Course Description and Philosophy:

The notion of the “traditional American family” is transforming. With new historical circumstances, families in the United States have become increasingly more diverse. This course is intended to provide graduate students in psychology (others may enroll with instructor’s permission) with an overview and analysis of a variety of contemporary family systems in the U.S., such as single-parent families, adoptive and foster family systems, families who have children via reproductive technologies, and families with sexual minority parents. Taught from a developmental psychological perspective, graduate students will also gain understanding in family systems theory and in research methods for studying family systems. Course material will be considered within the context of social issues, questions, and public controversies, e.g., “Is the traditional family disappearing?”, “Is the institution of marriage dying or changing?”, “Do children need both a mother and a father for optimal development?”. The course will address factors that contribute to positive family functioning and healthy outcomes for children and parents. Implications for future research, clinical practice, public policy, and law surrounding parenting and families (e.g., custody and placement decisions) will be covered.

Course goals are accomplished through interactive dialogue of course readings, multiple opportunities for presentation on course topics, and several course projects/papers. The reading list includes reviews, book chapters, and empirical articles (there is no required text to buy). As a graduate seminar, this course is designed to be discussion-based. I will lecture minimally to convey important information not covered in readings, but we are all responsible for generating a stimulating discussion. Thus, it is essential that everyone be prepared to engage in discussion every class day! Discussion will involve three key components: (1) reading the assigned readings carefully, posting your comments and questions about the readings on Canvas (more on that below), and reading others’ comments and questions on Canvas prior to each class, (2) take turns throughout the semester as “class discussant” – first providing an integrative summary (i.e., summarizing how the readings work together, comparing and contrasting the articles) and then guiding discussion by using the Canvas posts your classmates have prepared in advance, and (3) take turns as “paper presenter” to present and lead discussion on one outside paper during the semester. The final assessment will be a final project (you can select from several options that emphasize research and/or teaching) due at the end of the semester.

I am a big proponent of integrating course assessments that maximize your academic success, such as dovetailing assignments with program requirements, enhancing your teaching experience, and/or furthering your progress as a researcher. In this way, I have made efforts to assign readings, activities, and projects that will facilitate your overall professional development. Please use course assessments as you are able to help you in achieving program milestones (e.g., preparing your Master’s thesis, considering your allied area) and/or other scholarly accomplishments (e.g., working toward submitting a manuscript for publication, writing a grant proposal, or developing a lecture for an undergraduate course)!
Course Materials:

To contribute actively to the course, students will complete several weekly reading assignments, primarily selected from high-quality empirical journals and/or written by topic experts available on our course page on Canvas. Log in with your link blue ID and password https://uk.instructure.com/. Here, you will have access to the syllabus, readings, and all other course materials. There is no required text to purchase for the class.

Grading and Requirements:

Each student will complete several assignments (more details for each assignment to follow). First, student attendance, participation, and engagement in class is imperative. Second, discussion posts (questions and comments) based on the weekly readings will be generated by each student prior to class meetings. Third, each student will facilitate (or co-facilitate) class 1-2 times, depending on the size of the class. Fourth, students will prepare a presentation on an outside article of their choosing and facilitate a class discussion of that paper. Lastly, students will do a final project (comprising a final presentation in class and a final paper - both uploaded to Canvas) regarding diverse families topics (options below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Participation in Class</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Posts on Canvas</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Facilitation in Class</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Presentation &amp; Discussion in Class</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Review of Final Project Draft</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project Presentation in Class</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project Paper on Canvas</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Note for students if they audit the course: the final project will be optional, but all other aspects of the course will be required.

Discussion Participation in Class (20%):

As dynamic and interactive discussion is at the heart of this course, it is expected that all students will, at minimum, read all required readings, attend class regularly (especially as we only meet once weekly), and actively participate. I understand that there are some circumstances in which you may need to miss a class (e.g., conference attendance). If you need to miss a class, you must inform me in advance. One unexcused absence is permitted, but if you are facilitating discussion, you are responsible for finding a substitute. Additional absences (or absences without finding a substitute) will result in a penalty to your final course grade. In addition, after one excused absence, extra assignments will be considered to compensate for missed time. The seminar will only be successful if everyone is consistently actively engaged. Beyond assessments described, there will be no other assignments, homework, or examinations unless extraordinary circumstances prevail.

Discussion Posts on Canvas (20%):

Students should come prepared each week to discuss course readings. By 5pm on Sat before our Mon class, please use the Discussion board (via Canvas) to post at least 1 question and 1 comment about at least 1 of the readings (can be more). Your question(s) and comment(s) should be around 250 words in total at minimum (can be longer). They should reflect critical thinking about the theories, research design, and/or practical application related to the readings. Designated facilitators will use your posts to guide class discussion (see next
section). Posts can reflect any of the following (but are not limited to): (1) strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical arguments and evidence presented; (2) relations and integration between the readings for the current week or from across the course; or (3) unanswered questions raised by the work. Your post may focus on a single reading but should be informed by the week’s readings as a whole. Posts are meant to help you think through and clarify your reactions to and thoughts about the readings as well as to point me (and discussants) to areas for clarification and interest. My goal is for you to engage deeply and critically with the readings (but note that critical does not mean negative – if you criticize an idea or a study, you should also provide alternative ways of thinking or a possible resolution). Your posts will be evaluated in terms of their relevance, your demonstrated understanding of the readings, and your overall engagement with the topics (e.g., raising critical questions, connections, and/or insights).

Note: you need not submit a post for any weeks in which you are a discussion facilitator or co-facilitator (but you do when you present a paper – see below).

Discussion Facilitation in Class (15%)

Each student, or a pair of students (depending on the size of the class), will be in charge of leading 1-2 classes throughout the semester covering material on the syllabus (there are 11 weeks of content, not counting Week 1, presentation weeks, or other breaks). You are encouraged to sign up for topics that are of particular interest to you (we'll do this in class the first week). For (co-)facilitating class discussions on the weekly readings, please prepare a brief (10 minutes max) integrative summary and/or mini-presentation. You do not need to cover every point – focus on the highlights and anything that you found particularly striking about the reading. Compare and contrast the readings – how do they connect and how do they differ? Please also find a brief news item that is related to the weekly reading and plan to briefly summarize and share with the class. You are welcome to be creative and include other relevant information on the week’s topic, including video clips and/or other data sources (but this is not required). Feel free to check in with me for such resources. Using student questions posted by the Fri night deadline, organize and select 4-5 provocative questions (and add your own!) to ask the class and stimulate discussion. Facilitators should come prepared to class at minimum with their brief integrative summary, news item, and discussion questions. Your integrative summary and discussion facilitation questions can be shared with the class after you facilitate by adding it to the week’s Discussion board as a new post.

Note: all except facilitators are expected to complete weekly posts.

Paper Presentation & Discussion in Class (15%):

Once over the course of the semester, you will present a paper to the class and lead a discussion about it. This will be an empirical paper that you will identify and choose yourself based on the readings for that class. So let’s say there are 4 assigned readings for a class. If you are to present during that class, you will read the 4 assigned readings, find one empirical paper either cited in or closely related to those readings that you find especially interesting, intriguing, and/or surprising. You will read that paper in detail and come prepared to describe the paper to the class, answer questions, and lead an informed discussion about the paper and its findings. You should summarize the paper (no PowerPoint needed, but if you do, then please only sparingly), presenting questions, problems, critiques, and connections with the readings for that class (and if you want, with other relevant literature), and guiding the discussion. The most important part of these paper presentations is raising critical, thought-provoking questions, drawing connections with other literature, and leading a strong discussion. Papers could be theoretical or empirical or focus on methodological or statistical approaches. You should pursue
a paper from which you (and your classmates) will derive benefit from spending additional time studying it and facilitating discussion about it (note: discussion will be about 15-20 minutes).

**Note:** Please send me the paper that you have chosen by the Sat (5pm) before class (same deadline as discussion posts, which you are expected to do during the week you are "paper presenter"). After I review your article, please upload to Canvas (on the Discussion post) for reference. If you would like to discuss your paper with me ahead of time, please email me by mid-week of the preceding week with questions/comments and/or to set up a time to meet. Your classmates do not need to read the article you choose in advance of your paper presentation.

**Final Project: Peer Review (5%), Class Presentation (10%), Paper (15%; Total: 30%)**

For your final project, you have **FIVE** options. Please choose the option that best fits with your current and long-term professional and academic goals. Whatever option you choose, you are required to **submit a 250-word project plan on Canvas** during the 4th week of class. All students will briefly present (i.e., 10-12 minutes via PowerPoint) their final project during the last class meeting. Your **presentation** will happen about a week in advance of your final paper deadline; as such, these presentations need not reflect your fully finished paper product. Rather, the presentation is an opportunity for you to share your thinking and work with your classmates. It also ensures you are making headway on your final paper and provides a time for you to solicit and receive feedback about your project. I am happy to meet with you anytime during the semester to discuss your ideas, review rough drafts, and provide guidance as needed.

In addition, just after the midway point of the semester, students will engage in a formal **peer review** process using a prepared draft of their final paper. In conversation with the class, the instructor will pair up students. The first deadline (exact dates TBA) will be for students to send a prepared draft (i.e., far enough along to solicit productive feedback) of their final paper to their peer reviewer. One week later, the second deadline will be for peer reviewers to provide a formal written review to the student whose draft had been assigned to them. (Separate guidance and instructions for writing the peer review will be provided.) Students should ensure they post their drafts and peer reviews on Canvas, as well as individually provide them (via email or Canvas message) to the students with whom they are paired for peer review.

**Option 1 – Develop a Lecture on Diverse Families:**
Please prepare a full lecture (e.g., 50 minutes) on a diverse families topic of your choosing, geared for undergraduate students, perhaps as part of an introductory psychology or other intro-level social sciences course. I would strongly encourage you to attend to how you would involve interaction and discussion opportunities with the students in your class. Please video-record yourself giving the lecture. Alternatively, you could give your lecture in PSY 100 or PSY 223 or another relevant undergraduate course in family sciences or another related field (please talk to the respective instructors to explore this option). Plan to upload your lecture PowerPoint and this video file to Canvas as your “final paper.” Your final paper should also include your reflections on the process of developing and completing this assignment. How has content covered in this course informed the development of your lecture? Your presentation in class could be a shortened version of your lecture and your reflections on the process.

**Option 2 – Write a Research-Based Paper:**
You will write a research paper (approximately 10-12 double-spaced pages without References; APA style) on any aspect of diverse families that goes beyond the course. This could be a literature review (i.e., think the “Introduction” section of an empirical paper you would write) that also argues for needed improvements (conceptually and/or methodologically) in the field. Alternatively, your final paper could be a full-length manuscript (likely longer than 10-12 pages) regarding your own empirical research in some way related to diverse families. This paper may
also serve as the basis or a part of your Master’s thesis, Qualifying Exam proposal, etc. In developing the plan for your final project, it is critical to distinguish how your project goes beyond what we cover in class. Although you may use readings and other resources from class, you must incorporate additional references.

**Option 3 – Diverse Families Scholar Project:**
Students could research the career of a well-known and noteworthy expert who has devoted their scholarly careers to the study of diverse families. The paper and presentation would involve a pointed discussion of the theories, empirical contributions, career, and life of a scholar whose work has had a major influence on the field. Some ideas for selecting this scholar could be generated by reviewing the course reading list, and I am happy to brainstorm. This is an opportunity to network and connect with a notable scholar, and to explore their life and work more in-depth. Choose someone of interest to you – perhaps someone you would like to get to know! If feasible (scholar is living and willing), “interview” them by email or phone (or Skype, Zoom, etc.). Some biographical information will be helpful. Please also mention why the scholar and their work focus is particularly important to you (e.g., give some autobiographical context for your scholarly interests). Recommended readings (3-4) written by the scholar should be provided as a part of your presentation. The final paper will be a summary of what you learned from your research and interview, as well as your own reflections (i.e., autobiographical lens).

**Option 4 – Conduct Secondary Data Analyses:**
If interested in a collaborative opportunity to conduct and write up secondary data analyses (with the goal of preparing a publishable manuscript) related to diverse families, students could work with existing data from my lab to complete this final project. Longitudinal data (representing 2 time points: early and middle childhood) are available regarding child development, parenting, couple relationships, family dynamics, and individual adjustment from multiracial adoptive families including lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents and their children, as well as children’s teachers. Survey, interview, and family interaction data are represented. As such, many possible project options are possible. I am also open to this being a joint or team venture with other students in the class. Talk to me for more information and with questions. We can discuss project directions and whether IRB approval will be necessary.

**Option 5 – Write a Research Proposal for a Grant Application:**
Lastly, if interested, students could use the final project to design a research proposal for a major grant application (e.g., the NSF predoctoral fellowship, Ford Foundation Diversity Fellowship, NIH NRSA F-series grant) that is in some way relevant to diverse families.

**NOTE:** For the final paper and class presentation, the following questions and issues generally should be addressed (some are more relevant depending on the project option you select):

- What is the type of family system you selected? Describe this family system (and be very specific about how broadly or narrowly you define this family system), and discuss particular dynamics or issues that may be unique or interesting for family members.
- What research has been conducted to date on your family system? What do we know from the literature about these families? I encourage you to find empirical, peer-reviewed original research journal articles from the last 10 years on your topic.
- What factors contribute to well-being, health, and psychological adjustment among members in your family system? What promotes positive outcomes? Are there unique factors (including risk factors) to consider in these families?
• What future research could be helpful on your family system? What gaps in the literature remain that you think should be addressed? (and why?)
• What public policy or legal issues surround your topic, or are relevant for your family system? Are current or historical cultural contexts important to consider? (and why?) Are there important social implications from the research on these families? (Describe.)

Excused Absences:

Attending class and completing assignments are expected. Occasionally, circumstances arise that are out of your control and cause you to miss class or assignments (or be late in turning them in). Senate Rule 5.2.4.2 defines the following as acceptable reasons for excused absences: (a) serious illness, (b) illness or death of family member, (c) university-related trips, (d) major religious holidays, and (e) other circumstances found to fit "reasonable cause for nonattendance" by the professor. Faculty have the right to request "appropriate verification" when students claim an excused absence because of illness or death in the family. Students anticipating an absence for a major religious holiday are responsible for notifying the instructor in writing of anticipated absences due to their observance of such holidays no later than the last day in the semester to add a class. Information regarding dates of major religious holidays may be obtained through the University Liaison in the Dean of Students Office, 2 Alumni Gym, (859) 257-2754. Students are expected to withdraw from the class if more than 20% of the classes scheduled for the semester are missed (excused or unexcused) per university policy.

Academic Integrity:

Per university policy, students shall not plagiarize, cheat, or falsify or misuse academic records. Students are expected to adhere to University policy on cheating and plagiarism in all courses. The minimum penalty for a first offense is a zero on the assignment on which the offense occurred. If the offense is considered severe or the student has other academic offenses on their record, more serious penalties, up to suspension from the university may be imposed. Plagiarism and cheating are serious breaches of academic conduct. Each student is advised to become familiar with the various forms of academic dishonesty as explained in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Complete information can be found at the following website: http://www.uky.edu/Ombud. A plea of ignorance is not acceptable as a defense against the charge of academic dishonesty. It is important that you review this information as all ideas borrowed from others need to be properly credited.

Students with Disabilities:

It is the policy of the University of Kentucky to accommodate individuals with disabilities pursuant to federal law and the University’s commitment to equal educational opportunities. If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible during my scheduled office hours. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (Contact: Director David T. Beach, dtbeac1@uky.edu; Multidisciplinary Sci Bldg, #407, 725 Rose St, (859) 257-2754; http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/DisabilityResourceCenter/)

Class Schedule:

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<tr>
<th>Date (Mon)</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>**Jan 20</td>
<td>**NO CLASS – MLK JR DAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1: Jan 27</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2: Feb 3</td>
<td>Historical contexts and current theorizing about family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3: Feb 10</td>
<td>Diversity of family formation (including single and non-married parents, childfree families, etc.); factors important to all families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4: Feb 17</td>
<td>Cohabitation, marriage, divorce, remarriage, and step-parenting/blended families <strong>Notify instructor of Final Project topic choice (submit short paragraph on Canvas)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5: Feb 24</td>
<td>Adoptive families – overview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6: Mar 2</td>
<td>Foster and kinship care families; grandparent families; other caregiver families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7: Mar 9</td>
<td>Sexual minority parent families; sexual minority children <strong>midterm: Mar 9; grade window Mar 2-16</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mar 16</strong></td>
<td><strong>SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8: Mar 23</td>
<td>Gender minority parent families; gender diverse children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 9: Mar 30</td>
<td>Racial/ethnic minority families; transnational and immigrant families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10: Apr 6</td>
<td>Transracial adoption, multiracial/ethnic families, and interracial couples</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11: Apr 13</td>
<td>Families formed through assisted reproductive technologies (ART) <strong>Drafts of final projects due to peer reviewers (Email, Canvas)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12: Apr 20</td>
<td>Course summary; directions for theory and methods; implications for public policy and law <strong>Peer reviews due (Email, Canvas)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13: Apr 27</td>
<td>Final Project Presentations (last class) <strong>Final papers due by Mon May 4, 11:59PM (submit on Canvas)</strong></td>
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**Spring 2020 semester calendar:** [https://www.uky.edu/registrar/spring-2020-semester](https://www.uky.edu/registrar/spring-2020-semester)

Reading list: *Note: I’ll provide a suggested order of readings in advance of each week.*

**Week 1: Introduction to the course**


**Week 3: Diversity of family formation (including single and non-married parents, childfree families, etc.); factors important to all families**


**Week 4: Cohabitation, marriage, divorce, remarriage, and step-parenting/blended families**


**Week 5: Adoptive families – overview**


**Week 6: Foster and kinship care families; grandparent families; other caregiver families**


**Week 7: Sexual minority parent families; sexual minority children**


**Week 8: Gender minority parent families; gender diverse children**


**Week 9: Racial/ethnic minority families; transnational and immigrant families**


**Week 10: Transracial adoption, multiracial/ethnic families, and interracial couples**


**Week 11: Families formed through assisted reproductive technologies**


**Week 12: Course summary; directions for theory & methods; implications for public policy and law**


**Week 13: FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS**