

**HDCF 263**  
**RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY SYSTEMS (3 CREDITS)**  
SUMMER 2008  
1:45PM TO 3:55PM MONDAYS, TUESDAYS AND WEDNESDAYS

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### **Course Description**

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This course explores relationship development across the life cycle from a family systems perspective. It focuses on the dynamics of relationships through five major life transitions: (1) relationship formation (e.g., dating and mate selection); (2) marital and other committed relationships; (3) parenthood; (4) termination of marriage or significant relationship (e.g., death or divorce); and (5) remarriage and stepfamilies. The family transitions that people experience are related to socioeconomic trends, changes in cultural norms, and their family dynamics (e.g., communication, conflict resolution, and problem solving skills). A family systems theoretical orientation is stressed throughout the course.

### **Required Readings**

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1. Strong, B, DeVault, C, & Cohen, T. F. (2008). *The Marriage and Family Experience: Intimate Relationships in a Changing Society*. Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth.
2. Additional readings can be found on reserve at the library or will be provided in class.

### **Suggested Readings**

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If you are interested in learning more about a particular topic, please see the instructor. I have many articles and books related to the topics we will be exploring.

### **Prerequisites**

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HDCF 150 or HDCF 160 and sophomore standing (or permission by the instructor)

### **Course Goals and Learning Objectives**

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1. To use social science research as a foundation for understanding how individuals pair up and move toward intimate and committed relationships.
2. To use social science research within the conceptual context of family systems theory to understand the dynamics of intimate relationships.
3. To increase one's knowledge of the diversity of American families and of some of the factors, such as social class and ethnicity, that influence diversity.
4. To understand some of the normative and non-normative challenges and opportunities with which American families commonly connect.
5. To understand and appreciate the time, energy, and commitment required to build strong families.
6. To understand how strengths are resources upon which individuals and families can draw when facing challenges and/or opportunities.

## Course Requirements

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### 1. Class Participation/ Dailies (worth a total of 50 points)

The material in this course is most effectively mastered through careful reading, critical thinking, and lively debate and discussion. No issue is cut-and-dried and the success of this course depends on our ability to have thoughtful, respectful conversations about the course readings and lectures. **Ideally, you will attend each class and read all assigned readings in depth before each class meeting.**

Throughout the semester, there will be in-class exercises and “dailies” which comprise of questions based on readings and lectures that you will be asked to respond to in class. I will also take attendance periodically throughout the semester. All of these in-class activities will be counted toward your class participation grade (worth 15% of you grade). These in-class activities CANNOT be made-up. Medical and other approved university excused absences must be presented in order to be excused from the class.

### 2. 2 Exams (each worth 100 points)

There will be two multi-choice style exams each worth 100 points. A discussion of the exam and review of key issues will be held prior to each examination. Review sheets will be posted on WebCT.

### 3. Course Project (worth 100 points)

Details are posted on WebCT.

## Summary of Evaluation Criteria

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Final grades will be determined on the basis of the student’s performance in the following areas. There will be no extra-credit available.

1. Class Participation	50 points
2. 2 Exams (each is worth 100 points)	200 points
3. Course Project	100 points

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Total	350
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**Final Grades:** Final grades will be assigned as follows:

329 and Above	A	259-272	C
315-328	A-	245-258	C-
308-314	B+	238-244	D+
294-307	B	210-237	D
280-293	B-		
273-279	C+	Below 210	F

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## **Electronic Communication & WebCT:**

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All e-mail communication will occur through WebCT. To log on to WebCT for the first time go to [webct.montana.edu](http://webct.montana.edu) and type in your student ID number (GID) without the dash in front of it as both your ID and your password. If you have used WebCT before, just log in the same way you have for other classes. All assignments will be posted on WebCT so it is imperative that you log in as soon as possible.

## **Class Organization, Confidentiality, Etc.**

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Classes will be conducted primarily in a lecture format with discussion. Your input and questions are welcome at any time. You each are essential contributors to class discussion. I assume that you share equally in the learning process—that you are equally responsible for what goes on and what is gained. This assumption requires you to be prepared with questions, comments, and reactions to the assigned readings and topics covered in the course.

While most class time will be spent in lecture, some in-class time will be dedicated to discussion groups. Given the potentially personal nature of our class topics, all group members are expected to treat fellow members with respect, and are asked to commit to maintaining confidentiality. Similarly, please remember that you alone are responsible for how much you share with your group. Do not share more than is comfortable for you.

## **Course Policies**

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- Make sure all written assignments are typed, double-spaced, and proofread for correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and coherence. Adhere to APA 5<sup>th</sup> Edition format whenever feasible. Significant points will be deducted for poorly written work. Contact the Writing Center on campus or see me if you need help.
- Make sure you plan for the assignment due dates accordingly. This course depends on your timely participation, therefore, **there will be no late assignments accepted**. In other words, if you know you will be traveling during the session or missing a class, you are responsible for alerting the instructor ahead of time and making sufficient arrangements.
- If you miss a class, you are responsible to contact a classmate and find out what you missed. I will not share my lecture notes with you.
- As I want to make this class as inclusive and accessible as possible, students are encouraged to discuss special needs/challenges with the instructor. Together, we can determine how best to meet your needs and course demands.
- Familiarize yourself with the **University's Code of Conduct**. I will follow the code to the best of my ability and expect you to do the same. If you are uncertain about aspects of the code (definitions regarding plagiarism or cheating, application of code to behaviors), it is your responsibility to seek clarification from the instructor or from university officials (Dean of Students Office, 120 Strand Union Building, 406-994-2826).

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READING/ASSIGNMENT</b>
	<b>UNIT 1: MEANINGS OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY</b>	
<b>WEEK 1</b> June 30, July 1 & 2	Introductions/Course Overview Meanings of Marriage and Family Studying Marriages and Families Theoretical Perspectives on Families	Ch 1  Ch 2
<b>WEEK 2</b> July 7	Variations in Family Life	Ch 3
	<b>UNIT 2: INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS</b>	
<b>WEEK 2</b> July 8 & 9	Gender, Roles, and Family	Ch 4 <b>Due by 7/9: Class Project, Part 1</b>
<b>WEEK 3</b> July 14, 15, 16	Friendship, Love, and Intimacy Sex and Sexualities Communication, Power, and Conflict	Ch 5-6  Ch 7
	<b>UNIT 3: FAMILY LIFE</b>	
<b>JULY 21</b>	<b>Exam 1</b>	<b>In Reid 402 1:45-2:45pm</b> <b>Class meets 2:50-3:55pm</b>
<b>WEEK 4</b> July 21, 22, 23	Singlehood, Pairing, and Cohabitation The Institution of Marriage Other Committed Relationships	Ch 8 Ch 9
<b>WEEK 5</b> July 28	Transitions to Parenthood Parent-Child Relations	Ch 10-11
	<b>UNIT 4: FAMILY CHALLENGES AND STRENGTHS</b>	
<b>WEEK 5</b> July 29 & 30	Marriage, Work, and Economics	Ch 12 <b>Due by 7/30: Class Project, Part 2</b>
<b>WEEK 6</b> Aug 4 & 5	Intimate Violence and Sexual Abuse Divorce and Remarriage Family Change, Family Health	Ch 13 Ch 14-15
<b>AUG 6</b>	<b>Exam 2</b>	<b>In Reid 402 1:45-3:55pm</b>