COURSE FOCUS AND CONTENT OBJECTIVES

This course develops your capacity to think and learn critically, actively, and deeply about different world views or viewpoints and their corresponding belief systems or ideologies about the purposes and realities of (a) families; (b) family phenomena such parenting, care-giving, etc.; (c) family values; (d) family policy; (e) the contexts in which these concerns are embedded; and (f) your analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of these concerns as you discover their relevance and application to your own family belief system. A belief system or ideology or world view is a composite perspective of organized beliefs, values, ideals, assumptions, attitudes, ideas, etc., for thinking about and understanding people, groups, institutions, as well as issues, problems, phenomena, research findings, policies, the relationships between any and all of these, and many other things. Belief systems help explain the world, the universe, life itself, and virtually all things that “should” or “should not” be a particular way according to the corresponding belief system. Political parties, religions, social movements, artists, scientists, professors, students, parents, and children all utilize them. Each system you study helps you think differently about things you already know as it uncovers new content and considerations. We study beliefs and expectations about women, men, children, and families in different parts of society and how they have been maintained and/or changed over time. We consider different strategies for coping with such changes, for creating changes in the future, and for understanding the implications of these changes for ourselves and others. To help us accomplish this we focus on the ways these and related matters are conceptualized and perceived within some of the more influential and important belief systems in our society (e.g., conservative, liberal, feminist). The course assumes that a discussion of these issues must take into account the diversity of men, women, and children and the role in their everyday lives of things such as culture, language, race, ethnicity, social class, education, employment, sexual orientation, human reproduction, religious participation, and political affiliation. These are essential elements of an education that respects and reflects diversity and complexity. Given this introduction, the following COURSE CONTENT OBJECTIVES can be articulated:
1. Develop a deeper understanding of and consciousness of different beliefs about families and how they make a difference in the ways we perceive and think about families, their purposes and problems, related family phenomena, and your own family experience within the context of our contemporary society.

2. Develop a deeper understanding of the rich, intricate complexity of issues pertaining to the well-being of families and family members, their development, and the always problematic role of family policy and the family beliefs and values that policies are based on in securing and providing for family well-being.

3. Develop a deeper understanding of some of our society’s more problematic family concerns as they are diversely studied by researchers, therapists, educators, policy makers, and concerned citizens so you are able to see the relevant applications of these things to your personal world of experience, your family, and to different parts of our society.

4. Develop a deeper understanding of the central ideas, values, assumptions, and practices of those who espouse different important contemporary social, political, and philosophical viewpoints.

5. Develop a deeper understanding of personal and collective beliefs, values, and assumptions; how they are acquired and developed; how resistant they are to change; and how they can be changed.

6. Develop a deeper understanding of the processes that influence the congruity or disparity between beliefs people profess to hold, the related practices or behaviors they enact, and how people can acquire the consistency between beliefs and practices that is necessary for ethical and morally responsible decisions, choices, and actions.

This course is also designed as a writing emphasis (i.e., earns upper-division communication/writing credit) course for a variety of reasons: (a) to provide you with more integrated, holistic, and meaningful learning experiences; (b) to further your understanding of some of the processes of communicating in the social and behavioral sciences; and (c) to help you discover greater depths of understanding about yourself, your personal system of thinking, and the course content. You will have many opportunities to reflect on and articulate through writing and class discussion your questions, learning, and insights.

**REQUIRED COURSE READINGS AVAILABLE IN THE BOOKSTORE**


3. There are several course readings on “Electronic Reserve” at the Marriott Library General Reserve. They are also available in printed form at the General Reserve Desk in the Marriott Library.

4. A few required readings can be accessed directly from web pages on the internet.

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS AVAILABLE IN THE BOOKSTORE**


**COURSE LEARNING DEMONSTRATIONS AND ACTIVITIES**

There are no exams or term projects in this course. Your learning and mastery of course content is transformed into an array of **personalized learning demonstrations** — the majority of which require some form of writing, analysis, insightful discussion, and careful contemplation rather than summarizing, reiterating, rephrasing, restating, regurgitating, and rote memorizing. Your final course grade is based on the following components:

**IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES (30% of grade)**. During most class meetings we engage in activities, as individuals and/or in small groups, that build on your class preparation, readings, and other assignments. Some activities require work outside of class and some are completed in class. For most activities, it is my intention for you receive credit because you are present in class and participate. Other activities may be graded using grading criteria discussed in class. Your participation in the assessment of your own work, the work of your peers, and providing feedback for your peers will be accounted for in this component of your course grade. Sometimes you will give and receive feedback from class members on the clarity, precision, depth, and other standards of reasoning as they are evident or absent in different assignments so you learn to assess your own work and the work of your peers.

**WEEKLY QUOTES AND INSIGHTS (40% of grade)**. Starting with the required reading assignments for the third week of the term, complete the relevant components for any ten of the weekly required reading assignments. Your list of quotations, accompanying insights (minimum of 200 words per author), and related questions you identify are due at the beginning of the first class...
meeting of each of the ten weeks you select to write about. You receive full credit for these assignments if you complete them accurately and completely. I do not attempt to evaluate your reasoning or your writing in these assignments.

**LEARNING ANALYSES (30% of grade).** Two times during the term you are to write in essay form, an analysis of some important aspects of your personal learning that you have acquired due to your course-related studies and experiences. This will include an in-depth analysis of relevant quotations from the course reading assignments. You may choose what you write about and when you write it. You are encouraged to elaborate on and analyze in greater depth things you have written about in your **WEEKLY QUOTES AND INSIGHTS**. These analyses are intended to help you build on and write about the course-related learning you have been experiencing inside and outside of class. These assignments may be revised partially or completely for a better grade. One of your LEARNING ANALYSES must be turned in (approximately) during week seven or eight of the term. The second LEARNING ANALYSES and all revised LEARNING ANALYSES are due no later than the last class meeting of the term.