**Why Should Anyone Care About Intimate Relationships and Family Life?**

In sociology, “the family” is both a key institution and a location where social rules and practices are communicated, endorsed, and, sometimes, critiqued by members of society. It’s an important area of social studies for this reason. The course title alludes to the fact that the family, as a social institution, is defined by “blood,” as in blood ties or biological relationships, as well as “sex,” as a basis for sanctioning (or not) physical intimacy, and also as a basis for determining which sexual combinations (e.g., same or opposite sex) in families are accepted by society. Historically, families were primarily economic institutions, and we will explore the role that economic resources (“money”) play in the formation and maintenance of families. Families are also a site for the creation and maintenance of power relations, a topic we will explore further in this class.

We will discuss and think more about theories and data that describe the influence of family on society and individuals, as well as societal and individual influences on families and intimate relationships. Family forms, family functions, and the relationships between social institutions and family life are all things we will read and think more about this semester.

A critical component of our discussions will be grappling with defining and understanding the concept of family—intimate relationships, marriage, and family life—as a social phenomenon. Sociologists also emphasize the diversity or similarity of family experiences across social class, gender, race and age structures so that the potential for change can be critically examined.
The overall goal of this course is to provide you with a basis for understanding family life and relationships, including your own, so that rational, constructive, and comprehensive approaches to contemporary family problems can be developed. Becoming more familiar with family history and forms, learning to assess theories and apply explanations to data that describe families and intimate relationships, identifying patterns of inequality, and defining and evaluating diverse intimate relationships are all points of focus in this class.

As a practical matter, understanding more about the social forces that shape families, and vice versa, is important in a number of professional arenas. Many career professionals, such as teachers, social workers, health care providers, government employees at all levels, and managers across a range of industries, must understand the social barriers and opportunities that individuals embedded in different family forms face as well as how family diversity influences (and is influenced by) society. Social study of families, then, is part of a strong foundation for preparing for your role as engaged citizen and professional employee when you leave UWM.

**University Course Description**

Examines the social forces that shape inequality within, and the formation and maintenance of, marriage and other intimate relationships across diverse groups. This course meets the UWM General Education Requirements (GER) for Social Science. It also meets the requirements for a Women’s Studies Cross-listed Course. Sociology 260 is cross-listed because sex and gender play essential roles in shaping experiences in intimate relationships and family life.

**Course Prerequisite**

Sophomore standing or a 100-level sociology course

**About Your Instructor and Teaching Assistant**

Family sociology is one of my areas of special training. Both my research and teaching interests are centered around social questions that intersect with contemporary family life. In particular, much of my research is focused on how paid employment influences family expectations, attitudes, and experiences. Prior to working as a professor, I worked in a private-sector consulting firm, where I applied social research methods to solve real-world problems. I also bring that experience to bear in all of my teaching. My central goal as your instructor is to excite you about the possibilities for learning and growth that studying sociological topics can enhance and inspire you to do your very best work. I am also happy to introduce and welcome Teaching Assistant Matthias Scarpaci to our course. Mr. Scarpaci is a first-year master’s student in the UWM Master’s program. He has a strong sociological background, is passionate about our discipline, and his involvement will be an asset to this course.

**Required Books and Materials**


All other course materials will be available via the course website (D2L).
Learning Objectives*
Completing this course with sufficient effort will help you gain an understanding of:

1) the demographic, historical, and social factors that influence relationship and family formation, maintenance and dissolution;
2) how different social theories explain the need for families and their broader role in society;
3) how a variety of social contexts shape family experiences in ways that produce differences by sex, gender, race/ethnicity, and social class;
4) the interaction between individuals and society and its institutions;
5) the role that intimate relationships and families play in creating social change.

Skill Development*
This course will help you progress in your ability to:

1) Think Critically: evaluate/analyze social science research, discuss theories of intimate relationships and family life, distinguish evidence-based arguments from those based on values and personal experiences, debate whether the evidence to date supports one explanation of family life more fully than others, and appreciate the value of multidisciplinary approaches to the study of intimate relationships and family life;
2) Create Relevant Information: synthesize and integrate information from a variety of sources, pose questions that follow from existing research, link individual life experiences to course concepts, and formulate and communicate conclusions to others;
3) Solve Problems Creatively: think about problems and their solutions in multiple ways, seek information from a variety of sources;
4) Communicate Effectively: summarize and critique conclusions from family research through effective communication to classmates, engage with other learners through active listening and sharing ideas;
5) Understand and Appreciate Diversity: become more aware of values and experiences of different cultures, religions, ethnic traditions, and social arrangements. Develop a more nuanced understanding of the possibilities and challenges associated with diversity in all its forms.

* These learning objectives and skill development goals meet university-wide General Education Requirements 1, 2, 3, & 5 detailed in “Social Sciences Distribution GER learning outcomes” (Rev. 2012);

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

Course Workload
The UW System notes “that study leading to one semester credit represents an investment of time by the average student of not fewer than 48 hours” (UWS ACPS 4). This means that a 3-credit course such as this one will require a minimum of 144 (3 x 48) hours of your time. In this course, you will spend about 9 hours each week engaged in course activities, including the time you take to read through course materials, prepare for and engage in discussions, and complete assignments and exams.
Central Course Activities

1) **Weekly Discussion.** High quality participation in online weekly discussions (weeks 1 – 14) is a central element of the course and an important place to learn! These discussions will engage ideas in that week’s reading and will include your analysis of course material and reactions to others’ posts. Posts are graded on a 1-5 point basis. Lowest 2 posts are dropped.

   More information about this activity is available in the “Creating Effective Posts for Online Discussion” document on the course website (see “Assignment Instructions” under Content).

   **Rationale:** Research on teaching and learning demonstrates that short, regular opportunities to apply what you are reading and learning are one of the best ways to build knowledge and skills (such as writing skills).

2) **Mid-Term Exam.** We will have a mid-term exam (essay, short answer) designed to assess your comprehension of course material mid-way through the semester.

   **Rationale:** This is your chance to think more comprehensively about how some of the different topics we have covered so far work together. What is the bigger picture starting to look like, drawing upon concepts and ideas from multiple weeks of the course?

3) **Presentation & Commentary.** You will use PowerPoint, or some other software (Prezi, YouTube, etc.), to create an online, self-guided presentation on a topic related to the *social aspects* of intimate relationships and family life. You will also review the presentations of other students and provide written feedback assessing the effectiveness of those presentations as part of that assignment.

   More detailed instructions for these assignments will be provided in the “Assignment Instructions” area of the course website.

   **Rationale:** The ability to communicate in different mediums (in writing, through more formal presentations, verbally, etc.) is an important transferrable skill necessary in any number of professional settings. This assignment is a chance to learn more about how to become an effective presenter in a fully online setting.

**UW System Shared Learning Goals and This Assignment.** Putting sufficient effort into this assignment should help you progress in your ability to: 1) think critically and creatively about intimate relationships and family life; 2) Further develop your written and visual Communication Skills as well as your information and technical literacy. Completion of this assignment may also help you: 3) progress in your ability to interact and work with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures as you engage with others’ presentations and comment upon them, and 4) empathize with and understand social differences. Finally, since written, oral, and visual presentation is a skill that is often utilized by an engaged citizenry, completion of this assignment can help prepare you for future civic involvement.

4) **Final Paper.** Drawing on relevant theories and concepts covered in this course, students will analyze numeric data about relationships and family life to draw conclusions about a research question. The course instructor will supply both the data and the question(s) to be addressed and this analysis and discussion will be the basis of a final paper.

   More detailed instructions for these assignments will be provided in the “Assignment Instructions” area of the course website.
Instructions” area of the course website. This final paper is in lieu of a final exam.

Rationale: The ability to construct an evidence-based argument to explain patterns in data is an important transferrable skill that is necessary in a number of professional environments. This is your chance to learn more about how to do this effectively and to practice applying the analytical skills you have been honing throughout the semester.

UW System Shared Learning Goals and This Assignment. Putting sufficient effort into this assignment should help you progress in your ability to: 1) think critically and creatively about intimate relationships and family life; 2) Further develop your written communication skills. Completion of this assignment may also help you: 3) progress in your ability to interact and work with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures as you analyze and evaluate intimate relationships and family life with respect to gender, racial/ethnic, and class differences in family outcomes; 4) empathize with and understand social differences as you study and analyze relationships and families that may differ from your own experience. Finally, since formulating critical thought and argument is a skill that is often utilized by an engaged citizenry, completion of this assignment can help prepare you for future civic involvement.

Summary of Course Requirements

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<tr>
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<td>Presentation &amp; Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
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Translating Points to a Final Grade

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<td>202 &amp; below</td>
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<tr>
<td>248-257</td>
<td>C+</td>
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If you require special assistance for any reason, please contact the instructor immediately so that we can work together to support your success in this class.

COURSE FORMAT: FULLY ONLINE

This course, SOCIOL 260, is a fully online course. Many students have the misconception that an online course will be less work or will be less rigorous. This is not the case. An online course has the same rigor as a face-to-face course, except that you have more flexibility regarding when and where you complete your work. So, the good news is that you can participate in class on your own schedule.

The online class is always open, and you can read the course materials anytime. You can even talk about them anytime through threaded discussions. This gives you a chance to think about your response. Because of this, many online students come for the convenience and return for the quality. They find that they make more thoughtful contributions to these asynchronous conversations than they do in traditional in-person classrooms. This course format also obligates everyone to participate, bringing a variety of viewpoints to bear on complex issues.

The challenge is that you have to be self-disciplined and highly organized, learn how to communicate without meeting face-to-face and learn how to effectively use the technology to do well in the course. You have to remember to go online and complete the readings and lectures, to actively participate in the discussions on a timely basis and communicate online, to e-mail or call the professor, TA, or a classmate when you are lost or have a questions, and to learn how to effectively complete assignments online.

Even though we do not meet face-to-face a few times a week, it is still important that you schedule time for yourself to go online at least 3 times a week. For example, you may schedule yourself to go online on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays from 9:00p.m.-10:30p.m. to review the agendas, review lectures, work on a project, or interact with your classmates in the discussions. Make sure to schedule at least 3 days a week for one to two hours that you can be online. Add it right into your calendar or date book. Further, you need to schedule time complete readings, assignments, and to study for exams.
The successful online learner:
- communicates effectively in writing.
- enjoys the challenge of learning independently.
- is *highly motivated and challenged* by being in charge of his/her own learning.
- *may need flexible scheduling* but understands that flexibility does not imply that completion of
- the course requirements will be easy.
- demonstrates problem-solving skills and the ability to work through difficulties.
- manages time well by prioritizing and establishing a personal schedule.
- completes assigned work by deadlines.
- uses a personal computer and the Internet to access information and to communicate.
- possesses above average reading skills.

**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT**

Communication in an online environment can be more challenging than face-to-face communication. There are no physical cues to rely on (smiling, tone of voice, etc.). Moreover, in asynchronous communication, the need to clarify or follow-up with additional questions can slow down communication progress. It is essential that you focus on professionalism, clarity, and specificity in your online communications, whether through email, online discussions, or other technologically-mediated forums.

**Constructing Effective and Professional Emails**

Because our communication this semester will happen over email or online, I would like to ask students to follow these guidelines when relying on online communication in this class:
- **Be professional and focused in your communication.** Please format your emails like you would a business letter. This means including a greeting, a body of the email that contains the clear purpose of your communication, and a closing.
- **Use the Subject Line.** In addition, please use the following format in the subject line of email: “Soc 260: [Put the topic of your email here].” Because we all receive many emails for a range of different activities and deadlines, this helps all of us stay organized and facilitates the use of email filters.
- **Watch your writing quality!** Use a professional writing style and avoid including “texting” acronyms (i.e. OMG, BTW, LOL etc.) in your emails and online questions. It is critical that we are as clear as possible in our written communication.

**Response Times for Communication**

One of the challenges of the online classroom is the possibility of 24/7 participation. All of us balance a number of different responsibilities and cannot be online all the time. I am committed to responsive communication. I check my email several times a day during traditional business hours (Monday – Friday, 9 – 5) unless I am in all-day meetings or sick. I do not generally check into our class on the weekends, however, and will respond to requests or questions made during those times on Mondays.

**Discussion Forums for Course Questions.** There is a discussion forum on D2L that is set up for you to ask questions regarding the course. Many times, you may have missed something in the syllabus or course documents that may have an answer to your questions. However, someone else may have read it or have your answer. The discussion forums are a great way for you to get help from a classmate or me. So, if you have any questions about the structure of the course, assignments, deadlines, or anything else please post them in the appropriate discussion forum. *It is really important that we all get in the habit of regularly posting to...*
and reading these forums, since many of you will have similar questions and concerns. Posting these in the discussion forum, and reading my (and others responses) allows for efficient communication in the class.

**WEEKLY STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE**

The course is organized according to a weekly schedule (included at the end of this syllabus). Each week, I post an agenda that provides an overview of the material for that week, outlines what needs to be done, and provides details on that week’s online discussion activity (if applicable). I also typically post some PowerPoint Slides that provide points of emphasis or expansion of ideas for that week’s reading. We will sometimes read articles outside the text. In those cases, I have these on the course website, either in the “links” section or included with the week’s materials. We may also view video or listen to podcasts as part of the weekly activities.

**TECHNOLOGY**

*Course Site.* The Learning Management System used at UW-Milwaukee is Desire to Learn, sometimes called D2L, available at [http://d2l.uwm.edu/](http://d2l.uwm.edu/).

Need Help? Any problems with access to D2L, please contact help@uwm.edu or call (414) 229-4040. The Help Desk can help you with your technical issues with the class.

For searchable self-help about using D2L see: [http://www4.uwm.edu/learningtechniques/ondemand/d2l.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/learningtechniques/ondemand/d2l.cfm)

*Hardware.* To successfully participate in an online learning environment, you will need routine access to a computer that has a broadband connection. You should have access to a desktop or laptop computer at home that is capable of accessing the course site and course materials. Recommendations for computer specifications can be found at: [http://www4.uwm.edu/techstore/department/recommend.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/techstore/department/recommend.cfm)

*Software.* On your computer, you will need to be able to view, edit, and create .pdf files. You will also need to be able to view Adobe PDF (portable document files, .pdf) files.

*Email.* Email will also be used. Make sure your email program of choice will recognize messages sent from me as legitimate (rather than SPAM). If you do not use your UWM e-mail, you can find information on forwarding your email at: [https://kb.uwm.edu/page.php?id=17693. I will routinely use your UWM address, so please make sure you can receive email sent to this address.](https://kb.uwm.edu/page.php?id=17693. I will routinely use your UWM address, so please make sure you can receive email sent to this address.)

*Internet.* You will need convenient access to a broadband Internet connection in order to efficiently and effectively access course materials.

*An Important Note to Students*

Not having access to technology or the appropriate technology to complete course requirements is not a valid excuse for incomplete work. You must be willing to obtain access to the needed hardware, software, and Internet. You must be willing to check your e-mail regularly and access the course site at least 3 times a week. If you are not willing to do these things, then an online learning environment may not be a good fit for you. If you do not have...
the needed hardware or broadband, please consider taking an alternative course, or finding
an alternate location with the needed equipment to which you will have access prior to class
starting.

Desire2Learn (D2L)

A Desire2Learn website is active for this course (Note: the newest version of this software
system is called “Brightspace” although we still call it D2L at UWM). To access your grades,
assignments, supplementary readings, and other information please log in to
http://D2L.uwm.edu. You will use the same username (username@uwm.edu) and password
that you use for your UWM email account. If you have any questions about content on the
course website, please contact me. If you have questions about, or problems using, the D2L
website, please email help@uwm.edu, call 229-4040, or see the service staff in Bolton 225
during their office hours.
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<td>A Sociological View of Families and Intimate</td>
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<td>Cohen, Ch. 1</td>
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<td>Relationships</td>
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<td>The Family in History</td>
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<td>Response Post: Sun (2/5) by 11:59 PM CST</td>
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<td>Race, Ethnicity, Immigration and Families</td>
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<td>Response Post: Sun (2/12) by 11:59 PM CST</td>
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<td>Social Class and Families</td>
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<td>Gender and Families</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Sexuality</td>
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<td>Love and Romantic Relationships</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td><strong>Mid-Term Exam</strong> <strong>(See Instructions for Due Dates)</strong></td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Marriage and Cohabitation</td>
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<td>Families and Children</td>
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<td>Divorce, Remarriage, and Blended Families</td>
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<td>Family Violence and Abuse, The Future of Families</td>
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UNIVERSITY AND SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT POLICIES

The Secretary of the University maintains a web page that contains university policies that affect the instructor and the students in this course, as well as essential information specific to conduct of the course. The link to that web page is: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf

Students with Disabilities. Verification of disability, class standards, the policy on the use of alternate material and test accommodations can be found at the following: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/Sac/

Religious Observances. Policies regarding accommodations for absences due to religious observance are found at the following: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm

Students called to active Military Duty. Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty are found at the following: http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm

Incompletes. You may be given an incomplete if you have carried a course successfully until near the end of the semester but, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond your control, have been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of course work. An incomplete is not given unless you prove to the instructor that you were prevented from completing the course for just cause as indicated above. The conditions for awarding an incomplete to graduate and undergraduate students can be found at the following: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S31.pdf

Discriminatory Conduct (such as sexual harassment). Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience and well-being of students, faculty and staff. Policies regarding discriminatory conduct can be found at: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S47.pdf

Academic Misconduct. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others’ academic endeavors. Policies for addressing students cheating on exams or plagiarism can be found at the following: http://www4.uwm.edu/osl/dean/conduct.cfm

Complaint Procedures. Students may direct complaints to the Sociology Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences. If the complaint alleged violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the Sociology Department Chair, the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences, or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. Policies may be found at: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S49.7.htm

Grade Appeal Procedures. A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College of Letters & Science. Procedures for undergraduate student grade appeal can be found at http://www4.uwm.edu/letsci/upload/grievance_procedure.pdf. Procedures for graduate student grade appeal can be found at http://www.graduateschool.uwm.edu/students/policies/

Final Examination Policy. Policies regarding final examinations can be found at the following: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S22.htm

Book Royalties. In accord with Department of Sociology policy, the royalties from the sale of faculty-authored books to students in their classes are donated to a UWM Foundation/Sociology Account to support future awards and activities for UWM students in Sociology.