIVERSE CONTEXTS II**

**WEEK 11**  
MAR 31

**Student Facilitator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**WORK AND ECONOMIC REALITIES OF FAMILY LIFE**

**WEEK 12**  
APR 7

**Student Facilitator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*STUDENT PRESENTATIONS\*\***

**WEEK 13**  
APR 14

**\*\*STUDENT PRESENTATIONS\*\***

**WEEK 14**  
APR 21

**\*\*NO CLASS SESSION\*\***  
**\*\*FINAL PAPER DUE VIA EMAIL ATTACHMENT\*\***  
**\*\* TO DR. HELMS BY 1PM ON THURSDAY 4/28\*\***

**WEEK 15**  
APR 28

**NOTES: THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM FOR THIS CLASS.**