

CO 615

SOCIOLOGY OF THE FAMILY GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY FALL 2009 PROFESSOR – RAY PENDLETON

PURPOSE:

This course is designed to provide a background for the understanding of the contemporary family in American culture. The differences between biblical anthropology and the postmodern culture will be investigated. Issues to be considered include social, cultural, religious, educational, economic and lifestyle patterns of the family. The relationship between an understanding of the sociology of the family and various therapeutic approaches will also be studied.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop a working definition of the family unit.
2. Understand the complex pressures that shape the structure and function of the family.
3. Discover the relationship between the theories of sociology as it relates to family life and the utilization of that knowledge in family therapy.
4. Review the importance of the family life cycle as a structure for understanding the dynamics of family-in-culture.
5. Study the unique and multiple influences that impinge upon the students own family structure and function.
6. Utilize research in the sociology of the family to broaden the student's knowledge of the complexity of family structures.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS –

1. TEXTBOOKS:

Required:

L.M. Bidwell & B.J. Vander Mey. (2000) *Sociology of the Family: Investigating Family Issues*. Allyn & Bacon.

Recommended:

Balswick, J. O., & Balswick, J. K. (1998). *The Family: A Christian perspective on the contemporary home* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

2. READING:

Students are expected to select materials from a wide variety of sources that will serve to expand their understanding of the sociology of the family. There are many resources that are acceptable: books, journals, periodicals, as well as audio and video taped materials. A fairly extensive, but representative, bibliography is appended to this syllabus.

A reading log is to be submitted at the end of the semester:

1. Date of reading
2. Author
3. Title and source of material
4. Number of pages or hours read for each selection

Expectations for reading: Students should read approximately 2000 pages for a grade of A. Lesser amounts of reading down to 900 pages for a C-. Slow readers may contract with the professor for a grade based upon hours of reading.

3. WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

There are two papers required for this course. The first paper will be an analysis of the student's own family of origin. The analysis will focus on the impact of such variables as race, ethnicity, socio-economic status (SES), religion, sexual role identification, and geographic location on family structure and roles. This study should also include partner selection, marital relationship, family size, parenting style, sibling relationship, etc.

The paper is due after the second reading week.

The second paper should follow the same outline as above but will focus on a family that is significantly different from the student's own family of origin. Differences in race, country of origin, SES, major religion, e.g., Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, sexual orientation of couple, setting (urban, rural, suburban). This will require some investment in interviewing of the family.

The paper is due the last day of class.

4. CLASS PARTICIPATION:

Students are expected to attend all classes in order to participate in small group exercises and class discussions.

GRADING PROCEDURE –

First written assignment	30%
Second written assignment	40%
Reading assignment	20%

Class participation

10%

**SOCIOLOGY OF THE FAMILY
COURSE OUTLINE**

- September 14, 2009 - Introduction to the course; history of the field; family definition.
- September 21, 2009 Research methods in the sociology of the family – The American family in historical context.
- September 28, 2009 Theological perspectives on the family.
Reading: Balswick & Balswick, Chapters 1 & 2
- October 5, 2009 Mate selection – Marriage and adjustment – Divorce and remarriage.
Reading: Balswick & Balswick, Chapters 3, 4 & 15
- October 19, 2009 Parent-child relationships.
Reading: Balswick & Balswick, Chapters 6 & 7
- October 26, 2009 Families in later life.
Reading: Balswick & Balswick, Chapter 17
- November 2, 2009 Education and the family.
Reading: Balswick & Balswick, Chapter 13
- November 16, 2009 The impact of the economy – SES.
Reading: Balswick and Balswick, Chapters 14 & 16
- November 23, 2009 The state and the family – Issues of family violence.
- November 30, 2009 The belief system of the family, [Course evaluation]
Reading: Balswick & Balswick, Chapters 11 & 12

**SOCIOLOGY OF THE FAMILY
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