

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

UG Course Syllabus

Family Psychology

SOSC 3888A

3 Credits

Term: Spring 2026

Location: 2304 Academic Building

Time: Tuesday & Thursday 12:00 pm – 1:20 pm

Instructor

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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.

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 interact 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.
Family Psychology in Practice	5%	ILO5-6	This task is designed to provide students with firsthand experience in applying knowledge related to family psychology. It aims to deepen their understanding of how psychological insights can be utilized in practical settings and real-life situations.
Topic + Article Selection	2%	ILO2, 3	These tasks are designed to offer students a chance to investigate and learn sub-topics of family psychology of their own interest. Students need to critically evaluate a few studies in the subfield that they choose.
Article Sharing & Reflection	15%	ILO1-2, ILO5-6	These tasks are designed to offer students first-hand experience in conducting psychological research 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.
Interview Plan	15%	ILO2, 3, 6	These tasks are designed to offer students first-hand experience in conducting psychological research 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.
Interview Report	25%	ILO1-6	The exam is 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.
Midterm exam	28%	ILO1-6	The exam is 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 interact 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.

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 in-class 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.
- Make-up exams will ONLY be arranged for **documented medical reasons**. Students must contact the instructor or the teaching assistant no later than 24 hours after the scheduled exam time to request a make-up exam. Make-up exams will be in the form of oral examinations (12-15 questions). Make-up exams will be arranged within one week of the scheduled exam date. If students are unable to take the make-up exam within one week after the original exam date due to medical reasons, additional documentation and a formal application for an extension are required.
- For other assignments (e.g., interview plan and report), 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 24 hours after the deadline, a 50% penalty will be applied. No submissions will be accepted one week after the deadline.

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

GenAI may be used as a tool but is not a substitute for completing assessment tasks. AI tools can be used in assistant roles (e.g., proofreading, transcribing interview scripts) but must **NOT** be used in substantive ways (e.g., summarizing journal articles, analyzing interview results). The use of GenAI tools must be declared in assignment submissions. Undeclared AI use will be considered academic misconduct.

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

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

Family Psychology in Practice (5 points)

Option 1: PsyMatters On-Campus Event

Participate in the PsyMatters event (April 14–17) and write a short reflection (120–200 words). You should submit the reflection along with proof of participation (e.g., a photo). Detailed information will be provided in due course.

Option 2: PsyMatters Off-Campus Workshop

Register for the off-campus experiential learning workshop offered by the PsyMatters event. Participate in the workshop and then write a short reflection (120–200 words). Detailed information will be provided in due course.

Option 3: Family Services and Family-Related Seminars

[If you choose this option, you will need to identify potential events yourself.] You can participate in any family services in Hong Kong or family-related seminars (online or in-person, not limited to those offered by HKUST). After participating, write a short reflection (120–200 words) and submit it along with proof of participation (e.g., a screenshot of the webinar or a photo).

Topic and Article (3 points)

You need to select a research topic that interests you, choose two articles you plan to read, and provide a brief explanation of your interest in this topic, as well as your reasons for choosing the two articles (2-4 sentences).

Article Sharing & Reflection (15 points)

Share the knowledge you have gained from the articles you selected in your preferred format (e.g., poster, PowerPoint slides, podcast). Regardless of the format you choose, the content should include a summary of the articles and your analysis of both articles.

Interview Assignment

Interview Proposal (15 points)

This assignment can be completed individually or in a group of no more than five people. You need to come up with a plan for conducting interviews on a topic related to family psychology. You should specify your research question, provide a list of thoughtful interview questions, outline potential issues in your plan, and propose alternative solutions. Feedback about the plan will be provided.

Interview Report (25 points)

This assignment can be completed individually or in groups of no more than five people. Each of you must interview at least one person. You should analyze the interview data, report the results, and discuss your findings in your interview report.

If you choose to work in groups, you must also submit an additional individual reflection that discusses your interview findings (the one you conducted) and your thoughts on those findings. Additionally, compare your results to those of your group members, noting similarities and differences.

Midterm Exam (27 points)

The midterm exam will cover all content (required readings and lectures) up to the date of the midterm. Exams are closed-book tests. Please arrive on time, as no additional time will be provided for students who arrive late.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Content	Note
1	03 Feb	Course Introduction	
	05 Feb	Theories in Family Psychology	
2	10 Feb	Research Methods in Family Psychology	12 Feb: Topic Selections
	12 Feb		
3	17 Feb	No Class: Lunar New Year	
	19 Feb		
4	24 Feb	Parent-Child Relationship	
	26 Feb		
5	03 Mar	Couple Relationships	06 Mar: Poster or Podcast Due
	05 Mar		
6	10 Mar	Divorce and Remarriage	
	12 Mar	Children and Interparental Relationships	
7	17 Mar		
	19 Mar		
8	24 Mar	Fathers, Siblings, and Grandparents	26 Mar: Midterm
	26 Mar		
9	31 Mar	Family Transitions	
	02 Apr		
10	07 Apr	No Class: Midterm Break	
	11 Apr	Family Psychopathology	
11	14 Apr	Attend the PsyMatters event or workshop*	17 Apr: Interview Proposal Due
	16 Apr	Family Psychopathology	
12	21 Apr	Interview Project Consultation	
	23 Apr	Interview Project Consultation	
13	28 Apr	Daily Family Life: Rituals and Routines	
	30 Apr	Family and Other Contexts	
14	05 May	Family Diversity: Culture, LGBTQ+, etc.	15 May: Interview Report Due
	07 May		

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the content and timing of the course. Any changes will be communicated in advance (in writing or during class). *The exact time of the workshop is yet to be determined.