Marriage, Family and Sexuality in European History

“Marriage is a disturbance of equilibrium.”
Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*

“All happy families resemble one another, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”
Leo Tolstoi, *Anna Karenina*

“Nothing is so much to be shunned as sex relations”
St. Augustine, *The Confessions*

*Introduction*

The purpose of this seminar is to examine the structure and history of the European family from medieval times to the present. This course tracks three discrete but interrelated themes—marriage, family, and sexuality—tracing them backward to the historical context in which they emerged in the Christian West, and describing how they changed over time. Particular attention will be paid to the early modern period: from the close of the Middle Ages to the turn of the nineteenth century, when many of the themes that interest us took their modern form. Current day issues will not be ignored, however. In fact, it is one of the arguments of this seminar that modern attitudes toward these themes have deep historical roots.

Our task will be an interdisciplinary one, though the structure of the course will be essentially chronological. We will read anthropology, micro-histories, standard historical monographs, and analytical studies. One theme in particular will interest us, especially at the end of the seminar: the development of the wedding ritual itself.

This course provides students with an understanding of how the family is studied by scholars; explores the key issues historical and cultural factors that influences our attitudes about the family, women’s history, and human sexuality; and sketches the historical context in which to
understand these themes. Human history is just that: very “human.” And nothing is more human than family and sex. In treating these themes academically, analytically, we explore not only an important field of scholarship, we learn something about ourselves. All knowledge is, after all, self-knowledge.

**Goals and Outcomes**

On the most basic, stratospheric level, the goals of this course are:

1. To describe the interconnectedness and relevance of all knowledge;
2. To identify the nature and limits of historical claims;
3. To describe how historians make claims about the past;
4. To define what a primary source is for a historian;
5. To describe how historical knowledge evolves, changes, and is revised;
6. To demonstrate effective written and oral communication skills and to support these skills through the appropriate use of technology tools.
7. To demonstrate problem solving, critical thinking and, cooperative-learning skills.

and, on an affective level,

8. To instill a love of learning and respect for past and unfamiliar cultures.

These important and lofty goals will be achieved through reading historical texts, reading the works of historians who have worked with these texts, discussing with your peers and with the instructor the meaning and significance of these readings, and by writing about what you have discovered in this course in ways that are individual and learned.

The more specific goals of this reading, discussing, and writing are to:

1. Describe the evolution of the three themes (marriage, family, and sexuality) over the centuries covered in this course, including;
2. Demonstrate synthetic mastery of a core list of facts, concepts, and scholarly literature, including secular and ecclesiastical legal texts, social and demographic trends, and the historiography of the family and marriage;
3. Demonstrate writing and reasoning skills by engaging the assigned reading and writing, and by writing a research seminar paper;

and, on an affective level,

4. Enrich your lives forever!

**Texts**

1. Frances and Joseph Gies, *Marriage and Family in the Middle Ages*;
2. Steven Ozment, *The Bürgermeister’s Daughter*;
3. Robin Fox, *Kinship and Marriage*;

In addition, there are a number of short articles that are placed on reserved on D2L (in PDF format) and which will be required reading and especially useful for in-class discussions and for your papers.

**Assignments and Policies**

1. **Seminar (Research) Paper.** Each student will pick a topic, either from a list supplied by the professor or of their own devising, and write a research paper on it, using materials from class (discussion notes and readings) and materials found by the student him- or herself in the course of researching the topic. The paper will be 10 pp. (not including apparatus).

2. **Presentation.** Each student will give a lecture on their selected topic. They will receive feedback from colleagues in the class, as well as the professor, and will revise their papers by taking into account this feedback.

3. **Book Review.** Each student will write a short (4 pp) paper on a book they read for this seminar—either one assigned or one they have discovered in their own research and reading. A list of acceptable monographs will be provided. This paper functions as a midterm.

4. **Short writing assignments.** Infrequently, students will write very short analytical reactions (usually one page in length) on the readings. Sometimes, these will be in-class.

5. **Participation.** Students will be expected to attend class and to have prepared for discussion sessions by having read and thought about the assigned readings. This is a seminar. That means everyone really needs to attend class because we learn from each other. There are only very rarely any lectures.

**The grading rubrics for these three categories of assignments are:**

The writing assignments themselves will be graded according to the following rubric:

1. **Argumentation (80%).** How lucidly do you make your arguments? How relevant or substantial is your thesis? How well do you draw on sources? How convincing are your arguments?

2. **Format (20%).** How well does your citation of sources conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition*? Does your paper conform to the course’s own format requirements (enumerated below)? How grammatical is your prose? How correct is your spelling and punctuation, generally but especially of terms introduced in this course? Has your paper been submitted on time and both in paper and electronic versions?

*For the take-home (second) exam, please follow the guidelines enumerated below:*
1. Type your papers.
2. Double space your main text.
3. Single space footnotes, but double space between them; and if you prefer to use endnotes, double-space them throughout.
4. Do not put extra spaces between paragraphs or subheadings.
5. Use reasonable margins and headers/footers: 1.25” all around.
6. Do not use a separate title page, but always have a title.
7. Begin page 1 at the top of the first page (not mid page). Place your title at the very top of page 1, with the main body of the text beginning 3 lines below it.
8. After your title, your first paragraph should NOT be indented. All others, of course, should be.
9. Use only black ink for all your text, including hyperlinks that might appear in your main text, foot- or endnotes, or bibliographies (hyperlinks often print out in blue ink; it is advisable to deactivate all hyperlinks in your papers as a matter of course).
10. Pay scrupulous attention to spelling, grammar and punctuation, which do “count.”
11. Use footnotes or endnotes (footnotes are friendlier to the reader), following strictly the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS, 17th edition) rules.
12. Include a separate bibliography page listing not only all sources cited but all sources consulted.
13. The bibliography page should follow CMS style; the heading “Bibliography” (no quotation marks) should appear at the top of a new page, centered.
14. Label your submissions as following: name, date, course and number, description of the assignment (in our case: “Exam 2”).
15. Type or neatly and legibly write this information on the top left corner of the back of your last page of the paper, approximately 3 inches from the top of the page.
16. Always staple your pages together.
17. Always be mindful of the appearance of your submitted work. A bad printer or low ink cartridge (and therefore poor-quality print) is not acceptable.
18. All written assignments must be submitted in hardcopy by the announced due date and simultaneously submitted to the D2L drop box for the course, or by email attachment: whichever the professor indicates.
19. When doing so, please name your document with your last name followed by the number of the assignment (without a space), e.g.: Martin1, Martin2, etc. (If there are two students with the same last name, add initials of first and middle names, again without spaces: REMartin1, REMartin2, etc.)
20. Be advised that late papers are penalized in ruthless Soviet fashion: a one-third reduction in the grade of the paper for each day late (including weekends), beginning at the conclusion of the class during which the assignment was due. An “A” paper turned in one day late will receive an “A-,” two days late, a “B+,” three, a “B,” and so on.

Participation will be assessed according to the following rubric:

1. Information (70%). How accurate and complete is the information in your presentation or other oral work?
2. Presentation (30%). How lucidly presented and organized is your verbal participation?
**Grading**

1. The final grade will be determined according to the following breakdown:

   - Seminar Paper: 40%
   - Presentation: 10%
   - Book Review (Midterm): 25%
   - Short writing assignments: 5%
   - Participation: 20%

2. Grades will be assigned according to the following numerical equivalencies:

   - 93-100: A
   - 90-92: A-
   - 87-89: B+
   - 83-86: B
   - 80-82: B-, ....Etc.

**Academic Honesty**

The 2017–2018 Undergraduate Catalog (pp. 65–69; quote at p. 65) provides the following definition for “academic integrity”:

> Central to the purpose and pursuit of any academic community is academic integrity. All members of the Westminster community, including students, faculty, staff, and administrators, are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity, in keeping with the philosophy and mission of the College.

> Academic dishonesty is a profound violation of this code of behavior.

For a course like this one, the major concern about “academic dishonesty” is plagiarism, partly because it remains, alas, fairly commonplace on college campuses, partly because what constitutes plagiarism is often unclear in the minds of students. Plagiarism is described in some detail in the Undergraduate Catalog on pp. 66–67. For the sake of clarity, plagiarism can be defined as generally leading your reader (or in the case of oral presentations, listeners) to believe that what you have written or said is your own work when, in fact, it is not. Plagiarism runs from the rather mild to the totally flagrant. It can be the word-for-word reproduction of another person's text without quotation marks and appropriate citation. It can be a paraphrase that is far too close to the source text to constitute “being in your own words.” And it can be even the unattributed borrowing of apt phrases or terminology. All of these degrees of plagiarism are equally unethical and may be penalized with failure for the assignment, or, in extreme cases, failure for the course.

*If you are ever in doubt as to whether your written work is plagiaristic in form, do not hesitate to consult with the professor.*
And please be informed that the take-home exam in this course may be submitted to turnitin.com, a licensed service to which the College has a subscription to help faculty identify papers that contain plagiaristic material.

**Statement on the Use of Communications Technology in the Classroom**

The use of all cell phones, smart phones, pagers, iPods, iPads, or any other internet-accessible technology is **expressly prohibited** during class unless part of an in-class assignment or activity. All students are required to turn off or silence their phones and to stow them out of reach and out of sight for the duration of the class and during in-class examinations. Violation of this policy may be considered a breach of the academic integrity policy of the College.

**On Notifications**

If you are going to miss a scheduled exam or quiz, please notify the professor in advance to obtain permission to reschedule (in the case of exams) or to be excused (in the case of quizzes). Failure to do so will mean that the exam may not be permitted to be rescheduled and that the grade for the missed quiz will be a zero. Permissions are not automatically granted, even when advanced notice is given. All absences at times of exams and quizzes must be documented with a legal excuse and for reasons permitted by College policy (as stated in the *Undergraduate Catalog*).

**On Citation Styles**

Most students at Westminster College have been taught MLA citation conventions. These are good to know generally, but are not always appropriate for use in history courses. It is the usual (though not universal) custom in the historical profession to use the *Chicago Manual of Style* (or CMS, currently in its 16th edition). This is the method that makes use of footnotes or endnotes (which you use is entirely up to you), in preference to in-text or parenthetical references. Students will be required to master CMS sufficiently well enough to write their second (take-home) midterms. While more complex than MLA, it is not difficult to learn or use. McGill also has a copy of the CMS (14th through 16th editions—for our purposes, it doesn’t matter which you consult). Students are encouraged, of course, to seek out the professor's advice in any especially problematic cases.

**Copyright of Lectures and Course Materials**

All federal and state copyrights to my lectures and course materials of my own generation are reserved by the professor.

You are authorized to take notes in class for your own personal use and for no other purpose. You are not authorized to make any recording of my lectures without the professor’s written permission. You are not authorized to make any commercial use of the professor’s course materials or to provide them to anyone else other than students currently enrolled in this course without the professor’s written permission.
**Accessibility Statement**

Westminster College actively strives for the full inclusion of all our students. Students with disabilities who require access solutions for environmental or curricular barriers should contact Faith Craig, Director of Disability Resources, at 209 Thompson-Clark Hall; 724-946-7192; craigfa@westminster.edu. See the 2017–2018 Undergraduate Catalog, p. 27 for details. See also here: https://my.westminster.edu/ics/Campus_Life/Campus_Groups/Disability_Resources/.

I am very willing and eager to meet the instructional needs of any and all of my students. Please see me privately if you have any special needs, concerns, or questions that pertain to your performance in this class.

**Statement on a Safe Learning Environment**  
*(Adapted from the statement at use at Santa Clara Univ.)*

Westminster College operates under a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment and assault. If you or someone you know has experienced discrimination, harassment, or sexual assault, including domestic or dating violence or stalking, I encourage you to tell someone promptly. Feel free always to report the incident to me, though know that I am obligated to report all incidences to the College. The College’s EEO and Title IX coordinator is Kimberlee Christofferson, who can be reached at 724-946-7247 or at christkk@westminster.edu. I am determined to make sure that this class and this classroom setting are safe learning spaces for you.
Session Schedule

This schedule is subject to modification, as the needs of the students may require.

Part I. Defining the Questions

Week I.

January 18: Micro-Histories, Women, Men, the Law, and Class: The Burgurmeister’s Daughter
Read: Start Ozment, The Burgurmeister’s Daughter

Week II.

January 23: Some issues: Bastardry, Consanguinity, Licit and Illicit Sex
January 25: The Burgurmeister’s Daughter

Part II. Antique and Medieval Patterns

Week III.

January 30: The Anthropology of it: Disciplines of Discovery
February 1: Fox, chapters 1–3.
Read: Start Fox, Kinship & Marriage

Week IV.

February 6: Fox, chapters 4–7.
February 8: Fox, chapters 8–9.

Week V.

February 13: Discussion: Bringing the Issues Up to Date, or: A Breather
February 15: Medieval Times.
Read: Gies, Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages, chapters 1–2

Week VI.

February 20: Late Antiquity
February 22: Early Middle Ages
Read: Gies, Marriage and the Family, chapters 3–5.

Week VII.
February 27:  Class Distinctions
March 1:  Disease and Lineage

Read: Gies, Marriage and the Family, chapters 6–10.

Week VIII.

March 5, 7, 9:  No Class:  SPRING BREAK

Week IX.

March 13:  Family, Marriage and the Changing World
March 15:  The Church and Sex

Read: Gies, Marriage and the Family, chapters 11–15; The Church Fathers on marriage and sexuality (readings in the form of PDF handouts).

Part III.  Weddings

Week X.

March 20:  Weddings:  General Development and Trends
March 22:  Weddings:  Medieval West

Read: Stevenson, Nuptial Blessing, chapter 1 and 2; excerpts from Flandrin and Goody.

Week XI.

March 27:  Weddings:  Orthodox East

Read: Stevenson, Nuptial Blessing, chapter 3.

March 29:  No Class:  EASTER BREAK

Week XII.

April 3 (Tuesday):  No Class:  Monday Classes Meet!
April 5:  A Demonstration and a Consultation

Read: Martin (TBA).

Week XIII.

April 10:  Weddings:  The Reformation
April 12:  On the Presentations, or:  Another Breather

Read: Stevenson, Nuptial Blessing, Chapter 4

Part IV.  Research and Presentations

Week XIV.

April 17:  Presentations
April 19: Presentations

Week XV.

April 24: Presentations
April 26: Presentations

Week XVI.

May 1: The Church and Sex
May 3: Conclusions

*Read:* Selections from Levin.

**Examination Period:** Seminar Paper Due