

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**  
**College of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Human Development and Family Science**

HDFS 400.001– Advanced Family Processes  
3 Credits, Summer 2019  
Fully Online

**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. Offered by Graduate School of Education. May not be repeated for credit.

**Course Overview**

The purpose of the synthesis course is to provide students with the opportunity to synthesize the knowledge, skills and values gained from the Mason Core curriculum. Synthesis courses strive to expand students' ability to master new content, think critically, and develop life-long learning skills across the disciplines. While it is not feasible to design courses that cover "all" areas of general education, synthesis courses should function as a careful alignment of disciplinary goals with a range of Mason Core learning outcomes.

Many departments may require a Capstone Experience instead of a Synthesis course. Please see your major advisor to confirm which requirement you must complete.

**Course Delivery Method**

This course will be delivered online (76% or more) using an asynchronous format via the Blackboard Learning Management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard course site using your Mason email name (everything before @masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. This course site will be available on May 13, 2019. I will email you beforehand if the site is ready earlier.

This course utilizes a Blackboard online learning format requiring timely and active participation of all students throughout the semester. Activities to support student achievement of the learner outcomes include instructor presentations, videos, collaborative student work in small groups, assigned readings, and projects leading to written products. Students engage in timely critical reflection and accountable talk related to the learning activities.

**Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.**

### *Technical Requirements*

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access with a standard up-to-date browser, either Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox is required (note: Opera and Safari are not compatible with Blackboard).
- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
  - Windows Media Player:  
<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player>
  - Apple Quick Time Player: [www.apple.com/quicktime/download/](http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/)

### *Expectations*

- Course Week: Because asynchronous courses do not have a "fixed" meeting day, our week will start on Monday, and finish on Sunday.
- Log-in Frequency: Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, small group work, and/or access to course materials at least 3 times per week. At some points during the semester, you will have the opportunity to meet and conference with the instructor via Skype, Google Hangout, or another video form. These meetings will be scheduled via email and/or via a signup sheet on our Blackboard site.
- Participation: Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.
- Technical Competence: Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.
- Technical Issues: Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, **budget their time accordingly**. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- Workload: Please be aware that this course is **not** self-paced. Students are expected to meet *specific deadlines* and *due dates* listed in the **Class Calendar** section of this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.
- Instructor Support: Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues. The instructor can meet via telephone or

web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.

- **Netiquette:** The course environment is a collaborative space. Experience shows that even an innocent remark typed in the online environment can be misconstrued. Students must always re-read their responses carefully before posting them, so as others do not consider them as personal offenses. *Be positive in your approach with others and diplomatic in selecting your words.* Remember that you are not competing with classmates, but sharing information and learning from others. All faculty are similarly expected to be respectful in all communications.
- **Accommodations:** Online learners who require effective accommodations to insure accessibility must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services.

### **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.

### **Learning Outcomes for Synthesis**

Upon completing a synthesis course, students will be able to:

1. Communicate effectively in both oral and written forms, applying appropriate rhetorical standards (e.g., audience adaptation, language, argument, organization, evidence, etc.)
2. Using perspectives from two or more disciplines, connect issues in a given field to wider intellectual, community or societal concerns

Apply critical thinking skills to:

1. Evaluate the quality, credibility and limitations of an argument or a solution using appropriate evidence or resources, OR,

### **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 (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. NY, NY: Guildford Press.

## CONTENT MODULES – 5 MODULES TOTAL

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This course will utilize 5 content modules. Following a traditional classroom model, each module contains several “in class” lectures, discussions, and activities that are based on your readings and also include information gleaned from other sources. Specifically, all the relevant course material will be available in course readings, lessons and workshops. Course readings should be done at the start of each module before completing any lessons or workshops. Course readings for each week are noted on the course calendar in the syllabus and are available within each module. Lessons within each module will provide students with additional information in the format of notes, videos, and powerpoints. These should be reviewed before beginning the related workshops. Workshops within each module contain the activities to be completed for each module. These activities and their due dates are noted on the syllabus. It is critical for students to review all content on each module in a timely manner.

### 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).

**I. Weekly Discussion Activities (6 points/module = 30 points)**

For each module, I will post individual, pair, small, and/or large group activities. You are asked to participate in these “class discussions” by addressing accomplishing the activity as an individual or a group. Students will be graded based on their level of participation with critical thought in these activities

**Requirements:** To earn full credit, you will need to address each aspect of the weekly activity posted. This means that you must complete **multiple** components, including individual and group work each week. **Each activity response** should reflect course content and other sources to enrich the discussion.

**Evaluation of Weekly Discussion Activities:** To build a rich learning community through group discussions, the following areas will be assessed for EACH module activity upload: **1) promptness and initiative, 2) quality of individual work in terms of relevance and contribution to the learning community, and 3) quality of collaborative work.**

- Promptness and initiative: Student completes in a timely manner the activities and assignments, leaving adequate time for fellow students to collaborate in meaningful ways. **Please be kind to your group-mates and do not wait until the last minute to participate in activities. (1 points)**
- Quality of work: Responses to the assignments and activities should be comprehensive and coherent, as well as well reflect an application of the course material. Skimpy activity or assignment responses or responses that do not reflect course resources will not receive full credit. I will give you feedback early on so you understand the depth and breadth or expected responses. **(3 points)**
- Collaboration: The majority of weekly assignments and activities are collaborative in nature, as they would be in a face to face course. To earn these points there must evidence in the Bb discussion board of back and forth collaboration with group members. In particular for each weekly assignment each person will be assigned a role or roles (you might have multiple roles one week, depending on the size of the class/group) including:

1. Team Leader: The team leader has one of the most important roles because he/she needs to set a timetable and encourage/motivate the group members to meet deadlines. The team leader will share the final work with the instructor via Bb. **Team leaders should plan to send an email to all group members very early in the week to set up the process.**
2. Communications Officer: The "communications officer" is the point of contact between the group and the instructor. If the group has questions of the instructor, this person will email the instructor on behalf of the group. If the instructor has questions about the project, he/she would address them to the communications officer. Communication officers might plan to send check-in emails to group members to make sure everyone is on track.
3. Tech Support: Tech support handles any issues directly involving technology. For example, if the activity involves developing a Padlet, the group member who is tech support that week will download the free program and upload the Padlet template.
4. Editors: The editors' responsibilities really come at the end of the project because they will read through the activity and edit for content, clarity, and cohesiveness. (2 points)

Activity completion is asynchronous, which means that you will have the 1-week window to respond. You do not have to respond at the same exact time as everyone else in class. Refer to the course calendar for "due by" dates. You will NOT be able to make up any missed group activities and assignments except under extraordinary circumstances (as previously defined in this syllabus).

## II. **Synthesis Assignments: Homework, Quizzes & Exams (40 points)**

Homework: Integrative Responses (5 points each x 4 homeworks = 20 points)

To encourage student engagement and reflection of the assigned readings, four times throughout the semester (5 points each), students will provide one-page single-spaced integrative responses to the posed question. **The responses 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*. *Critical reflection of the meanings students are deriving from these readings as they relate to their personal and professional experiences will be important to include as well.*

Exams (10 points each x 2 exams = 20 points): There will be two short-answer and essay exams that will cover class lectures, discussions, readings, etc.

## III. **Final Paper: Family Processes Research Paper (25 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 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 8-10 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 to the class. We will discuss the expectations of these presentations later in the course.

### **Due Dates:**

Topic Idea (6/16) - 0 points

Annotated Bibliography (6/26) - 5 points

Draft of Final Paper to Peer (7/9) - 2.5 points

Feedback on Draft to Peer (7/11) - 2.5 points

Presentation (7/17) - 3 points

Final Paper (7/20) – 12 points

### • **Other Requirements**

#### **Attendance and Participation (5 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](http://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	5
Weekly Discussion Activities	Weekly	30
Synthesis Assignments (Homework, Exams)	Homework (6/5, 6/21, 7/7, 7/13)- 5 points each Exams (6/30, 7/20)- 10 points each	40
Final Paper	Topic Idea (6/16)- 0 points Annotated Bibliography (6/26)- 5 points Draft of Final Paper to Peer (7/9)- 2.5 points Feedback on Draft to Peer (7/11)- 2.5 points Presentation (7/17)- 3 points Final Paper (7/20) – 12 points	25
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>

• **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.



## Class Schedule

Week/Date	Topic	Readings	Activities & Assignments [Weekly Discussion Activities (individual or small group); Synthesis Assignments; Final Paper Assignments]
<b>Module 0: Introduction to Course, Instructor, and Students</b>			
5/13-5/19	Instructor Introduction Student Introductions	Review Instructor Introduction Video Review and Respond to Student Introductions Review Syllabus and Course Requirements	Student Introduction (due 5/20)
<b>Module 1: Advanced Family Processes: Overview</b>			
5/20-5/26	Course overview and introduction to family processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is family?</li> <li>• The New Normal: Diversity and Complexity</li> </ul>	Amato, <i>What is family?</i> Walsh Ch. 1	Response to Student Introductions (due 5/22) Family Story (due 5/22)
5/27-6/2	Views of Family Normality, Health, and Dysfunction: From Deficit to Strengths Perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Systems Theory</li> <li>• Family Strengths</li> </ul>	Ingoldsby, <i>Family Systems Theory</i> <a href="#"><i>Being Black is not a Risk Factor</i> (pp. 1-7 &amp; an additional chapter of your choice)</a>	Defining Family ( <i>small group</i> ) (due 6/2)



Module 2: Couple Relationships, Transition to Parenthood, & Parenting			
6/3-6/9	<p>Couple Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gottman's 4 Horsemen</li> </ul>	<p>Walsh Ch. 3-4</p> <p>Review Anderson Cooper Gottman videos  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJDN3PKZ1KE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJDN3PKZ1KE</a>  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11nDjWch78A">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11nDjWch78A</a></p>	Homework 1: My Family System (due 6/5)
	<p>Parenthood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transition to Parenthood</li> <li>Parenting Styles</li> <li>Intersectionality (SES, race, family structure) and parenting</li> </ul>	<p>NCFR Report focused on "Transitioning to Parenthood" (read Cowan &amp; Cowan, plus one other article in the report)</p> <p>Choose one:  Lareau, <i>Unequal Childhoods</i>  Collins, <i>Shifting the Center</i></p>	Get on the Line...and Parent ( <i>small group</i> ) (due 6/9)
Module 3: Diverse Family Structures			
6/10- 6/16	<p>Decoupling &amp; Divorce, Parenting Across Households</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social Exchange Theory</li> <li>Kinscripts theory</li> </ul>	<p>Walsh Ch. 5</p> <p>Fine, Ganong, &amp; Demo, <i>Divorce: A Risk and Resilience Perspective</i></p> <p>Walsh, Ch. 6 or 7</p> <p>Pasley &amp; Lee, <i>Stress and Coping within the context of Stepfamily Life</i></p>	Final Paper Topic (due 6/16) Risk & Protective Factors through Divorce (due 6/16) ( <i>small group</i> )
6/17-6/21	<p>Gay, Lesbian, Trans, and Queer Family Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Life Course Theory</li> <li>Intersectionality (revisited)</li> </ul>	<p>Walsh, Ch. 8</p> <p>Scott &amp; Erika's Story (on Bb)</p> <p>Watch: <i>Pink Boy</i> (15 minutes, <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWceuPo42y8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWceuPo42y8</a>), <i>Growing up Trans in America</i> (84 minutes, <a href="https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/growing-up-trans/">https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/growing-up-trans/</a>)</p> <p>McGuire et al., <i>Transfamily Theory</i></p> <p>Optional: Few-Demo et al., <i>Queer Theory, Intersectionality, and LGBT-Parent Families</i></p>	Homework 2: LGBTQ+ theory application (due 6/21)

6/22-6/26	Adoptive Families and Kinship Care	Walsh Ch. 9-10 Center for Adoption Support and Education (CASE) Resources	Annotated Bibliography for Final Paper (6/26)
<b>6/27-6/30</b>	<b>EXAM 1 distributed via Bb on 6/27</b>		<b>Due 6/30 by 11:59PM</b>
<b>Module 4: Cultural Perspectives on Family Functioning</b>			
7/1-7/7	Cultural Dimensions in Family Functioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Life Course Theory</li> <li>Acculturation Theory</li> </ul>	Lynch & Hanson, Ch. 2 Walsh, Ch. 11-12	
	Immigrant Family Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life Course Theory</li> <li>Trauma &amp; Resilience</li> </ul>	Vesely et al., <i>Turning Points and Transitions</i> Vesely et al., <i>Immigrant Family Resilience in Context</i> Watch: <i>Jose's Story</i>	Homework 3: A Cultural Journey (due 7/7)
<b>Module 5: Developmental Perspectives on Family Functioning, Evidence-Based Practices, &amp; Family Interventions</b>			
7/8-7/17	Death, Dying, and Grief in Families	Walsh, Ch. 17 NCFR Report: Families & Therapy, Boss, <i>Closure: Why it's a myth?</i>	Final Paper Draft for Peer Review in Small Group (due 7/9 via email)
	Non-normative Family Stressors: Stress, Trauma, & Resilience Family Stress Theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Illness</li> <li>Family Homelessness</li> <li>Family Violence</li> </ul>	Ingoldsby et al., <i>Family Stress Theory</i> Choose one: Walsh, Ch. 19 (illness) Articles on homelessness (in Bb) NCFR report on Intimate Partner Violence (read pages F2-F4 and an article of your choice)	Homework 4: Film Analysis & Theory Application (due 7/13) Final Paper Feedback to Peer in Small Group (due 7/11 via email)
	Culturally- and Contextually Relevant Practices and Interventions	No readings	Paper Presentation in Bb (due 7/17) Final Draft of Final Paper (due 7/20)
<b>7/17-7/20</b>	<b>EXAM 2 distributed via Bb on 7/17</b>		<b>Due 7/20 by 11:59PM</b>

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

## 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](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/>.
- The Writing Center 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 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 Student Support & Advocacy Center staff helps students develop and maintain healthy lifestyles through confidential one-on-one support as well as through interactive programs and resources. Some of the topics they address are healthy relationships, stress management, nutrition, sexual assault, drug and alcohol use, and sexual health (see <http://ssac.gmu.edu/>). Students in need of these services may contact the office by phone at

703-993-3686. 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://ssac.gmu.edu/make-a-referral/>.

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

**For the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, please visit the website <https://chss.gmu.edu/>.**