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 influences 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):
Enrollment in the 3rd or 4th year student. This course may be of interest to Sociology Majors interested in social inequalities and will be part of the Health, Aging, and Population Concentration. It may be a nice follow-up to the family course.

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.
Lecture format:

Plan A: If everything goes as planned and there are no technological issues:

- At 3:30pm on Monday, I will e-mail students a link to the zoom call with a password.
- Starting at 3:40pm, I will deliver a lecture for 60-75 minutes, allowing for students to ask questions as the lecture progresses.
- We will have a zoom discussion of a popular media or movie article. You can participate verbally by raising your hands or using the clap function in zoom.
- You need to fill out the weekly assignments in OWL to obtain the extra credit participation marks.

Required Text(s):

You can also download all other articles on-campus using [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org) or [scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com). You can login to these sources by installing VPN or by logging in through the library. The instructor reserves the right to change some of the readings during the course in response to student interests.

How to read for this class

- Pay attention to the abstract, introduction, background, results, and discussion/conclusion. Don’t worry about the methodology.
- When you take notes, think about what are 3 to 4 key findings of the study.
- Think about how the article fits in with the other articles discussed in class.

Method of Evaluation:

Below is a detailed description of the work requirements of this course. You must choose from the following two options:

(a) **Option A**

- Midterm grade 50%
- Final grade 50%

(b) **Option B**

- Midterm grade 33.33%
- Reaction Paper 33.33%
- Final exam 33.34%

Students taking option (b) must let me know of their intent to submit their reaction paper two weeks or 14 days before the reaction paper due date.
Midterm exam

(1) An in-class examination will be held on **Wednesday, October 20, 2021.**
(2) Type of questions: the exam will include short answer questions.
(3) Location: The midterm exam will be held online. If the university requires in-person presence, the location requirement may change. If it is in-person, I will let the students know a few weeks in advance.
(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) Students who take the exam during the scheduled time will be graded in relative terms.
(6) If the student cannot take the exam due to a “documented” reason, they have the option of having their grades reweighed, if they partake in Option B.
    a. 50% final exam; 50% essay. If you take this option, you must complete all remaining assignments to receive a grade and pass the class.
    b. They will have to arrange a time to take the exam with me. Their test will be 2 essay questions. You will be graded in **absolute** terms to ensure that other students do not have to wait to receive their grade.
(7) You can obtain documentation by contacting 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. You cannot use a self-reported absence because the exam grade exceeds the 30% threshold that “excuses”
(8) In cases where there is no approved justification for the absence, the student will receive a grade of 0% on the exam.
(9) To optimize reliability and validity of your grades, I employ a two-step grading process.

Reaction paper (33%)

(1) You will be asked to write a 1500-word essay about a topic. I will provide detailed instructions about this assignment and rubric for grading the exam 2 weeks before its due date.
(2) You will lose 10 points/day of delay. The definition of delay starts at the 24:01 mark. That is, you will lose 10 points on December 9, 2021 at 12:30pm, but 20 points on December 9, 2021 at 12:31pm.
(3) The instructor will read drafts ahead of time and provide “general” advice, if the student asks for feedback in advance.
(4) Some students expect me to guess their grade based on drafts. You are graded in relative terms.
(5) These essays are due in-class on **December 8, 2021 at 12:30pm.**
Final exam

(1) A final examination will be held during exam week.
   a. Please review steps (1)–(9) in the midterm exam section.
   b. Content: The exam will be cumulative, with most questions coming from the material
      after the midterm and the rest coming from questions that a significant portion of the
      students did not answer properly in the midterm.

(2) University is requiring that all faculty administer final exams be in-person unless safety
    measures are put in place during the Fall. If you need to make other arrangements, please contact
    Academic Counselling and/or Western International. I will honor their recommendations as
    much as possible.

(3) Final exam is to be held on the date designated by the Registrar’s Office.

Extra Credit: Participation

(1) Participation is an important aspect of all my classes. It is also the part that students find very
    enjoyable. It also helps develop mastery in verbal skill sets necessary to help students perform
    better in job interviews, team meetings upon employment, and when they enroll in law/graduate
    schools. We are, however, living in the era of COVID-19 and many of you are logging in
    remotely. It would be unfair to penalize a student’s internet connection is not working, but it
    would also be unfair for me to penalize students who participate actively. Below is a “hybrid”
    approach to ensure fairness for all students.

(2) Expectations: You are expected to attend class and have the materials read ahead of class. You
    should answer questions posed in class or ask questions of your own relevant to the material.
    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,
    you need to cite where you read it from, and you need to link with the material being discussed.

(3) In the seven days prior to the next class, students will be asked to address 5-6 questions in the
    assignment portion of OWL. This should just be an inventory of your participation. The extra
    credit participation grade will be computed based on my notes of your participation in class
    (75%) and your post (25%).

(4) Daily grades: Roughly, the scores will correspond to the following:
   a. 0: no attendance
   b. 3: attendance no participation
   c. 5: attendance with at least one participation
   d. 7: attendance with 2 or more participations – comments tend to be a hit or miss
   e. 10: attendance with 2 or more participation and most comments made a significant
      contribution to class. Of the students who attend and participate more than once, roughly
      25% will be given a score of 4.
f. Midterm and final scores: I will average the daily grades and add them to the midterm and final exam grades.

(5) Some students are very verbose. Getting to the point quickly is an important skill to develop for the job market. I want you to try to summarize your point of view in less than 2 minutes unless I prompt you to elaborate.

(6) Some students have a fear of public speaking. I really encourage students to try to verbalize their point of view. In the beginning of class, the students can use the chat function in zoom where they can type their remarks. The remark has to be less than 3 sentences.

(7) 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”.

(8) 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- I will mute you for 3 consecutive classes, preventing you from getting any extra points. The third time – you will be asked to leave the class and I will request that the student be considered for disciplinary action.

o Following the Sociology department’s guidelines, the average final grade for this class will be likely fall in between 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. Except in extreme cases (e.g., excuse the student from the second week to two weeks after the last day of class), I will follow the recommendations by Academic Counselling. In extreme cases, I will

If you foresee having to miss more than 2 assignments, please consider dropping the course before the March 7, 2020 (i.e., official date for dropping the course). It is the student’s responsibilities to double check the exact date of drop with his/her academic counsellor.

**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% (i.e., you will transition into Option A).*

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 offence (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 detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking 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 submit 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 in order to be approved for certain accommodation: https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.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 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: 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 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](https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.html) 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](https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.html) (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.
TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to some variation)

Each week, I will also provide you short reading from a popular magazine, radio show, or newspaper that will be the focus of our in-class discussions. I will also allocate some time for you to peruse this material.

WEEK 1 (9/8/2021). Class introduction

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

WEEK 2 (9/15/2021). How did historical changes shape the institution of marriage?


Supplementary readings


WEEK 3 (9/22/2021). Theories of Marriage


WEEKS 4/5 (9/29/2021-10/6/2021). What is happening to the institution of marriage?


WEEK 6 (10/13/2021) Thanksgiving Break
WEEK 7 (10/20/2021) MIDTERM EXAM

WEEK 8 (10/27) Marriage: an institute for the rich?


Optional:


WEEK 9 (11/3): Marriages and racial inequality


WEEK 10 (11/10): Exam Review and Individual Consultation for Final Exam

WEEKS 11/12 (11/17-11/24): Mate selection


**WEEK 13 (12/1): Examples of interracial unions**

Watch on your own *Loving* or *A United Kingdom*. For those of you writing the reaction paper, the reaction paper will be based on this.

**WEEK 14 (12/8): Finale, Exam Review, and Concluding Remarks**

*Reaction papers are due*