

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Human Development and Family Science

HDFS 400 (001) - Advanced Family Processes
3 Credits, Fall 2016
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30 –11:45 am
Thompson Hall, Room 1020, Fairfax Campus

Faculty

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Prerequisites/Corequisites

None

University Catalog Course Description

Examines family system dynamics and processes, with an emphasis on cultural and contextual factors that influence family functioning and well-being over the lifespan. Examines both healthy and dysfunctional family processes (including abuse, neglect, and family violence). Explores evidence-based practices and interventions that promote family health, resilience, and well-being.

Course Overview

Not applicable.

Course Delivery Method

This course utilizes a distributed learning format requiring active participation of all students. Students are expected to complete all class readings prior to each session so as to engage in active dialogue, productive learning, and critical reflection. Activities will include instructor presentation, small-group discussions, student presentations, videos, and whole class sharing to support course content. In addition, a Blackboard online component of coursework is required.

Learner Outcomes or Objectives

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the diverse experiences of contemporary families across the lifespan,
2. Show understanding of how cultural and contextual factors influence family functioning and well-being,
3. Apply family theories to explain family processes within diverse contexts,

4. Understand some of the normative and non-normative challenges and opportunities faced by American families across the lifespan,
5. Demonstrate an understanding of both healthy and dysfunctional family processes
6. Show understanding of current evidence-based practices and interventions that foster family health and resilience.

Professional Standards

This course is aligned with the standards established by the National Council on Family Relations, focusing specifically on the “internal dynamics of families” content area, to include “an understanding of family strengths and weaknesses and how family members relate to each other.”

Required Texts

Walsh, F. (2011). *Normal family processes: Growing diversity and complexity (4th ed.)*. NY, NY: Guildford Press.

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, Tk20, hard copy).

• **Assignments and Examinations**

I. Exams (Total: 40 points)

Midterm (20 points): There will be one in-class midterm short-answer and essay exam that will cover class lectures, discussions, readings, etc. Exam will be closed book.

Final (20 points): The final exam will be a comprehensive essay exam that will cover class lectures, discussions, readings, etc. Exam will be closed book.

II. Homework Assignments: Summary of Readings (15 points)

To encourage student engagement and reflection of the assigned readings, three times throughout the semester (5 points each), students will provide one-page single-spaced integrative summaries of the readings/ course topics to date (e.g. Homework Assignment 1 should focus on the readings and course discussions from Weeks 1-3). Students will be expected to contribute to class discussions based on their chosen summaries. **The summaries are not a regurgitation of the readings**, but *a synthesis of the readings informed by in-class discussions as well as students’ independent critical thought, including critical reflection of the meanings students are deriving from these readings*. Summaries are due in Blackboard by the beginning of each class they are due.

III. Video Assignment on Family Stress Theory (5 points)

During Week 11 there will be asynchronous online coursework in which you will view a film and write a short paper applying family stress theory. There will be more details on this assignment provided in class closer to week 11.

IV. Final Paper: Family Processes Research Paper (30 points)

Guided by family theories and conceptual frameworks, students will examine in greater depth the processes, functioning, and well-being of families based on differing family forms or configurations (e.g., single-parent, multigenerational households, two-parent), differing cultural dimensions (e.g., intersections of race/ethnicity and class), and/or differing developmental trajectories across the lifespan (e.g., families with preschoolers, aging parents).

- Students will choose their topics, provide a framework for their investigation, and conduct a review of the relevant literature. For example, a student might 1) explore homeless families, parenting practices, and child well-being guided by an ecological perspective, or 2) examine African immigrant family stress, coping, and mental health outcomes using the Double ABCX Model, or 3) explore refugee families' experiences acculturating and navigating a new society using the resiliency framework.
- Students should explore both the challenges facing these contemporary families and their strengths and resilience characteristics.
- Students should also examine extant evidence- and family-based practices and interventions designed to promote family resilience and well-being and provide suggestions for future intervention work.

These 15 page MAX papers require clear writing, critical thinking, and incorporation of peer-reviewed journal articles and other sources in the family research literature. APA format required.

Students will present their papers briefly to the class. We will discuss the expectations of these presentations in class.

Due Dates:

10/11 (topic due)

10/27 (annotated bibliography)

11/15 (draft of final paper to peer)

11/17 (feedback on draft to peer)

11/22 (final paper due)

11/19 (Brief Presentation of Paper)

• Other Requirements

Attendance and Participation (15 points)

Because active participation and engagement are imperative for optimal learning, preparation for and participation in in-class activities will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Students attend class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class period.
- Students complete readings and prepare for class activities prior to class as is evidenced by their ability to discuss and write about the concepts presented and examined in the texts as well as participate fully in related activities.
- Students are actively involved in in-class and online learning experiences as is evidenced by (1) participating in all activities, (2) engaging in small and large group

discussions and in-class exercises, (3) completing written work related to the activities, and (4) supporting the participation and learning of classmates.

- Students show evidence of critical reflective thinking through in-class and online discussions, activities, and written reflections. Go to mymason, <http://mymason.gmu.edu>, to login to Blackboard 9.1.

Note: To determine whether the campus is closed due to inclement weather, call 703-993-1000 or go to www.gmu.edu.

Written Assignments

All formal written assignments will be evaluated for content and presentation. The American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition (APA) style will be followed for all written work. All written work unless otherwise noted must be completed on a word processor and should be proofread carefully. (Use spell check!) If students are not confident of their own ability to catch errors, they should have another person proofread their work. When in doubt, they should check the APA manual. Portions of the APA manual appear at the Style Manuals link on the Mason library web at <http://infoguides.gmu.edu/content.php?pid=39979>. Students may consult the Writing Center for additional writing support.

Students will do the following:

1. Present ideas in a clear, concise, and organized manner. (Avoid wordiness and redundancy.)
2. Develop points coherently, definitively, and thoroughly.
3. Refer to appropriate authorities, studies, and examples to document where appropriate. (Avoid meaningless generalizations, unwarranted assumptions, and unsupported opinions.)
4. Use correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.
5. Type the paper with double spacing, indented paragraphs, 1-inch margins all around, and 12-point Times New Roman font.

- **Course Performance Evaluation Weighting**

Assignments	Due Dates	Points
Attendance and Participation	Ongoing	15
Exams (Midterm = 15 points; Final = 20 pts)	10/20, 12/1	35
Homework Assignments (3, 5 points each)	9/15, 10/6, 11/3	15
Video Assignment	11/10	5
Final Paper (15 points), Annotated Bibliography (6 points), Draft & Feedback to Peer (6 points) & Presentation (3 pts)	10/11 (topic due), 10/27 (annotated bibliography) 11/15 (draft of final paper), 11/22 (final paper due)	30
TOTAL		100

- **Grading Policies**

97-100	A+	87-89	B+	77-79	C+	60-69	D	Below 60	F
93-96	A	83-86	B	73-76	C				
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-				

All CEHD undergraduate and graduate students are held to the university grading policies as described in the Academic Policies section of the current catalog, which can be accessed at <http://catalog.gmu.edu>. Those students enrolled in a CEHD Licensure Graduate Certificate program, however, must earn a B- or better in all licensure coursework. A degree-seeking graduate student will be dismissed after accumulating grades of F in two courses or 9 credits of unsatisfactory grades (C or F) in graduate courses. A 3.0 grade point average is required for completion of the graduate degree.

Professional Dispositions

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

Core Values Commitment

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

GMU Policies and Resources for Students

Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to tk20help@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/api/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/>.
- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing (see <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>).
- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance (see <http://caps.gmu.edu/>).
- The George Mason University Office of Student Support staff helps students negotiate life situations by connecting them with appropriate campus and off-campus resources. Students in need of these services may contact the office by phone (703-993-5376). Concerned students, faculty and staff may also make a referral to express concern for the safety or well-being of a Mason student or the community by going to <http://studentsupport.gmu.edu/>, and the OSS staff will follow up with the student.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/>.

Class Schedule

Week/Date	Topic	Readings and Assignments DUE
Advanced Family Processes: Overview		
Week 1: Aug. 30, Sept. 1	Course overview and introduction to family processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is family? • The New Normal: Diversity and Complexity 	Tuesday: Amato, <i>What is family?</i>
		Thursday: Walsh Ch. 1
Week 2: Sept. 6, Sept. 8	Views of Family Normality, Health, and Dysfunction: From Deficit to Strengths Perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Systems Theory • Family Strengths 	Tuesday: Ingoldsby, <i>Family Systems Theory</i>
		Thursday: <u>Being Black is not a Risk Factor (pp. 1-7 & an additional chapter of your choice)</u>
Varying Family Forms, Challenges, & Strengths		
Week 3: Sept. 13, Sept. 15	Couple Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gottman's 4 Horsemen (<i>Couple & Family Therapist Guest Lecturers: Leidy Mena & John Hart</i>) • Transition to Parenthood 	Tuesday: Walsh Ch. 3
		Thursday: NCFR Report focused on "Transitioning to Parenthood" (read Cowan & Cowan, plus one other article in the report) DUE: Homework 1
Week 4: Sept. 20, Sept. 22	Parenting & Dual Earner Couples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting Styles • Intersectionality (SES, race, family structure) and parenting 	Tuesday: Walsh, Ch. 4
		Thursday: Lareau, <i>Unequal Childhoods</i> <i>OR</i> Collins, <i>Shifting the Center</i>
Week 5: Sept. 27 Sept. 29	Decoupling & Divorce, Parenting Across Households <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Exchange Theory • Kinscripts 	Tuesday: Walsh Ch. 5 OR Fine, Ganong, & Demo, <i>Divorce: A Risk and Resilience Perspective</i>

		<p>Thursday: Walsh, Ch. 6 or 7</p> <p>Optional reading: Pasley & Lee, <i>Stress and Coping within the context of Stepfamily Life</i></p>
<p>Week 6: Oct. 4 Oct. 6</p>	<p>Gay, Lesbian, and Trans Family Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Life Course Theory • Intersectionality (revisited) 	<p>Tuesday: Walsh, Ch. 8</p> <p>Choose 1 reading from selection on Bb</p> <p>Thursday: McGuire et al., <i>Transfamily Theory</i> or Few-Demo et al., <i>Queer Theory, Intersectionality, and LGBT-Parent Families</i></p> <p>DUE: Homework 2</p>
<p>Week 7: Oct. 11 (no Tuesday classes) Oct. 13</p>	<p>Adoptive Families and Kinship Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment Theory • Intergenerational Ambivalence 	<p>Tuesday: Walsh Ch. 9 DUE: Final Paper Topic</p> <p>Thursday: Walsh Ch. 10</p>
<p>Week 8: Oct. 18 Oct. 20</p>	<p>Review for Midterm Exam</p> <p>Midterm Exam</p>	<p>Tuesday: DUE: Questions regarding course material for exam review</p> <p>Thursday: Midterm Exam</p>
Cultural and Developmental Perspectives		
<p>Week 9: Oct. 25 Oct. 27</p>	<p>Cultural Dimensions in Family Functioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture: A challenge to concepts of normality • Intersectionality of culture and structure • Cultural Competence and Humility 	<p>Tuesday: Lynch & Hanson, Ch. 2</p> <p>Thursday: Walsh, Ch. 12 DUE: Annotated Bibliography for final paper</p>
<p>Week 10: Nov. 1 Nov. 3</p>	<p>Immigrant Family Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acculturation Theory • Life Course Theory 	<p>Tuesday: Walsh: Chapter 13</p>

		<p>Thursday: Vesely, Goodman, Scurlock, <i>Turning Points and Transitions</i></p> <p>DUE: Homework 3</p>
<p>Week 11 (no in-class meeting; asynchronous online class): Nov. 8 Nov. 10</p>	<p>Families, Stress, and Trauma</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Stress Theory • Family Illness • Family Homelessness • Family Violence 	<p>Tuesday: No in-class meeting (asynchronous online class) Ingoldsby et al., <i>Family Stress Theory</i></p>
		<p>Thursday: No in-class meeting Walsh, Ch. 19 (illness) OR Articles on homelessness posted in Bb OR Read NCFR report on Intimate Partner Violence (read pages F2-F4 and an article of your choice) Video Assignment DUE</p>
<p>Week 12: Nov. 15 Nov. 17</p>	<p>Developmental Perspectives on Family Functioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Resiliency Framework • Death, Dying, and Grief in Families 	<p>Tuesday: Walsh, Ch. 17 DUE to partner: FINAL PAPER- DRAFT for paper workshop</p>
		<p>Thursday: NCFR Report: Families & Therapy, Boss, <i>Closure: Why it's a myth?</i> Paper workshop (DUE: feedback to partner on paper)</p>
Evidence-Based Practices, Family Interventions, & Course Wrap-up		
<p>Week 13: Nov. 22 Nov. 24 (no class- Happy Thanksgiving!)</p>	<p>Culturally- and Contextually Relevant, Evidence- and Family-Based Practices and Interventions</p>	<p>Tuesday: Guest Lecturer (<i>Megan Fitzgerald</i>) DUE: FINAL PAPER- FINAL DRAFT (you must attend class for paper to be accepted on time)</p>
		<p>Thursday: Enjoy observing family processes among family and friends!</p>
<p>Week 14: Nov. 29 Dec. 1</p>	<p>Course Wrap-up</p>	<p>Tuesday: DUE: Brief Paper Presentations</p>
		<p>Thursday: Exam 2</p>

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

Assessment Rubric(s)

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HDFS 400
Assignment Rubric for Final Paper

NCFR Content Area: Internal Dynamics of Families, to include an understanding of family strengths and weaknesses and how family members relate to each other.

Standard #1: Student has knowledge and understanding of theory related to diverse family processes and interpersonal relationships across the lifespan

Standard #2: Student has an understanding of families and their relationships to other institutions, such as educational, health, governmental, religious, and occupational institutions.

Standard #3: Student can apply knowledge and understanding of family processes, interpersonal relationships, and the ways in which families interact with other societal institutions across the lifespan

I = The outcome is introduced with this criterion

R = The outcome is reinforced with this criterion

A = The outcome is assessed with this criterion

	No Evidence	Beginning (Limited Evidence)	Developing (Clear Evidence)	Accomplished (Clear, convincing, substantial evidence)	SCORE
CRITERIA	0	1	2	3	
<p>I. Defines topic and provide overview: Provides a comprehensive overview of the selected family form, cultural dimension, and/or developmental trajectory and relevant family processes/outcomes under study. Student should use a minimum of 4 separate sources in this section (2-3 pp.) STANDARD 1 (A)</p>	Does not include a comprehensive overview of defined topic	Includes some discussion of the topics as defined but uses fewer than three sources	Provides a discussion of the topic as defined and cites at least three peer-reviewed empirical articles. However, section may not be well-integrated or necessary details are not included.	Provides a well-integrated, thoughtful discussion of the topic as defined and cites four or more peer-reviewed empirical articles. (3)	

NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus as needed. If changes are made, you will be notified of the changes in class or by your university e-mail address.

<p>II. Utilizes family theory or conceptual framework to guide investigation: Applies at least one family theory or conceptual framework in explaining the issue, using at least one unique theory-related source (1-2 pp.) STANDARD 1 (A)</p>	Does not discuss any family theories or conceptual frame	Attempts to apply family theory and/or uses less than one source	Applies one family theory or conceptual frame using less than one source to explain the issue	Successfully applies one or more family theories or conceptual framework using 1-2 sources to explain the issue (4)	
<p>III. Examines the challenges, strengths and resilience characteristics of families under study: Provides a clear discussion of the challenges, strengths and resilient characteristics emblematic of their chosen families (based on form, culture or developmental trajectory). Uses 2 additional sources (2-3pp.). STANDARD 1 (A)</p>	Does not provide a discussion of challenges and strengths	Attempts to discuss challenges and strengths/resilience but includes limited discussion and/or uses one or fewer additional sources	Provides some discussion of challenges and strengths/resilience and/or uses fewer than two additional sources.	Provides an in-depth discussion of challenges and strengths/ resilience and uses two or more additional sources. (4)	
<p>IV. Explores evidence- and family-based practices/ interventions and policies: Provides a clear discussion of the extant practices and intervention strategies designed to promote family well-being. Integrates this discussion with the role of related family policy. Uses a minimum of 2 additional sources (1-2pp.). STANDARD 2 (R) STANDARD 3 (R)</p>	Does not discuss any family interventions or family policies	Attempts discuss family-based practices, interventions, or policies and/or uses one or fewer sources	Provides some discussion of family-based practices/ interventions and policies using less than two sources to explain the issue	Successfully provides an in-depth discussion of family-based practices/ interventions and at least one related policy using 2 or more sources to explain the issue (3)	
ELEMENTS OF WRITING RUBRIC					
<p>V. APA formatting: Student cites all articles used using correct APA formatting for both in-text citations and reference list.</p>	Does not provide references and/or in-text citations	References and in-text citations are not in APA format	References and in-text citations are in APA format but they include more than two minor errors	References and in-text citations are in APA format and they contain no more than two minor errors (3)	

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VI. Grammar and Spelling: Student's paper is error free.	Contains more than 10 errors in spelling and grammar	Contains five to ten spelling or mechanical errors	Contains three to five spelling or mechanical errors	Contains less than two spelling or mechanical errors (3)	
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