

SOC 255: Dating, Relationships & Families

Winter 2017

Bellevue College



Professor: Denise Johnson
Email: denise.johnson@bellevuecollege.edu
(put SOC 255 in the subject line)
Office Hours: Daily 12:30pm-1:20pm
Office Location: A100D
Office Phone: (425) 564-5143
Class Meets: Daily 11:30am-12:20pm
Class Location: R102

COURSE INTRODUCTION

How have dating and courtship changed in recent years?
Does 'hookup culture' have any role in forming our relationships?
What is a "family?"
Is "family" universally defined, or is it always somehow changing and evolving?
How do we form families?
How do families benefit and harm individuals?
Is the "family" falling apart?
What are the problems within families?
Are there things our society can do to help/support families?

If any of these questions interest you, then you are in the right place! Over the course of the quarter, we will explore these questions as well as many other fascinating topics pertaining to relationships and families. I look forward to working with you and sharing my enthusiasm for sociology. I have a passion for this subject matter, and I hope you will have a passion too. Welcome to our class!

I think relationships and families are fascinating. They are among the most dramatic social relationships in the world, as they can lead to both sheer joy and extreme pain. We might be thrilled to date, fall in love, and have children, but we may also experience deep sorrow from abuse, separation or divorce, and the death of a loved one. Although the experiences within relationships and families are often mundane (imagine the daily routines of household chores, for example), they can also be equally thrilling (imagine having a baby). Indeed, families are a paradox in multiple ways.

For most of us, the family was central to our personal development as human beings. In our families – no matter what our families "looked" like and no matter the struggles we faced within them – we learned to become who we are. Likewise, families are central in the structure of societies. Families nurture, prepare, and train workers for the economy. Families also teach us culture and values, allowing the society to survive. Families are so important, in fact, that many scholars argue that individuals and societies would not exist without them.

Over the course of the quarter, we will examine several aspects of relationships and families using a sociological perspective, and we will conceptualize families *broadly* and *inclusively*. We'll study the crucial interaction between families and other social institutions (like the economy and government). We'll explore the social patterns and characteristics of families in America. We'll learn about diversity within families (e.g. no two children come from the same family), and we'll study a wide range of relationships and family forms. Our overarching goal for the quarter is to place relationships and families in a social context. Indeed, families do not exist independently of their societies.

“The chief object of education is not to learn things but to unlearn things.”

–Gilbert Chesterton

“Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire.”

–William Butler Yeats

LEARNING ATMOSPHERE

I believe that students learn best when they are actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Thus, this is an *active, interactive* course where you are expected to read, write, discuss, and participate. I think of our class as a “collaborative learning community” where we all teach and learn from each other. Every time you make a comment or ask a question, you teach something to the rest of us. I challenge you to abandon the traditional passive student role and to get involved with teaching and learning – I think you’ll enjoy it and learn a lot in the process!

A note about confidentiality: It is important that, as a community of learners, we build trust in one another. With that in mind, it is important to respect your classmates. Part of respecting them involves confidentiality. *What is said in this classroom is to remain in this classroom.* Further, if one of your classmates says something like you’d like to talk to him/her about, please ask his/her permission first. (“John, I’d love to talk to you more about your background or about _____. Is that okay with you?”)

A note about course content: Since sociologists examine just about every aspect of the social world, we sometimes talk about provocative material in class. Please be advised that, when we explore controversial topics, they will always be framed within an academic context. You are free to leave the room at any time, but please know that you will be responsible for any course material you may have missed while you were gone. If you have any questions or concerns about course content or climate, don’t hesitate to let me know.

REGARDING SAFE SPACE: This class is a Safe Space for ***all*** students. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students are welcome in this classroom!



COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing the course, the successful student will be able to:

- Describe the complexity of “family” as an idea, using a sociological perspective.
- Explain how families are connected to and shaped by culture and all the major social institutions, especially political and economic processes.
- Illustrate how gender, class, sexuality, and race structure intimate relationships.
- Debunk common myths about the family and relationships.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MISCELLANEOUS PURCHASES

Texts: "Families and Their Social World" by Seccombe (3rd edition) – *NOTE: I requested that the BC order copies of the 'loose-leaf' version of this which saved students about \$80 each! You will purchase a three-ring binder to put the pages in.*

Additional readings are on posted on our course (which is on Canvas)

Additional purchase: Please purchase about 10 forms from the bookstore



(3rd bookstore book, want to

website

scantron

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

The following outlines what you may expect of me as your instructor:

- **A sincere effort to help you learn the course material.** Since my ultimate goal is to help you learn and succeed, I intend to spend enough time and effort on class preparation to make the material as understandable and as interesting as I possibly can. However, I will not simply "regurgitate" the material from the textbook, but rather, I will help us apply and synthesize it. This means that class time will usually NOT be lecture – we will have interesting discussions, watch films, and engage in a wide variety of activities. I am a big believer that a variety of teaching styles/approaches helps you learn more. I am also a big believer that 'learning by doing' leads to deeper levels of understanding.
- **Accessibility.** I agree to be available to you outside of class should you desire help. I encourage you to come to my office hours whenever you have a question or concern. I am more than happy to help. If my office hours are not convenient for you, we can schedule an appointment that fits your schedule. However, please be aware that I am not available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. In general, I am in my office for a couple of hours in the morning (before my classes) and again in the afternoon, and I always check my email a few times a day. I do my coursework during the week, during daytime business hours. *Thus, please do not send to me late-night or weekend emails expecting an immediate response.* Thank you in advance for your understanding and consideration. (NOTE: I will award you 10 extra credit points if you come to my office hours at any time before the end of the quarter. Maybe we can talk about how you're doing in class, a challenging topic, or even your group project.)
- **Attention.** When you are speaking, you will have my undivided attention.
- **Fairness.** Your grade will be based upon what I detect that you have learned and how I assess your performance. It is your job to clearly communicate to me that you understand the material. I will not negotiate final grades.

The following outlines what I expect from you as a student in this class:

- **A sincere effort to learn the course material.** When participating in discussions and when writing assignments/papers, your comments should indicate to me that you have read and understand the course material. Some students wrongly assume that they can simply "wing it" in this class and still receive a high grade. The fact that you live in a family and have been in a relationship does not make you an expert in them. PLEASE don't 'wing it' or blow off the class.
- **Preparation.** You should come to class having done the assigned readings and homework, and you should always bring the proper supplies with you. On seminar days, you should bring the readings. Note that the BC guideline for homework is two hours outside of class for each hour spent in class (this means 10 hours of homework per week for a typical 5-credit class). Don't worry, though – the work load in this class is not that high.
- **Attendance.** Please attend all class sessions – your presence in class contributes significantly toward your final grade in the course. If you do need to miss class, please note that you will not be able to make up any in-class work that you may have missed (such as group work), and you are also responsible for any and all work that is due at the class meeting immediately upon your return. That

means that being absent does not grant you an extension on anything. I highly recommend that you get the names and contact information of one or two of your classmates so you can contact them for any assignments or notes you may have missed while absent.

- **Promptness.** You should be in class on time except when delayed by an emergency, and you should stay until class is over unless you become ill or have made arrangements with me to leave early. Furthermore, you should comply with all due dates. I believe that one of the major lessons students take away from college is the importance of meeting deadlines. As a result, **no late work will be accepted.** Late work will receive a **zero** grade. Please do not ask me if I will accept your work late...I won't. If you know you are going to be absent on the day something is due, then turn it in early. **Being absent on the day something is due does NOT grant you an automatic extension (even if you were absent on the day it was assigned).** Major due dates are indicated on the attached Course Calendar, so plan ahead.

NOTE: I do not accept assignments via email. It is your responsibility to get the work to me in class when it is due.

- **Contribution.** Learning about each experiences and perspectives is an integral the learning process in this course. I that you will learn a lot about yourself and fellow classmates. To work effectively in course, therefore, you are expected to be an participant in our learning environment. should do your best to contribute to class discussions and activities. Please be advised that your grade will suffer if you do participate and contribute to the intellectual life of our class.
- **Respect.** Since learning about diverse experiences is central to this course, it is of the utmost importance that you respect your classmates' experiences, differences, and opinions. Disrespectful attitudes will not be permitted.
- **Honesty.** This means no cheating, and no plagiarism. If you cheat/plagiarize, you fail. No excuses will be taken into account. Your work must be your own, except when asked to work with other students. Furthermore, you are required to acknowledge in your papers if you have borrowed any ideas, terms, or phrases, even if you have borrowed from a classmate. Please do not copy and paste material from wikipedia or any other website into your assignments, as this is a severe form of cheating (that is very easy to catch, by the way). ***In this class, your assignments should be grounded in the textbook (rather than web resources, which are often wrong!). This means that you should NOT do internet research in this class – all you need is in the course textbook and supplementary readings.*** If you have any hesitation, or if you are in doubt about one of these issues, feel free to ask me.



other's
part of
believe
your
this
active
You

not

GRADING

Grades are based on your performance on six factors: (1) exams, (2) individual and group quizzes, (3) homework assignments, (4) group research project and presentation, (5) seminar, and (6) participation. Each of these elements is awarded a specific number of points:

Exams (2 @ 150 pts each)	300 points (30% of final grade)
Quizzes	210 points (21% of final grade)
Group project and presentation	200 points (20% of final grade)
Seminar	150 points (15% of final grade)
Participation	100 points (10% of final grade)
Homework assignments	40 points (4% of final grade)
TOTAL	1,000 points

The following are the letter-grade equivalents to the course points:

Course Grade	Point Total	Course Grade	Point Total
A	= 930-1,000 points	C+	= 770-799 points
A-	= 900-929 points	C	= 730-769 points

B+	=	870-899 points	C-	=	700-729 points
B	=	830-869 points	D+	=	670-699 points
B-	=	800-829 points	D	=	600-669 points
			F	=	0-599 points

The following is a brief description of each of the six components:

- (1) Exams: Over the course of the quarter, you will take two exams that integrate the course's in-class activities (lectures, films, etc.) and readings. Exams are designed to make sure you understand important course themes. Exams might include multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay questions. Please note that **you cannot make up missed exams**. Exam dates are on the attached Course Calendar, so please plan ahead. I do not give early or late exam; you need to plan to be in class on the exam dates. (2 exams @ 150 points each = 300 total points)
- (2) Individual and Group Quizzes: Six in-class quizzes are given over the course of the quarter. Each quiz consists of an individual and group component – you'll first take the quiz independently (worth 15 points), and then you'll take the same quiz in groups (worth 20 points). The individual component of the quizzes are designed to test whether or not you *completed* and *understand* the readings for the week, and the group component is designed to help you learn the material better. This process should help you prepare for the larger exams. Note that **you cannot makeup missed quizzes**. Quiz dates are provided on the attached Course Calendar, so plan ahead accordingly.

6 individual quizzes @ 15 points each =	90 points
6 group quizzes @ 20 points each =	120 points
TOTAL	210 points

- (3) Group "Family Change" Project and Presentation. You will work in groups of 2-3 students, analyzing cultural artifacts such as magazines, movies, music, newspapers, or television. You will write a brief 3-4 page paper (as a group) and present a 10-minute presentation to the class at the end of the quarter. *More details about this project will be distributed early the quarter.*
- (4) Seminar: We will have eleven seminars over the course of the quarter; you are permitted to miss one seminar without consequence to your grade. Seminar involves discussing a specific reading and completing a brief assignment independently AND another one in small groups in order to reach deeper levels of learning. In the first part of the quarter, I will assign students randomly to groups. This will be your quarter-long Seminar Group (although I reserve the right to re-assign groups at any time, particularly if a group has become dysfunctional). Most weeks, you will work in this group, having discussions with your group members and completing a brief group assignment with them.

If you look at the Course Calendar, you will see that there is a Seminar due most weeks. On Seminar day, it is crucial that you come to class prepared. You will need to complete the reading ahead of time and bring a brief assignment to each seminar. (NOTE: **I will not accept assignments that are not typed.**) Each INDEPENDENT seminar assignment (that you bring with you to class on Seminar day) should include the following:

- a statement of what you think the article's main claim/conclusion is (in your own words); in other words, what is the thesis of the article, and what is the author CONCLUDING about the topic? (Oftentimes, the title of the article is a big hint about the conclusion/thesis!) Please note that a thesis is NOT the same as the topic of the article, but rather, a thesis is an ARGUABLE CLAIM that the author is making. *(continued on next page)*
- 3-4 central questions that you have about the article that you would like to talk about with your classmates (the questions should be thought-provoking, not "What did you think about the article?" and "What is the author saying?").
- Seminar assignments should NOT include your opinion about the article (you will have plenty of time to talk about that during seminar!).

In class on seminar days, you will break into your assigned groups and come to an agreement about what the thesis of the article is. Your group will write your agreed-upon thesis on a piece of paper, and then begin talking about your discussion questions. After your discussion ends, your group will staple your individual seminar assignments to the sheet of paper that contains your agreed-upon

thesis, and you'll CIRCLE the best three discussion-questions (that is, the three questions that were the most thought- and discussion-provoking for you all). I grade seminar in the following manner:

I review your group's agreed-upon thesis and assign it a grade (for example, 15 out of 15). I then look at my notes from class and check to see who contributed to discussion in a meaningful way. Those students will receive the highest grade in the group (in this example, they'd receive 15s). Students who participate a little might receive 10s, and those who don't participate at all would receive zeros. Students who do not submit individual assignments (stapled in the packet) also receive a **zero** grade. This means that not all seminar group members automatically receive the same grade – students who participate less receive lowered grades.

- (5) **Participation:** Participation is essential to the format of this class and will therefore contribute significantly toward your grade. In short, your success in this class depends on your attendance and your *active* participation. "Participation" includes attendance, class discussions, group work, and independent in-class assignments. As a result, if you skip class or disrupt class by coming in late regularly or whispering, then your participation grade will suffer. For each five (5) class periods that you miss (or arrive late), your final grade will drop one full letter grade. This means that you are permitted to miss or arrive late to five (5) classes – that's roughly 10% of our class! – without consequence to your course grade. If you maintain strong attendance and contribute to class discussions in a meaningful way by adding important insights, your grade will benefit. *Do not take this portion of your grade lightly – excellent attendance and participation can significantly improve your final grade! The hallmark of a successful college student is great attendance.*
- (6) **Homework:** You will complete a handful of homework assignments throughout the quarter that require you to reflect on the course material and/or observe the social world. These assignments are very important to your own and your classmates' learning, as we will talk about them in class and engage in activities around them. You should do your best to address every assignment thoughtfully, clearly, and completely. Homework will be graded not only on completeness (Did you adequately address all the components of the assignment?), but also thoughtfulness (Does your assignment show that you thought hard about the topic, or did you give the topic just a little superficial attention?). Please note that I will not accept late homework, so homework that is not handed in on time will receive a **zero** grade. Additionally, I will not accept homework that isn't typed (unless I've specifically mentioned that it can be handwritten). Some homework assignments are described in the attached Course Calendar, and others will be announced during class. (200 total homework points)

The **Disability Resource Center** serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you are a student who has a disability or learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact the DRC as soon as possible.

If you are a person who requires assistance in case of an emergency

COURSE CALENDAR

The following Course Calendar will be revised as needed. Please note that you will be held responsible for all revisions to the calendar. If you miss a class, be sure to check either with me or a classmate regarding any changes.

You should make every effort to read the articles and chapters in the order listed (there is a reason why they're ordered in this manner!). "Seccombe" refers to the "Families and Their Social Worlds" textbook. Several additional articles are posted online on our course site at *MyBC*.

WEEK ONE – Introduction to the Course and the Field: What is the “family?”

NOTE: No class on Wednesday and Thursday, January 4-5

Read Seccombe Chapter 1

Read Stoller and Gibson's "The Diversity of American Families" (on WEBSITE)



WEEK TWO – What is the “family,” and how do they vary?

Read Seccombe Chapter 2

Read Coontz "The Evolution of American Families" (on WEBSITE)

DUE TUESDAY: Homework Assignment

Ask 7-10 people (not your family members) the following questions:

- 1) To you, what is a “family?”
 - 2) When you think of a “family,” what mental picture comes quickly to mind?
- Take notes on their responses, and bring your handwritten notes to class.

DUE FRIDAY – Quiz on Chapters 1 & 2 and SEMINAR on Coontz

WEEK THREE – Differentiation in Families: Gender and Power

NOTE: NO classes on Monday, January 16th – Happy Dr. MLK, Jr. Day!

Read Seccombe Chapter 4

Read Kimmel "The Gendered Society" (on WEBSITE)

DUE WEDNESDAY: Homework Assignment

Bring to class a visual representation of your “gendered” self. Your task is to create a visual presentation of your gendered identity or a symbolic shield that "tells" others of your gendered identity. You can use whatever materials, media, or artifacts you wish, but at the very least be creative and make it large enough for all of us to see. Some may choose to create collages, while others may bring in a series of artifacts displayed in a coherent fashion, while others still will create a multimedia presentation of their gendered identity. There is no "right or wrong" in doing this assignment (although be sure that you do not confuse sex with gender...see the chapter!). But give some thought to who you are as a gendered being and (re)present that to us.

DUE FRIDAY – Seminar on Kimmel

WEEK FOUR – Differentiation in Families: Social Class and Families

Read Seccombe Chapter 5

Read Rank's "As American As Apple Pie: Poverty and Welfare" (on WEBSITE)

DUE Wednesday: Seminar on Rank

DUE FRIDAY: Quiz on Chapters 4 and 5

WEEK FIVE – Race, Ethnicity, and Families

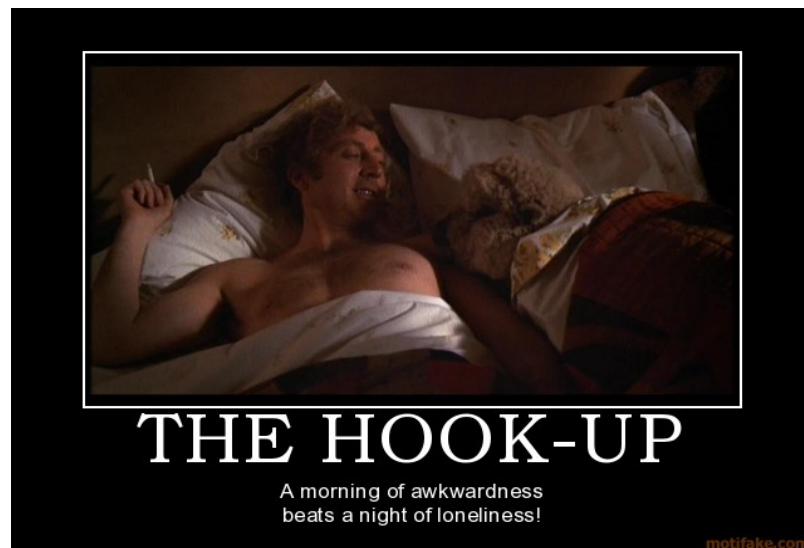
Read Seccombe Chapter 6

Read Dalmage "Tripping on the Color Line" (on WEBSITE)

DUE MONDAY: Choose your group for the "Family Change" project (submit list to Denise)

DUE FRIDAY: Seminar on Dalmage

WEEK SIX – Dating, Hooking Up, Courtship, and Cohabitation



NOTE: NO classes on Thursday, February 9th (campus closed)

Read Seccombe Chapter 7

Read Armstrong et al "Orgasm in College Hookups and Relationships" (on WEBSITE)

DUE WEDNESDAY: Seminar on ARMSTRONG

DUE FRIDAY: Group time to figure out what you're going to study

DUE FRIDAY: Quiz on Chapters 6 & 7

WEEK SEVEN – Families and Marriage: Personal Commitment and Social Institution

Read Seccombe Chapter 8

Read Cherlin's "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage" (on WEBSITE)

Read Green's "From Outlaws to In-Laws: Gay and Lesbian Couples in Contemporary Society" (on WEBSITE)

DUE MONDAY – EXAM #1

DUE WEDNESDAY: Seminar on CHERLIN

DUE FRIDAY: Seminar on GREEN

WEEK EIGHT – Life with Kids: Parenting and Parenthood



NOTE: No classes on Monday, February 20th (campus closed)

Read Seccombe Chapters 9 & 10

Read Coltrane's "Fathering: Paradoxes, Contradictions, and Dilemmas" (on WEBSITE)

DUE WEDNESDAY: Homework Assignment

Watch one sitcom that centers on a family with children (e.g. "Modern Family," "The Middle," "The Simpsons," "The Family Guy," "Blackish," "Fresh Off the Boat," etc.) and take notes on the following:

- 1) What is the relationship of the parents to the children? Good? Strained? Dysfunctional? Do the parent(s) seem to enjoy their kids and parenting?
 - 2) What *messages* about the family and parenting is that episode conveying to the public?
- Bring your notes to class.

DUE FRIDAY: Quiz on Chapters 9 & 10 and Seminar on COLTRANE

WEEK NINE – Working Families

Read Seccombe Chapter 11

Read Nyhan's "Matrimonial Bliss Lies in the Mop Bucket and Broom" (on WEBSITE)

Read Gerson and Jacobs' "The Work-Home Crunch" (on WEBSITE)

DUE THURSDAY: Homework Assignment

For this assignment, you will take detailed notes about the division of labor in a household that has both males AND females in it. If your household includes both males and females, you can write about your own household. If your household does not have both males and females, then you should find a household that does and ask them the following eight questions:

- 1) Describe the members of the household - gender, age.
- 2) What percentage of each person's time is spent on paid work/employment?
- 3) What percentage of the household income is contributed by each person who does paid work?
- 4) Who literally pays the bills? (writes the checks, completes the online bill payments)
- 5) Who decides how the household's surplus or discretionary income is spent?
- 6) Who does most of the following jobs? (If shared, about how many times per week does each person do the job)?
 - child care -- feeding, bathing, dressing, putting to sleep, playing with, taking to school/daycare
 - meal preparation
 - food shopping
 - washing dishes
 - personal laundry (clothing)
 - household laundry (sheets, towels)
 - bedmaking
 - vacuuming/dusting
 - cleaning kitchen/bathroom
 - taking out garbage
 - mowing lawn, other yard work
 - car maintenance, getting gas
 - pet care, feeding
- 7) How were these chores allocated? By whom?
Do they rotate?
- 8) Are there arguments about who does what? How are these resolved?



"I'll be home late. I've joined a support group for women who need a reason to stay at work until the house is picked up and dinner is on the table."

After reviewing each of the above questions, what do you think is the relationship between the time spent in paid work and the time spent in housework and the amount of income each person brings into the household?
Bring your typed notes to class.

DUE FRIDAY: Quiz on Chapter 11 and seminar on GERSON/JACOBS

WEEK TEN – Family Challenges: Violence and Abuse

NOTE: No classes on Tuesday, March 7th (campus closed)

Read Seccombe Chapter 13

Read Jacobson and Gottman's "Basic Facts about Battering: Myths vs Realities" (on WEBSITE)

DUE WEDNESDAY: Seminar on JACOBSON/GOTTMAN

WEEK ELEVEN – Changing Families: Divorce, Repartnering, and Remarriage

Read Seccombe Chapter 14

Read Walzer and Oles' "Accounting for Divorce: Gender and Narratives" (on WEBSITE)

DUE MONDAY: Quiz on Chapters 13 & 14 and seminar on WALZER/OLES

DUE FRIDAY: EXAM #2

IMPORTANT NOTE: Although we do not have an actual final class, we will meet during our final exam time in order to hear group presentations. Please mark your calendars accordingly.



Uncoupling

exam in this
each other's