



**Theology of the Family**

**“Family isn’t something that’s supposed to be static, or set. People marry in, divorce out. They’re born, they die. It’s always evolving, turning into something else.” [S. Dessen](#)**

**Time:** Mondays 2:30 - 4:30 in rm 303  
Wednesdays 2:30 - 3:30 in rm 303

**Course Director:** Dr. Sheila Kappler  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 1:30 – 2:15  
(and by appointment)

**Office:** tba  
**e-mail:** through the course site on OWL

**Course Description:**

This course examines various understandings of family: what it is, how it gets defined, its relationship to other institutions, how it has evolved and continues to evolve. Specifically, we will examine the theological constructs sustaining the Judeo-Christian understandings of the family, and how they have changed and developed over time. In addition to discussing the traditional and contemporary teachings of Judaism and Christianity on marriage and family, the marital and familial teachings of additional faith traditions will also be considered.

The bulk of the course will focus on contemporary developments in understandings of families and the myriad questions the 21<sup>st</sup> century poses to traditional theologies of family.

**Antirequisites:** for 2150: Religious Studies 2140, 2223E and 2265E.  
for 2265E: Religious Studies 2140, 2150, and 2223E.

**Course Requirements:**

task	2150	2265 E
in-class tests	20%	20%
forums (on-line discussion)	20%	15%
beyond the texts	10%	10%
article review	15%	n/a
research seminars and essay	n/a	20%
chapter preparation and discussion	10%	10%
final exam	25%	25%

## Required Texts:

1. Browning, Don S. *Equality and the Family*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007.
2. Carr, Anne, and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, eds. *Religion, Feminism and the Family*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.
3. Other readings are available on-line or on reserve in the Brescia library.

## Description of Requirements:

1. **In-class tests** (10 % each). These tests will be in week 9, on Monday the 11<sup>th</sup> of November and in week 18, the 10<sup>th</sup> of February.
2. **Participation in the forums** (2150: 20%, 2265 E: 15%) -- This section of the course is to be completed on-line, through the OWL Sakai platform. Each week (except as noted in the calendar of readings) we will engage in on-line discussion of the course reading material for that week. Details of this task will be fully discussed in the first class, and posted on the course site on the OWL course home page.
3. **Beyond the texts** (10%) This task affords you some options:
  - a) you can read a course related book, or view a film, and review it;
  - b) you may find a documentary or series of articles in the mainstream news on which to report;
  - c) you may want to explore your faith denominations doctrinal stand on a related issue.

The novel, film, news report or ecclesial stance you select must be relate-able to the readings and concepts discussed in class, and the best work here will clearly establish the connections, challenges, and questions it poses.

Please submit the written portion of your work through the Assignments tab. Your presentation to the class should be interactive and engaging. Whatever medium you choose, your topic needs to complement course lectures and discussions. Your presentation should be 15 – 20 minutes long.

*This task is to be completed in the first term, before the break in December / January.*

#### **4. Article Review (2150 only: 15%)**

This assignment affords you the opportunity to select an article or chapter from the list provided, to read the selection and prepare a review of it. The review is to be 4-5 pages, and include:

- ✚ a summary of the major points presented by the author (not more than 1 page)
- ✚ reference as to how the topic relates to other course material
- ✚ challenges / questions raised by the author
- ✚ some personal comment on the issues raised.

This review is to be submitted through the Assignments tab no later than the 3rd of February, class 17.

#### **5. Research Seminars and Essay (2265E only: 20%)** [seminar participation: 8% paper: 12%]

This task asks you to select a topic from those suggested on the course readings schedule, research and write an 8-10 page formal essay on the subject.

Should you wish to propose a different topic, be sure to consult with your instructor well in advance of beginning your research. Such consultation will take place through the Assignments tab on the course homepage.

There will be two compulsory seminars in which we will discuss the progress of your research over the course of the year. The dates for these will be set early in September, but ideally they will be during week 5 (the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of October) and week 15 (the third week of January). At these seminars we will discuss areas of interest for research (October) and research to date (January). A third conversation about the completed papers will take place on-line.

This paper is due no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> of March, class 21. See General Expectations, number 1, below. By that date, papers will be posted in a dedicated forum for discussion and comment.

Be sure to document your paper carefully. I recommend MLA style (see point three (3) below, at General Expectations). You must document your sources for any idea or content you take from any source, and not only that which you quote directly. Failure to document your sources constitutes plagiarism. See point two (2, at General Expectations) below.

## 6. Readings preparation and discussion (10%)

Along with participation in the forums, each student has the opportunity to provide a summary of one day's reading (from the required readings list posted) and to moderate the discussion of those readings in a class of their choice.

- ✚ Choose and sign up for the reading(s) you wish to present, and read them thoroughly.
- ✚ Prepare a one – two page summary of the three or four main points presented.
- ✚ Make your summary, with relevant quotations and focus questions, available to us the class before you are to present. You can do so by posting your work in the relevant forum on the course webpage. This will give us all some time to consider the material thoughtfully.
- ✚ The day of your presentation, you will moderate the discussion in class. Your presentation should be engaging and interactive: simply reading is precluded.

The task here requires you to engage the text in a meaningful way: to present and lead an interactive discussion about the main points. Focus on the main ideas, comparing and contrasting them. Include some critique of underlying assumptions, approaches, strengths and weakness.

This presentation should typically run about 15 - 20 minutes.

## 7. Final Exam (25%) Definitions, short answers and essays.

The final exam will be in the April exam period. The use of electronic devices is not permitted at the final exam.

**Instructional Objectives:** upon successful completion of this course students will have the capacity to:

1. evaluate with a clear understanding the past and current religious and secular views of marriage and family;
2. demonstrate a thoughtful understanding of contemporary visions of marriage and family;
3. reflect theologically on these contemporary religious and secular understandings of marriage and family and to evaluate their advantages and shortcomings;
4. reflect on their own family relationships and;
5. assess their own operative theology of family.

## General Expectations:

**1. Deadlines:** Deadlines are firm, and must be met. Absence from class on the day work is due does not constitute an extension. Any extension must be negotiated with the instructor prior to the due date and recorded, by email. Any work submitted after the due date for which you have not followed this procedure may be penalized at five (5) per cent per day.

It is particularly important that presentation dates are honoured. Failure to present on the specified date will be penalized by not less than 35%.

A medical accommodation for work valued at less than 10% of your total grade can be established, in writing (preferably email, as above), with the instructor. For all other cases, please refer to Westerns policy regarding “Medical Accommodation Policy,” available at <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>

**2. Academic Integrity:** One operative assumption of this course, as with all university courses, is that all work you submit for marking will be **your** work. You must **properly cite all the sources** from which you gather your ideas and phrasing, and not only the directly quoted material.

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence – please see: Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar, available at [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

All required papers are to be submitted through the Assignments tab on the OWL Sakai course site. This site sends papers through turnitin.com, the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between the University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Plagiarism may be penalized with a failing grade in the assignment and an offence record that will be held in the Dean’s office.

There is a helpful resource available at [www.uwo.ca/ombuds/pdf/academicintegrity.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/pdf/academicintegrity.pdf)

**3) Academic Style:** There are a number of acceptable styles of documentation: Chicago, MLA and

APA. The MLA (Modern Language Association) style is preferred for this course.

*This is the first thing I look at when assessing your papers. Be attentive.*

The MLA recommends a Name-Page method. In this method, no footnote or endnote is needed. Rather you can make a brief parenthetical citation in your text.

i.e., “Mysticism is seen to be a highly specialized search for reality, for heightened and completed life, which we have found to be a constant characteristic of human consciousness” (Underhill 27).

The parenthetical reference includes the authors surname and the relevant page number with no punctuation intervening. Placed on a separate sheet, at the end of the paper, is a list of Works Cited, as below:

Underhill, Evelyn. *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*. 12th ed. New York: World Publishing, 1930.

The list of “Works Cited” must include an entry for each source you use in your paper.

I recommend: Buckley, Joanne. *Fit To Print: The Canadian Students Guide to Essay Writing*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Toronto: Nelson, 2008.

An on-line document guide can be found at  
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

**4) Inclusive Language:** Use non-sexist, non-discriminatory language in your writing. Language that reinforces sexism (or racism, ethnic bias, homophobia, or other forms of prejudice and discrimination) should not be used. Some general points: In English, there is a tradition of using male terms to refer to the whole human population: *Aman*, *A mankind*, *Ahe*, and *Ahis* are often employed in the generic sense. Since these terms refer also to exclusively male populations, using the same term for the two different meanings is ambiguous. Be specific: if you mean all people, males and females, say so. Instead of *man/mankind* -- use *humanity*, *human beings*, *human race*, *people*, *person(s)*, *individual(s)*, *men and women*, *women and men*.

**5) A Respectful Learning Environment:** A respectful learning environment is a collective responsibility. We will listen to each other with openness and consideration, respecting individual differences and honouring each person’s right to hold her or his own beliefs. This does not preclude discussion and/or disagreement, but does call for a considerate sharing of opinions and ideas.

**6) Grading:** Grading will be based on the extent and quality of research and on the imagination and critical judgment shown in papers and on the exam.

University-wide grade descriptors:

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

See <http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2013/pg104.html> for the reference in the UWO Calendar.

**[Further Information about Policies and Procedures at Brescia](#)**

## **BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC POLICIES AND REGULATIONS**

### **1. POLICY REGARDING MAKEUP EXAMS AND EXTENSIONS OF DEADLINES**

When a student requests academic accommodation (e.g., extension of a deadline, a makeup exam) for work representing 10% or more of the students overall grade in the course, it is the responsibility of the student to provide acceptable documentation to support a medical or compassionate claim. All such requests for academic accommodation **must** be made through an Academic Advisor and include supporting documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds will be granted only if the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete her academic responsibilities. Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined by the Deans Office in consultation with the students instructor(s).

***Please note that personal commitments (e.g., vacation flight bookings, work schedule) which conflict with a scheduled test, exam or course requirement are not grounds for academic accommodation.***

A UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is **required** if a student is seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. A SMC can be downloaded under the Medical Documentation heading of the following website: <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>. If it is not possible to have an SMC completed by the attending physician/nurse practitioner, the student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that her ability to meet academic responsibilities was seriously affected. Please note that under University Senate regulations documentation stating simply that the student “was seen for a medical reason” or “was ill” is **not** adequate to support a request for academic accommodation. All documentation is to be submitted to an Academic Advisor.

Whenever possible, requests for academic accommodation should be initiated in advance of due dates, examination dates, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and Academic Advisor in a timely manner.

The full statement of University policy regarding extensions of deadlines or makeup exams can be found at [http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

## 2. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

If you feel that you have a medical or personal problem that is interfering with your work, contact your instructor and Academic Advisor as soon as possible. Problems may then be documented and possible arrangements to assist you can be discussed at the time of occurrence rather than on a retroactive basis. Retroactive requests for academic accommodation on medical or compassionate grounds may not be considered.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your work load is not manageable, you should consult an Academic Advisor. If you consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines (refer to the Registrars website, <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/index.html> for official dates). You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. *Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP eligibility and/or Entrance Scholarship eligibility.*

The Dean may refuse permission to write the final examination in a course if the student has failed to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year or for too frequent absence from the class or laboratory.

## 3. ABSENCES

**Short Absences:** If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or assignment. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow notes from a classmate. Contact the course instructor if you have any questions.

**Extended Absences:** If you have an extended absence, you should contact the course instructor and an Academic Advisor. Your course instructor and Academic Advisor can discuss ways for you to catch up on missed work and arrange academic accommodations, if appropriate.

## 4. POLICY ON CHEATING & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences. Students are urged to read the section on Scholastic Offences in the Academic Calendar.

Note that such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course in the University or elsewhere. Students are advised to consult the section on [http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/resources/selected\\_teaching\\_topics/academic\\_integrity/](http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/resources/selected_teaching_topics/academic_integrity/).

If you are in doubt about whether what you are doing is inappropriate or not, consult your instructor, the Student Services Centre, or the Registrar. ***A claim that "you didn't know it was wrong" is not accepted as an excuse.*** The penalties for a student guilty of a scholastic offence (including plagiarism) include refusal of a passing grade in the assignment, refusal of a passing grade in the course, suspension from the University, and expulsion from the University.

### Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

**Computer-marked Tests/exams:**

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating. Software currently in use to score computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams performs a similarity review as part of standard exam analysis.

**5. PROCEDURES FOR APPEALING ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS**

All appeals of a grade must be directed first to the course instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course instructor, a written appeal signed by the student must be sent to the Department Chair. If the response of the department is considered unsatisfactory to the student, she may then submit a signed, written appeal to the Office of the Dean. Only after receiving a final decision from the Dean may a student appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic. A Guide to Appeals is available from the Ombudspersons Office, or you can consult an Academic Advisor. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Rights and Responsibilities in the Western Academic Calendar.

**6. PREREQUISITES AND ANTIREQUISITES**

Unless you have either the prerequisites for a course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Similarly, you will also be deleted from a class list if you have previously taken an antirequisite course unless this has the approval of the Dean. These decisions may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course because you have taken an antirequisite course.

**7. SUPPORT SERVICES**

The Brescia University College Registrars website, with a link to Academic Advisors, is at [http://www.brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar\\_services/index.html](http://www.brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar_services/index.html).

The Western Registrars website is at <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/index.html>.

The website for the Student Development Centre at Western is at <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

---

*Portions of this document were taken from the Academic Calendar, the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policy and the Academic Handbook of Senate Regulations. This document is a summary of relevant regulations and does not supersede the academic policies and regulations of the Senate of the University of Western Ontario.*

## **Appendix A: Recommended Readings**

On reserve at the Brescia library are some texts you may find useful for essays, presentations, and forum discussions preparation.

Bogle, Kathleen A. *Hooking Up*. New York University Press, 2008.

Brizendine, Louann. *The Female Brain*. New York: Morgan Road Books, 2006.

Dunnewold, Ann and Sandi Kahn Shelton. *Even June Cleaver Would Forget the Juice Box: Cut Yourself Some Slack (and Still Raise Great Kids) in the Age of Extreme Parenting*. HCI, 2007.

Ellison, Katherine. *The Mommy Brain: How Motherhood Makes us Smarter*. Basic Books, 2005.

Emery, Robert E. *The Truth About Children and Divorce: Dealing with the Emotions so You and Your Children Can Thrive*. Plume Book, 2006.

Gerhardt, Sue. *Why Love Matters: How Affection Shapes a Baby's Brain*. New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004.

Gottman, John M., and Nan Silver. *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999.

Hetherington, E. Mavis and John Kelly. *For Better or for Worse: Divorce Reconsidered*. Norton, 2002.

hooks, bell. *all about love: new visions*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2000. ISBN 0060959479  
Johnson, Olive Skene. *The Sexual Spectrum: Exploring Human Diversity*. Raincoast Books, 2004.

Lawlor, Michael G. *Marriage and the Catholic Church: Disputed Questions*. Liturgical Press, 2002.

Rauch, Jonathan. *Gay Marriage: Why it is Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America*. New York: Times Books, 2004.

Solot, Dorian and Marshall Miller. *Unmarried to Each Other: The Essential Guide to Living Together as an Unmarried Couple*. Marlowe & Company, 2002.

Other texts may be added. These will be posted on the course homepage.