Family Relationships  
Dr. Alice Schermerhorn  
UVM

**Instructor's Contact Information:**  
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**Course Information:**  
PSYC 380  
Fall, 2014  
Fridays 12:50 - 3:50  
Dewey 100

## Course Description and Goals
This course is about family relationships over the life course (e.g., attachment, parenting, marital conflict). The course strongly emphasizes both theory and the empirical literature. The course will also include an emphasis on methods for research in this area. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe theories of family relationships, including understanding how different theories compare to one another.
2. Understand much of the empirical literature on family relationships, and be able to integrate and synthesize different findings from this literature.
3. Understand the methods and principles of research on families, and explain advantages and disadvantages of different methods (e.g., questionnaire, observation) for research in this area.

## Readings
Readings will be a variety of empirical articles and book chapters. All readings (listed at the end of this document) will be available on Blackboard.

## Class Meetings
Because this is a graduate-level class, our class meetings will largely involve class discussion of the course content. It will also include some brief lectures in each class meeting, group activities, and writing and thinking on your own.

## Grades
Class participation (30% of final grade): This is a reading- and discussion-intensive course, and as a result, what you will get out of the class will depend a lot on what you put into it. Your effort is reflected in large part in your contributions to class discussion. Both the quantity and the quality of your contributions to discussion will factor into your grade.

Debate (10% of final grade): Several major theoretical perspectives have been offered to account for associations between marital conflict and child functioning. You will each be assigned to represent one of these perspectives in an in-class debate, making the strongest case you can for your assigned perspective. The debate will take place on Oct 17, and more detail about the debate will be given closer to the date. In addition to other readings on marital conflict and child functioning, there is a designated reading in the reading list corresponding to each of the 4 major perspectives; of these 4 readings, you only need to complete the 1 reading for your assigned perspective, although you are welcome to complete the other 3 as well.

Paper 1 (30% of final grade):  
Identify a topic of interest in the literature on family relationships, and write a literature review on this topic. The paper should include a 300-word abstract on a page by itself (following the cover page), followed by 1 – 2 paragraphs identifying the area of interest, followed by 6 – 8 pages reviewing the background literature. The paper should be a total of 7 – 9 pages long, not counting the cover page, Abstract, or References. The paper should be carefully organized, on-topic throughout (no “fluff”), and should include separate sections (with headings) on different aspects of the background literature. Use APA style, use double-spacing, and include a cover page and a Reference list. This paper is due (hard copy, not electronic) in my mailbox in Dewey by 3 pm on Fri, Oct 3 or by 3 pm on Wed, Nov 12 (your choice
of deadline!). An advantage of the Oct deadline is it gives you a chance to get a grade and feedback earlier in the semester; an advantage of the Nov deadline is it gives you more time to complete the assignment.

Paper 2 (30% of final grade):

Identify an unanswered question (or a question that hasn’t been answered adequately) in the literature on family relationships, and design a study to address this question. Your method/approach must be different in some substantial way from the work you are doing now (it cannot consist entirely of methods/approaches you’re already using in your lab). The point is to expand beyond the methods and scientific approaches you are already familiar with, and identify other potentially useful ways to answer a question of interest. For example, if questionnaires and observational procedures are standard in your area of research, consider what you’d gain by using a behavioral genetic approach, using diary reports, or setting up an experimental procedure to create a standardized experience for every participant.

The paper should include a cover page, followed by ¾ – 1 page reviewing the background literature, 1 – 2 pages identifying and describing the question your study addresses, explaining why the question is important, and explaining why your method is ideally suited to addressing the question, and 2 – 3 pages detailing the method (a total of 5 – 6 pages, not counting the cover page and References). Your writing will need to be concise and the paper should be well organized. It should be very clear where in the paper you are addressing each of the components described above. Ideally, this paper will be on the same topic as the first paper, and you can use material from the first paper for the background review portion of this paper. Use APA style, use double-spacing, and include a cover page and a Reference list. The paper is due (hard copy) in my mailbox in Dewey by 3 pm on Wed, Dec 3.

Policies and Procedures

Grading scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82.9-86.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>79.9-82.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-75.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>60-69.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>75.5-79.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59.9 or below</td>
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Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting accommodations, please contact UVM’s ACCESS Office (Accommodation, Consultation, Collaboration & Educational Support Services) by phone (656-7753) or email (access@uvm.edu). That office will guide you through the processes that are required for accommodations to be made.

Academic Integrity: This class follows the university’s policy on academic integrity. You may view this policy in full at [http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf).

Religious Holidays: According to UVM guidelines, students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. Students should submit their documented religious holiday schedule for the semester in writing to their instructors by the end of the second full week of classes. Faculty must permit students who miss work for the purpose of religious observance to make up this work.

Grade Concerns: If you have concerns regarding your grade at any point please come see me as soon as you can. I will not be able to accommodate students who contact me at the end of the semester with concerns about their grades.

General Policies & Expectations:

1. It will be a major advantage to you if you attend all classes and actively pursue knowledge. I understand that sometimes circumstances beyond your control may prevent you from attending class. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you have missed.
2. The overall success of the class will depend on students cultivating their curiosity, coming to class prepared, and joining with me and the rest of the class in efforts to understand the topics of the course. Being regularly present, alert, and engaged in class contributes to learning for all of us. Feel free to bring your lunch, etc.
3. We will treat all members of the learning community with respect and will not discriminate on the basis of characteristics that include race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, or gender identity or expression.

4. Material assigned in the text and material covered in lecture will be related, but will not perfectly overlap. Completing the readings is critical to your success in this class, and to your career success.

I plan to keep any changes to the syllabus to a minimum; but occasionally adjustments might be needed. For example, due to student interest, we may add a topic, if that appears useful, and there may be changes in readings (dropping or adding assignments).
Reading List

Fri, Sept 5: Theory and broad perspectives

Fri, Sept 12: Parent-child relationships: Parenting

Fri, Sept 19: Parent-child relationships: Parenting

Fri, Sept 26: Parent-child relationships: Attachment

Fri, Oct 3: Parent-child relationships: Fathering; Parental personality and psychopathology; and Other Family Characteristics
Fathering:

Parental personality and psychopathology:

Other family characteristics:
Fri, Oct 10: Marital relationships


Fri, Oct 17: Marital conflict and children: Debate on the Major Theories


Plus, each person/team reads the one paper for their assigned theory on the association between marital conflict and child adjustment (but feel free to read more than your one assigned paper if you want) of the following:


Fri, Oct 24: Marital conflict and children


Fri, Oct 31: Family stress and conflict; Child maltreatment
Family stress and conflict:


*Child maltreatment and domestic violence:*

**Fri, Nov 7 No Class** (I will be speaking at a conference) – in lieu of this meeting, I will meet with each of you individually to discuss your papers and other topics relevant to the class.

**Fri, Nov 14: Siblings; Bidirectional/transactional processes in families**

*Siblings:*


*Bidirectionality:*


**Fri, Nov 21: Families in context: Neighborhoods, community violence, and SES**


**Fri, Nov 28 No Class** (Thanksgiving)