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, adaptive, 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, 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 so. Fortunately, there is much more agreement amongst the experts on the characteristics of strong families. 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.

We live in a culture that accentuates the bizarre, negative, and dysfunctional. In contrast, considerable research has documented the kinds of things that characterize strong and healthy relationships, marriages, and families, such as respectful, appreciative, and supportive relationships, processes, interactions, activities, communication, listening, problem solving, conflict resolution, and coping strategies. A major objective of the course is to study these characteristics with the intent of learning to recognize and create them in our own individual lives, marriages, families, and communities as antidotes to the negative images, messages, and emphases in our society. The course will emphasize the things we have learned through research that couples and families do to provide for individual, family, and community well-being amidst the many challenges facing them in our society. This requires that we acquire an understanding of the workings of relationships, partnerships, marriages, and family systems that are strong, healthy, and resilient which we know contribute to healthy, responsive, and responsible communities. Among other things already mentioned, we also will study things we know to be of importance to strong families and communities, such as shared histories, traditions, and rituals; kinship bonds; intimacy; ethical, spiritual, and religious orientations; coping strategies; parental supervision and monitoring; and ways of reducing delinquency, youth violence, drug abuse.

REQUIRED COURSE READINGS AVAILABLE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH BOOKSTORE

1. Some of the required readings for the first half of the term are on “Electronic Reserve” through the Marriott Library. Instructions pertinent to using “E-Reserve” are at the following location on the web:
   To access “e-reserve” readings from an off-campus computer, see instructions at:
   [http://www.lib.utah.edu/information/remote.html](http://www.lib.utah.edu/information/remote.html).

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/](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

COURSE LEARNING DEMONSTRATIONS, ACTIVITIES, AND COURSE “ODDS AND ENDS”

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 to 130 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 EXAMS ARE SCHEDULED ON WEDNESDAYS MAY 21, JUNE 4, AND JUNE 18. THE THIRD EXAM IS NOT COMPREHENSIVE AND IS TAKEN DURING THE LAST 75 MINUTES OF THE CLASS PERIOD.

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.

ATTENDANCE POLICY. As a general rule, you need to attend class in order to participate in and receive credit for IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES and exams. These activities cannot be made-up except in particular circumstances. According to the University’s Registrar’s guidelines, if you are absent from class to participate in officially sanctioned University activities (e.g. band, debate, student government, intercollegiate athletics), religious obligations, or with instructor’s approval, you will be permitted to make up both assignments and examinations. Please inform me in advance of such absences or emergencies if at all possible. More information on this policy is available at <http://www.admin.utah.edu/sched/handbook/attend.htm>.

RESPECTFUL CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT. Please help contribute to a respectful and civil learning environment by turning off and refraining from the use of cell phones, beepers, ipods, palm pilots, etc. during our class meetings. Also avoid the use of non-course related materials, objects, or activities during class meetings such as homework for other classes, newspapers, personal correspondence, browsing the internet, etc. Use of laptop or notebook computers in class is allowed after notifying and obtaining the instructor’s permission.

APPROPRIATE CONDUCT. In order to ensure that the highest standards of academic conduct are promoted and supported at the University, students must adhere to generally accepted standards of academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, research misconduct misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. Students are also expected to be aware of and adhere to the guidelines for appropriate conduct as articulated in the CODE OF STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES (“STUDENT CODE,” Policy 8-10 Rev 6, enacted February 3, 2006). A copy of the code is available at: <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html>.

ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY. It is very likely that some of our reading materials, lectures, discussions, films, or other presentations in this course will include content that may be at odds with your personal set of values, beliefs, or point of view. This is virtually unavoidable in a class that is designed to help you study and understand the central concerns, issues and perspectives that are relevant to our course of study. We deliberately work at trying to understand multiple viewpoints and what they are based on that are diverse and often in opposition to one another. Only as we do this are we able to more fully and accurately understand the problems, issues, and concerns that are relevant to our class so we can consider possible responses and resolutions. Please carefully review the syllabus, assignments, and readings to determine if you are willing to participate in and contribute to our class as a learning environment and experience. Consequently, accommodations in content or assignments are not offered in our class. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about these or related matters at your earliest convenience. More information on the University of Utah’s Accommodations Policy is available at: <www.admin.utah.edu/facdev/accommodations-policy.pdf>.

INCOMPLETE POLICY. According to University policy, students must have completed 80% of the course requirements to be eligible for an “Incomplete” grade.
COURSE WITHDRAWAL POLICY. Each of you may formally withdraw from the course for academic reasons up through FRIDAY, MAY 30. If you remain in the course after this date you cannot withdraw for academic reasons at any other time during the term. The online Student Information System includes the following “Notice” regarding this matter [see “drop/withdrawal deadlines”]:

After the withdrawal deadline, you may petition for withdrawal if you have a nonacademic emergency. Submit a petition and supporting documentation to the office of the dean of your academic college. Undeclared, nonmatriculated and premajor students apply to the University College. You must submit the petition to the appropriate dean’s office by the last day of regular course instruction preceding the final exam period.

REQUESTS for SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS by STUDENTS with DISABILITIES. Persons with disabilities requiring special accommodations to meet the expectations and assignments of this course are encouraged to bring this to the attention of the instructor as soon in the term as possible. The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services <http://www.sa.utah.edu/ds/>, 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in the course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services. More information is available at: <http://www.hr.utah.edu/oeo/ada/guide/faculty/>.

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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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 ‘quisite’ means the reading can be found on the Web; an ‘< reserve’ means the reading can be found on e-reserve; and a ‘< reserve’ means the reading can be found in the required course textbook.

MEETING 1: MAY 12

INTRODUCTION TO COURSE

WHAT MAKES A FAMILY A FAMILY? WHAT ARE FAMILIES FOR?


FAMILIES ARE FOR HAVING CHILDREN OR JUST FOR ADULTS?


MEETING 2: MAY 14

CONTINUATION

ARE FAMILIES DECLINING OR ADAPTING AND PROGRESSING?


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

RECOMMENDED READINGS ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND ITS RELEVANCE TO MARRIAGE AND PARENTING:

http://www.futureofchildren.org/usr_doc/06_FOC_15-2_fall05_Meezan-Rauch.pdf

http://www.frc.org/get.cfm?f=IS01J3

MEETING 3: MAY 19

MAY 21

!!!LAST DAY TO DROP COURSES!!!

MEETING 4: MAY 21

IN-CLASS EXAM ONE on materials through today; 75 minutes for exam

TO COHABIT OR TO MARRY OR FIRST ONE THEN THE OTHER?

http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/swlt2.pdf or http://www.smartmarriages.com/cohabit.html

http://www.unmarried.org/10problems.php

Alternatives to Marriage Project. (2002). “Frequently asked questions about cohabitation.”
http://www.unmarried.org/cohabfaq.php

MAY 26

!!!MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY — NO CLASS — HAVE SOME FUN!!!

MAY 27

!!!LAST DAY TO ADD COURSES!!!

MAY 27

!!!TUITION PAYMENT DUE!!!

MEETING 5: MAY 28

CONTINUATION

PURPOSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF DIVORCE


http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-gallagher032502.shtml
PREPARATION FOR REMARRIAGE

MEETING 6: JUNE 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF STRONG AND HAPPY FAMILIES

MYTHS AND REALITIES ABOUT SUCCESSFUL, HAPPY MARRIAGES

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

MEETING 7: JUNE 4

BE INTIMATELY FAMILIAR WITH EACH OTHER’S WORLD
Gottman. “Principle 1: Enhance Your Love Maps,” in The Seven… (Chapter Three, 47-60).

HONOR AND RESPECT EACH OTHER TO BUILD A REWARDING, LONG-LASTING ROMANCE
Gottman. “Principle 2: Nurture Your Fondness and Admiration,” in The Seven... (Chapter Four, 61-77).

IN-CLASS EXAM TWO on materials from May 21 through today; 75 minutes for exam

BE EMOTIONALLY ENGAGED IN BEING CONNECTED AND INDEPENDENT
Gottman. “Principle 3: Turn toward Each Other Instead of Away,” in The Seven... (Chapter Five, 79-97).

MEETING 8: JUNE 9

SHARE MARITAL POWER AND RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER’S VIEWPOINTS
Gottman. “Principle 4: Let Your Partner Influence You,” in The Seven... (Chapter Six, 99-127).

CORRECTLY UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF YOUR CONFLICTS
Gottman. “The Two Kinds of Marital Conflict,” in The Seven... (Chapter Seven, 129-155).

MEETING 9: JUNE 11

STEPS FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT IN A LOVING RELATIONSHIP
Gottman. “Principle 5: Solve Your Solvable Problems,” in The Seven... (Chapter Eight, 157-185).

MEETING 10: JUNE 16
COPING WITH AND SOLVING THE RESOLVABLE


MEETING 11: JUNE 18

IDENTIFY, UNDERSTAND, AND RESPECT EACH OTHER’S IMPORTANT DREAMS


BUILD DEEPER, RICHER, MORE REWARDING RELATIONSHIPS

Gottman. “Principle 7: Create Shared Meaning,” in *The Seven...* (Chapter Eleven, 243-258).


MAINTAIN MOMENTUM IN KEEPING YOUR RELATIONSHIP ON COURSE


IN-CLASS EXAM THREE on materials from June 4 through today (during last 75 minutes of class)

JUNE 18 !!!END OF THE FIRST SUMMER TERM!!!

AUGUST 12 !!!GRADES AVAILABLE ON THE WEB!!!