

*CHFD 6630 - Theories of Family Relations  
Department of Child and Family Development  
College of Family and Consumer Sciences  
The University of Georgia- Spring Semester, 2007*

Professor: Dr. Velma McBride Murry

Class Meeting: 1095 College Station Road,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room  
Mondays: 10:10-1:00

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1095 College Station Road  
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***Required Reading:***

- 1) Sourcebook of Family Theory and Research (Eds., Bengtson, V. L., Acock, A. C., Allen, K. R., Dilworth-Anderson, P., & Klein, D. M)
- 2) Articles in reading packet (noted as \*\* on the course outline)

***Recommended Readings:***

- Chibucos, T. R., Leite, R.W., & Weis, D. L. (2005). *Readings in Family Theory*; Sage Publication
- Boss, P., et al. (1993). *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods: A Contextual Approach*. Plenum Press: New York
- Sussman, M. & Steinmetz, S. (Eds.). (1987). *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*. New York: Plenum Press.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course will focus on the theories and their applications to studies of family functioning, family interaction patterns, as well as family and interpersonal relationships. Consideration will be given the process of evaluating and the building of family theory.

**SKILL OBJECTIVES:**

1. To develop/and refine an awareness of one's personal and professional assumptions about families, family functioning, and interpersonal relationships.
2. To be able to think critically about the implication of theories for assessing optimal functioning among diverse families.
3. To utilize the course content and process to enhance the conceptual-theoretical development of future research activities, including professional presentations, a research project, thesis, or dissertation.

**What I hope you gain from the course this semester:**

1. Familiarity with and a working knowledge of selected theories of family studies.
2. Level of comfort "doing" theory in understanding families.
3. An understanding of the concepts that traditional theorists have used to understand family functioning and family and interpersonal relationships
4. Familiarity with the basic principles of major conceptual frameworks in the field of family studies, as well as critical thinking about the sociohistorical and eco-political backgrounds of each of the frameworks.
5. Fluency in applying the major family studies frameworks to various research, clinical, and everyday family life situations.
5. Ability to conceptualize research questions from theoretical perspectives and/or orientations.
6. Awareness of the research base of these theories and the interconnectedness between theory and methods.
7. Understand recent theoretical explanations on what makes families and relationships strong and resilient
8. Motivation and curiosity to continue your personal journey toward mastery of and work with family theories.

**Expectations and Requirements:**

Attend **ALL** classes (unless ill or emergency)

**READ** ALL assigned materials prior to class.

**ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE** in class discussions.

Complete **ALL** assignments and examinations in accordance with established deadlines.

**ASK** for and **ENGAGE** in support seeking. If you find that you are having difficulty at any point in the course, please seek assistance before a crisis emerges.

**Course Evaluation Parameters:**

	<b><u>POINTS</u></b>	<b><u>GRADE DISTRIBUTION</u></b>
Attendance and class participation	10	285-300 = A
2-Theory application assignment	100 @ 50 points each	270-284 = A-
Discussion leadership	35	255-269 = B
Theory paper	125	240-254 = B-
Presentation of final paper	<u>50</u>	225-239 = C
TOTAL	300	210-224 = C-
		195-211 = D
		180 -194 = D-
		179 ≤ = F

***DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS & DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETION***

***THEORY APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT***

**Summary and Application of Theory:** Each student will present an in-depth examination of one theory listed in the course outline. The purpose of this assignment is to gain a greater understanding of selected family theories, as such the paper should include the following:

- 1) a description of the history and current use of the theory in family studies;
- 2) identification of major concepts, including definition of each concept;
- 3) examination of ways in which it is conceptually, empirically, and practically useful;
- 4) an assessment of its explanatory value for the study of family issues (including issues regarding family diversity: racially and ethnically, social class, family composition and family forms),
- 5) an overview of the following: how the theory defines family; its perception of growth and development in families and interpersonal relationships; what it deems to explain how development, growth, and functioning in families occurs; what is focused on to determine whether families are coping well, are in trouble or dysfunctional; and its explanations of the origin/cause of dysfunctional families, as well as healthy family functioning; and
- 6) identify topical issues or questions that will facilitate class discussion about the theory. Due Dates: (A copy of the presentation, including list of references is due ***January 29<sup>th</sup>***). Presentations will occur over the course of two class periods, ***January 29<sup>th</sup> and February 5<sup>th</sup>***. Worth: 50 points

**Case Study: Using the Media as a Source for Applying Theory to Family and Relationships :** Write on a family or relational issue based on a movie. Write a brief description of the movie and prepare a detailed genogram showing as many generations of the family as you can given the information you have. Include significant family/relational patterns. Write a brief description of the family members and the nature of their relationships. Provide a thorough and thoughtful description of the presenting problem and background of the problem. Select an aspect of the family situation that you view as the essential presenting problem; use assigned readings to explain the difficulties confronting the family. It is essential that your explanation reflect relevant concepts for the theoretical explanations offered. Given your analyses of the family, offer suggestions for preventive/intervention and reasons for targeting such efforts. **Assignment is due: March 5<sup>th</sup> : Worth 50 points.**

***THEORETICAL PAPER***

Each student will write a theoretical paper focusing on a family related topic. This paper will be based on a **comprehensive**

*literature review* of your selected topic. The paper is not to exceed 20 pages (not including references and your theoretical model), and should be doubled-spaced, 12 point font. Use APA guidelines for organizing the text of your paper and references. Guidelines for completing paper are described below:

1. Identify a specific family related issue and write a brief justification of why this issue phenomenon is an important one to study.
2. After reviewing several articles related to your selected topic, develop a conceptual framework that integrates and ties your idea or question into a larger body of literature by reviewing the literature related to your idea or question.
3. Use the literature review to identify and define relevant concepts and the interrelationship among concepts.
4. Include in your paper, a ***theoretical model*** that illustrates the interrelationships of concepts and justify predicted paths in your model, as supported by selected theoretical explanations. NOTE: This model is to be included in your final paper as a figure.
5. Your theoretical model should explain all relevant research/empirical findings associated with your topic
6. Include in your paper a discussion of how you would operationalize the theoretical concepts/constructs and collect data to gain insight into your research question, e.g., operationalization of concepts, who would you recruit for the study and why; how would you collect data and what measures would you use to reflect the major concepts of your model?
- 7 Also discuss the implications of your model for informing future research or theory development.
8. Include a complete reference list using APA writing style.
9. Include in your paper a copy of your *theoretical model* (using *POWER POINT* or related presentation software package)

***A detailed description of GUIDELINES FOR Completing Theoretical Paper is also included in your reading packet. Please review and follow and noted.***

NOTE: Papers will be graded on the basis of use of relevant course content, quality of writing, originality, logic, integration, attention to details, accuracy, and quality of theorizing. Four points will be deducted for each day beyond the due date that this paper is handed in.

*NOTE: No suffering in silence. Please feel free to consult with me as you are developing your research question and also in the development of your theoretical paper.*

### ***THEORETICAL PAPER PRESENTATION***

Each student will develop and present a 30 minute presentation of their theoretical paper – approximately 5 minutes of introduction (stating the issue, significance of the issue) and 25 minutes of discussion. Your presentation will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Clear justification of the research topic, research question, why this is an important issue to consider;
- Evidence of reviewing relevant literature to inform the identification of relevant concepts/constructs to support your theoretical position.
- Evidence of integrating research/theoretical issues into a larger body of research
- Clear identification and definition of concepts and illustration of how the concepts are interrelated
- Evidence of clearly delineating the interrelationship of concepts in a theoretical model – and evidence that these illustrated paths are grounded in empirical works
- Some indication of how you would operationalize or test the model, if you were launching a research project.
- Understanding of the implication and usefulness of your model to the related field of research or future theory building.

NOTE: Each student presenting will prepare a handout critiquing-explaining-summarizing their project to distribute to the class the week BEFORE his/her presentation date. In turn, the *non-presenters prior* to and in preparation for the presentation will, on a 4x6 card (one per presentation), write thoughtful questions and comments intended to clarify and enhance the project being presented. These cards will be turned into the instructor at the beginning of class. At least 15 minutes of the class time for each presentation will be devoted to class questions, comments, and discussion.

**EXTRA CREDIT:** There is no way, in the course, to gain extra credit in order to raise your grade on any specific product or in the course as a whole.

***CLASS SCHEDULE, READING ASSIGNMENTS, & ACTIVITIES***

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
January 8	Introduction to Course Review of Assignments <b><i>ISSUES TO CONSIDER:</i></b> What is Theory? (Where the theory leaves off and other things begin – (e.g., ideas, hunches, suggestions, perspectives) If it is not “theory” but it is an interesting idea, what is it? Understanding Deductive versus Inductive Theoretical Approaches Integrating Theory and Research Method Tension between making a theory into a form you can understand and use fluently versus being loyal to a strict interpretation of the theory. Linking theory and practice. Theory as a tool in personal life. Theory as a tool in critical review. Linking theory developmental and socio-political and economic contextual influences (Readings new Sourcebook: Chapters 1-3)
January 15	MLK HOLIDAY
January 22	<b><i>OUT OF CLASS ACTIVITY</i></b> In lieu of class meeting today, during this class period, students will spend out of time class working on the completion of the <u>Summary and Application of Theory assignment</u> . This assignment is due at the beginning of class January 29 <sup>th</sup> . Dates for presentations will resume according to prior assignments made on the first day of class.
January 29	<b><i>Group 1: Presentations of Summary Application of Theory Assignment</i></b> Structural-Functionalism _____ Family Development _____ Family Life Course _____ Social Exchange _____ Social Conflict & Communication Theory _____

February 5

***Group 2: Presentations of Summary Application of Theory Assignment***

Symbolic Interaction\_\_\_\_\_

Conflict Framework\_\_\_\_\_

Feminist Framework\_\_\_\_\_

Ecology Framework\_\_\_\_\_

Family Stress Theory\_\_\_\_\_

February 12

*Unified Family Process Theory* - This theoretical approach to the study of families integrates family systems theory with the dialectical(philosophical) consideration of paradigms within an idiographic context. Family paradigms are understood to be contextually sensitive as representative of historical, developmental and evolutionary considerations.

Readings:

- The Structure Of Family Paradigms: An Analytical Model of Family Variation (\*\*Constantine's article)
- System's Theory (\*\*Boss, Chapter 14:\*\* Whitchurch and Constantine)
- What Makes Love Last (\*\*Atkisson's article)

Lead Discussant: Reading: What Makes Love Last -- Application of Atkisson's article to theoretical papers explanations of family process paradigms \_\_\_\_\_

February 19<sup>th</sup>

Theoretical Explanations of Families and Change

*Demographics, Compositions, Transition, and Heteronormativity*

Lead Discussant (Readings: Sourcebook Chapters 4, 8) \_\_\_\_\_

Lead Discussant (Readings: Sourcebook Chapters 5, 6) \_\_\_\_\_

February 26<sup>th</sup>

*Theorizing about Sibling Ties and Stepfamily Relations*

Lead Discussant (Readings: Sourcebook Chapters 7, 9) \_\_\_\_\_

Analyzing and Summarizing Families and Change

Lead Discussant (\*\*Reading: Thornton, A article (2001). The developmental paradigm, reading history sideways and family change.) \_\_\_\_\_

- What do we know thus far: Reviewing Theoretical Approaches and Explanations for studying Change and Transitions in Families

March 5<sup>th</sup>

Family Interactional Patterns: Within and Across Generations and Dyads

*Implication of Time for Family Ties and Process and Work/Family Demands*  
Lead Discussant (Readings: Sourcebook Chapters 10, 20) \_\_\_\_\_

*Marriage and Intimate Couples' Issues*  
Lead Discussant (Readings: Sourcebook Chapters 11,12) \_\_\_\_\_

ASSIGNMENT DUE TODAY: **Media Case Study of Theory Application**

March 12-16<sup>th</sup> SPRING BREAK

March 19<sup>th</sup> *Theorizing about Family Violence, Aggression and Conflict*  
Lead Discussant (Readings: Sourcebook Chapters 13, 16) \_\_\_\_\_

*Theorizing about Parenting: Implication of Fatherhood, Parents, and Siblings on Youth Outcomes*  
Lead Discussant (Readings: Sourcebook Chapters 14, 15) \_\_\_\_\_

March 26<sup>th</sup> Contextual Processes and Family Patterns:  
*Social Status, Culture, Cognition and Parenthood*  
Lead Discussant (Readings: Sourcebook Chapters 17,19) \_\_\_\_\_

Lead Discussant (Readings: Sourcebook Chapter 21; Dodge et al., article: The Cultural Context of Physically Disciplining) \_\_\_\_\_

**FRIENDLY REMINDER:** *Presentations will begin NEXT WEEK: Each student presenting will prepare a handout critiquing-explaining-summarizing their project to distribute to the class the week BEFORE his/her presentation date. In turn, the non-presenters prior to and in preparation for the presentation will, on a 4x6 card (one per presentation), write thoughtful questions and comments intended to clarify and enhance the project being presented. These cards will be turned into the instructor at the beginning of class. At least 15 minutes of the class time for each presentation will be devoted to class questions, comments, and discussion.*

April 2<sup>nd</sup> *Doing Gender in Families*  
Lead Discussant (Reading: Sourcebook Chapter 18; Fox and Murry, 2000) \_\_\_\_\_

Theoretical Paper Presentations  
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April 16<sup>th</sup> Theoretical Paper Presentations  
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\_\_\_\_\_

April 23<sup>rd</sup>

Theoretical Paper Presentations

April 30<sup>th</sup>

Theoretical Paper Presentations

Wrap-up, Course Evaluation, Pot Luck

May 4

Final Paper is due by NOON today

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NOTE: We are encouraged by the University System to appraise students of The University of Georgia Academic Honesty Policy. Academic honesty means performing all academic work without cheating, lying, tampering, stealing, receiving assistance from any other person or using any source of information which is not common knowledge (unless that assistance is authorized by the person responsible for supervising that academic work or fairly attributed to the source of assistance or information).

\*\* Academic dishonesty means knowingly performing, attempting to perform, or assisting any other person in performing any academic work, which does not meet this standard of academic honesty. Academic work includes, but is not limited to, examinations, exercises, quizzes, term papers, reports, performances, presentations, and scientific experiments. <http://www.uga.edu.vpaa> \*\*You are to cite sources to which you refer in your responses; if you use materials verbatim, they should be presented at quotes and cited. Refer to the APA manual for additional information on professional writing style.

CHFD 6630 - Theories of Family Relations  
Instructor: Dr. V. McBride Murry

*GUIDELINES FOR Completing Theoretical Paper*

For this portion of the course you are to develop a theoretical paper that focuses on a question or questions about a family related issue or phenomenon. The theoretical paper is to be original and should be written from the perspective of providing new information or new ways of thinking about a family related issue. You should view this project as a concept paper that may be submitted for publication. Because of the limited amount of time available during the semester, **many of these sections should be worked on simultaneously**. Please consult the APA Handbook (5<sup>th</sup> edition) for information about writing style and citation format. Specific due dates for Sections I and II to be submitted to me for review are indicated below. Feedback on other sections of your paper will be provided upon request. A description of the following sections:

I. Identify a research question/problem(s) that you will focus on. Due Date for Electronic submission to my email: [vmurry@uga.edu](mailto:vmurry@uga.edu) January 22<sup>nd</sup>

II. Introduction - In this section you are establishing the problem that your work is addressing. You are building a case for why your topic is important - it sells the need and value of your topic along with providing a context for understanding why you have proposed certain patterns of relationships. In other words, explain why you have developed your research hypotheses. Also include in this section the potential contribution of your topic to a larger body of literature and its practical implications. Due Date for Electronic submission to my email, [vmurry@uga.edu](mailto:vmurry@uga.edu): February 19<sup>th</sup>

III. Literature Review - This section should include a brief overview of information about how your question or topic "fits" into what is currently known in the field of family relations. In this section you are summarizing all of the research related to your topic, including theoretical and methodological issues relevant to the phenomenon. To complete this segment of your paper, you are to review related literature specific to each of your proposed hypotheses or research questions. Discuss the major contributions to this general field of study. In writing, you should organize information in the order of your propositions or research hypotheses, and relationships illustrated in your theoretical model.

IV. Method. This section has been included in order to provide an opportunity for you to become aware of the interrelatedness of theory and methods. Each of the sections MUST be addressed and included in your paper. To

adequately address these issues, it will be to your advantage to be mindful of the way in which researchers have designed their study and operationalized concepts/variables. This section should be written in a thoughtful manner as if you were to implement a "real" research study to test your theoretical model. Include each of these subheadings in this section of your paper:

a. **Design.** For this section, you are to design your study to be reflective of the issues posed in your paper. Is your theoretical model more conducive to experimental, a participant-observation, and a series of interviews, survey/questionnaire, or direct observation research design?

b. **Subjects.** Give some thought to the participants in your study. In so doing, identify a population of interest, describe the criteria for selection, and give some thought to how they will be recruited.

c. **Measures.** What types of data will be collected? Think about what your research hypotheses and theoretical model. Examine your theoretical model and think about how each will be assessed. This will also allow you to become more aware of the extent to which your proposed model is testable.

V. **Conclusion** -- This section should include a discussion of what insights can be drawn from your theoretical review. What new knowledge may be generated from your proposed heuristic model? This section should also include a discussion of the implication of theoretical framework, in terms of either research, education, clinical, or policy.

VI. **References** - All citations used in your manuscript should be listed

Revised 1/14/20087

## Evaluation Forms

