Families have long been considered the basic unit of our communities and society. From this vantage point, as go families, so go communities and society. The institution of the family can then be understood and studied as a microcosm of neighborhoods, communities, and society. We also have come to understand much more clearly how our neighborhoods, communities, and society shape our families and provide (or do not provide) them encouragement, support, and protection in varying degrees and forms as families endeavor to fulfill their pivotal roles. While these matters are at once social and psychological, they are also economical, political, and philosophical. For us to understand these interdependent relationships we must also become mindful of those things that will make them healthier and stronger as well as more responsive, adaptable, and resilient. Not everyone agrees on what this means should be done, how it should be done, and who should do it. But just about everyone agrees that something should be done. One very important question we will explore is whether families are declining and doing poorly or adapting and doing well. The experts do not agree. However, the experts do agree that there are a number of very critical issues facing contemporary families and, therefore, our communities and society.

There are a host of family issues (some consider them “problems”) — cohabitation, same-sex marriage, out-of-wedlock births, single parenting, divorce, fathers who don’t provide economic and social support to their children, child and spouse abuse, to name a few — that involve individuals and couples in partnerships, marriages, and families in ways that result in great costs to those individuals and families. Such costs are even more enormous and consequential as they are carried into and manifested in our neighborhoods, communities and society. Part of our course of study will be to assess and understand these costs and what can be done by individuals, families, and our communities to understand them and resolve the related problems where possible. Before we study some of these problems in greater depth and detail, we need to become familiar with some of the important questions regarding contemporary families that are being asked by interested parties in our culture and society today. A major objective of this course is to understand these important questions and how they are variously perceived and answered within different relevant points of view.

What are families? What are families for? Who belongs to them? How do you become a family?
Is cohabitation with someone else sufficient to become a family?
Is marriage to someone else necessary to become a family?
Does your partner have to be a member of the opposite sex or can he or she be of the same sex?
Do you have to create or adopt a child before you can become a family?
Can all adults parent children well enough?
Should all adults be allowed to adopt and rear children?
Who are the best parents for the optimal development of children?
Do these parents need to be coupled in some way?
Do the couples need to be heterosexual or can they be homosexual or bisexual?

Although we may not be able to explore all of these questions, it is through our study of them that we will learn that the experts on these matters do not agree on the answers to these questions. We will also become more aware of the complex concerns and issues that are relevant to the study of strong, resilient, and successful families and the things that make them important and meaningful to us personally, in our families, and our communities. Fortunately, there is much more agreement amongst the experts on the characteristics of strong families and the family processes they practice that allow their members...
to make and share meaning. Other matters of focus for this course are building and preserving (1) successful, strong, healthy, and resilient individuals and families, (2) secure, stable, warm, and open home environments to house and sustain them, and (3) supportive, responsive, and cohesive communities to surround and sustain them.

REQUIRED COURSE READINGS AVAILABLE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH BOOKSTORE

1. Some of the required readings are on “Electronic Reserve” through the Marriott Library. You may access these reserved readings through the student portal. Login into My.Utah.edu, click on “Academics” and a link to the E-Reserve readings for this course should be available there for you.
2. Several required readings for the first half of the term can be accessed directly from web pages on the internet.

Lecture notes for the different reading assignments are available to read and/or download to your own computer from my faculty web site which is located at: <http://www.fcs.utah.edu/faculty/herrin/>. Simply scroll down to the relevant items listed under the section labeled “Current Course Syllabi, Overhead Notes, and Materials.” The notes are essentially the text of the overheads that I use in class lectures. Hopefully, by having the notes for a particular lecture when you attend, you can listen more for things that are of interest to you and how the things we are learning might be applied in your own lives and jot down some notes about such things rather than having to copy down all the information on the overheads.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS AVAILABLE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH BOOKSTORE


NOTE: The assignment due dates and list of class meetings and reading assignments listed below is from FALL 2009. It may change to some degree before the Semester begins. The accurate list of class meetings and reading assignments will be forthcoming.

COURSE LEARNING DEMONSTRATIONS, ACTIVITIES, AND GRADING SCALE

EXAMS (80% of total course grade). There are three in-class exams. The highest two of three exam grades are counted for the final grade after the lowest of the three exams is dropped. If you know that you will miss two of the three exams, please realize it will be difficult to get a grade higher than a D. If you are satisfied with your first two exam grades, you do not have to take the third exam. The exams contain approximately 100 or so items that are primarily multiple-choice and true/false items with some matching and short fill-in items. Exams cover both topics and content discussed in class lectures and/or the readings. THERE ARE NO MAKE-UP EXAMS. THE FIRST TWO EXAMS ARE SCHEDULED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24th AND THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5th. THE THIRD EXAM IS DURING THE
REGULARLY SCHEDULED FINAL EXAM PERIOD WHICH IS MONDAY, DECEMBER 14th, FROM 8:00 TO 10:00 A.M. THE THIRD EXAM IS NOT COMPREHENSIVE.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES (20% 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 class activities. A few activities may require work outside of class but most are completed in class. For these activities, you receive credit if you are present, participate, and turn your work in at the end of the particular class meeting with your name on it. Since these activities take place and have their intended meaning within the context of a particular class meeting, you have to be in class to participate and receive credit. Parts of activities missed because you were late in coming to class or activities missed because you were not in class at all, cannot be made up. These exercises are intended to provide experiences with additional forms of learning in addition to reading and listening to lectures. Your grade for these activities will be determined by the percentage of the total number of these activities that you complete in class. There will be at least ten of these activities.

GRADING SCALE. Letter grades are assigned to exam scores and to total points at the end of the term according to the scale of percentages listed below.

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>90 - 93.9</td>
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<td>80 - 83.9</td>
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CLASS MEETINGS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

This schedule is flexible with respect to timing since we may spend more or less time on a topic as determined by class interest. Exam dates can be taken seriously and planned for accordingly. The reading assignments itemized below a particular date or dates are to be completed before coming to the date’s class meeting. Before each reading, you will find one of several symbols. A ‘☑’ means the reading can be found on the Web; a ‘☒’ means the reading can be found on e-reserve; and a ‘&nbsp;’ means the reading can be found in one of the course textbooks.

Class Meeting 1: August 25

INTRODUCTION TO STRENGTHENING HOMES AND FAMILIES

Meetings 2, 3: Aug 27, Sep 1


Meetings 4, 5: September 3, 8


Meetings 6, 7: September 10, 15


Meetings 8, 9: September 17, 22


http://members.iquest.net/~dkoons/marriage.html

Meeting 10: September 24  EXAM ONE on materials thru September 22

Meeting 11: September 29  THE QUEST FOR THE PERFECT SOUL MATE — GOOD OR BAD?

http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200403/great-expectations-the-soul-mate-quest

http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200512/lust-the-long-haul

Meetings 12, 13: October 1, 6  PURPOSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF DIVORCE


Meeting 14: October 8  PREPARATION FOR REMARRIAGE


Meeting 15: October 20  WHO CAN MARRY? WHO CAN PARENT? SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND ITS RELEVANCE TO MARRIAGE AND PARENTING:


http://www.narth.com/docs/gendercomplementarity.html


Meeting 16: October 22  MYTHS AND REALITIES OF SUCCESSFUL, HAPPY MARRIAGES


Meetings 17, 18: October 27, 29  WHY MARRIAGES FALTER

Gottman. “How I Predict Divorce,” in The Seven Principles... (Chapter Two, 25-46).

Meeting 19: November 3  BE INTIMATELY FAMILIAR WITH EACH OTHER’S WORLD

Gottman. “Principle 1: Enhance Your Love Maps,” in The Seven... (Chapter Three, 47-60).

Meeting 20: November 5  EXAM TWO on materials from September 29 thru November 3

Meeting 21: November 10  HONOR AND RESPECT EACH OTHER and BE EMOTIONALLY ENGAGED, CONNECTED, AND INDEPENDENT

Gottman. “Principle 2: Nurture Your Fondness and Admiration,” in The Seven... (Chapter Four, 61-77).
Gottman. “Principle 3: Turn toward Each Other Instead of Away,” in The Seven... (Chapter Five, 79-97).

Meeting 22: November 12  SHARE POWER AND RESPECT EACH OTHER’S VIEWPOINTS

Gottman. “Principle 4: Let Your Partner Influence You,” in The Seven... (Chapter Six, 99-127).
Meetings 23, 24: November 17, 19
UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF YOUR CONFLICTS

Meetings 25, 26: Nov 24, Dec 1
RESOLVING CONFLICT IN A LOVING RELATIONSHIP

Meetings 27, 28: December 3, 8
COPING WITH AND SOLVING THE RESOLVABLE

Meeting 29: December 10
IDENTIFY, UNDERSTAND, AND RESPECT EACH OTHER’S IMPORTANT DREAMS and BUILD DEEPER, MORE MEANINGFUL AND REWARDING RELATIONSHIPS

MONDAY, December 14
EXAM THREE, in regular classroom on materials from November 10 thru December 10, 8:00 to 10:00 a.m.