



College of Education and Human Development

Early Childhood Education Program  
4400 University Drive, MS 4C2, Fairfax, Virginia 22030  
Phone: 703-993-3844; Fax: 703-993-4370; email: [earlyed@gmu.edu](mailto:earlyed@gmu.edu)  
<https://gse.gmu.edu/programs/earlychildhood/>

**HDFS 200.003 Individual and Family Development (3:3:0)**  
**Spring 2014**  
**Thursdays 1:30-4:10 PM**  
**Robinson B108**

**Instructor:** Bethany L. Letiecq, PhD  
**Office:** 1101 Thompson Hall  
**Telephone:** 703-993-5076  
**Email address:** [bletiecq@gmu.edu](mailto:bletiecq@gmu.edu)  
**Office hours:** Thursdays 10-12AM or by appointment

**Course Description**

Examines how individuals and families function and develop over the lifespan. Uses a multidisciplinary approach to integrate theories of family science and human development emphasizing the role of contextual factors in contemporary families' lives. Explores the impact of gender, socioeconomic, race/ethnicity, culture, and immigrant status on human development and family relationships. Introduces a basic model of scientific inquiry and theorizing.

**Nature of Course Delivery**

This course utilizes a distributed learning format requiring active participation of all students. Students are expected to complete all class readings prior to each session so as to engage in active dialogue, productive learning, and critical reflection. Activities will include instructor presentation, small-group discussions, student presentations, videos, and whole class sharing to support course content. In addition, a Blackboard online component of coursework is required.

**Learner Outcomes**

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the diverse experiences of contemporary families across the lifespan,
- Show understanding of how various micro- and macro-level systems shape individual and family development,
- Apply family theories to explain individuals' development across the lifespan within the context of their families,
- Understand some of the normative and non-normative challenges and opportunities faced by American families across the lifespan,
- Understand research methods used for examining the development, coping, and adaptation of individuals and families
- Engage in personal growth and development that will enhance students' academic and interpersonal experiences.

**Professional Standards**

This course is aligned with the standards established by the National Council on Family Relations, focusing specifically on the "families and individuals in societal contexts" content area, to include "an

understanding of families and their relationships to other institutions, such as educational, governmental, religious, and occupational institutions in society.”

### **Required Texts**

Karraker, M.W., & Grochowski, J.R. (2012). *Families with futures* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). New York, NY: Routledge.

### **George Mason University Policies and Resources for Students**

- Academic integrity (honor code, plagiarism) – Students must adhere to guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/>].
- Mason Email – Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, division, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>].
- Counseling and Psychological Services – The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops, and outreach programs) to enhance students’ personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- Office of Disability Services – Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor in writing at the beginning of the semester <http://ods.gmu.edu/>.
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- The Writing Center (Optional Resource) – The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].
- University Libraries (Optional Resource) – The George Mason University Libraries provide numerous services, research tools, and help with using the library resources [See <http://library.gmu.edu/>].

### **Professional Dispositions**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

**Core Values Commitment:** The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles.

### ***Collaboration***

Collaboration is an important human activity that involves shared responsibility in promoting healthy, productive lives, and educational success. We commit ourselves to work toward these goals in genuine partnerships with individuals, families, community agencies, schools, businesses, foundations, and other groups at the local, regional, national, and international levels.

### ***Ethical Leadership***

In all professions represented by the college, leadership is an essential component denoting ability and willingness to help lead professional practice to higher levels. We commit ourselves to practice ethical leadership through deliberate and systematic attention to the ethical principles that guide all leaders in a moral society.

### ***Innovation***

We have a history of creating dynamic, innovative programs, and we are dedicated to continue creating innovative approaches in all areas of our work. We commit ourselves to seeking new ways to advance knowledge, solve problems, improve our professional practice, and expand on our successes.

### ***Research-Based Practice***

The best practice in any discipline is based upon sound research and professional judgment. We commit ourselves to basing our instruction, scholarship, and policy recommendations on well-established principles that, wherever possible, emerge from research and reflection on its implications for professional practice.

### ***Social Justice***

Social justice embodies essential principles of equity and access to all opportunities in society, in accordance with democratic principles and respect for all persons and points of view. We commit ourselves to promoting equity, opportunity, and social justice through the college's operations and its missions related to teaching, research, and service.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>].

## **Course Requirements**

### **General Requirements**

1. The completion of all readings assigned for the course is assumed. Because the class will be structured around discussion and small group activities, it is imperative that students keep up with the readings and participate in class.
2. Attendance in class and/or online is important to students' learning; therefore, students are expected to make every effort to attend class sessions and/or complete online modules within the designated timeframe. Absences, tardiness, leaving early, and not completing online modules in the designated timeframe may negatively affect course grades. If, due to an emergency, students will not be in class, they must call the instructor and leave a message or send an email before class. The following policy is from the university course catalog:

Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation. Students who miss an exam with an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

3. In line with Mason's policy that students should not be penalized because of observances of their religious holidays, students shall be given an opportunity to make up, within a reasonable time, any academic assignment that is missed due to individual participation in religious observances. It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences for religious observations in advance of the class that will be missed. Notice should be provided in writing as soon as possible.

4. During face-to-face and live online meetings, cell phones, pagers, and other communicative devices are not allowed in this class. Students must keep them stowed away and out of sight. Laptops or tablets (e.g., iPads) may be permitted for the purpose of taking notes only. Engaging in activities not related to the course (e.g. gaming, email, chat, etc.) will result in a significant deduction in their participation grade.
5. It is expected that assignments will be turned in on time. However, it is recognized that students occasionally have serious problems that prevent work completion. If such a dilemma arises, students should speak to the instructor prior to the assignment due date (when possible). If the student does not communicate with the instructor, a late penalty will be applied.
6. Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when responsible for a task, students will perform that task. When students rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, they will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind), students will ask for guidance and clarification.

### Written Assignments

All formal written assignments will be evaluated for content and presentation. The American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition (APA) style will be followed for all written work. All written work unless otherwise noted must be completed on a word processor and should be proofread carefully. (Use spell check!) If students are not confident of their own ability to catch errors, they should have another person proofread their work. When in doubt, they should check the APA manual. Portions of the APA manual appear at the Style Manuals link on the Mason library web guide at <http://infoguides.gmu.edu/content.php?pid=39979>. Students may consult the Writing Center for additional writing support.

Students will do the following:

1. Present ideas in a clear, concise, and organized manner. (Avoid wordiness and redundancy.)
2. Develop points coherently, definitively, and thoroughly.
3. Refer to appropriate authorities, studies, and examples to document where appropriate. (Avoid meaningless generalizations, unwarranted assumptions, and unsupported opinions.)
4. Use correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

### Grading Criteria

97-100	A+	87-89	B+	77-79	C+	60-69	D	Below 60	F
93-96	A	83-86	B	73-76	C				
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-				

### Grading Policy

All CEHD/CHSS undergraduate and graduate students are held to the university grading policies as described in the Academic Policies section of the current catalog, which can be accessed at <http://catalog.gmu.edu>

### Specific Course Assignments

Assignments	Due Dates	Points
Attendance and Participation	Ongoing	15
Exams (10 points each)	Feb 20, Apr 3, and May 8	30
Homework Assignments	Feb 6, Mar 20	30
Final Paper	April 24	25
TOTAL		100

**I. Attendance and Participation (15 points)**

**Because active participation and engagement are imperative for optimal learning, preparation for and participation in in-class activities will be evaluated based on the following criteria:**

- Students attend class, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class period.
- Students complete readings and prepare for class activities prior to class as is evidenced by their ability to discuss and write about the concepts presented and examined in the texts as well as participate fully in related activities.
- Students are actively involved in in-class and online learning experiences as is evidenced by (1) participating in all activities, (2) engaging in small and large group discussions and in-class exercises, (3) completing written work related to the activities, and (4) supporting the participation and learning of classmates.
- Students show evidence of critical reflective thinking through in-class and online discussions, activities, and written reflections. Go to mymason, <http://mymason.gmu.edu>, to login to Blackboard 9.1.

**II. Exams (Each exam worth 10 points; Total: 30 points)**

There will be three in-class exams that will cover class lectures, discussions, readings, etc. The exams will not be cumulative (i.e., the second exam will cover material after the first exam only, and the third exam will cover material after the second exam only). Exams will be closed book.

**Due:** Feb 20, Apr 3, and May 8

**III. Homework Assignments (30 points)**

There will be two homework assignments due during the semester. Students are on their honor to complete their homework assignments using their own words and ideas. Students must cite any and all sources used to write and construct their ideas for their papers. A word to the wise: “When in doubt, cite it!” If you have any questions about how to cite your sources, please ask your instructor prior to passing in your paper. Homework assignments should be written and formatted according to American Psychological Association (APA), 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, style rules (i.e., papers

should be typed using 12-pt. font with 1-inch margins; however, in the interest of conserving paper, no need for a cover page, **single space**, print front to back, and cite your sources following your sentence of text).

- **Homework Assignment 1: Risk and Resilience**

Consider the cultural and structural diversity of families today, and the functions these families perform to ensure healthy individual and family development. Address all of the following in **2 typewritten, single-spaced pages (may print front-to-back)**. Remember to proofread your work.

Choose a family form common in today's society (e.g., two-parent, dual-earner; divorced parents with joint custody; single parent; same-sex couple with children; grandparents rearing grandchildren). Guided by risk and resilience theories (to include family systems theory, ecological, family stress and coping (ABCX), family resilience, etc.), discuss the following considering both micro and macro levels throughout:

- Describe demographically your chosen family form—discuss prevalence and other pertinent characteristics.
- What are potential stressors or risk factors that your chosen family form may experience?
- Next, describe potential individual, familial and community protective factors that may promote healthy adaptation and coping.
- Drawing upon Walsh's key processes in family resilience, how might you intervene as a family services staff member to ameliorate risks and promote protective characteristics and family resilience and health?

**Due:** Feb 6

- **Homework Assignment 2: Marriage Promotion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Consider the salience of marriage as an institution in American life. Researchers have noted that marriage rates have been declining over time as individuals choose to remain single, or opt out of the institution of marriage. Consider also the marriage equality movement and marriage promotion efforts among economically marginalized communities.

Address the following in **2 typewritten, single-spaced pages** (printed front-to-back is acceptable). Remember to proofread your work.

- Is marriage becoming obsolete? For whom? Or is there a new marriage model taking hold in American family life? If so, what does it look like?
- What are modern-day qualities and characteristics of men and women that you think are essential for marital success?
- Given your list above, are all individuals marriageable?
- Should we as a society be promoting marriage through our laws and policies or should we be promoting something else to strengthen family life (and if something else, what)?

**Due:** Mar 20

#### **IV. Final Paper: Genogram Project (25 points)**

You will be required to complete a genogram project (see genogram assignment description, example genograms, genogram symbols page, and genogram grading rubric on Blackboard to fully understand and correctly execute this requirement).

**Evaluation of Genogram:** There are two parts to this assignment: a paper and a family genogram, which is like a “family tree”. I will review, edit, and give feedback on draft genograms—just ask!

- **Paper:** Your genogram paper should be written in MS Word, double-spaced, using 12-point font with a page MAXIMUM of 5 pages (including references). **You should include 6 sections in your paper and use the following headers:**
  - INTRODUCTION, where you introduce the three themes that you will explore in your paper;
  - THEME 1: \_\_\_\_\_, which identifies the first theme to be examined. For each theme, be sure to draw linkages to course concepts and relate theme to research findings in your text. Example themes might include a pattern of marital stability through the generations, a pattern of divorce and remarriage, single-parenting, health problems (e.g., diabetes, alcoholism, drug abuse, cancer, heart disease, mental health issues), commitment to education, etc. **You should include a discussion of both micro-level processes and macro-level forces throughout the themes;**
  - THEME 2: \_\_\_\_\_;
  - THEME 3: \_\_\_\_\_;
  - DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS
  - REFERENCES (typically students reference your text as well as any other resources utilized in applying your theme/pattern to your family system. For example, you may find a journal article on a theme or a helpful website—these should all be referenced to give credit where credit is due and to avoid plagiarism!).
- **Genogram:** I recommend keeping this simple—using an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper, drawing out your genogram in pencil, including as much pertinent information as possible for each family member (ages, names, health status, education level, occupation for starters). It is also important to show graphically relationship quality indicators (marriage/divorce dates, length of cohabitation, highly conflictual/abusive relations, highly cohesive/supportive relations, etc.)—see the symbols page to help represent these relationships as clearly as possible! We will discuss this project often in class.

**Final Paper Due: April 24**

## Course Topics and Schedule

Week/Date	Topic	Readings and Assignments <b>DUE</b>
<b>Individual and Family Development: A Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological Toolbox</b>		
1: Jan 23	Course overview and introduction to human development and family studies Changing families in a changing world	Karraker & Grochowski, Ch. 1
2: Jan 30	Family Theories and Research with Families	Karraker & Grochowski, Ch. 2
3: Feb 6	From Risk to Resilience	Karraker & Grochowski, Ch. 3 <b>DUE: Homework 1</b>
4: Feb 13	Family Health	Karraker & Grochowski, Ch. 4
5: Feb 20	Wrap-up & Review Exam 1	<b>DUE: EXAM 1</b>
<b>Family Life Courses: Contemporary Experiences of Individuals and Families</b>		
6: Feb 27	Being single, choosing partners	Karraker & Grochowski, Ch. 6
7: Mar 6	Intimate Relationships: Marriage and Civil Unions	Karraker & Grochowski, Ch. 7
8: Mar 13	<b>Spring Break</b>	
9: Mar 20	Sexual Intimacy and Parenthood	Karraker & Grochowski, Ch. 5, 8 <b>DUE: Homework 2</b>
10: Mar 27	Parenthood (Cont'd)	Karraker & Grochowski, Ch. 8
11: Apr 3	Wrap-up & Review Exam 2	<b>DUE: EXAM 2</b>
<b>Contextual Issues Facing Contemporary Families</b>		
12: Apr 10	Family Discord	Karraker & Grochowski, Ch. 9
13: Apr 17	De-coupled Families	Karraker & Grochowski, Ch. 10
14: Apr 24	Money Matters: Economics and Family Living	Karraker & Grochowski, Ch. 11 <b>DUE: FINAL PAPER</b>
15: May 1	Future of Families: From Family Values to Valuing Families Wrap-Up/Course Evaluation	Karraker & Grochowski, Ch. 12
16: May 8	Final Exam: 1:30-4:15PM	<b>DUE: EXAM 3</b>

NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus as needed. If changes are made, you will be notified of the changes in class or by your university e-mail address.