Western University  
Sociology 3364G – 001  
Marriage Markets:  
Finding the One in the Era of Rising Inequality  
Winter 2020  
Tuesday 3:30-6:30 pm, UCC 65

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Course Description:
Families are changing. Age at marriage is increasing, as are non-marital fertility, non-marital cohabitation, and divorce. At the heart of these changes are shifts in marriage market conditions resulting due to the increasing inequality and transition into a service economy. Changing economic structure, for example, has increased the number of disadvantage men who no longer play economically productive roles or meet the prerequisites of marriage, diminishing the marriage rates among men and women of lower socioeconomic status. Polarizing economic fates have increased the salience of economic markers in mate selection, increasing the likelihood that “birds of a feather flock together”.

The goal of this course is threefold: (1) to discuss how marriage market conditions have changed; (2) to investigate how the resulting changes in marriage market conditions affect dating, union formation, and family structure; and (3) to ascertain how shifts in inequality is affecting the wellbeing of couples and their offspring.

Learning Outcomes:
At the end of this course students will be able to:

- Understand how economic transformations over the last 50 years has altered the availability of marriageable mates and family life
- Identify how marriage market conditions influence the timing of marriage
- Increase awareness on the implication of union formation and mate selection on the financial and emotional wellbeing of couples and offspring.

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth year standing in a module in Sociology or Criminology.

Unless you fulfill either requisite for this course or written special permission to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The 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.
Required Text(s):
You can also download all other articles on-campus using www.jstor.org or scholar.google.com. The instructor reserves the right to change some of the readings during the course in response to student interests.

Method of Evaluation:
Below is a detailed description of the work requirements of this course.

Participation (7%)

1. You are expected to attend class and have the materials read ahead of class.
2. Each class, you will receive a 0: no attendance, 1: attendance no participation; 2: attendance and one participation; 3: attendance and active participation.
3. To ensure that you get proper credit, please bring an 8.5*11 paper with your name typed (horizontal folded in half; font: 40; Arial and bold) starting the second week of class.
4. You should substantiate your insights with empirical evidence from your readings. You are allowed some leeway in terms of bringing outside material, but it needs to be factually accurate and you need to cite where you read it from.
5. This is a class where we discuss the individual correlates and structural determinants of union formation. It is not a class where we discuss your own dating experiences. Repeated discussions of your dating life and/or sexual history are unwelcome and will be considered “disruptive behavior”.
6. To ensure that our class is a pleasant learning environment for everyone, there is a zero-tolerance policy towards disruptive behavior in class. The first time - you will receive a warning in writing; the second time- your participation grade will be a 0. The third time – you will be asked to leave the class and a request for disciplinary action will be filed by the instructor.
7. Absences: Students can be absent from class without using a self-reported excuse or e-mailing the instructor up to 2 times. Your participation grade will be averaged from 10 classes. If you attend 11 or more classes, I will pick the 10 classes with the ten highest scores and use it to compute your participation grade. If you miss 3 or more classes and either claim a self-reported absence or have an excused absence, you will receive a score of 1 starting with the 3rd absence.

Midterm exam (31%)

1. An-in class examination will be held on Tuesday, February 25, 2020
2. The exam will include 12 short answer questions.
3. The answers need to be handwritten. Answers that the instructor cannot read will be considered wrong.
4. Some students go on a fishing expedition during exams and write anything and everything in hopes that they can obtain a higher score. Factual inaccuracy can reduce the validity of your argument and dampen your credibility. Incorrect guessing will result in lower grades.
(5) If the student is unable to take the exam due to a “documented” reason, then the student can take the exam during the departmental make-up exam day (TBD by the department). The make-up exam will be comprised of 4 essay questions.

(6) If the student cannot make the original and make-up exam due to a “documented” reason, then the instructor will extrapolate your midterm grade based on the class average for the final exam, the class average standard deviation scores for the final exam, and the average number of standard deviations that your final exam is from the class mean.
   a. For students to be the beneficiary of this policy, they must obtain documentation from Academic Counselling, the Dean’s Office, or the Chair of the Department of Sociology at UWO. Verbal communication to the instructor does not meet the requirement, nor does a doctor’s note sent to the instructor.

(7) In cases where there is no approved justification for the absence, the student will receive a grade of 0% on the quiz.

Final exam (31%)

(1) A final examination will be held during exam week.
   a. The exam will include 10-15 short answer questions.
   b. The answers will be handwritten. Answers that the instructor cannot read will be considered wrong.
   c. Some students go on a fishing expedition during exams and write anything and everything in hopes that they can obtain a higher score. Factual inaccuracy can reduce the validity of your argument and dampen your credibility. Incorrect guessing will result in lower grades.
   d. If you miss the exam due to a documented reason, then the instructor will extrapolate your test grade based on the mean grade of the test, the standard deviation scores of the test, and the average number of standard deviations that your other assignment grades are from the class mean.
      i. For students to be the beneficiary of this policy, they must obtain documentation from Academic Counselling, the Dean’s Office, or the Chair of the Department of Sociology at UWO. Verbal communication to the instructor does not meet the requirement, nor does a doctor’s note sent to the instructor.
   e. In cases where there is no approved justification for the absence, the student will receive a grade of zero on the test.
   f. University policy dictates that you cannot use a self-reported absence during the final exam season. Please check the details with an academic advisor in your faculty and plan accordingly.

Reaction paper (31%)

(1) You will be asked to write a 1500-word essay about changes in union formation behavior. We have also seen vast changes in mate selection behavior: interracial marriages are on the rise, same-
sex marriages have been legalized, and people are foregoing marriage as a setting for childbearing and childrearing. You need to address the following four questions:

a. What aspect of the institutions of marriage has remained unchanged over time?

b. What is the significance of marriage?

c. What type of changes do you foresee in the institution of marriage in the next 50 years? Are marriages here to stay and in what format?

(2) These essays are due in-class on **March 31, 2020 at 4:00 pm.**

(3) I will provide more detailed instructions about this assignment 2 weeks before its due date. No late assignments will be accepted. If you cannot make the last class, please submit in the dropbox in front of SSC 5307. I will only read papers that are stamped by the staff of the sociology department. Please do not turn your papers in elsewhere (e.g., under my door).

(4) The instructor will read drafts ahead of time if the student asks for feedback in advance.

**Evaluation Breakdown: The course grade will be computed using the following weights:**

- Participation 7%
- Midterm 31%
- Final exam 31%
- Reaction paper 31%

- Following the Sociology department's guidelines, the average final grade for this class will likely fall in between 79 and 80 percent. The standard deviation will likely fall in between 3 to 4 percentage points. The instructor reserves the right for some discretion depending on class performance.

**Important note:** There are 3 assignments in this course. If a student is unable to complete 2 or more assignments, then he/she will (a) receive an incomplete in the course and needs to retake the course in the future or (b) write a 5000-word essay addressing the questions posted for the reaction paper. This essay will be graded in absolute terms. If you foresee having to miss more than 2 assignments, please consider dropping the course before March 7, 2020 (i.e., the official date for dropping the course). It is the student's responsibility to double-check the exact and official drop date with his/her academic counselor.

**How to Contact Me:**
E-mail is the best way to contact me. During weekdays, allow for 24 hours until response. During weekends, allow for 48 hours until response.

**Grade negotiation**
Students are graded on a curve. Research suggests that the likelihood of approaching faculty to verbally negotiate grades are lower for women than for men, more disadvantaged than advantaged students, younger relative to older students, and visible minority relative to other students. As someone committed
to fairness, I will not entertain verbal grade negotiations. Within 7 days of receiving your grade, you must write a memo contesting a section of the grade; write down what your answer was, indicate what the write answer was, and explain why your grade deserves to be raised. This approach is taken to ensure that the process is fair and a learning experience. Without proper documentation, I cannot excuse students from assignments on grounds of compassion. It is also worth noting that I cannot alter grades on grounds of compassion.

If you submit another student’s grade as an excuse, I will review both student’s grade. Simply put, Student B’s answer and grade can serve as a rationale for why Student A’s grades deserve to be raised, but also a rationale for why Student B’s grades should be lowered. Student B – proceed at your own risk.

**IMPORTANT POLICIES**

*Standard Western Policies except for Policies for Assignment Deadlines*

**Policies for Assignment Deadlines:**

If you miss a due date for an assignment due to illness or for any other unforeseen reason, you must notify your Academic Counselor within 48 hours. Please follow the Academic Counselor’s instructions about proper documentation. For example, if your problem is medical in nature, you should hand in a doctor’s note to the Academic Counselor for the due date of the assignment. 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.

*I will not accept any late reaction papers. If you have a documented reason for not being able to hand in your paper, I will compute your grade excluding this paper. In this instance, your midterm and final exam will each be worth 50%.*

Even with an excuse, students who cannot complete 2 or more assignments by the final exam date (to be announced by the registrar’s office) will receive a grade of incomplete. Their ability to not receive an “F” will be contingent on their completion of the 5,000-word assignment listed above by a deadline specified by the Dean’s Office.

**A Note on Plagiarism:**

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea 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 scholastic offense (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed 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 for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database to detect
plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. The use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com).

Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class:

Laptops are permitted in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are turned off at the beginning of class.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

Western’s policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf. Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation to be approved for certain accommodation: http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html

Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar’s website: http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html

Scholastic Offenses

Scholastic offenses 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: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Mental Health

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 on how to obtain help.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence form online provided that the absence is 48 hours or less and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy are met. Two important exceptions to this rule: SRAs will not be allowed for final examinations or assessments worth more than 30% of a given course.

Students whose absences are expected to last longer than 48 hours, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive
academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds).

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/having_problems/Self_Reported_Absence.html
TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to some variation)

WEEK 1 (1/7/2020). Class introduction

In class: What does the "average" Canadian family look like? – CBC documentary

WEEK 2 (1/14/2020). Demographic transitions and institution of marriage


Supplementary readings


WEEK 3 (1/21/2020). Theories of Marriage


WEEK 4 (1/28/2020). Institution of Marriage


In class: The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap

WEEK 5 (2/4/2020). Marriage: an institution for the rich?


2.11.2020. Diverse families: Cohabitation and non-marital fertility


2.18.2020. Reading week

2.25.2020. Midterm exam

3.3.2020. Mate selection: Correlates


3.10.2020. Same-sex marriages – Sean Waite


3.24.2020. Consequences of marital decisions


3.31.2020. Consequences of mate selection

