

Marriage and Family: A Sociological Perspective

Lecturer: Vidhu Maggu, PhD, MBA

Contact: Vidhu.Maggu@cerge-ei.cz

Course Description:

This course examines the fundamental social institutions of marriage and family. It reviews the historical development and changing structures and functions for understanding relationships. The course delves into the current trends across various cultures and societies to understand and deal with new challenges that are shaping family and marriage issues in contemporary society. Emphasizing comparative analysis, students will engage in debates and open discussions on different topics such as parenting styles, gender roles, marital relations and the impact of globalization on family life. Critical thinking exercises aim to foster a deeper understanding of the ways in which cultural norms, social policies and societal changes influence the evolving concept and definition of family worldwide.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

The main goal of this course is to introduce students to the basic understanding of the institution of family and marriage and the internal dynamics of family life.

Upon successfully completing this course the student will be able to:

- Understand key concepts of the institution of family and marriage.
- Define “the family” and diversity of meanings and different family forms.
- Understand and deal with different life situations and new challenges that are shaping family and marriage issues in contemporary society.
- Discuss and relate major theoretical perspectives to the institution of family.
- Understand different aspects of families and their roles in society from a global perspective.
- An attempt to understand the policy implications on family relationships.
- Develop an ability to analyze a problem, synthesize an analytic discussion, present and justify an analysis orally and respond to criticism and queries raised by fellow students and the course tutor.
- Demonstrate an appropriate level of competence in written expression and in library research as demanded by the discipline.

Course Requirements:

Assignments include an Individual Project (SSP), Quiz, Mid-term exam and a Group Project. Test format may be a combination of short answer exercise, essay questions covering all readings, lectures, hand-outs and class discussion content. More details regarding all assignments will be discussed in class.

Assignment	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes
Quiz	15%	A written test to check the extent to which key terms and basic concepts are comprehended.
Individual Project (SSP)	20%	Students select any one project from the suggested options to discuss it from a sociological perspective. They demonstrate analytical skills through both an oral presentation and a two-page written paper.
Midterm Exam	25%	A written examination to ascertain the extent to which key terms and basic concepts have been understood.
Group Project	25%	Students will work in small groups to demonstrate their ability to explain the studied topic to peers and identify key issues. Creativity and innovation are encouraged with regard to the facilitations! Handouts, visual aids, posters, slides, etc. are expected to enhance the presentations and benefit the class.
Class Participation	15%	Active and meaningful engagement in the class is expected. In-class activities will be assessed on either an individual basis or group basis and will be marked according to student's ability to work together as a group and come up with a solution to the problem asked.
TOTAL	100%	

Mandatory Completion Policy

Note that all mandatory assignments and exams must be completed to the best of your ability in order for your final grade to be issued. Failure to complete a mandatory assignment or exam may result in a failing grade.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A+	97-100	Excellent Work
A	93-97	Outstanding Work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

AEP Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the development of knowledge and learning is encouraged at many stages of the learning process. While we value technology for educational purposes, we also value originality and the retainment of knowledge, and thus using AI for assignments and examinations, even if rephrased, is strictly prohibited and considered an academic integrity violation, unless the instructor explicitly allows for it in the context of evaluated work

AEP Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The AEP program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristics, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

AEP Diversity Policy

AEP is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming community that values diversity in all its forms. We believe that one of the most meaningful lessons of studying abroad is learning to navigate and appreciate differences with curiosity and an open mind. While engaging across differences can sometimes be challenging or uncomfortable, these moments are essential for growth and learning. We recognize that every member of our community, even with the best intentions, may occasionally make missteps. Our commitment is to provide a supportive environment where respectful and honest dialogue helps us learn from these experiences, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive and broaden their perspective.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

CEE Introductory Lecture Series

AEP Introductory Lecture Series

Week 2 (February 19th)

Introduction, The Meaning of Marriage and Family

General overview of the syllabus, Basic Introduction to the discipline, and the course content. Types of marriage and family and their functions within society. Reading: Schwartz & Scott, Chap. 1 – Intro; Lecture slides

Week 3 (February 26th)

Marriages and Families over Time

Looking at families in the U.S. from a historical perspective

Reading: Schwartz & Scott, Chap. 1; Lecture slides

Week 4 (March 5th)

Field trip – The Communist Museum

Looking at Czech families from a historical perspective.

Different perspectives on Marriage and Families

Each group will be assigned a theory to discuss in the next class. More information will be provided.

Reading: Schwartz & Scott, Chap. 2; Lecture slides

Week 5 (March 12th)

Different perspectives on Marriage and Families ... to be continued

Student groups discuss their respective theories in class.

Reading: Schwartz & Scott, Chap. 2; Lecture slides

The Many Faces of Love

Understanding the meaning, types and theories of love

Reading: Lamanna, Riedman & Stewart Chap.7; Schwartz & Scott, Chap.4; Lecture slides

Week 6 (March 19th)

Quiz

Dating, Coupling and Mate Selection

Mate selection from a historical and cross-cultural perspective.

Reading: Schwartz & Scott, Chap.5; Lecture slides

Week 7 (March 26th)

Midterm Exam

All topics covered in the class are included.

Semester Break (April 2nd) *No class! Enjoy your break.*

Week 8 (April 9th)

Understanding Gender

Gender and its influence in intimate relationships, lecture slides

Readings: Schwartz & Scott, Chap.3, Newman, Chap.2; Lecture slides

Part of the class time will be assigned to discuss the individual project.

Week 9 (April 16th)

Individual Presentation (SSP)

Each student will be asked to select a project from the provided list. A class presentation focusing on key issues will be followed by class- discussion. At the end of the presentation, students will submit a two- page paper. More information will be available on Moodle and discussed in class.

Week 10 (April 23rd)

The Marriage Experience

Understanding marriage traditions and rituals, Change and continuity in the meaning of marriage

Reading: Schwartz & Scott, Chap.8; Lecture slides

Week 11 (April 30th)

Non-Marital Lifestyles

Living single and living together (Cohabitation and other lifestyles)

Reading: Schwartz & Scott, Chap. 7; Lecture slides

Team Project Presentations

Week 12 (May 7th)

Team Project Presentations

Reproduction and Parenting (if time permits)

Fertility patterns worldwide and reproductive technology

Reading: Schwartz & Scott, Chap.9; Lecture slides

Week 13 (May 14th)

Student selected activity

Please note: *This syllabus serves as a guide for the course and is subject to change, with student notification. The most current version of the syllabus will always be available on Moodle. *Additional readings and related websites will be assigned throughout the semester

Teaching methodology

The course will be taught by a series of lectures, class discussion, team activities, simulation exercise, tests and other in-class activities and exercises. Conceptual frameworks, case discussions, and skill-oriented activities are blended within each broad topic. Students will read, watch, analyze and discuss a variety of text specific visuals to enable them to deal with real-life predicaments. This format aims to develop student's ability to analyze a problem, synthesize an analytic discussion, present, and justify an analysis orally and respond to criticism and queries raised by fellow students and the course instructor.

Readings:

Required Material

- Schwartz, M.A. & Scott, B.M. (2018) *Marriages and Families: Diversity and Change*, 8th edition, New York: Prentice Hall.

Recommended reading

- Angel, R.J & Angel, J.L (2018) *Family, Intergenerational Solidarity, and Post-Traditional Society*, London: Routledge
- Lamanna, Riedmann & Stewart (2018) *Marriages, Families, and Relationships: Making Choices in a Diverse Society*, 13th edition, Cengage Publications.
- Newman, D.M. & Grauerholz, L (2002) *Sociology of families*, 2nd edition, Sage Publications.

- Strong, B and Cohen, T (2016) Marriage and Family experience: Intimate relationships in a Changing Society, 13th edition, Cengage Publications.
- Szydlik, M (2018) Sharing Lives: Adult Children and Parents, London: Routledge.
- Yodanis, C & Lauer, S (2017) Getting Married: The Public Nature of Private Relationships, London: Routledge.

Other reading material will be discussed in the class. Additional readings & lecture slides will be uploaded on the Moodle portal.

Much of out of class communication will be done using Moodle, including sending articles, case studies, class notes etc.