Description and Goals

Two frameworks organize this course: (a) a bioecological systems view of family conflict and developmental processes, and (b) a model-analytic approach to developmental risk. The systems view orders the topics, from an analysis of the transition to parenting, to parent-child conflict, to environmental adversity and family-level conflict. The model-analytic approach to risk organizes each topic by conceptualizing and contrasting hypotheses about the relations between family processes and child outcomes. The goals of the course are (a) to train you to think critically and systematically about developmental and psychological claims, focusing on the underlying logic, (b) to train an evidence-based approach to conclusions, (c) to conceptualize contextual influences on family and developmental processes in particular social settings and locations, and (d) to expose you to family-level constructs and issues. The first two goals concern method; the last two concern content.

Course Requirements

The course requirements will include (a) a 120-point essay exam given on Tuesday, March 20, and (b) a 150 (or 160)-point essay exam given during the finals period. The final examination will cover the entire semester. (c) You must also prepare 7 short analyses of selected readings (of approximately 3 pages each) and a final more extended analysis (6–7 pages). An eighth short analysis is optional (for section 10 students) and is for extra-credit. Each reading makes a specific theoretical point. One purpose of the analyses is to train you to think theoretically and to analyze systematically. A second purpose is to prepare you for class discussion, and to persuade you that analysis and opinions require empirical evidence. Everything we do in this course will be evidence-based. Most important, your prior pass over the material will enable you to understand my take on the material. A third purpose is to train you to read non-passively and in a directed fashion. Each short analysis will be worth 20 points, and each one will consist of responses to questions I provide. The final analysis will be worth 50 points. I will try to give at least a week’s notice about changes in due dates, if necessary, in response to course progress. Late analyses will lose an unbelievable, incredible, world-shattering amount of points—so do things on time. If you have a problem with a due date, please notify me in advance and we can negotiate.

The following point system will determine your final grade:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you earn:</th>
<th>Your grade will be at least:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90% of the points (460/470)</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>80% of the points</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>65% of the points</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>55% of the points</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;55% of the points</td>
<td>F</td>
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"At least" means that I credit improvement and I credit vigorous participation in class discussion. The more general point is true as well: you must attend class to succeed in this course.

Syllabus

Please follow the syllabus and come to class prepared. The analyses will help in this regard. Adjustments in the dates may be necessary, depending on the time spent on particular topics. I've got big plans, but somehow or other I rarely get to the last topic I've prepared.
I. American Family Context
   A. Family Ethnotheory

II. Emerging Family Ecology
   A. Transition Theory
   B. Transition to Parenting  2, 4-8
   C. Risk and Early Parenting

III. Parent-Child Conflict
   March 6
   A. Socialization Perspectives
   March 8, 13
   B. Early Conflict and Compliance 3, 19-24
   March 20, Apr 3
   C. Conduct Problems 25-32

IV. Family-Level Conflict
   April 10
   A. Cumulative Risk 33-37
   April 17
   B. Parenting Under Stress
   April 24
   C. Child Maltreatment 38-44
   May 1
   D. Marital Discord 45-51
   May 8, 15
   E. Divorce 52-61

Guidelines for Course Success—Pay attention!!!!

1. **Attend Class!!!** I have a MANDATORY ATTENDANCE POLICY and a No Study (for another class) rule. If you are sick or have a family emergency of some sort, please notify me by e-mail. In the same vein, do not use this class to study for some other class. Here is the reason for this policy. This class has an interactive format. Worse yet, there is no text. Implication: If you don’t get the material in class through absence or inattention, you won’t get it. Flunk city!!! You will probably even enjoy the classes—surprising, I know.

2. I have a ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY regarding cell-phones. If I see you with your cell-phone out in class, I will not grade your next analysis or exam, whichever comes first, in a one-for-one manner. If your infraction occurs right before the final exam, I won’t grade the final exam. Your grade point total will get ugly very fast.

3. Similarly, I am strongly intolerant of using computers to do anything other than take notes in class. If I think you are accessing e-mail or searching google, etc., I will impose the same penalty as point 2 above. Trust me, it is easy to tell if you are off-task in your computer use in this course. If I am wrong, you will have to negotiate, and that will be aversive.

4. Do all of the readings. The material will be covered and the concepts will be tested. Even better, all of these readings are "leading edge" theoretically and empirically, and you may actually find them informative. (Well, let’s not go too far.)
5. Hand in your analyses on time. The late penalty is onerous, horrible, calamitous, disgusting, ugly, senseless.

6. Talk—you are responsible for class excellence. The more you talk, the less we do.

7. Consult with me and your classmates. I need to see you if you are having difficulty. I’ll be having difficulty too, so we can commiserate.

8. As always, have fun. The issues we address are controversial, and your viewpoints are welcome.

9. Don’t believe anything I say. I make up stories, exaggerate events, and often argue the opposite of my personal beliefs, and I am frequently sexist (both ways), classist, and generally obnoxious. Simply put, my goal is to provoke you.

Readings

All readings but one are available from electronic journals off the library web-site on the University homepage. The exception is the Wallerstein article (article 53) in the Divorce section, which I will send by e-mail. With the exception of Wallerstein, all of the articles are from leading-edge, peer-reviewed, main-stream journals. Note that you need not print all or any of these articles. If you can do a careful read of the abstract, introduction, and the discussion on the terminal screen, you should be able to obtain a good sense of the reason for my choice of an article. Probably, however, you should print the conceptual articles by Emery (39), by Cherlin (52), and by Hetherington (54). You might also print the articles in Current Directions in Psychological Science, which are conceptual summaries. Please note that there are a lot of readings, which suggests that you should space your reading over several days. It will be difficult to cram everything you need to do in the night before an analysis is due.

Family Systems Theory


Analysis 1: Transition to Parenting


Analysis 2: Post-Partum Depression


Analysis 3: Attachment Risk


Analysis 4: Early Control Tactics


Analysis 5: Coercive Processes and Anti-Social Behavior


Extra-Credit Analysis: Parenting Under Stress


Analysis 6: Child Maltreatment


Analysis 7: Marital Discord


Analysis 8: Divorce


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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis #1</td>
<td>Feb 14, Tuesday</td>
<td>Articles 2, 4-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis #2</td>
<td>Feb 21, Tuesday</td>
<td>Articles 9-12</td>
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<td>Analysis #3</td>
<td>Feb 28, Tuesday</td>
<td>Articles 13-18</td>
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<td>Analysis #4</td>
<td>March 8, Thursday</td>
<td>Articles 3, 19-24</td>
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<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
<td>March 20, Tuesday</td>
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<td>Analysis #5</td>
<td>April 3, Tuesday</td>
<td>Articles 25-32</td>
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<td>Extra-Credit</td>
<td>April 12, Thursday</td>
<td>Articles 33-37</td>
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<td>Analysis #6</td>
<td>April 24, Tuesday **</td>
<td>Articles 38-44</td>
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<td>Analysis #7</td>
<td>May 1, Tuesday **</td>
<td>Articles 45-51</td>
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<td>Analysis #8</td>
<td>May 10, Thursday **</td>
<td>Articles 52-61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Finals Week</td>
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** Tentative, subject to change.