THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
Department of Sociology
SOCIOLOGY 2299 Selected topics
Aging and Family Ties

* Some details regarding assignments may change at or prior to the first class, based on class size.

January 2018 Thursday, 1:30 pm- 4:30 pm Room: SSC 2020

Professor: Dr. Ingrid Arnet Connidis
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Office Hours: By appointment (see me after class, call me or send me an e-mail)

*I encourage you to print the course outline and bring it to class.

Course Description
This course examines family relationships and aging from a sociological viewpoint, emphasizing the negotiation of family ties over time in the context of current social arrangements. These arrangements include cultural and normative views and expectations about family life and about aging; structured social relations based on age, gender, sexual identity, class, race, ethnicity and ability; and institutional arrangements, especially those regarding family, work and retirement. An examination of theoretical perspectives and research approaches will lay the foundation for considering a range of family relationships in mid- and later life and their link to social aspects of aging, current demographic realities, and social policy. A critical life course perspective will be applied to studying continuity, change and contradictions in family relationships over time with a focus on the vantage point of middle-aged and older adults. Topics include intimate relationships in mid and later life; being ever single; intergenerational ties between older parents and adult children, grandparents and grandchildren; lifetime childlessness; and sibling relationships. An aging population, declines in fertility rates, divorce trends, shifts in the economy and social change are related to the ongoing working out of family relationships and to re-partnering, alternative intimate ties and step-ties.

Required Course Readings
Selected book chapters and journal articles will be assigned each week.
Course Requirements *specifics may change and will be confirmed in January.

Students are expected to attend all lectures and are responsible for all material in lectures and course readings. You should do the assigned readings BEFORE the date indicated on the course outline in order to facilitate class discussion and to ensure that any questions you may have about the readings are addressed in class. If you miss a class, you should borrow notes from another student.

- Weekly Ideas (Students highlight in writing a key idea from that week’s material/lecture and note how it applies to personal experience). Due at end of class. 10%
- Mid-term test (multiple choice and short answer) March 1 35%
- Class presentation (Current Events Assignment) Due: on assigned date 15%
- Written assignment (Family Life of an Old Person) Due: Start of last class 40%

Weekly Ideas 10%

At the end of 6 classes (at least 4 out of the first 6 classes plus 2; not the last class and not the test day) students will submit a handwritten core idea or point from that day’s class, indicating why they think it is an important idea and how it relates to personal experience (one’s own family ties; a family member; personal thoughts about aging and family relationships). 1% for each sound idea; a grade out of 4% for the strength of the 6 ideas (clarity of presenting the idea; relevance of example).

Current Events Assignment 15%

On their assigned date, students will submit hard copies of 3 different articles from reputable newspapers or magazines or posted special reports from major networks (e.g., Globe & Mail, McLean’s, CBC; the Economist; Time; Newsweek; BBC; Huffington Post; not “rags”, not official policy documents, and not research journals) covering current events (as recent as possible and no more than one year old; primarily Canadian content or international comparisons that include Canada) that relate to the week’s topic. These could be news stories, cover stories, editorials, or opinion pieces. The key is that they are intended for a lay audience and presented by mass media outlets.

Students will briefly describe the article they considered most interesting to the class and answer factual questions about it (excerpts can be read as well). Students will also write a two-page (double-spaced, typed, 250 words per page) critical analysis of the 3 articles that relates them to key course themes. You should be explicit about how your articles relate to course materials. A reference page with full citations (title, source, date, page number, internet site, date) must be included as part of your submission (see www.lib.uwo.ca/services/styleguides.html for APA or ASA guidelines).

The articles and two-page analysis are due at the beginning of class on the assigned date.
Specific assignment dates will be determined during the first and second classes. If you are not there, you will choose from topics that have not already been claimed.

Grading: 5% for presenting one article to the class on the scheduled date; 10% for the written, critical analysis of 3 articles submitted on the scheduled date.

Mid-term Test 35%
The mid-term test will be primarily multiple choice with some short answer questions. The aim of the test is to solidify your foundation and knowledge of key concepts, theoretical perspectives and trends regarding aging and family ties.

Written Assignment: Critical Analysis of an Old Person’s Family Life 40%
Students will locate a photograph of an old family member (65 or older; e.g., a grandparent, parent, great-aunt or great-uncle, aunt or uncle). This person should be someone you know but may have died. Write an analytical narrative about this person that reflects key concepts and knowledge about aging and family ties obtained from the course. Tell about the life of your subject and apply what you have learned about aging and family ties to his or her life experiences. This should be the bulk of your paper. In the remaining 3-4 pages compare how this person’s experience compares with that of a middle-generation member of your family (e.g., a child of the person you are profiling) and reflect on how you anticipate your experience will compare. If you are middle-aged, compare your experience thus far and consider what you anticipate for a younger family member.

This is a chance to take a more creative approach to writing by applying critically what you have learned in the course to the life of your chosen subject. Discuss ways in which and possible reasons why your subject’s experiences (and those of younger family members for the closing comparison) fit and do not fit typical patterns for his/her life stage, theoretical perspectives on aging and family ties, and life course trends for a particular demographic profile and position in society (structured social relations).

Use course materials only.

15 double-spaced typed pages, 12-pitch Times New Roman font, a reference page and the photograph (a photocopy is fine).

Due: At the beginning of the last class. April 5.
Sociology 2299 COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Please check the Department of Sociology web site (http://sociology.uwo.ca/) for class cancellations or changes.

**Introduction** March 11 & 18
Older Persons in Family Context
Availability of Family Ties in Later Life
Core concepts and theoretical orientation

**Intimate Ties** January 25 & February 1
Core concepts
Intimate Partnerships (Marriage)
Impact of Life Transitions on Intimate Ties
Being Ever Single

**Transitions in Intimate Relationships: Losses and Opportunities** February 8
Widowhood, divorce, alternative relationships, step-ties

**Exploring Intergenerational Relations** February 15
Core Concepts and Theoretical Perspectives

**REVIEW**

February 22 READING WEEK

**March 1** Mid-term Test

**Support Exchanges between Older Parents and their Children; Childless Older Persons** March 8

**Grandparents and Grandchildren; Divorce, Remarriage, Step Ties, and Intergenerational Relations** March 15

**Sibling Ties** March 22

**Research and Policy: Issues and Directions** March 29

**Last Class** April 5
Written assignment due at beginning of class. Open discussion.
Learning Outcomes

Committed involvement (attending class, keeping on top of readings, participating in class discussion, working hard on course assignments and tests) in this course is expected to have the following learning outcomes:

- The ability to critically apply core theoretical frameworks and concepts to family ties in mid and later life.
- The ability to relate core sociological concepts and research to real-life family ties and transitions in middle and later life.
- The ability to take a multi-level perspective which relates the political and economic environment, structured social relations (e.g., age, gender, class), social institutions (e.g., work and family), interpersonal relationships (especially with family members) and individual experience to one another.
- The ability to critically interpret quantitative and qualitative data related to aging presented in lay and professional sources.
- Improved proficiency in oral communication and writing skills.

**Things You Must Know:

Course Prerequisites

Soc 020 or 021E. Unless you have either the prerequisite for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site

www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf
Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (www.turnitin.com).

Scantron Exams

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Missed Exams and Late Assignments

Make-up exams will be granted with approved documentation only. If you have a conflict with one of the exam dates, it is your responsibility to discuss it with the Academic Counseling office at least one week before the regularly scheduled exam and provide documentation of the conflict. If approved, you will be allowed to schedule a make-up exam. If you miss an exam date or the due date for an assignment due to illness or for any other unforeseen reason, you must provide notification of and documentation for the reasons for your circumstances to your Academic Counselor within 48 hours. If your problem is medical in nature, you should be seen by your doctor on the date of the exam or on the date the assignment is due. If your Academic Counselor agrees that your reasons are legitimate and are supported by your medical doctor’s documentation, you will be allowed to write a makeup exam or hand in your assignment at a later date. The Social Science Academic Counselor’s office is on the main floor of the SSC, Room 2105.

Compassionate Grounds

Serious Illness of a Family Member: Inform your instructor as soon as possible and submit a medical certificate from the family member’s physician to your home faculty’s Academic Counseling office. In Case of a Death: Inform your instructor as soon as possible and submit a copy of the newspaper notice, death certificate or documentation provided by the funeral director to your home faculty’s Academic Counseling office.
Make up exams, if approved, will cover approximately the same material but the questions may vary. If you miss an exam, you must not talk to other students in the class about what was on the exam.

Drop Box
If you are submitting your assignments outside of class time, please leave them in the drop box located outside room SSC 5307 in the sociology department. Only assignments put in the drop box will be date stamped. You will not be able to leave your assignment in my mailbox.

Grade Guidelines
The Department of Sociology has grade distribution guidelines that all instructors are required to follow. For Sociology courses at the 2100 and 2200 level:
* As are not to exceed Bs, and
* Class averages must be in the range of 66-70%