



Course Syllabus

PSY 102 L1

Dynamics of Marriage and Family

Fall 2026

Class Information

Day and Time: Tues and Thurs 12:15-1:30pm

Room Number: E201

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Jennifer R. Burgess, PsyD

Instructor Email: jburgess@criswell.edu

Instructor Phone: 214.818.1371

Instructor Office Hours: Tues 1:30p-3:00p and Thursday 11a-12p; 1:30-3:00p

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. (This course satisfies requirements for a Social/Behavioral Science course.)

Course Objectives

- Explore historical theoretical perspectives on couples and family dynamics as well as the impact of diversity on expectations of patterns
- Recognize internal and external factors affecting family life and construction
- Understand romantic relationship formation, sexuality, and how these can be applied with consistency through Christian worldview
- Demonstrate knowledge of common marital and family processes essential to adaptive functioning (e.g. communication skills, conflict resolution skills, interaction patterns, etc)
- Understand risk and resiliency factors commonly identified in current theoretical approaches and how these can be implemented to support more cohesive family units
- Examine impact of family conflict, dysfunction, divorce, and blended family on both adults and children with the family unit

Required Textbooks

Balswick, J.O, Balswick, J.K., & Frederick. T. V. (2021). *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*. 5th Ed. Baker Academic: ISBN 978-1540963000.

Recommended Reading

Additional articles and readings will be assigned and provided to students via Canvas weekly Modules throughout the semester.

Course Requirements and Assignments

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (40% of overall grade): 10 sets of reflection questions will be assigned throughout the semester. For each question (2-3 questions per assignment) write a well-developed discussion response of **at least 400 words**. Your responses should demonstrate critical thinking, engagement with course materials, as well as integration of an appropriate Biblical quotation into your discussion. Students will be permitted to drop their two lowest grades on these assigned discussions. While not prohibited, students are encouraged not to just ‘skip’ a set of questions as these have been developed to challenge and encourage deeper thinking about the various topics of discussion related to marriage and family dynamics essential to this course.

GENOGRAM Paper (40% of overall grade): Students will complete a genogram of their own family history including their generation and 2 prior generations, incorporating significant relationships and emotional connections between key family members. Students are not expected to seek out information beyond what they know of their family unless they choose to do so. The genogram should be completed using GenoPro software. A free academic trial has been set up for each student which will cover your use of the program for 180 days. The website to download and install this software is <https://genopro.com/registration/> and the referral ID is jburgesspsyd. *Tip: this software historically does not work well with MAC computers. You are strongly encouraged to complete this task on a PC. Plan to begin this process early as a genogram takes longer to build than most students realize and the program itself has a bit of a learning curve. Once the genogram has been completed, students will be expected to reflect on their family genogram, history, emotional connections, conflicts, etc and to write a 6 page paper considering the patterns, dynamics, emotional dynamics of their own family with regard to information on theoretical applications of genograms. The paper should not incorporate information that can readily be seen on the genogram, but rather dig into the family dynamics present in the students family of origin which explain the impact of one's family on one's own development and relationship dynamics. **Additional information on the paper will be provided on Canvas so be sure to review that information.** This assignment will require students to submit two documents: the paper and the genogram itself.

ATTENDANCE AND APPLICATION EXERCISES (20% of overall grade): Students will be expected to participate in various in class application exercises, many of which include a task to be completed either as part of the class time or brought to class with them. Each of these activities explores an application of a key concept to marriage and family therapy. Students will earn participation credit for the completion of these activities and for participation in the class discussion element of them. Lack of participation in class discussion or frequent absences will jeopardize a student's application grade. Missing more than 4 class periods without prior instructor approval or failure to adequately participate in periods application activity will result in 5 points deduction per additional day missed from class participation grade.

Course/Classroom Policies and Information

Internet use is required to complete several experiential assignments and assessments throughout the course of the semester. These can be completed either on campus or remotely depending on the individual students' needs. All assignments and weekly information will be provided to students via Canvas so that students might arrive prepared for class, having completed all tasks and assignments prior to arrival in class. Success in this course requires a time commitment to complete outside assigned readings and tasks in advance of the scheduled class period where students will be expected to engage in meaningful discussion of the topics. This is a 3 credit course, which means students should expect to spend a minimum of 6 hours per week outside of class on assigned readings, homework, and projects. Thus, students should come to class prepared to engage in discussion, not to observe a lecture. Class participation is required regularly in order to earn full participation credit. See class attendance policy for additional details.

LATE WORK - All assignments are expected on or before the deadline indicated in the syllabus. If unforeseen, extenuating circumstances occur, students should contact the professor as soon as possible to discuss the potential impact of the situation. In general, late assignments will not be accepted without prior approval from the professor, and then may incur a penalty depending on the circumstances. It is strongly encouraged for students not to wait until the day before a due date to submit assignments or complete tests through Canvas. IT issues sometimes arise and may jeopardize your ability to complete the assignment by the due date. Extensions for technical issues are typically not granted unless the problem is extensive and affects class wide availability. Waiting to submit an assignment until just before class begins and then experiencing IT issues DOES NOT automatically guarantee your assignment will be accepted. Late work not given prior approval to be submitted after the due date will be given a grade of 0.

CELL PHONES - All cell phones and any other electronic equipment should be turned off or placed on silent during class. Any electronic device used in class to take notes must likewise be put into silent mode (including the keyboard functions) in order to minimize the disruption to one's classmates. Should one's electronic device become a distraction to the class, the professor reserves the right to request that it be turned off during class times.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSIONS – All assigned work and exams must be completed through Canvas and be submitted prior to beginning of class time (do not email written assignments. Upload your .docx files through Canvas). Assignments not submitted by the assigned due date and time, may not be accepted for grading. It is strongly encouraged that students not wait until the last minute to submit graded work. It is the instructor's preference that students submit all work in .docx format for uniformity of submission. It is strongly encouraged that students submit all work consistent with APA formatting

as it is considered a standard presentation format within the field. However, APA formatting is not a requirement on the response papers for this course.

Extra credit work is not permitted. Students are expected to plan and execute assigned work sufficiently throughout the semester to earn the grade they wish from the course. Students are welcome to seek tutoring or additional help from Dr. Burgess during office hours at any point during the semester (appointments are recommended). If students are not scoring well on exams or written work, Dr. Burgess is very accessible to discuss ways in which the student may improve scores on future work. Students who miss more than 2 consecutive days or are not performing well on course work will be brought to the attention of the student success office. This is not punitive, but rather to insure that struggling students have every opportunity to be successful in their coursework.

COMMUNICATION WITH DR. BURGESS – Dr. Burgess strives to respond to email within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours on the weekend. As such, students are strongly encouraged to begin assigned tasks well before the due date so as not to jeopardize completion of an assignment on time because of technology problems or other confusion about assignment expectations. I strive to have all papers graded within 5 days of the due date for a written assignment to allow for expedient feedback and improvement for future assignments. Students are also encouraged to schedule an appointment during my office hours to discuss questions, concerns, or guidance they may need. Voicemails left on my official campus voicemail will be checked during office hours only. If your issue is pressing and cannot wait, emailing is likely going to get you a quicker response.

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.)

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

Date	Topic	Assigned Reading	Assignment Due
8/18 & 8/20	Secular and theological perspectives on Marriage and Family	Ch 1 & 2	
8/25 & 8/27	Attraction, Dating, and Relationships	Ch 3	DQ 1 Due 8/29
9/1 & 9/3	Becoming One: Marriage	Ch 4 & 5	
9/8 & 9/10	Family of Origin		Additional Readings on Canvas DQ 2 Due 9/12
9/15 & 9/17	Genograms		Additional Readings on Canvas
9/22 & 9/24	Gender Roles and Culture	Ch 11	DQ 3 Due 9/28
9/29 & 10/1	Communication	Ch 13	
10/6 & 10/8	Family Spirituality	Ch 8	DQ 4 Due 10/10
10/13 & 10/15	Sexuality	Ch 12	NO CLASS 10/15 DQ 5 Due 10/17
10/20 & 10/22	Social Dynamics, Career and Family Transitions	Ch 14	DQ 6 Due 10/24
10/27 & 10/29	Attachment and Parenting Young Children	Ch 6 & 7	DQ 7 Due 10/31
11/3 & 11/5	Parenting Teens and Launching Young Adults	Ch 9	DQ 8 Due 11/7
11/10 & 11/12	Empty Nesters and Aging Together	Ch 10	DQ 9 Due 11/14
11/17 & 11/19	Broken and Blended Families	Ch 16 & 17	DQ 10 Due 11/21
11/24 & 11/26	Thanksgiving Week NO CLASS		
12/1 & 12/3	Surviving the Storms	Ch 15	Genogram Paper due 12/3
12/8	Finals Week – NO IN PERSON CLASS		