

**McMaster University**  
**Department of Sociology**  
**SOCIOLOGY 3CC3E:**  
**Sociology of The Family And The Life Cycle**  
**Fall 2017**

Instructor: Dr. Stephen Lin

Day & Time of Classes: Monday: 3:30pm- 5:20pm; Wednesday: 4:30pm-5:20pm

Class Location: KTH B124

Email: slin0899@gmail.com

Office Hours: Before class or by appointment, Room KTH 607

### **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.

### **Course Learning Objectives**

By the end of Sociology 3CC3, students who attend all the classes should be able to

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

### **Textbook**

Connidis, Ingrid Arnet. 2010. *Family Ties & Aging, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Los Angeles: Pine Forge Press/Sage. (ISBN: 978-1-4129-5957-5)

## Method of Evaluation

Theoretical / Conceptual Map Assignment ( <b>due on October 6</b> )	20%
In-Class Test #1 ( <b>October 23</b> )	25%
Final Exam ( <b>during December Exam Period</b> )	25%
Community Group Fieldwork Research Project ( <b>due on December 6</b> )	30%

## Evaluation Details

### **1. Theoretical Framework Assignment (20%) – Friday, October 6**

In this assignment, students are asked to submit a **4 page (of 12 point font, double spaced)** 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. The expectation of this assignment is listed as follows:

- clearly define the selective theories/perspectives and concepts in the context of family ties and aging (see lecture one and Chapter One in Connidis's text)
- 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 in general

You can link theories and concepts while defining them at the same time if this approach strengthens your paper flow. Please **fully edit your paper** (e.g., spelling check, sentence structures) before you submission to the online dropbox made available through the course webpage (Avenue to Learn) before **11:59pm, October 6**

### **2. In-Class Midterm Test (25%) – Monday, October 23**

- This 2-hour in-class closed-book exam will cover course material from **September 11 up to October 18**. You should use **lecture slides and notes** as your primary preparation materials. You can use the textbook as supplement to your exam preparation.
- Exam format will be **multiple-choice** questions only.

### **3. Final Exam (25%) – TBA**

- This 2-hour closed-book exam will cover course material only from **October 30 to December 4**. 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 plus short answer questions**.

### **4. Community Group Field Research Project (30%)- Presentation on Dec 4 / Paper due on Dec 6**

Students will be paired with two other students to work on a community field research project related to ***family over the life cycle***. Your main task is to come up with an interesting research topic from which your group attempts to develop a ***researchable question***. Then, your group will collect relevant information from different sources of information, such as printed and observational data 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. Prior to the submission of this paper, your group will briefly present your topic (10-12 minutes or so) in class on **December 4**. Then you will submit your group paper electronically to the online dropbox (via Avenue to Learn) before **11:59pm, December 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 (up to 2 pages)
- ***Analyze*** the information you have gathered with relevant theories and concepts and explain how it helps your group to answer your research (up to 4 pages)
- ***Conclude*** your research by highlighting the key findings and suggestions for future research to improve your understanding of the chosen topic (up to 2 pages)

***\*\*Please note that I strongly recommend that your group consult with me regarding your research topic before collecting any data.***

## Course Schedule & Readings

### **PART 1: INTRODUCTION & THEORETICAL ORIENTATION**

#### **September 11-13:**

*Introduction of Course Material, Assignment & Expectation  
Theoretical Orientation*

- Connidis. Preface and Chapter 1, pp. 3-24. Older Persons in a Family Context.

### **PART 2: FAMILY TIES**

#### **September 18-20:**

*Overview of Family Ties over the Life Course & Conceptual/Theoretical Review*

- Connidis. Chapter 2, 25-49. The Availability of Family Ties in Later Life: Demographic Trends and Family Structure.

#### **September 25-27:**

*Intimate Ties & Partnerships*

- Connidis, Chapter 3, pp. 53-64. Intimate Ties in Later Life
- Connidis, Chapter 4., pp. 65-80 (Interdependence; Marriage; Gay/Lesbian Partnerships). Intimate Partnerships

#### **October 2-4:**

*The Impact of Life Transitions on Intimate Ties*

- Connidis, Chapter 4, pp. 81--92. Intimate Partnerships

*Transitions in Intimate Relationships*

- Connidis, Chapter 6, pp. 107-136. Transitions in Intimate Relationships: Losses and Opportunities.

\*\* Theoretical Framework Assignment Due by **11:59pm, Friday October 6** (Online Dropbox Submission)

#### **October 9-11:**

Fall Reading Week (No Class)

**October 16-18:**

*Singlehood and Family Ties*

- Connidis, Chapter 5, pp. 93-106. Being Single in Later Life

**October 23-25:**

In-Class Test (25%) / No Class on October 25

**PART 3: INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS**

**October 30-November 1:**

*The Complexity of Intergenerational Relations*

- Connidis, Chapter 8, pp. 153-178. Support Exchanges Between Older Parents and Their Children.

*Intergenerational Exchanges of Support*

- Connidis, Chapter 7, pp. 137-152. Exploring Intergenerational Relations.

**November 6-8:**

*Childless People & Grandparents and Grandchildren*

- Connidis, Chapter 9, pp. 179-186. Childless Older Persons.
- Connidis, Chapter 10, pp. 187-203. Grandparents and Grandchildren

**November 13-15:**

*Divorce, Remarriage, Step Ties & Intergenerational Relations*

- Connidis, Chapter 11, pp.203-224.

**PART 4: SIBLING TIES**

**November 20-22:**

*Sibling Ties & Exchanges of Support*

- Connidis. Chapter 12, pp. 225-240. Sibling Ties in Middle and Later Life.
- Connidis. Chapter 13, pp. 241-258. Life Transitions and Sibling Ties.

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

### **November 27-29:**

#### *Living Alone & Successful Aging*

- Funk, L. (2015). *Beyond Participation: the Social Inclusion of Older Adults*. Oxford University Press. pp. 122-142.

#### *Research & Policy*

- Connidis. Chapter 14, pp. 259-top of 281. Research and Policy: Issues and Directions.
- In-class documentary: *"Being Old in Rural Japan"*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDyPwiVObzg>

### **December 4:**

#### *Group Presentation Day (No Reading)*

- Community Field Research Paper Due by **Wednesday Midnight, Dec 6**
- No Class on December 6

### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- 2.
3. Improper collaboration in group work.
- 4.
5. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

(If applicable) In this course we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

**DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES:**

Do NOT fax assignments. Please see your instructor for the most appropriate way to submit assignments. The Sociology staff do NOT date-stamp assignments, nor do they monitor the submission or return of papers.

The McMaster Student Absence Form (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>) is a self reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report absences that last up to 3 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work. Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period.

You may submit a maximum of 1 Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation. If you are absent more than 3 days or exceed 1 request per term, or are absent for a reason other than medical, you MUST visit your Associate Dean's Office (Faculty Office). You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence. Students should check the web, the white board and the Undergraduate Bulletin board outside the Sociology office (KTH-627) for notices pertaining to Sociology classes or departmental business (eg. class scheduling information, location of mailboxes and offices, tutorial information, class cancellations, TA job postings, etc.).

Computer use in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture.

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes.

It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes. It is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.