

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

UG Course Syllabus

Family Psychology

SOSC 3888A

3 Credits

Term: Spring 2025

Location: LG3008

Time: Wednesday & Friday 4:30 pm – 5:50 pm

Instructor

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Teaching Assistant

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Course Description

Welcome to Family Psychology! This course introduces family dynamics and relationships through a psychological lens. It covers topics such as family formation, transition, and disruption, daily family life, couple relationships, parent-child relationships, and the impact of family systems on children's development.

Office Hours

During my office hours, you do not need to have an appointment to talk to me—just stop by my office! You can come to my office to ask for assistance in understanding the course materials or assignments, or you can chat with me about the course, college more generally, or anything else you want to talk about with me. Do not feel like you need to have a “good” question or reason to come to office hours. You can just pop in to say hello if you want. If you cannot make it to my office hours because you have a schedule conflict, please email me to schedule a meeting, and I'll be happy to meet with you at other times.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand general and domain-specific theories that guide family psychology research.
2. Critically evaluate research in the field of family psychology.
3. Recognize and appreciate family diversity.
4. Understand recent changes in family demography and family beliefs/values.
5. Understand how families interface with other societal systems.
6. Apply knowledge from family psychology to enhance understanding of real-life family experiences/issues.

Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing, and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Descriptions for each assignment are provided below.

Assessments and Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Task	Percentage	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
In-Class Activities	10%	ILO1-6	The in-class activities are designed to assess students' understanding of the lecture materials, collect their opinions on family psychology-related topics, and share different perspectives of thinking. Students will be asked to apply knowledge to various real-life contexts.
Reading Reflections	10%	ILO1-2, ILO5-6	This assignment is designed to encourage students to read articles on various topics related to family psychology and practice the ability to understand, interpret, and critically evaluate research findings in the family psychology field. Students are encouraged to think about the real-life implications and applications of the findings.
Topic + Article Selection	3%	ILO2, 3	These tasks are designed to offer students a chance to investigate and learn sub-topics of family psychology of their own interest.
Article Presentation	15%	ILO1-5	Students need to critically evaluate a few studies in the subfield that they choose.
Interview Plan	12%	ILO2, 3, 6	These tasks are designed to offer students first-hand experience in conducting psychological research

Interview Report	25%	ILO1-6	on family-related topics. These activities offer students a chance to appreciate diversity in family experiences and structures. Students need to apply psychological knowledge and principles to understand real-life family issues.
Final Exam	25%	ILO1-6	The exams are designed to assess students' comprehension of the core subject matter. The exam questions are designed to require students to evaluate research in family psychology, analyze psychological information, and apply psychological principles to various situations.

Final Grade Descriptors:

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	Students at this level demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of both overarching and domain-specific theories in family psychology. They critically evaluate research with a high degree of insight, recognizing strengths, limitations, and implications. These students show a deep appreciation for family diversity, articulating the complexities of various family structures. They are adept at analyzing recent family demographic changes in Hong Kong and other regions and can analyze changes in people's family beliefs and values. Additionally, they effectively examine the interactions between families and societal systems (e.g., school, work), applying their knowledge to real-life family experiences in a thoughtful and informed manner.
B	Good Performance	Students exhibit a strong understanding of both general and domain-specific theories guiding family psychology. They critically assess research with a good degree of clarity. These students appreciate family diversity and are able to discuss recent changes in family demographics and family beliefs. They demonstrate a solid understanding of how families interface with societal systems and show competence in applying their knowledge to real-life situations.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Students show an adequate knowledge of core subject matter, competence in dealing with familiar problems, and some capacity for analysis and critical thinking. Students show persistence and effort to achieve broadly defined learning goals.
D	Marginal Pass	Students have threshold knowledge of core subject matter, the potential to achieve key professional skills, and the ability to make basic judgments related to family psychology. These students benefit from the course and have the potential to develop in the discipline.
F	Fail	Students demonstrate insufficient understanding of the subject matter. They show limited ability to think critically or analytically

		and exhibit minimal effort toward achieving learning goals. They do not meet the threshold requirements for development in the discipline.
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Communication and Feedback

Feedback on assignments that are more than 10% of the final grades (e.g., interview reports) will be provided. Students who have further questions about the feedback, including marks, should consult the instructor or the teaching assistant within five working days after the feedback is received.

Required Reading Materials and Textbook

All the reading materials will be posted on Canvas. This course does not have a required textbook.

Late Submission and Make-up Policy

- No late submissions are allowed for attendance-related activities. Documented excuses are required for students with medical reasons to apply for make-up opportunities. Make-up submissions must be submitted within a week after the original class time. Students need to write a summary (120-250 words) and a reflection (250-400 words) on the required readings.
- For writing assignments (e.g., interview reports), there is a 5-hour grace period. For submissions after the deadline and within the grace period, 1 point will be deducted. For submissions after the grace period and within 24 hours of the deadline, a 20% penalty will be applied. For submissions after 24 hours past the deadline, a 50% penalty will be applied. No submissions will be accepted beyond one week after the deadline.
- If you cannot attend the final exam, please contact the instructor and the teaching assistant with **documented excuses**. Make-up exams will be arranged in the form of oral examinations (12-15 questions).

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

Course AI Policy

Students are encouraged to use artificial intelligence tools to facilitate effective learning. GenAI may be used as a tool but is not a substitute for completing the assessment tasks. The use of GenAI tools must be declared in assignment submissions. Undeclared AI use will be regarded as academic misconduct.

In-Class Activities (10 points | 2 points * 6+ opportunities, five highest scores counted)

During classes, we will have activities in various forms. The activities are designed to assess your understanding of the lecture materials, collect your opinions, and share different perspectives of thinking. You will earn up to 2 points for completing one activity. You can expect at least 6 graded activities offered throughout the semester, and only the five highest scores will count toward the final grades.

Reading Reflections (10 points | 5 points * 3 opportunities, two highest scores counted)

You need to submit written reflections on required readings. There are three chances for you to submit your reading reflections. Each reading reflection is worth 5 points. The lowest score will be dropped from the final grades.

- Reflections should each be around 300-400 words and should demonstrate that you have read the required articles and considered the content. The specific content and format of the reflections are open but should include comments and/or questions about at least two of the required articles.

Topic + Article Selection (3 points)

Within the first four weeks of classes, you need to form a group of 3-5 people. As a group, you need to decide on a research topic you are interested in. You need to submit your research question, a brief explanation of why you are interested in this topic, and a list of articles (one article per group member) you plan to read and present.

Article Presentation (15 points)

Each group will make a presentation (15-20 minutes) to the class during presentation sessions.

- Presentation quality will be evaluated by fellow students via a survey (5 points).
- The quality of content will be evaluated by the TA and/or the instructor (5 points for individuals and 5 points for the group).

Interview Plan (12 points)

You need to work with your group members to come up with a plan for conducting interviews on a topic related to family psychology. You need to specify your research question, who you will interview, a list of thoughtful review questions, potential issues in your plan, and your alternative solutions. Feedback about the plan will be communicated.

Interview Report (25 points)

Everyone should participate in the interview and interview at least one person. As a part of the interview report, each student needs to submit their own interview transcript or a summary of interview content, and a reflection on this activity (18 points). As a group, students need to write a summary of the interviews and a discussion about the findings (7 points).

Final Exam (25 points)

The final exam covers all the required readings and lectures. Exams are closed-book tests. Be sure to arrive on time for the exam since no additional time will be given to students who arrive late.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Context	Note
1	05 Feb	Course Introduction	
	07 Feb	Theories in Family Psychology	
2	12 Feb	Research Methods in Family Psychology	
	14 Feb		
3	19 Feb	Parent-Child Relationships	Find Your Group Members
	21 Feb		
4	26 Feb	Couple Relationships	2 March: Topic and Article Selection Due
	28 Feb		
5	05 Mar	Divorce and Remarriage	9 March: Reading Reflection 1 Due
	07 Mar	Children and Interparental Relationships	
6	12 Mar		Fathers, Siblings, and Grandparents
	14 Mar		
7	19 Mar	Family Transitions	23 March: Interview Plan Due
	21 Mar		
8	26 Mar	Family Psychopathology	
	28 Mar		
9	02 Apr	No Class: Midterm Break	06 April: Reading Reflection 2 Due
	04 Apr		
10	09 Apr	Family Psychopathology	
	11 Apr	Daily Family Life: Rituals and Routines	
11	16 Apr	Family and Other Contexts	
	18 Apr	No Class: Good Friday	
12	23 Apr	Family Diversity: Culture, LGBTQ+, etc.	27 April: Reading Reflection 3 Due
	25 Apr		
13	30 Apr	Presentations	
	02 May		
14	07 May	Final Exam	18 May: Interview Report Due
	09 May		

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the content and the timing of the content. Any changes will be conveyed in writing.