

Sociology 332 - Sociology of Families

University of Montana

MWF 11:00-11:50 EDUC 312 Fall 2020

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Email is our best contact method

Mtgs by appointment (zoom or in person)

Office: SS 321

Office Hours: MWF 10:00-10:45

Tentatively planning to hold office hours in EDUC either on the third floor concourse or in room 312

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The primary goal in this course is to introduce and explore important issues related to the influential social institution understood as family. Our complex society continues to undergo major changes in theoretical and practical discussions regarding family issues. I expect you to gain a fuller understanding of the functioning of families, the social processes inherent in marriages and family groupings, and challenges facing contemporary families. We will consider concepts and perspectives in order to develop a stronger and more comprehensive understanding of the myths and realities of family life. In addition to acquiring new knowledge about the institutional characteristics of marriages and families, you will gain insight into your own family relationships (past, present, and future).

This course includes a great deal of student participation. Open, honest dialogue will help us understand history as well as current situations involving marriages and families. You will be asked to discuss your ideas and explore *evidence* regarding those ideas with the class. We will move beyond personal experience as we study social forces and institutional structures that influence families. **Active involvement is absolutely necessary!**

INTRODUCTION:

My name is Rick Anderson and I'm happy to be teaching this course. I first took a family sociology course in 1987 and was impressed by the notion that scholarly research could simultaneously be personal, rigorous, and useful. I taught my first family sociology course in 1991 as a 24 year old grad student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and have taught it nearly every year since remaining intrigued and enthusiastic about systematic analysis of families.

I grew up living about 2 miles outside of a small central Minnesota town called Staples with a population of about 2200. I am the oldest of five and we are each married now (not to each other) and have kids (several of them are adults now) of our own. Among the five of us we have direct experience with adoption, divorce, remarriage, infertility, artificial insemination, attention deficit disorder, depression, anxiety, attempted suicide, the autism spectrum, and dementia to name some but not all topics relevant to this course. My family of orientation and my in-laws all live in Minnesota.

I graduated from high school in 1985 (in a class of 117 students) and was active in football, wrestling, track and field, choir, and band (as well as 4-H, NHS, church stuff and summer jobs). My family was eligible for reduced fee lunches growing up and I know that part of my work ethic comes from not having much as a kid. I graduated from Luther College (a school I could only afford due to good financial aid and the fact that tuition, room, and board back then was less than \$9000 annually) in 1989. I sang in Luther's Nordic Choir and while the experience was amazing, probably the most important event that occurred during those years was that I impressed Donna with my talent and wit. Donna and I have been married for nearly 30 years and have two sons, Drew and Brook. Drew graduated college in 2016 and is working in Des Moines coaching youth sports and driving for the elderly. Brook graduated in 2018 majoring in math and minoring in anthropology. He worked as a field technician at Bear Creek Archeology in Northeast Iowa and is now living in Des Moines driving for Hyvee and tutoring. Donna is the Senior International Officer and Executive Director of Global Engagement here at UM.

I have absolutely loved getting to know Missoula and the surrounding area since moving a year ago. I am an active person with a lot of energy to pursue a lot of interests so we have hiked nearly every weekend excepting a handful when we went cross country skiing. I have done a fair amount of mountain biking and I've

put quite a few miles on my road bike riding the trail toward Hamilton. I've even taken to trail running here as that is yet another way to enjoy the outdoors in this spectacular setting.

While I sometimes take myself and my work too seriously I am actually a very funny person (and if you don't think so you likely have HDD). Sociology for me is not just a course or a discipline. Sociology is a way of understanding the world and my place in it through systematic analysis and interpretation. Sociology helps me understand a whole range of behaviors and attitudes from the simplest to the most complex. My identity as a sociologist continues to develop as I have only been immersed in the field for about 30 years. My answer to a commonly asked question, "Why do you care about this stuff?" is abundantly clear to me- because it matters! I want you to give a damn about the issues we explore. Ultimately, all this learnin' doesn't do a whole lot of good if it doesn't help make you a better person who can contribute to making the world just a little bit better. The reason I disclose this much information about myself so that you know something about me as we begin the semester together considering the institution of family.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students successfully completing this course should:

1. understand the institution of family, including its interdependence with other social institutions.
2. employ a sociological approach to the analysis of values including understanding how personal and cultural values result from social forces and structures.
3. consider the social construction of inequality (including social class, sex, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity), identify the cultural and structural supports of inequality, and articulate the effects of inequality at both the macro and micro levels.
4. situate personal experiences in a social context by actively employing the sociological imagination.

REQUIRED TEXT:

Cohen, Philip. 2018. *The Family: Diversity, Inequality, and Social Change- Second Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company. FYI- He is a Cohen brother but not one of *the* Coen brothers.

EXPECTATIONS and CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:

Please be fully present! I will ask you for your input frequently...these questions are not rhetorical. Ultimately, you are responsible for your own learning!!! *Participation* entails more than mere physical presence. It is absolutely essential that you keep up on your reading and writing as this will maximize your gains. Students who struggled with this course in the past simply did not keep up with the work.

Since we address a variety of issues in an honest, open, systematic manner, it is essential that we treat each other respectfully. Given the range of perspectives explored, we will sometimes hold different positions and we must be free to disagree. We begin our institutional analysis of families by recognizing that values and norms are socially constructed. We will not shy away from sensitive issues but will discuss them frankly and civilly.

Communication

Though many of us text often, use facetime or other apps, and use some form of social media, the primary mode of communication outside of class for this course is **email**. I will regularly use the Moodle email function to communicate important information about the class schedule, class content, assignments or expectations. Unless I am off the grid I will respond to your email within 24 hours during the week. On weekends I may not respond to messages until Sunday evening. I will try to control my eye roll if I have answered the question in class or it is in the syllabus. Do your best to be a responsible adult as we all adapt and adjust to this unusual semester.

You must maintain a university email account and check it regularly for class announcements. You are responsible for all information contained in class announcements that I send via email or post on Moodle. Please contact me via email with questions or comments about the course and/or your performance in the course. I am available for zoom calls during office hours but also at other times if you are not available during my posted office hours.

When emailing me (and other UM faculty), always:

- Use your UM email account
- Include “SOCI 332” or “Soc of Family” in the subject line of your email
- Sign your full name (first and last)

Devices

Don't use them...unless they are enhancing your learning and not distracting others. Seriously, don't check messages and/or social media during class it hinders your learning and disrespects others including me. Really! Don't check 'em! I'm serious! You may use your computer to take notes and sometimes I'll ask you to search for info on a device.

Academic Honesty

Do not cheat. The majority of students do honest work. To the few students who do not adhere to such ideals, I want to stress that cheating (getting unauthorized help on a quiz, test, or assignment) and plagiarism (submitting work as your own that is someone else's) in any form are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The institution will hold students accountable for academic dishonesty (full policy available in the student handbook). Please ask if you have questions about plagiarism or other forms of cheating. Cheating really hurts you in the long run. Just dig in and do your work and you will get a lot out of this class. Bottom line- don't cheat. It's stupid and it will not pay off in the long run.

University Policy

You must practice academic honesty in this course. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which is available for review online (<http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/default.php>).

Accessibility

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think that you may have a disability that adversely affects your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact them in Lommasson Center 154 or (406) 243-2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

Preferences

My pronouns are he, him, and his and I affirm and acknowledge all gender expressions and gender identities. Please share your pronouns with me and the class as you are comfortable.

If you prefer a different name than the name on the class roster, please let me know so that I can call you by that name.

UM's Cultural Leave Policy

The new cultural and ceremonial leave policy allows excused absences for cultural, religious, and ceremonial purposes. To receive an authorized absence for a cultural, religious, or ceremonial event, the student or their advisor must submit a formal written request to the instructor. The request must include a brief description (with inclusive dates) of the cultural event or ceremony, and a brief statement about the importance of the student's attendance or participation. Authorization for the absence is subject to approval by the instructor; students may appeal the instructor's decision to the Department Chair, Dean, or Provost. The excused absence or leave may not exceed five academic calendar days (not including weekends or holidays). Students who take excused leaves are responsible for completion or make-up of assignments, at the instructor's discretion. Students can find more information about the University of Montana's cultural leave policy here:

<https://catalog.umt.edu/academics/policies-procedures/>.

Accommodations

If you have a condition that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please contact me ASAP. All DSS requests accompanied by a letter for accommodation will be honored.

Late Work

Late reflection papers may be submitted for *half credit* if I receive them within *two weeks* of the original deadline. The Topics and Titles assignment and the Sources assignment and the Draft for the Literature Review Paper may earn half credit if submitted after the deadlines.

Relationship Contracts and Final Literature Review Papers will incur a 10 point penalty for each day that they are late.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Reading and comprehending the material in the Cohen text is mandatory as it provides the base for our classroom interactions. **Questions and Reflection (Q&R)** You will respond to at least 5 of the Questions for Review at the end of each chapter (you may answer all of them if you want to). Then you will *reflect* on issues in or related to the content of the chapter. Your **Q&R** for each chapter should be between 500-1000 words. This assignment requires you to read and comprehend each chapter, to see where data challenges popular opinion, to wrestle with some research ambiguity, and to demonstrate sociological mindfulness. I want you to engage with the material presented in the book in meaningful way and demonstrate that you have considered issues carefully through your critical analysis. Submit **Q&R** on Moodle before class begins on each due date. *Late reflection papers may be submitted for half credit if I receive them within two weeks of the original deadline.* You must complete 12 of the 13 Q&Rs.
- 2) I will *pair you* with a classmate and together you will create a **Relationship Contract**. Detailed guidelines provided in a separate document. This assignment requires thoughtful dialogue and significant writing.
- 3) You will focus on a particular topic or issue regarding marriages and/or families and review scholarly research for your **Literature Review Paper**. Successful literature review papers will introduce and examine empirical evidence, identify theoretical perspectives, analyze the quality of the research, synthesize information, consider important issues and make recommendations. Detailed guidelines later.
- 4) This class requires active **engagement** (not the type immediately prior to marriage). Our text will guide us through many discussion topics. I will introduce many topics throughout the semester and I expect you to be prepared to offer critical thoughts, evidence, and reasoned explanations. Please look for current events/news that relate to the course and share them with the class. Instead of a traditional exam the final will be an interactive discussion that counts toward your participation grade.

Please contact me if you have any questions, concerns, or particular considerations about any of the course requirements. Do not wait until you are completely overwhelmed.

EARNING YOUR GRADE:

You are responsible for *earning your grade* in this course. Scores will be recorded on eLearn and accumulate throughout the semester. Please check regularly to see that your work is successfully submitted and scores recorded.

Reflection Papers	12 x 20 points each	240
Relationship Contract		70
Topic and Titles		10
Sources		10
Literature Review Draft		20
Literature Review Paper		100
<u>Engagement (active participation)</u>		<u>50</u>
Total		500

You should regularly check Moodle to be sure that scores are properly recorded.

A	93-100%	A-	90-92.9%	B+	87-89.9%
B	83-86.9%	B-	80-82.9%	C+	77-79.9%
C	73-76.9%	C-	70-72.9%	D+	67-69.9%
D	63-66.9%	D-	60-62.9%	F	0-59.9%

August

W19 Intros & Expectations

F21 Start reading- this is a very good book but the chapters are long

M24 Ch. 1 A Sociology of Family (**Moodle- submit Q&R before class**)

W26

F28 Ch. 2 The Family in History (**Submit Q&R to Moodle for every chapter**)

M31

September

W2 Ch. 3 Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration(**keep submitting Q&R to Moodle for every chapter**)

F4

M7 No Class- Labor Day

W9

F11 Ch. 4 Families and Social Class

M14

W16 Ch. 5 Gender

F18

M21 **Literature Review Topic and Titles Due**

W23 Ch. 6 Sexuality

F25

M28 Ch. 7 Love and Romantic Relationships

W30

October

F2 **Relationship Contract Due**

M5 Ch. 8 Marriage and Cohabitation

W7

F9 Ch. 9 Families and Children

M12

W14 Ch. 10 Divorce, Remarriage, and Blended Families

F16 **Sources Assignment Due**

M19

W21 Ch. 11 Work and Families

F23

M26

W28

F30 Ch. 12 Family Violence and Abuse

November

M2 **Full Draft Literature Review Paper Due**

W4

F6

M9

W11 No Class- Veteran's Day

F13 Ch. 13 The Future of the Family

M16

W18 **Final Literature Review Paper Due**

Friday, November 20th 8:00-10:00 a.m. Final interactive session

Questions and Reflection (Q&R) Scoring Rubric

20= Your writing demonstrates an excellent grasp of the concepts described in the chapter and consider the issues critically. You identify important points- they are well selected and well examined. You make explicit connections to other chapters, classroom activities, materials considered or current events. It was interesting to read what you had to say about the implications of the material in the chapter. You have organized your comments in a meaningful and compelling manner. You use higher order thinking throughout the reflection and avoid reductionism.

19= Quite excellent but still a bit of room for improvement. Your comments are well written and suggest that you have spent considerable time thinking about these ideas and applying your sociological imagination. See description above.

18= You demonstrate a very good understanding of the material in the chapter. You provide good comments about your three big points and analyze many pertinent examples. Your comments are well written and suggest that you have spent some time considering the issues.

17= You demonstrate a good understanding of the material in the chapter but may have overlooked some significant topics. You provide some good comments about issues and share some pertinent examples. Your comments are mostly clear and suggest that you basically understand and can apply the material in the chapter. Perhaps an extended example or more critical analysis would show more evidence of higher order thinking.

16= You demonstrate a basic understanding of the material in the chapter. You provide some decent comments but perhaps only provide cursory review of your three big points.

15= You provide an adequate discussion of some of the ideas in the chapter. Your writing does not show convincingly that you can really apply the concepts described. You may have read most of the chapter but your writing sounds more like a chapter summary than a serious reflection. More evidence is needed to show that you understand the implications related to the material. Perhaps time was short or you had other priorities but the reflection lacks depth and breadth.

14= You are missing important issues worthy of consideration. You should write more and analyze more thoroughly.

12-13= If you gave this your best effort then we need to talk. The answers you provide are insufficient and suggest a lack of comprehension of the material or the expectations for the assignment.

0-11= Your reflection overall is superficial and often inaccurate.

RELATIONSHIP CONTRACT GUIDELINES

Due: October 2

Your contract should be “reasonable” based on evidence provided in Cohen and other family sociology texts or scholarly publications. This contract is an exercise that should be based on reality not fantasy. You may consult material in our text and any additional sources you find helpful.

A relationship contract is a statement of one's expectations about the relationship. If you are currently in a relationship with a significant other you may recruit that person to complete this contract with you. Otherwise you will pair up with a person in this class for this assignment. The assignment works best if you are honest and grounded and are considering the themes from your own position in terms of sexual identity and gender expression. So, if you are heterosexual you should approach the assignment as such (even if you pair up with a person of the same sex from this class). If you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, or asexual also approach the assignment from your perspective. Try to consider your relationship goals as they relate to each of the categories discussed. In every case, the two of you will create a relationship contract that is comprehensive and reasonable. You may choose to write some paragraphs independently if that seems appropriate. Even if you never use such an instrument, this contract should address all the issues that you consider important in a marriage like relationship. The final contract should be at least 2000 words and might be significantly longer depending on your approach, style and format. Take the exercise seriously and include enough discussion regarding the issues you deem important to demonstrate that you thought carefully about them.

Some reasons for writing a relationship contract...

...First, partners need to articulate the primary focus of their relationship. Will their union be utilitarian or intrinsic? Will you get married? Can you get married? In your relationship **MUST** you get married eventually? Being honest with your partner about the practical advantages motivating you to marry can prevent misunderstanding later.

...Second, writing a personal agreement can allow partners to understand each other's role expectations.

...Third, partners may have different ideas of what a committed relationship means and different expectation about how they will behave in relationships. Discussing and negotiating these differences is important. Writing a contract before marrying can point out differences, many of which can be worked out.

...Fourth, love before and during early years of a relationship is often “blind.” Negotiating personal contracts help cut through this tendency to romanticize, for the process involves asking questions about daily living together. These questions are important, and great care should be taken in designing them.

...Fifth, it helps partners be aware of and avoid at least some common problems.

Topics to explore carefully in this relationship contract:

1. Preliminary statement of relationship goals.

Will you aim primarily at developing intimacy and is this different from a focus on romance? Or do you want to emphasize more practical advantages from being together or even being married, such as economic security or escape from your parents' home, for example. What kind of relationship do you and your partner realistically anticipate? How do you feel about a relationship that is unsatisfying? Should partners learn to accept these gracefully, work toward changing them, or divorce? Essentially, this topic asks you to consider what you want out of the relationship and whether marriage itself is an expectation.

2. Provisions for dissolution of the relationship (separation and/or divorce).

When should a marriage be dissolved and under what conditions? How long and in what ways would you expect to work on an unsatisfactory relationship before dissolving it? What factors would lead you to divorce?

3. Decision making and division of labor.

Will decisions be made equally? Will there be a principle breadwinner? Or will partner equally share responsibility for earning money? How will funds be allocated? Will there be "his," "her," and "our" money? Or will all money be pooled? Must you consult on all purchases? Are “big” purchased joint decisions? Will there be a principle homemaker? Or will domestic chores be shared? Will one of you be a stay at home parent if you choose to have children? How will you accomplish any or all of this?

4. Relationship to relatives.

How will you relate to your own and to your spouse's relatives? How do you expect your partner to relate to them? Will you expect to share many or most activities with relatives? Or do you prefer more couple-togetherness, discouraging activities with relative? Specifically, what will you do with all the holiday expectations? What are your rights and obligations? How might distance be a factor?

5. Communication expectations.

Will you purposely set aside time to talk with each other? What topics do you like to talk about? What topics do you dislike? Are you willing to try to become more comfortable about discussing these? If communication becomes difficult, will you go to a marriage counselor? What percent of your income would you be willing to pay for marriage counseling?

6. Educational goals

What about your educational goals? What educational goals do you expect your partner to have? Under what circumstances could you or your partner put aside wage-earning or housekeeping responsibilities to pursue advanced education? Which person will have first priority in terms of pursuing a degree? Will you relocate to pursue education? Will you relocate for job opportunities? Would your willingness to relocate relate to your age or, if you choose to have them, the age of your children?

7. Children.

Do you want children? If so, when? How many children would you like and how would you like to space them? Whose responsibility is birth control and what kind of contraception will be you use, if any? What is your attitude toward unwanted pregnancy: adoption? keeping and raising the child?

If you have children, how do you plan to raise them? How will you allocate child responsibilities and tasks? Will either person be primarily responsible for discipline? What are some of your values about raising children? Will physical punishment be used?

8. Expectations for sexual relations.

Can you discuss your sexual needs and desires openly with your partner? Do you know what your expectations are in terms of sexual activity? When and how will you discuss issues related to sex? Are there sexual activities which you consider distasteful? How would you sexual dissatisfaction or even sexual dysfunction in the relationship?

9. Friendships and privacy expectations.

How much time alone do you need? How much are you willing to allow your partner? Are either of you making assumptions about private time? How much "time with her friends" (on the phone or in person) or how many "nights out with the guys" do you consider appropriate? How much time and how much intimate information will you share with friends other than your partner? What is your attitude toward friendships with persons of the opposite sex?

In what ways do you plan to manage electronic devices that impact relationships with friends and your significant other? Will you have your phone with you at all times? Will you look at your phone constantly? Will you have access to each other's devices and accounts?

10. Time off/Vacations

What kinds of vacations will you take? This may relate to some of the issue you discussed in the previous category. What kinds of trips might you take? Will you take couple-only vacations? Will you take separate vacations? If so, how often and what kind?

11. Religious beliefs and practices

What are your religious values? Do you expect your partner to share them? Will you attend church services together? How often? If you are of a different religion from your mate, whose church will you attend on special religious holidays? What about the children's religion? Will they be baptized in a particular church or be initiated in a particular faith tradition? Will your offspring be involved in making their religious decisions?

12. Political views.

This is especially important given our current political climate so consider politics broadly not just official or explicitly political actions. Are you a registered voter? Why/Why not? Which party? What platform issues seem interesting or important to you? Do you suspect that you and your partner might vote differently on many issues? How will you address issues where you disagree (especially on significant issues)?

Beyond voting and official political activities, how will you discuss issues that are both personal and political? Will you work to resolve political disagreements? Will you openly discuss politically charged issues? Don't think that this category doesn't apply to you! Issues like whether you will vote "yes" on the local public school referendum or for the 1% sales tax increase to fund a particular need almost inevitably enter family discussions. So, too, do discussions about how to support troops in Iraq or the role of the U.S. in international affairs.

13. Unanticipated events.

How will you deal with death or dismemberment (a great term that insurance agents get to use all the time)? How will you prepare for the unexpected? Do you have a will? How will you prepare for the possible death or dismemberment of your future spouse? What would you want them to do if something catastrophic should happen to you? What sorts of things might you include in a will? If you have children who would you name as their guardians? Would the insurance money go in a trust until a certain age?

14. General discussion.

What are your own and your partner's definitions of primary concerns, intimacy, commitment, responsibility? Are there concepts that you used in this contract that need to be defined? This is the category to discuss any additional issues or topics that you may want to entertain. Are there things that you need to discuss more? Were there topics that seemed easier or harder to discuss than others? Do you think that these sorts of discussions occur regularly for engaged couples? Are there topics that should be considered in even more depth? How would this contract and the process of creating it be improved?

LITERATURE REVIEW TOPIC AND TITLES

Due: September 21

For this assignment you must identify a topic appropriate for this sociology of family course. There are hundreds of options- Be curious and find something that interests you as you will be spending much time with it and then sharing it with the class. Genuine enthusiasm inspires impressive results.

For this Topics and Titles assignment you must provide **at least** a short paragraph describing your topic and questions (or specific subtopics or issues) you are interested in pursuing. Do your best to explain what you are interested in and how it is connected to the institution of family.

Additionally, you must include titles and complete citations for **at least 5 good scholarly sources**. (A complete citation looks something like this:

Johansson, T. (2015). Fatherhood in transition: Paternity leave and changing masculinities. *Journal Of Family Communication*,11(3), 165-180.)

You should read abstracts and page through (or scroll through- as I assume most of you will access full text research articles available on-line) articles to be quite confident that the source fits your topic. This topic and titles assignment is somewhat speculative as it is early in the process. You may revise this list as your topic and particular issues related to it become clearer to you. In other words, you may add and delete as appropriate for subsequent assignments related to your review of literature paper.

Scholarly sources should be published within the last decade unless you are intentionally looking back to see how research on your topic has changed over time (even then you may be able to rely on pretty recent articles that will briefly review the history of research on the topic). Use the CRAAP test shared by our librarians and posted on our eLearn site.

SOURCES ASSIGNMENT

Due: October 16

List at least **7 scholarly sources** and provide a full citation for each. Then briefly review each article and make short notes on the following:

- Summary
 - Write a short description that identifies the purpose or primary focus of the source and the findings or conclusions presented.
- Accuracy & Reliability
 - Is the information presented accurate and reliable? How do you know? What is the author's information source (a questionnaire, interviews, observations, experiments)? Was the sample representative? What operational definitions were used for key variables? How, exactly, were the variables measured?
- Currency
 - When was the source published? Sources should be recent (within 10 years). If an older source is used, what is the justification?
- Relevance & Relationships
 - How does the source relate to your current topic and to other sources you have cited? Did this source point your research in a different direction or change the way you interpreted the rest of your sources? Do the conclusions support or contradict conventional thinking or previous literature?
- Phrases/Concepts
 - What ideas are you likely to incorporate in your literature review paper? Any quotes you should identify for future use?
 - Identifying great phrases to quote or paraphrase as you read them can save you much time.

LITERATURE REVIEW PAPER GUIDELINES

Draft Due: November 2nd

Final Due: November 18th

Your literature review draft should be solidly developed and be at least 1800 words. You must include a reference page and references must be cited throughout the paper. It is a real draft, an actual paper, not just a collection of material and some ideas about what you think you will do with it eventually.

The final literature review paper will be a 2000-3300 words essay that reviews and examines what the research shows us about your topic. Your final literature review must incorporate at least **7 peer reviewed scholarly research articles**. The primary goal of this exercise is to recognize the complexity of the topics and issues you are dealing with, the difficulty in conceptualizing and measuring many variables, and the importance of scholarly research.

Your literature review should provide a solid base for understanding your topic. In other words, what does the body of research literature show about your topic? Explain what researchers have asked about the topic and summarize the overall findings. You should be able to identify areas of consensus among researchers as well as remaining challenges or questions that need further analysis. Good reviews will identify strengths and weaknesses of the research.

As you read and analyze scholarly research articles you should ask yourself: What is the author's main claim (what seems to be the point)? Do the authors present reasons for their claims (why do they believe their main point)? Which reason is most convincing to you? Does the author present evidence for those reasons? What one thing do you like most about the article? What is one thing that you were unclear about? What ideas, changes or new directions (if any) has the article made you consider? Additional questions that might guide you include: How generalizable are the findings from each article? What factors contribute to the situation that you are describing? Are there forces outside of individual control that shape our opportunities? What lessons can we learn as we address this topic? Is there more than one "right" answer to some of the questions related to your topic?

Be creative and professional. Write clearly and purposefully. **Proofread** you're material or it can get so slopy that it is hard to read the sentences that might, in fact have run on or other grammar problems and it really detracts from the strength of the writing that is being presented as a formal paper that should persuade people to believe you.

Save and turn in all drafts with your final draft. I expect to see "real" revisions and improvements not just a little editing. This is formal writing and it should be done carefully over several drafts!

Disclaimer: I reserve the right to modify this syllabus at any time and in any way.