



Sociology 120: Marriage and Family

Tuesday and Thursday, 4:00-5:15pm

Birge 145

<https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/371122>

Fall 2023

Professor: Allison Daminger
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Student hours: Tues., 2-3 and 5:30-6pm
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Course Description

How do families shape who we are—and who we might become? What influence does society have on the families we form and the ways they function? What makes a family in the first place? These are some of the big questions we'll tackle as we collectively re-examine a familiar institution.

The family is a fundamental building block of social life. It provides the context in which our individual lives unfold, from birth to death. But families also have consequences for the greater good. On one hand, they educate children and care for the elderly; on the other, they help generate and perpetuate social inequalities.

We'll begin by examining what it means to think *sociologically* about the family. Put another way, we will learn how to look beyond individual families to "The Family." Next, we'll ask how gender, race, and class are associated with inequalities both within and between families. We'll follow one possible "life cycle" of a family, from dating to marriage to parenthood to old age. Finally, we'll conclude with a closer look at the role of the state in family life and ponder together the future of the family—both in our own lives and in society at large.

Our primary focus will be U.S. families, though we will draw on global data to put American patterns in context. Even within one country, however, there is incredible diversity in how families are structured and run. It may be tempting to assume there is a single "best" way to organize family life, but research indicates the family is constantly changing and adapting. Further, what works in one situation may not work in another: the consequences of family structure and behavior depend heavily on context.

This course is designed for students new(ish) to sociology. Seniors and sociology majors are welcome but should also consider the more advanced family course SOC 640.

Credits: 4

The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of 180 hours of student engagement with course learning activities, including regularly scheduled lectures and discussion sections, reading, writing, and other assignments. As a general rule of thumb, plan to spend roughly two hours outside of class (on reading, completing assignments, and studying) for every hour you spend in class/section.

Course Designations and Attributes

Breadth: Social Science; Level: Elementary; L&S Credit: Liberal arts and Science Credit

Requisites: None

Course format: Both lecture and sections meet in person. Lectures will not be recorded.

Required textbook:

2015. *Families As They Really Are, Second Edition*. Edited by Barbara J. Risman and Virginia E. Rutter. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

****Note:** Unfortunately, this reader is not commercially available as an e-book. If you require a digital version for accessibility reasons, please contact the McBurney Center.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, students will:

- 1) Understand the American family as both a private and public institution
- 2) Appreciate the diversity of family living across time and space
- 3) Evaluate the impact of race, class, and gender on individuals' experiences within families and families' experiences within society
- 4) Confidently discuss, debate, and evaluate sociological evidence
- 5) Analyze contemporary depictions of, and debates about, families using a sociological lens

Course components:

- 1) **Readings:** Most readings are drawn from the course textbook, *Families as They Really Are*, which I abbreviate as FATRA. All other required readings will be posted or linked on the course Canvas page.

I have intentionally kept the required reading load minimal – but in return, I really do expect you to do all the reading! We will talk about how to read academic texts in the first weeks of class.

Please keep in mind that exams will draw on both lectures and readings. If you have questions about any of the readings, please raise them in class, section, or student hours.

- 2) **Lectures:** In this course, lectures will involve a good deal of me talking, but they also include interactive elements such as personal reflection, small-group work, and class discussions. To facilitate this interaction, we will be using software called TopHat. You can access this via the course Canvas page.

Though I post lecture slides to Canvas in advance of each class, these slides do not contain all the important information. **In prior semesters, students who regularly attended lecture scored an average of 10+ points higher on exams.** To further incentivize regular lecture attendance, I will offer 1 point (added to your final grade at the end of the semester) of extra credit to each student who has attended at least 2/3 of all lectures. We will track attendance via your participation in the TopHat activities.

Please do not email me about occasional lecture absences! If you miss a lecture, contact a classmate to ask for notes. If you are dealing with an issue that requires you to miss many lectures, however, please do reach out so we can figure out a plan for keeping you from falling behind.

- 3) **Discussion Sections:** Given the size of our course, it will not always be possible for each student to participate during lectures. That is where section comes in: it's your weekly opportunity to discuss, probe, and question the ideas we'll encounter together this semester.

To earn full marks for section, you must be present, participate actively, and complete any necessary preparation (e.g., generating reading questions). Quality is more important than quantity: strive to contribute questions, reflections, and observations that engage your classmates and advance the discussion. If it's challenging for you to speak up in class, please talk to your TA and/or I about your concerns.

We recognize that things come up from time to time that interfere with your ability to attend section. You may miss up to two section meetings with no penalty and no need to inform your instructors. We recommend that you contact a classmate to get notes for any missed sessions.

If you miss more than two sections, your section grade will drop by 1 percentage point with each absence. If you have an emergency that prevents you from attending several section meetings, please email both your TA and me to come up with a plan. We want you to come to class, but not if you are sick.

- 4) **Online quizzes:** Over the course of the semester you will take regular quizzes with multiple-choice and true/false questions about readings and lecture concepts.

These quizzes are housed on Canvas. They are open notes and open book, and you may take them as many times as you would like before the deadline (Sundays at 11:59pm).

The quizzes are primarily intended to help your learning. In addition to incentivizing attendance and keeping up with the reading, they will give you important information about a) which concepts and ideas are important and b) how well your notes are serving you.

There are no extensions on the quiz deadlines. However, we will drop your two lowest quiz scores. If you miss class, you are still expected to complete the week's quiz: please contact a classmate to borrow notes.

- 5) **One short writing assignment:** One objective of this course is for you to be able to analyze contemporary depictions of families using a sociological lens. The primary way you will demonstrate this skill is via a short reflection essay on your choice of either a) current events or b) popular or social media related to course concepts.

Part of your grade for this assignment will involve submission of intermediate materials, such as a draft thesis statement. These will be submitted via a Canvas discussion thread and marked as complete or incomplete. They are primarily intended to help you do your best on the assignment.

- 6) **Three exams:** You will take three proctored in-class exams throughout the semester. The first portion of each exam will include multiple choice and true/false questions that test your comprehension of key concepts and mechanisms. The second portion consists of fill-in-the-blank and short essay questions that test your ability to make connections across course topics, analyze arguments, and apply your knowledge to new cases.

The first exam is relatively short, comes early in the semester, and counts for much less of your grade than the latter two. This is because I want you to get feedback in time to adjust your note-taking and study practices if need be. College exams look different than high school exams, and each professor has their own unique exam style. This early midterm will introduce you to my approach to exams and help you do better on later exams that count for more of your grade.

There is no final exam for this course. If your online schedule lists an exam time during exam period, please ignore it. Exam 3 will happen during our last regular class meeting.

Grading summary:

Exams	55%	10% for Exam 1, 20% for Exam 2, 25% for Exam 3
Writing assignment	15%	If you choose to revise and resubmit your assignment, only your <i>revised</i> grade will count.
Section attendance and participation	15%	Up to two absences with no penalty; 1 point off for each subsequent unexcused absence
Quizzes	15%	We will drop your two lowest scores
Extra Credit		One point will be added to the final grade of each student who attends at least 2/3 of the lectures (not including exam days)

Grade scale:

A = 93-100%
AB = 88-92.9%
B = 80-87.9%
BC = 76-79.9%
C = 68-75.9%
D = 55-67.9%
F = <55%

If necessary, I will curve grades up. I will never curve grades down.

How to Succeed in This Course:

1. Show up, physically and mentally: Regular lecture and discussion section attendance are critical to success in this course. Really, I can't stress this enough! Lecture slides will be posted on Canvas but will not contain all the important information covered in class.

Exams will require you to think critically and apply your knowledge to a range of cases. To prepare, you will need to practice active reading and listening. This means, for example, making notes in the margins, jotting down ideas about the connections between two course concepts, and asking questions (in class, section, or office hours) when you don't understand. It also means participating during in-class activities, which are designed to help you practice the skills tested via exams and writing assignments.

2. Seek support when you need it – or even before: Your instructors care about your learning *and* your well-being. If something is interfering with either, let us know. We can help you come up with a plan or direct you to additional campus resources.

We also encourage you to support each other. You'll have an opportunity early in the semester to get the contact information of several classmates. Call on those peers to act as study partners, to share notes from a class you missed, or even to commiserate about the challenges of college life.

3. Keep an open mind: "Family" is a topic all of us have some experience with, whether positive or negative. But thinking *sociologically* about the family is likely to be unfamiliar, and occasionally uncomfortable. Sociology is a powerful discipline in part because it compels us to look differently at behaviors, beliefs, and institutions we normally take for granted. I encourage you to take your classmates' and instructors' ideas seriously and treat them with respect, even if you ultimately disagree with their conclusions.

Course Policies:

Email etiquette: Email with your instructors should be treated as professional communication. This means starting with a polite greeting (e.g., “Dear Prof. Daminger”), writing in complete sentences, and signing your name.

Before emailing, please check the syllabus and course website to see if your question has been answered there. If not, please reach out to your TA first. If you have a question about course material that is better suited to discussion, you may be invited to come to office hours.

I strive to respond to student emails within one business day. This means that it is *not* a good idea to procrastinate on studying for exams or completing an assignment. If you email me right before an exam or assignment deadline, you may not get an answer in time.

Grading issues: You may contest grades on your exams or assignments *up to two weeks* after each exam or assignment has been returned to you. Beginning 24 hours after you receive your grade, you may raise technical issues (e.g., computational errors in your score) with your TA. Any substantive concerns about the contents of your answer should be discussed with Prof. Daminger. Your score may go up or down as a result of the review.

Late submissions: There are no extensions for online quizzes; quizzes not completed by the deadline (Fridays at noon) will receive a 0. However, because we drop your two lowest grades, you effectively get two free “skips.” That said, I don’t recommend using one unless you need to. You never know what will happen later in the semester, and these quizzes are an important learning tool.

Writing assignments will be penalized 3 points for each day they are late. For example, if you turn in a 97 assignment one day late, you will receive a 94. This policy is designed to balance TA and student interests: with so many students, it is disruptive to have papers turned in at all different times. However, because we know that life happens, we’ve kept the penalty minimal.

If illness or family emergency interferes with your ability to turn in a timely submission, contact your TA *prior* to the deadline to ask about an extension.

Missed exams: If you are compelled to miss the first exam because of serious illness, a family emergency, or a *required* university-sponsored activity, your second and third exams will simply count more. In other words, there is no penalty for missing the first exam. Nevertheless, I *strongly* recommend that you take it. Success requires practice! **Students compelled to miss the second or third exam because of illness or emergency must make arrangements with the professor *prior* to the exam or receive a score of zero.**

Artificial intelligence: Generative A.I. tools like ChatGPT have raised new questions about academic ethics, the purpose of education, and other big topics. In this course, you are welcome to use A.I. to aid your studying and to help with written assignments. You must disclose your use of A.I. on any written assignment; we’ll talk in much more detail later about how to do so. A.I. is not allowed during in-class exams. Inappropriate, unauthorized, or undocumented use of A.I. constitutes academic misconduct.

University and Department Policies:

UW-Madison and the Sociology Department require faculty to include standard language regarding key policies. Because I know these blocks of text are tempting to overlook, I have

provided a colloquial summary of each here. You can find the full text at the end of this syllabus.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: Accommodations are available to students who qualify for disability services via the McBurney Center (see <https://mcburney.wisc.edu/apply-for-accommodations/>). If you have a letter, please email Prof. Daminger early in the semester to discuss your needs and how the instructors can best support you. If you don't qualify for accommodations but have concerns about your ability to succeed in this course, reach out anyway, and we can have a confidential discussion.

Diversity and inclusion: Your instructors will strive to create an environment in which every student feels welcome and is equipped to succeed. This is a very important commitment for us. If you ever feel we are falling short, please let us know!

Academic integrity statement: Do not cheat or plagiarize! It's against course and university policy, and you will face disciplinary action. If you're unsure whether something counts as cheating, please ask.

Religious Observances: If you wish to request a scheduling accommodation for religious observances, you must send an email to both your TA and Professor Daminger by the end of the second week of the course stating the specific date(s) for which you request accommodation.

Privacy of student records & the use of audio-recorded lectures: Please do not record my lectures without prior permission or post notes or other class materials online. I encourage you to share notes on a 1:1 basis with a classmate who missed lecture or section, but this should be an *occasional* rather than routine practice.

Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights: If you have pressing concerns about this course, please report them to Prof. Daminger or to the Sociology Department Chair, Prof. Grodsky.

Course evaluations: You'll receive an email toward the end of the semester with an invitation to formally evaluate this course. You'll also receive one or more opportunities to informally evaluate the course during the semester. Your feedback matters, and I encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to share your anonymous perspective!

Teaching & Learning Data Transparency: Both your instructors and the university care about the privacy and security of your personal information. For specifics on how the university keeps your info secure, see this page: <https://teachlearn.provost.wisc.edu/teaching-and-learning-data-transparency-statement/>

Key Resources:

Please take advantage of the many services UW-Madison provides! If you aren't sure which office or program to go to, reach out to one of your instructors, and we will help you get connected.

- [University Health Services](#)
- [University Mental Health Services](#)
- [Survivor Services](#)

- [Undergraduate Academic Advising and Career Services](#)
- [Office of the Registrar](#)
- [Office of Student Financial Aid](#)
- [Dean of Students Office](#)
- [The Writing Center](#)

Course Schedule:

This information is subject to change, but we will give you as much notice as possible. All non-*Families As They Really Are (FATRA)* readings are linked below and available via Canvas.

Week 1		
Thurs, 9/7	Introduction & Expectations	<u>Read:</u> the syllabus! <u>Activate:</u> TopHat
Sun, 9/10		<u>Due</u> (11:59pm): Introductory survey; Quiz 1 (syllabus quiz)
Week 2		
Tue, 9/12	Defining the family	<u>Read:</u> FATRA pp. 84-95: Powell et al., “Changing Counts, Counting Change”
Thurs, 9/14	How do we know what we know about the family?	<u>Read:</u> FATRA pp. 12-16: Cherlin, “1049 Reasons...”; pp. 17-21, Cowan, “When is a relationship between facts...”
Sun, 9/17		<u>Due</u> (11:59pm): Quiz 2; Religious observation requests
Week 3		
Tue, 9/19	Research methods	<u>Read:</u> <i>A Sociology Experiment</i> , Ch. 2: Research Methods **Note: You will need to register for an account via sociologyexperiment.com and pay \$1 for the chapter.
Thurs, 9/21	US families in historical context I	<u>Read:</u> FATRA pp. 36-55: Coontz, “The Evolution of American Families”
Sun, 9/24		<u>Due</u> (11:59pm): Quiz 3
Week 4		
Tue, 9/26	US families in historical context II + short review	<u>Read:</u> FATRA pp. 56-67: Mintz, “American Childhood as a Social and Cultural Construct”
Thurs, 9/28	EXAM 1	
Sun, 10/1		No quiz this week!
Week 5		
Tue, 10/3	Intro to inequality; Gender I	<u>Read:</u> Hochschild and Machung 2012, <i>The Second Shift</i> (Excerpts, on Canvas)

Thurs, 10/5	Gender II	<u>Read</u> : FATRA pp. 593-608: Gerson, “Falling Back on Plan B
Sun, 10/8		<u>Due</u> (11:59pm): Quiz 4; Midterm Feedback Survey
Week 6		
Tue, 10/10	Race & Ethnicity	<u>Read</u> : FATRA pp. 72-83: Franklin, “African Americans and the Birth of the Modern Marriage”
Thurs, 10/12	Immigration & Social class	<u>Read</u> : FATRA pp. 518-537: Furstenberg, “Diverging Development”
Sun, 10/15		<u>Due</u> (11:59pm): Quiz 5
Week 7		
Tue, 10/17	Sex & Sexuality	<u>Read</u> : FATRA pp. 252-263: Schwartz, “Why is Everyone Afraid of Sex?”
Thurs, 10/19	Dating & Hooking up	<u>Read</u> : Lundquist and Curington 2019: “Love me Tinder, Love Me Sweet” (On Canvas) and FATRA pp. 280-296: Armstrong et al., “Orgasm in College Hookups and Relationships.”
Sun, 10/22		<u>Due</u> (11:59pm): Quiz 6; Draft thesis statement and article/media selection
Week 8		
Tues, 10/24	EXAM 2	
Thurs, 10/26	Cohabitation & Marriage I	<u>Read</u> : FATRA pp. 149-158: Smock and Manning, “New Couples, New Families: The Cohabitation Revolution”
Sun, 10/29		No quiz this week!
Week 9		
Tue, 10/31	Cohabitation & Marriage II	<u>Read</u> : FATRA pp. 304-320: Avishai et al., “The Marriage Movement”
Thurs, 11/2	Reproduction	<u>Read</u> : FATRA pp. 137-144: Blackstone and Greenleaf, “Childfree Families”
Sun, 11/5		<u>Due</u> (11:59pm): Quiz 7; News/Media reflection
Week 10		
Tue, 11/7	Parenting	<u>Read</u> : Lareau 2011, <i>Unequal Childhoods</i> : pp. 1-8 and 38-52 (On Canvas)
Thurs, 11/9	Adolescence and the transition to adulthood	<u>Read</u> : Schiffrin et al. 2014, “Helping or Hovering? The Effects of Helicopter Parenting on College Students’ Well-being.” (On Canvas) Furstenberg et al. 2004, “Growing up is Harder to Do” (On Canvas)
Sun, 11/12		<u>Due</u> (11:59pm): Quiz 8
Week 11		

Tue, 11/14	Sibling dynamics	<u>Read</u> : Davies 2015, “Siblings, Stories, and the Self”
Thurs, 11/16	Divorce	<u>Read</u> : FATRA pp. 329-350: Rutter, “The Case for Divorce
Sun, 11/19		<u>Due</u> (11:59pm): Quiz 9
Week 12		
No class 11/21 or 11/23. Happy Thanksgiving!		
Week 13		
Tue, 11/28	Remarriage, Old age	<u>Read</u> : FATRA pp. 343-357: Coleman and Ganong, “Stepfamilies as They Really Are”
Thurs, 11/30	Family violence and abuse	<u>Read</u> : Sweet 2019, “The Sociology of Gaslighting.” <i>Focus on the introduction (pp.851-852) and pp. 857-865. Skim the rest. Contains content related to sexual violence, so please proceed with care.</i>
Sun, 12/3		<u>Due</u> (11:59pm): Quiz 10; Revised news/media reflection (optional)
Week 14		
Tue, 12/5	Family law & policy	<u>Read</u> : FATRA pp. 116-136: Struening, “Families ‘In Law’ and Families ‘In Practice’”
Thurs, 12/7	Course wrap-up; Short review	No reading
Sun, 12/10		<u>Due</u> (11:59pm): Quiz 11
Week 15		
Tue, 12/12	EXAM 3	

Full Text of University and Department Policies

Accommodations for students with disabilities: The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy ([UW-855](#)) require the university to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities to access and participate in its academic programs and educational services. Faculty and students share responsibility in the accommodation process. Students are expected to inform instructors of their need for instructional accommodations during the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible after being approved for accommodations. Faculty and TAs will work either directly with you or in coordination with the McBurney Center to provide reasonable instructional and course-related accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. (See: [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#))

Religious observances: Following UW policies, we will accommodate religious observances if you make a timely request early in the term. See the university's web page for details: <https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=21698>.

Privacy of student records & the use of audio-recorded lectures: Lecture materials and recordings for this course are protected intellectual property at UW-Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability who has an approved accommodation that includes recording. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities, with the exception of sharing copies of your personal notes as a notetaker through the McBurney Disability Resource Center. Students are otherwise prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights: The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors and teaching assistants near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them to the professor or to the chair, 8128 Social Science.

Department learning objectives: Beyond the specific substantive and methodological content I will cover in this course, I have designed this course to achieve the following instructional objectives designated as priorities by the Department of Sociology.

- *Critically Evaluate Published Research:* Sociology graduates will be able to read and evaluate published research as it appears in academic journals and popular or policy publications.
- *Critical Thinking about Society and Social Processes:* Sociology graduates can look beyond the surface of issues to discover the "why" and "how" of social order and structure and consider the underlying social mechanisms that may be creating a situation, identify evidence that may adjudicate between alternate explanations for phenomena, and develop proposed policies or action plans in light of theory and data.
- *See Things from a Global Perspective:* Sociologists learn about different cultures, groups, and societies across both time and place. They are aware of the diversity of backgrounds and experiences among individuals. They understand the ways events and processes in one country are linked to those in other countries.

Academic integrity statement: By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but are not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

Diversity and inclusion statement: [Diversity](#) is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison

fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

Course evaluations: UW-Madison uses a digital course evaluation survey tool called [AEFIS](#). For this course, you will receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester, notifying you that your course evaluation is available. In the email you will receive a link to log into the course evaluation with your NetID. Evaluations are anonymous. Your participation is an integral component of this course, and your feedback is important.

Teaching and Learning Data Transparency Statement: The privacy and security of faculty, staff and students' personal information is a top priority for UW-Madison. The university carefully evaluates and vets all campus-supported digital tools used to support teaching and learning, to help support success through [learning analytics](#), and to enable proctoring capabilities. View the university's full [teaching and learning data transparency statement](#).