

**SOC/WS 407 - Family Violence**  
**Office: Psych 112**  
**Office Hours: M & W 12-2; 3:30-4**  
**Spring 2009**  
**And By Appointment**

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## **Family Violence**

**Family violence is an old and serious problem which is finally receiving the attention it deserves. As a society, we are increasingly aware of the extent and seriousness of intimate violence and the damage it is doing. This class explores the major forms of family violence. We will seek a sociological and social psychological understanding of why family violence exists and what we can do to heal and prevent it.**

**Violence is known to most social groups that suffer from inequality; women, children and the elderly encounter violence specifically because of gender and age. We will study this phenomenon within a social context. This includes analyzing medical and scientific (and social scientific) ideology, cultural objectification, and private domestic subordination. All of these fit a pattern of women's and men's lives and of age inequality. The other, and positive side of all this is redefining what has been called the "natural order" or "the way things are." We can now look at the daily intimidation of women, children, the elderly, and the disabled as more insidious forms of oppression, and label this as violence. This is a step toward eradication.**

**This course is intended for the academically sophisticated student. Studying family violence is a complex and often disturbing task. It requires the examination of many sensitive and controversial issues. Students are expected to do this in a scholarly and responsible manner.**

**Because this is a sociology course, we will use distinctly sociological perspectives to reveal the social and personal processes behind family violence. To broaden our point of view, when appropriate, we will use insights and observations from other disciplines, such as psychology and social work.**

**REQUIRED TEXTS: Family Violence Across the Lifespan: An Introduction (2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2005) by Barnett, Miller**

**Perrin and Perrin (abbr: FV)**

### **Course Objectives:**

- 1. To acquire knowledge and refute myths about family violence.**
- 2. To understand the social and cultural factors which contribute to violence in families.**
- 3. To become familiar with sociological and social psychological perspectives as ways of explaining family violence.**
- 4. To gain an appreciation of the empirical scientific literature about family violence including the methodology necessary for studying it.**
- 5. To examine social policies about family violence.**
- 6. To become familiar with current controversies in the area of family violence.**
- 7. To develop skills for discussing and dealing with controversial and sensitive topics.**
- 8. To develop one's personal philosophy regarding these issues.**

## **Course Requirements and Policies**

**Attendance, Preparation, and Participation.** I expect that you will attend class. If you miss class, you are still responsible for materials and assignments covered in class--including assignment due dates and announcements of changes in the syllabus. You will be living quite dangerously if you have more than four absences. It is difficult to establish a pattern of solid participation when absent and you will not gain participation points and attendance points. Students accumulate points by attending and participating. Participation points are not earned during illness, family emergencies, etc. Points are not deducted for absences, but are accumulated through attendance and participation. I shall check roll at the beginning of most class meetings. I expect that every student will do ALL of the reading prior to class. Additionally, because much of the reading is complex, you are expected to take reading notes so that you will be able to make valuable contributions to class discussion. The notes will be invaluable for examination preparation.

There will be a variety of classroom experiences, i.e., discussion, lecture, and videos. Lectures will not be a rehash of the text and will contain new material and therefore I want you to be present/

Attendance and participation will account for 20 percent of your final grade.

Listening and participating in class discussions is vital. Talking about the material is good practice for your exams. It can also be enjoyable. So push yourself to get involved, there is also no such thing as a "dumb question" and nothing you say in class will count against you in the determination of your grade. Do not slight this component because lack of attendance and meaningful participation will hurt your grade. Attendance and meaningful participation will enhance your grade.

**Classroom comportment.** Please shut off all cell phones and pagers. No jumping up to answer a phone call. NO TEXT MESSAGING. Ringing cell phones are rude and distracting. Points will be deducted for both text messaging, ringing phones and pagers, and jumping up and leaving class to take a call.

**Special guidelines.** It is likely that some of the students in this class are victims, perpetrators or witnesses of family violence. I am, therefore, establishing some special guidelines.

1. You are not obligated to share personal experiences with the class. Reveal only what you are comfortable sharing with 35 other people.
2. Any personal revelations made in class are considered confidential and should not be reported outside of class in any way that identifies the participants.
3. It is important that we respect the victims and their decisions even if we disagree with those decisions. We should also respect perpetrators and recognize their own victimization while still holding them responsible for their actions.
4. Disagreements must be handled with constructive dialogue. It is easy to get angry with those who disagree with us on these topics and with entire categories of people. Try to keep it constructive.
5. Keep in mind that this is an academic class about family violence. No one in this class is qualified as a therapist nor should we use large amounts of class time to solve personal situations.
6. Keep the faith. While this can be a very depressing topic to study, remember that things are better today than they were 10 years ago because activists in this area have worked for change. Things will be better in 10 years from now, IF we keep insisting on it.

**Examinations:** Exam questions will be in a multiple choice and true or false format. Exams will cover material from the assigned reading and from class lectures and discussions. Exams will be taken on Scantron answer sheets. Please bring a #2 pencil. I FOLLOW A NO MAKE-UP EXAM POLICY. EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE IN THE CASE OF CERTIFIED ILLNESS (AS IN A PHYSICIAN'S WRITTEN EXCUSE) OR JUSTIFIABLE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES AS DEFINED BY YOUR INSTRUCTOR. If you miss an exam due to an emergency falling under the above description, you can make up the exam ONLY if you contact your instructor before the exam or leave a telephone message (549-2143 or 2138). An email message is acceptable. Only ONE approved emergency make-up will be allowed.

Exam questions will be available in my office for review after tests, but cannot be kept by students.

**Examinations = 80% of final grade**

**Attendance and participation = 20% of final grade**

**Special Needs: If you have a disability or special needs, contact me by the end of the first week and register with John Meister (X2663 in Psych 232)**

**NO EXTRA CREDIT WORK ALLOWED!!**

**COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

**Exam dates are tentative**

**A. Introduction: Defining, documenting, and describing family violence. Readings: FV Chap 1**

**B. Theoretical and Methodological Concerns  
Readings: FV Chap 2**

Physical and Sexual Child Abuse  
Readings: FV Chaps 3-4

**Exam #1 - February 11**

- D. Child Neglect  
Readings: FV Chap 5
- E. Child Psychological Abuse Readings: FV Chap 6
- F. Overview of Child Maltreatment  
Readings: FV Chap 7
- G. Courtship Violence  
Readings: FV Chap 8

**Exam #2 - March 6**

- H. Battering  
Readings: FV Chap 9
- I. Survivors  
Readings: FV Chap 10
- J. Perpetrators  
Readings: FV Chap 11
- K. Abuse of the Elderly and Disabled  
Readings: FV Chap 12
- L. Solutions  
Readings: FV Chap 13

**Exam #3 - April 30 at 10:30 (during Finals Week)**