



Course Syllabus
PSY 102 L1
Dynamics of Marriage and Family
Fall 2025

Class Information

Day and Time: Tuesday/Thursday 12:15p-1:30p

Room Number: E207

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Denise Smith, BS, MA, ABD, LPC-Supervisor

Instructor Email: dsmith@criswell.edu

Instructor Phone: provided in class

Instructor Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description and Prerequisites

A detailed study of the family as a biblical and social institution. Relevant insights from the social sciences and history are used to illuminate the biblical model of family life. (Prerequisite may be taken concurrently: PSY 101)

Course Objectives

- Define and compare the concepts of family from a biblical as well as a contemporary North American cultural and social science perspective,
- Explore the history of American families and their current portrayals in events, policies, and pop culture in order to discern important distinctions for the church and its mission,
- Identify and understand key aspects within families including: family development, communication, common challenges, parenting, marriage, blended families, mate selection, and other major topics,
- Explain key factors contributing to the “healthiness” and “unhealthiness” of families,
- Introduce key counseling theories, techniques, and approaches related to Christian family therapy,
- Apply this knowledge to students’ own family, church, and community.

Required Textbooks

J. O. Balswick, J. K. Balswick, and T. V. Frederick, (2021). *The Family: a Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*. (5th ed). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN 978-1540963000

A. Kostenberger and D. W. Jones. (2012). *Marriage and the Family: Biblical Essentials*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway. ISBN 978-1433528569

Recommended Reading

S. Coontz. (2005). *Marriage, a History: from Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage*. New York, NY: Viking.

***D. Deaton, (2016). 15 Reasons Why Things Happen: Navigating the Adversities and Conflicts of Life. Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press. ISBN-13: 978-1512755633**

***D. Deaton, (2005). The Wonder of Worship. Maitland, FL: Xulon Press. ISBN-13: 978-1597815192**

Course Requirements and Assignments

1. *Weekly Summary Papers (30%)*: Students are required to upload to Canvas a one-page summary (approximately 250 words) of the assigned reading every Sunday by midnight before class. Each paper must be 12 point, Times New Roman font, double-spaced, and with one-inch margins. The top line of the page should contain the student's name, the date, and topic. The summary must contain concise statements of the main points or argument. Only important details should be mentioned to develop the skill of synthesizing. Summaries with "fluff" will have points taken away. The total number of summary papers due is 13 (graduating seniors 12), and the lowest grade will be dropped. Grades will depend on the quality of the responses to the following questions: 1) What was the author's main thesis or theses? 2) Does it affirm a biblical theology of the family or biblical norms? Why or why not?
2. *Analysis of Current Christian Thought on the Family (20%)*: Students must turn in a three-page paper (Times New Roman, 12pt font, one inch margins, top line for name/date/topic) that evaluates an influential source of Christian thought on the family such as a well-known author or an organization/ministry that has impacted the US Christian culture within the last 30 years. Examples are Focus on the Family or the Gottman Institute. The paper must substantiate why the source and its claims are important. This means students will explain why the organization/author believes it has something important to say about the well being of American families. Also, the paper must reflect an evaluation of the claims, the mission, and the methods that the organization has used to promote itself. Students are required to identify what they believe are the strengths and weaknesses of the organization/author, as well as demonstrate the reasons for the evaluation. More weight of the grade will go to the thoughtfulness of the analysis and use of knowledge from the course to substantiate the student's evaluation. This paper must be uploaded to Canvas and is due on December 13. Grading will be based on:
 - Format/style: 20%
 - Clarity & quality of evaluation: 60%
 - Selection of source: 20%
3. *Family Interviews (25%)*: Three reports will be due during the semester that contain each student's interactions with people in different stages of life. Students are to interview a single adult without children, a married couple with or without children, and a single parent using the questions and format provided in a separate sheet titled, Family Interview Instructions. Submitted on Canvas.
4. *Personal Evaluation (15%)*: At the end of the course, students will turn in a personal evaluation (2-3 pages, Times New Roman, 12pt font, one inch margins, top line name, date, topic) that describes how the information covered in the course has helped the student conform to biblical standards in one or more of their role(s) as a member of their family. Students may use the chart on page 22 of *The Family: A Christian*

Perspective as a starting point. The paper should answer two or more of the following questions: How did the content of the course help me understand how my childhood family dynamics impacted my behavior? Personal struggles? Fears? How did the knowledge of family topics from this course show me how I can be a better mate? Friend? Son/daughter? What new knowledge from the course impacted the way I see myself and my family relationships? How did the course and its content affect my spiritual growth? This paper is due Dec 6 by midnight and must be uploaded to Canvas.

5. *Class Participation (10%)*: Students are expected to attend all class times and to complete all assignments on time. No late work will be accepted. Class participation includes interactions with professor or classmates' statements by expressing comments, questions, applications, examples, etc. during class time. Class attendance will be recorded. More than four absences will automatically result in a failing course grade. Students will be fully responsible for their absences, and emergencies will require documentation. Walking into class 20 minutes or later will be considered half an absence, no exceptions.

Video Recording

To ensure FERPA compliance when a course is live-streamed or recorded, students can opt out of video recordings by requesting seating in a designated area off camera. Students who sit outside of this area are giving implicit permission to be recorded.

Class Attendance:

Students should only enroll in courses they are able to attend regularly.

- **On-campus** students are expected to attend class **in person** according to the course syllabus.
- Students enrolled in the **online section** must pay any applicable online course fees.
- Online students are expected to attend class **synchronously** at the scheduled time via the designated video conferencing platform, Zoom, found in the left-hand global menu in Canvas.
- Online students must have their **cameras turned on with sound muted** during class, and actively participate in discussions and activities. In order to be properly identified, students must upload a picture ID to their Canvas Account Profile *prior to the first online meeting*. For instructions on how to upload a profile picture, [click here](#).

Missed Classes:

- Each instructor may decide how attendance impacts your grade and learning objectives. Details are provided within the course syllabus.
- Students are responsible for catching up on any material missed due to absence or tardiness.
 - Instructors are **not required** to allow make-up work for missed classes.

Attendance & Financial Aid:

- Students receiving **grants, loans, or scholarships** must meet participation requirements set by the college.
- It is the student's responsibility to:
 - Review relevant sections of the Academic Catalog.
 - Contact the **Financial Aid Office** for details on how attendance affects aid.
 - Understand the consequences of non-participation.

Census Period Attendance Requirement:

- Though Criswell College does not officially take attendance, it must verify that students **begin their courses** to meet federal aid regulations.
- **During the census period** (first two weeks of a 16-week semester or first week of shorter terms), students must participate in **academically related activities**, or they may be dropped from the course.

Examples of Qualifying Activities:

- Attending class in person or via live video with the instructor present
- Submitting an assignment, quiz, or exam
- Taking part in assigned tutorials, study groups, or discussion boards
- Having documented communication with the instructor about course content

Important Note:

Simply logging into Canvas or a Zoom session without participating (e.g., camera off, no interaction) **does not count** as attendance.

Canvas:

- Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based Learning Management System (LMS).
- **For online courses** at Criswell College, instructors use Canvas to:
 - Organize course content on a module basis using organizational tools within Canvas
 - Control the timing of course requirements through module control or assignment due dates to ensure that students are engaged for the full length of the semester or term
 - Accept assignments from students only inside the Canvas course (emailed assignments are not acceptable)
 - Provide written feedback on assignments only within Canvas, preferably through Speedgrader
 - Use the Announcement or e-mail feature in Canvas to communicate with the students rather than by broadcasting to a class email listserv outside of canvas
 - Use Zoom in Canvas for all “live” (synchronous) class sessions

Important Note:

Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at 844-358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day.

Campus Closure

To ensure the health and safety of students and employees, college administrators may decide it is necessary on rare occasions to close the campus. Once this decision is announced, instructors will contact students to provide further details regarding the campus closure’s impact on those courses. Students are responsible to watch for communication from their instructors and respond appropriately. (Unless otherwise specified by the instructor in this syllabus, this communication will be sent to the student’s Criswell College e-mail account.)

In order to make progress toward the courses’ objectives, instructors have the freedom during most campus closures to require students to participate in activities as alternatives to meeting on campus. An instructor may, for example, hold class remotely (through Zoom) at the scheduled time, provide a recording of a class or presentation for students to watch independently, or assign other activities that students are to accomplish before returning to campus. Students are responsible for accomplishing these alternative activities as well as any course requirements listed in this syllabus during the period of the campus closure. If, during the period of the campus closure, personal circumstances prohibit a student from accomplishing these alternative activities or course requirements and assignment listed in the syllabus during the campus closure, the student is responsible for communicating with the instructor as soon as possible. Instructors will not penalize students who do not have the means to accomplish the alternative activities during the period of the campus’s closure and will work with students whose circumstances during the campus closure prohibited their timely completion of course requirements and assignments in the syllabus.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour
A-	90-92	3.7 grade points per semester hour
B+	87-89	3.3 grade points per semester hour
B	83-86	3.0 grade points per semester hour
B-	80-82	2.7 grade points per semester hour
C+	77-79	2.3 grade points per semester hour
C	73-76	2.0 grade points per semester hour
C-	70-72	1.7 grade points per semester hour
D+	67-69	1.3 grade points per semester hour
D	63-66	1.0 grade point per semester hour
D-	60-62	0.7 grade points per semester hour
F	0-59	0.0 grade points per semester hour

Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An "I" may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar's Office. The "I" must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the close of the term or semester in which the grade was awarded, or the "I" will become an "F."

Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting. Academic honesty includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,
- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

Course Policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Examples of AI-related functions you **may not use** without permission:

- Text Generation – You may not use AI to generate text for use in an assignment.
- Outline Generation – You may not use AI to generate an outline for an assignment.

AI-related tools you **may use** without permission:

- Spellcheck and grammar – built into Word, Pages, and Google Docs
- AI re-writing tools – tools that take what you’ve written and help make it clearer, such as what Grammarly offers. However, you must cite Grammarly or other sources in your assignment/paper and submit both original draft of paper and the final paper.
- AI research and summarize – tools that help you find sources to cite, such as the new AI tools built into Logos Bible Software.)

Basically, you can use AI to help find sources and research, but you cannot use it to write.

Institutional Assessment

Material submitted by students in this course may be used for assessment of the college’s academic programs. Since programmatic and institutional assessment is done without reference to specific students, the results of these assessments have no effect on a student’s course grade or academic standing at the college. Before submitting a student’s work for this type of assessment, the course instructor redacts the work to remove anything that identifies the student.

Institutional Email Policy

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students’ institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

Disabilities

Criswell College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Criswell College is committed to making reasonable

accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws. For more information, please contact the Student Services Office.

Intellectual Property Rights

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the instructor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

Research and Writing Standards

The default writing style for written assignments in Criswell College Courses is the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian. However, instructors are free to require alternative writing styles in their courses. These styles include but are not limited to the American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago Manual of Style, Modern Language Association (MLA), and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) writing guides.

Resources and Supports

Canvas and SONIS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and SONIS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with SONIS should contact the Campus Software Manager at studenttechsupport@criswell.edu.

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or studentservices@criswell.edu. The Student Services Office also works with local counseling centers to ensure that every student has access to helpful mental health resources. More information is located on the college website at [Criswell College Mental Health Resources](#), and students may contact the Director of Student Services if they have any questions.

Wallace Library: Students can access a wide range of academic resources and receive research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, located on the second floor of the Education Building.

Login credentials for accessing the library's databases are emailed to students near the beginning of each semester.

For more information or assistance, email the Wallace Library at library@criswell.edu or visit www.criswell.edu/academics/wallace-library/.

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to enhance their skills and build confidence. All tutors are recommended by faculty to ensure they are qualified to support the student body. To meet with a tutor, students can schedule an appointment through Calendly at <https://calendly.com/criswell-tutoringcenter>. The Tutoring Center is located in room E203 of the Education Building.

For questions, email tutoringcenter@criswell.edu.

Course Outline/Calendar

Week	Date	Topic/Assignment
1	Aug 19 & Aug 21	Syllabus; History of the Family in America (Fam 1-23)
2	Aug 26 & Aug 28	Scripture, biblical theology, and the family (Fam 24-46)
3	Sept 2 & Sept 4	Mate Selection and Dating (Fam 47-77)
4	Sept 9 & Sept 11	Biblical models of marriage (Fam 78-108)
5	Sept 16 & Sept 18	Marriage counseling and family background (Mar 9-38) Single adult interview due Sept 20
6	Sept 23 & Sept 25	Helping marriages with common struggles (Mar 39-51)
7	Sept 20 & Oct 2	Helping marriages with common struggles (Mar 131-144)
8	Oct 7 & Oct 9	Biblical models of parenting (Mar 53-78) Couple interview due Oct 11
9	Oct 14 & Oct 16	STUDENT DEVELOPMENT WEEK
10	Oct 21 & Oct 23	Theories of parenting (Fam 109-129)
11	Oct 28 & Oct 30	Family development stages and maturity (Fam 130-153)
12	Nov 4 & Nov 6	Family spirituality and major challenges (Fam 154-178) Single parent interview due Nov 8
13	Nov 11 & Nov 13	Gender and Sexuality (Fam 199-236)
14	Nov 18 & Nov 20	Communication, conflicts, and closeness (Fam 237-269)
15	Nov 25 & Nov 27	FALL BREAK
16	Dec 2 & Dec 4	Families and the greater social spheres (Fam 270-313) Personal evaluation due Dec 6
17	Dec 9 & Dec 11	Finals Week No Summary Due Analysis of Source on Christian Family due Dec 13