

**Point Loma Nazarene University
Psychology Department
Psychology 3080.1 (3 Units)
Family Development and Family Therapies
Spring 2026 Syllabus**

Instructor:	John T. Wu, Ed.D.
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Meeting Times:	MWF 8:30-9:25 AM, Ryan Learning Center 101
Final Exam:	Monday May 4th 7:30 AM-10 AM

Could This Class Really Matter?

It is not your love that sustains your marriage, but from now on, your marriage that sustains your love.
Told to a couple on their wedding day by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in 1943.

The family you come from isn't as important as the family you're going to have.
Ring Lardner

To maintain a joyful family requires much from both the parents and the children. Each member of the family has to become, in a special way, the servant of the others.
Pope John Paul II quotes

To us, family means putting your arms around each other and being there.
Barbara Bush quotes

You don't really understand human nature unless you know why a child on a merry-go-round will wave at his parents every time around - and why his parents will always wave back.
William D. Tammeus quotes

One thing most people agree on is that the family is important. No matter how much money, fame, status, or power we acquire, it is our families that we treasure most at life's end.

This class is designed to explore how healthy families operate, and how unhealthy families can get better. This class will show you the common mistakes people make that undermine their odds of having great families. This class will matter to you because it can give you a map to becoming better partners, spouses, and parents.

PLNU Mission:

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Catalog Description:

Introduction to the normative stages and crises affecting families over the life span and to the major theories of family and marital psychotherapy. Emphasis on how various models work with relational systems to facilitate development through times of crisis and developmental transition. Also focuses on therapeutic issues of substance abuse and on legal issues involved in child, spousal, and elder abuse. Family developmental theories are applied to community organizations in order to assist students in understanding how system principles are used in community consultation.

The professor reserves the right to change the syllabus at his discretion.

Course Objectives:

- Expose students to theological ways of thinking about the family.
- Expose students to the importance of the family and impacts of divorce.
- Introduce the common theoretical orientations in family therapy.
- Introduce special topics such as substance abuse and child abuse.
- Expose students to community consultation models such as marriage education and pre-marital couple's preparation.
- Increase students' understanding of their own family dynamics.

Student Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course you will be able to...

- Describe seven family theories and their core concepts and techniques.
- Critique the impact of marriage, divorce, and cohabitation.
- Describe families from a theological perspective.
- Summarize marriage education in the areas of mate selection, premarital preparation, and divorce prevention.
- Compare concepts of family therapy to your own family.
- Predict possible impacts to your future family based on your own family analysis.
- These objectives will be achieved through your diligent study of the assigned readings, lectures given, videos shown, group presentations, and key written assignments.

Readings:

Lomabooks Instructions for Students★:

*This course is part of our course material delivery program, **LomaBooks**. The bookstore will provide each student with a convenient package containing all required physical materials; all digitally delivered materials will be integrated into Canvas. You should have received an email from the bookstore confirming the list of materials that will be provided for each of your courses and asking you to select how you would like to receive any printed components (in-store pick up or home delivery). If you have not done so already, please confirm your fulfillment preference so the bookstore can prepare your materials.*

For more information about **LomaBooks**, please go: [HERE](#)

Our course will use two required books and one recommended book:

- Nichols, M., and Davis, S. (2020). Essentials of Family Therapy, 7th Ed. Pearson: Boston.
- Gottman, J. M. and Silver, N. (2015). The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert.
- Supplemental readings accessed through Canvas.

Recommended book :

- Yoyo Dad 2: Dating Well in an Up and Down World. (Search Amazon for “Yoyo Dad”).

Course Credit Hour Information:

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a 3 unit class delivered over 15 weeks. It is anticipated that students will spend a minimum of 37.5 participation hours per credit hour on their coursework. For this course, students will spend an estimated 112.5 total hours meeting the course learning outcomes. The time estimations are provided in the Canvas modules.

Grading:

The final grade will be based on a combination of five exams, two papers, one book journal, and one final. Students may drop the lowest of the first five exams but must take the final. Students must take the final and turn in the Family Paper to pass the class.

	Points	My Score
Exam 1	80	
Exam 2	80	
Exam 3	80	
Exam 4	80	
Exam 5	80	
Genogram Project	30	

Family Analysis Paper	50	
Gottman Book Journal	35	
Comprehensive Final Exam	120	
Total	555	

PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT NORMAL CURVE GUIDES

Z Score				
A	1.33	0.0918	9.2%	
A-	1	0.1587	6.7%	15.9%
B+	0.67	0.2514	9.3%	
B	0.33	0.3707	11.9%	
B-	0	0.5	12.9%	34.1%
C+	-0.33	0.6293	12.9%	
C	-1	0.8413	21.2%	
C-	-1.33	0.9082	6.7%	40.8%
D+	-1.67	0.9525	4.4%	
D	-2	0.9772	2.5%	
D-	-2.33	0.9901	1.3%	
F	<-2.33	1	1.0%	9.2%

Percentage Score		
A =	93-100%	
A -	90-92%	
B +	87-89%	
B	83-86%	
B -	80-82%	
C +	77-79%	
C	73-76%	
C -	70-72%	
D +	67-69%	
D	63-66%	
D -	60-62%	
F	59%	or below

The student will receive the **higher grade** between Z Score and Percentage Score grade calculations. A minimum of 60% is needed to pass the course.

Grades will be based on the Psychology departmental standards for upper division courses. The professor reserves the right to adjust the scale if needed. Students are expected to participate in discussions. In the event a student's final grade is within three points of the next grade, classroom participation will be considered in assigning the final grade.

All examinations except the final are non-comprehensive and will cover the text, lecture, and video material. The format of the examinations may consist of multiple choice, fill-in, short answer, and essay questions. The final is comprehensive. No make-up exams will be given without the prior approval of the instructor. If an exam is missed without an authorized excuse, that exam will be the dropped exam.

Final Examination Policy:

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination **on its scheduled day**. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Class Schedules](#) site. No requests for early examinations or alternative days will be approved.

Assignments:

There are three individual written assignments:

- a. The first written assignment is a **detailed genogram** of your family that extends at least three generations. This is worth 30 points. This project should have **two sections**.
 - i. One section will show all family members in a **genogram** (and include important features such as marriage, separation, divorce, alcoholism, abuse, mental illness, etc.). On the genogram include a **key** that shows history of alcohol, mental illness, major health concerns, etc. Show this key even if your family does not have these issues so that it is clear you assessed the issues.
 - ii. A second section will show your immediate family and your parents and their parents in a **structural chart** (who is close to whom?). Please break the structural chart into pieces to show the specific relationships – not one large structural chart showing everyone at once.
- b. The second written assignment is the signature assignment of the course: a **family/biography assessment**. Using class lectures and readings, you will write an analysis of either your personal family (at least three generations) or another family you know **extremely** well (it is highly recommended that you use your own family if possible). You may choose any theoretical orientation (or blend of orientations). 50 points / approximately 10-15 pages. Please label each of the ten sections.

Analysis should include the following ten questions:

Family Analysis Section:

1. A brief overview of the theory used.
2. Introduce your family (who are the members?). What is the structure of the family (e.g., is it open, closed, close or distant? How did your parents get along with each other and their parents? If they are not together what is your understanding of why? How did you get along with them?).
3. Strengths and struggles (negative family patterns, substances, mental health).
4. Impact of gender and ethnicity (what ethnicity are your parents and grandparents? What impact did this have on your family?)
5. Impact of finances and spirituality (what do your parents do for a living?)
6. Experiences with death.
7. Intervene in your family using your theory. How would it be different?

Self-Reflection Section: (Reflect on your own life and future family.)

8. Think about how your family impacted you in good ways and not so good ways. What lessons do you wish to bring into your future family? Based on your family analysis and your previous romantic patterns, what do you need to guard against in your future romantic relationships? **Ask someone** who knows you well (not a dating partner) what they recommend you remember when you choose a mate and build a family.
9. Based on your family and past relationships give tips to your current or future spouse about how to successfully be married to you.
10. When your own child is 25 years old, what do you hope he or she will say are the most important things he or she learned from you? What do you need to do now to help make that happen?

C. The third assignment is a **book journal** on the **Gottman book, The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work**. Write one page for **each chapter** (including the afterward) that consists of two parts: summarizing the key ideas, and giving your opinion of the material. Please separate these parts in different paragraphs. You will have 12-14 pages total, but should think of this as a lightly graded journal, not a well-crafted paper (but spelling still counts!). An alternate assignment is that you can make a **video** where you teach Gottman's Seven Principles to an imaginary group of engaged couples (include how he predicts divorce and the tips in the afterward). Each principle should be clearly described and explained, and include text or graphics. The length should be 5-10 minutes total, and you will upload the Youtube link on canvas. Either assignment is worth 35 points.

The requirements are as follows:

*Use 8 ½ by 11 paper, typewritten, on one side only.

*Place the title and your name on the top of the first page.

*Use double spacing and one inch margins. The Gottman assignment may be single spaced.

*All late papers lose 10% per week late; no papers will be accepted after the last day of classes (nothing is accepted during finals week).

**Papers will be submitted electronically on Canvas in PDF format.

State Authorization:

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on [State Authorization](#) to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

PLNU Copyright Policy:

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

Academic Integrity and Behavioral Expectations:

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been

detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

This class will be conducted in accordance with the college student code of conduct and basic standards of academic honesty. It goes without saying that any forms of cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty are not acceptable and will severely impact your grade and any future letters of recommendation. Is it really worth it? Part of my job is to help create a positive learning community. If you repeatedly have a negative impact on that community, I reserve the right to lower your final grade by one letter grade. Ultimately, everyone has to choose whether they will contribute or break down community, and I invite you to be a contributor.

Attendance is a critical component of this course. Much of the learning comes from class discussion and material not covered in the book. That is why the PLNU attendance policy will be closely followed. Please note that only Provost approved, university-sponsored activities are excused and personal reasons such as illness or family events are not.

Of course we all have personal reasons why missing class might be necessary, and so **each student receives four personal absences**. At the end of the semester, each unused absence will be converted into an extra credit point (yes, you can get four extra credit points simply by attending class each day.) **Each unexcused absence or tardy beyond four will be minus three points**. If absences are excessive, the student may be dropped from the class.

I am asking you not to use laptops:

I strongly recommend not using laptops in class. The reasons are three fold:

1. It is hard to not check other things, which impairs your learning. You most likely are not aware of the impairment, but the research is quite clear.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01443410.2018.1489046>
2. Even if it doesn't impair your learning, it impairs others learning.
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131512002254>
3. You write more but learn less. Writing your notes creates synthesis which increases your learning.
<http://pss.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/04/22/0956797614524581.abstract>
http://chronicle.com/blogs/linguafranca/2014/08/25/why-im-asking-you-not-to-use-laptops/?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en

So I am asking you not to use laptops unless you need or strongly prefer a laptop to take notes. In that case talk to me and we will make that work.

Office Hours: Make appointments directly with the professor or see posted office hours on Google Calendar.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy:

You are allowed to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini Pro 1.5, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc) to generate ideas, but you are not allowed to use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any work submitted to be graded for this course. If you have any doubts about using AI, please gain permission from the instructor.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy:

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2533). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. Professors are able to view a student's approved accommodations through Accommodate.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any accommodations.

Language and Belonging*

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on

age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/nondiscrimination.

Tutoring: The PLNU Tutorial Center is available free of charge for all current, **undergraduate** PLNU students. It offers tutoring for most subjects, as well as for general help with paper editing, study skills, etc. The Tutorial Center is located on the south end of Bond Academic Center, next to the Study Abroad offices. Tutoring is available by appointment only, may be arranged in person at the Tutorial Center, over the phone at (619) 849 2593, or via email at TutorialServices@pointloma.edu

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy:

Regular and punctual attendance at all **synchronous** class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions (virtual or face-to-face), the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive the appropriate grade for their work and participation. In some courses, a portion of the credit hour content will be delivered **asynchronously** and attendance will be determined by submitting the assignments by the posted due dates. See [Academic Policies](#) in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog. If absences exceed these limits but are due to university excused health issues, an exception will be granted.

Asynchronous Attendance/Participation Definition

A day of attendance in asynchronous content is determined as contributing a substantive note, assignment, discussion, or submission by the posted due date. Failure to meet these standards will result in an absence for that day. Instructors will determine how many asynchronous attendance days are required each week.

Spiritual Care:

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If students have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact the [Office of Spiritual Development](#)

Use of Technology:

In order to be successful in the online environment, you'll need to meet the minimum technology and system requirements; please refer to the [Technology and System Requirements](#) information. Additionally, students are required to have headphone speakers compatible with their computer available to use. If a student is in need of technological resources please contact student-tech-request@pointloma.edu.

Problems with technology do not relieve you of the responsibility of participating, turning in your assignments, or completing your class work.

Content Warning*:

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. In this class, all of the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. These topics include divorce, cohabitation, sex, alcohol, and abuse. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of family therapy, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Trigger Warning*:

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive several types of information. In this class, we will cover a variety of topics, some of which you may find triggering. These topics include divorce, cohabitation, sex, alcohol, and abuse. Each time this topic appears in a reading or unit, it is marked on the syllabus. The experience of being triggered versus intellectually challenged are different. The main difference is that an individual must have experienced trauma to experience being triggered, whereas an intellectual challenge has nothing to do with trauma. If you are a trauma survivor and encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include leaving class while the topic is discussed or talking to a therapist at the Counseling Center. Should you choose to sit out on discussion of a certain topic, know that you are still responsible for the material; but we can discuss if there are other methods for accessing that material, and for assessing your learning on that material. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual

engagement in the area of family therapy, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

PLNU Recording Notification (★):

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel. Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

Helpful Websites:

The course syllabus and course readings are posted on Canvas:

canvas.pointloma.edu

Log in using your PLNU username and password.

This site shows information on the marriage education movement; there are great articles and a description of their annual conference:

www.smartmarriages.com

Tips for psychology majors (including getting into graduate school):

<http://www.psychwww.com/index.html>

Careers in psychology

<http://careersinpsychology.org/>

Video resources on marriage:

<http://www.marriageuncensored.com/showGlobalE.php>