



Western University
SOCIOLOGY 2134B-001
Issues Facing Modern Families
Winter 2023
Tuesdays, 6:30pm – 9:30pm (Room SSC2032)

Instructor: Dr. Stephen Lin

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Course Description

This course examines family from a sociological viewpoint, emphasizing family as an institution over the life course. Theoretical perspectives and research approaches will be considered in relation to a variety of subject areas, including: health, living arrangements, various types of family relationships, informal and formal support, and work and retirement. The course heavily relies on a life course perspective that focuses on family ties and aging as a social process. Students will explore these two elements in greater depth and will appreciate the link between family life and other facets of social life in later life. The implications of family ties and aging society and of research for social policy will be considered in relation to all core topics.

Antirequisite: Sociology 2235

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Critically apply core theoretical frameworks and concepts to social aspects of family.
2. Relate sociological concepts and research to real-life transitions in mid and later life.
3. 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.
4. Critically interpret quantitative and qualitative data related to family ties and aging presented in lay and professional sources.
5. Improved proficiency in oral communication and writing skills.

Required Text

Connidis, I.A. & Barnett, Amanda. (2018). *Family Ties & Aging, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.* (ISBN: 978-1-41-299286-2)

Method of Evaluation

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

Theory Application Assignment (February 10)	20%
Online Midterm Exam (February 14)	25%
Final Exam (April Exam Period)	25%
Community Group Research Project (Presentation: April 4 / Group Paper: April 6)	30%
Total	100%

Evaluation Breakdown

1. Theory Application Assignment (20%) – Friday, February 10

In this assignment, you will submit a **4-page (double spaced, 12-point font)** paper that demonstrates your full understanding of the main theories and concepts that family scholars use to analyze various family ties over the life course. My expectation is:

- apply the selective theories/perspectives and concepts in the context of family ties and aging (see lecture one and Chapter One in the main textbook)
- demonstrate their relationship, that is, linking theories and concepts (e.g., interconnectedness or embeddedness) to show the complexity of studying family ties and aging theoretically and conceptually
- provide your brief reflection of how the theories and concepts you choose contribute to sociology of family in general

Please link theories and concepts while defining them at the same time. **You do not need to conduct additional research for this paper. Simply cite textbook and/or lecture materials with the proper APA referencing format.** Please submit your paper to the Assignment tab on OWL before **11:55pm, Friday, February 10.**

Tips:

- For this paper, everyone should focus on a specific topic of your own choice, as long as it is related to mid-life and elder years.
- There are many topics you can focus on, such as caregiving for the elderly family members, divorce in mid-life, widowhood in elderly years, life after retirement, changes in living arrangements in old age, etc.. Of course, there are more topics you can choose from.
- I expect everyone to apply the life course, the cohort and the feminist perspective to your own topic. While applying them, please explain how one theory can supplement the others in terms of understanding the topic you chose.
- There is one sample paper I have shared with everyone under the resources tab on OWL.

Examples of Citing Lectures

- In-text citation: (Lin, Lecture 3, 2023)
- Reference citation: Lin, S. (2023). Lecture 3: Intimate Ties and Partnership, January 24, 2023. Sociology 2134B: Issues Facing Modern Families. Western University, London ON Canada.

2. Midterm Examination (25%) – February 14

This open-book midterm exam will cover course materials from **January 10 until February 13**. You should use **lecture slides and notes** as your primary preparation materials. Readings can supplement your exam preparation. Exam format will be **multiple-choice** questions.

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.

3. Community Research Project (30%) – April 4 (Presentation) / April 6 (Paper)

Students will be working as a group of 4 on a community research project related to family issues. Potential topics may be widowhood and poverty, elder care arrangement, isolation among older LGBTQ persons, immigrant families and poverty. Your main task is to propose a research topic from which your group attempts to develop a **researchable question**. Then, your group will collect information from

- various departments of federal, provincial or municipal governments

- non-governmental organizations
- community centres
- libraries
- local community events
- mass and social media

Next, your group will analyze all the written or observational data in order to reach your findings. In this group research project, you must relate your analysis to key concepts and themes covered in this course. Your group will submit one group paper (**7 pages max., double-spaced, 12-inch font, excluding the cover and reference page**) to the Assignment tab on OWL before **11:55pm, Thursday April 6**. The structure of the research paper assignment is listed as follows:

- **Summarize** the chosen topic by highlighting key ideas, importance and purpose of your research and then propose your research question (2 pages)
- **Analyze** the information you have gathered with relevant theories and concepts and explain how it helps your group to answer your research question (3 pages)
- **Conclude** your research by highlighting the key findings and suggestions for future research to improve your understanding of the topic (2 pages)

Please cite all of your sources (including the course materials, such as lectures and relevant readings) with **the proper APA referencing format**.

Prior to the submission of this paper, each group will showcase the research project by highlighting the key points on **Tuesday, April 4**. Due to a large number of groups, each group should only present **between 7 and 8 minutes**.

4. Final Exam (25%) – During April Exam Period

This **non-cumulative** open book final exam will cover course material after the midterm from **February 28 to March 28**. You should use **lecture slides and notes** as your primary preparation materials. You can use the reading as supplement to your exam preparation. Exam format will be **multiple-choice** questions only.

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.

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning:

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Student Absences:

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade:

For work totaling 10% or more of the final course grade, students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible.

Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam. Course professor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test.

Absences from Final Examinations:

Students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible. Academic Counselling will determine eligibility to write a Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

Note: missed work can *only* be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is **not** sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty of Social Science Academic Counselling Office.

Course Schedule & Readings

PART 1: INTRODUCTION & THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

January 10: Introduction of Course / Theoretical Orientation

- Connidis & Barnett. Preface and Chapter 1: Older Persons in a Family Context.

PART 2: FAMILY TIES

January 17: Overview of Family Ties over the Life Course & Conceptual/Theoretical Review

- Connidis & Barnett. Chapter 2: The Availability of Family Ties in Later Life.

January 24: Intimate Ties & Partnerships

- Connidis & Barnett, Chapter 3: Intimate Ties in Later Life.
- Connidis & Barnett, Chapter 4: Long-Term Intimate Partnerships: Marriage and Same-Sex Unions.

January 31: The Impact of Life Transitions on Intimate Ties / Transitions in Intimate ties

- Connidis & Barnett, Chapter 5: Transitions in Intimate Ties: Loss of a Long-Term Partner.
- Connidis & Barnett, Chapter 7: New Opportunities for Intimacy in Later Life.

February 7: Singlehood and Family Ties

- Connidis & Barnett, Chapter 6: Being Single in Later Life.

** Theory Application Paper Due by **5:00pm, Friday February 10** (Online OWL Submission)

February 14

- Online Midterm Exam (Content Coverage: January 10 – February 7)

February 21

- Reading Week (No Lecture)

PART 3: INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS

February 28: The Complexity of Intergenerational Relations and Exchange of Support

- Connidis & Barnett, Chapter 8: Exploring Intergenerational Relations.

- Connidis & Barnett, Chapter 9: Support Exchanges Between Older Parents and Adult Children.

March 7: Childless People & Grandparents and Grandchildren

- Connidis & Barnett, Chapter 10: Childless Older Persons.
- Connidis & Barnett, Chapter 11: Grandparents and Grandchildren.

March 14: Divorce, Remarriage, Step Ties & Intergenerational Relations

- Connidis & Barnett, Chapter 12: Partner Transitions, Step-ties, and Intergenerational Relations.

PART 4: SIBLING TIES

March 21: Sibling Ties & Exchanges of Support

- Connidis & Barnett, Chapter 13: Sibling Ties in Middle and Later Life.
- Connidis & Barnett, Chapter 14: Life Transitions and Sibling Ties.

PART 5: SOCIAL ISOLATION IN OLD AGE, RESEARCH & POLICY

March 28: Living Alone & Successful Aging / Research & Policy

- Funk, L. (2015). Beyond Participation: the Social Inclusion of Older Adults. Oxford University Press. pp. 122-142.
- Connidis & Barnett, Chapter 15: Research and Policy: Issues and Directions.

April 4: Group Presentation

- Community Research Paper due on **Thursday, April 6 by 11:55pm**

IMPORTANT POLICIES

Academic Consideration for Missed Work: Students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation in order to receive accommodation for missed work worth 10% or more of the final grade in the course. All required documentation for absences must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty. Individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds or for other reasons.

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf. The

student medical certificate is available at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Religious Accommodation: When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at <https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

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.

Accessibility Options: Students with disabilities or accessibility challenges should work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD)

http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html), which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website: www.registrar.uwo.ca/academics/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:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

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.

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 subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<https://www.turnitin.com/>).

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

Please visit the Social Science Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters: [Academic Counselling - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#).

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.