



Western University
Sociology 3368F-200
Marriage Markets:
Finding the One in the Era of Rising Inequality
Fall 2021
Wednesday 9:30-12:30pm, Zoom
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Course Description:

Families are changing. Age at marriage is increasing, as are non-marital fertility, non-marital cohabitation, and divorce. At the heart of these changes are shifts in marriage market conditions resulting due to the increasing inequality and transition into a service economy. Changing economic structure, for example, has increased the number of disadvantaged men who no longer play economically productive roles or meet the prerequisites of marriage, diminishing the marriage rates among men and women of lower socioeconomic status. Polarizing economic fates have increased the salience of economic markers in mate selection, increasing the likelihood that “birds of a feather flock together”,

The goal of this course is threefold: (1) to discuss how marriage market conditions have changed; (2) to investigate how the resulting changes in marriage market conditions affect dating, union formation, and family structure; and (3) to ascertain how shifts in inequality is affecting the wellbeing of couples and their offspring.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course students will be able to:

- Understand how economic transformations over the last 50 years has altered the availability of marriageable mates and family life
- Identify how marriage market conditions influences the timing of marriage
- Increase awareness on the implication of union formation and mate selection on the financial and emotional wellbeing of couples and offspring.

Prerequisite(s):

Enrollment in the 3rd or 4th year student. This course may be of interest to Sociology Majors interested in social inequalities and will be part of the Health, Aging, and Population Concentration. It may be a nice follow-up to the family course.

Unless you fulfill either requisite for this course or written special permission to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The 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.

Lecture format:

Plan A: If everything goes as planned and there are no technological issues:

- At 9:30am on Wednesday, I will e-mail students a link to the zoom call with a password.
- Starting at 9:40am, I will deliver a lecture for 60-75 minutes, allowing for students to ask questions as the lecture progresses.
- Five-minute break
- We will have a zoom discussion of a popular media or movie article for 50-70 minutes. You can participate verbally by raising your hands or using the clap function in zoom.
- You need to fill out the weekly assignments in OWL to obtain the extra credit participation marks.

Notes: I reserve the right to change some of this format to meet student interest, technological challenges, and public health guidelines. Major changes will be communicated to the students ahead of time with the rationale for changes.

Required Text(s):

You can also download all other articles on-campus using www.jstor.org or scholar.google.com. You can login to these sources by installing VPN or [by logging in through the library](#). The instructor reserves the right to change some of the readings during the course in response to student interests.

How to read for this class

- Pay attention to the abstract, introduction, background, results, and discussion/conclusion. Don't worry about the methodology.
- When you take notes, think about what are 3 to 4 key findings of the study.
- Think about how the article fits in with the other articles discussed in class.

Method of Evaluation:

Below is a detailed description of the work requirements of this course. You must choose from the following two options:

(a) Option A

Midterm grade 50%

Final grade 50%

(b) Option B

Midterm grade 33.33%

Reaction Paper 33.33%

Final exam 33.34%

Students taking option (b) must let me know of their intent to submit their reaction paper two weeks or 14 days before the reaction paper due date.

Midterm exam

- (1) An-in class examination will be held on **Wednesday, October 20, 2021 at 9:30am.**
- (2) Type of questions: the exam will include short answer questions.
- (3) Location: The midterm exam will be held online.
- (4) Some students go on a fishing expedition during exams and write anything and everything in hopes that they can obtain a higher score. Factual inaccuracy can reduce the validity of your argument and dampen your credibility. Incorrect guessing will result in **lower** grades.
- (5) Students who take the exam during the scheduled time will be graded in relative terms.
- (6) Some students may not be able to take the test for medical reasons or reasons of compassion. You need to have documentation for this and obtain an official excuse from Academic Counselling, the Dean's Office, or the Chair of the Department of Sociology. University guidelines preclude individual faculty from excusing students from a test based on verbal communication from the student to the instructor, nor does it allow the instructor from issuing excuses based on a doctor's note sent to the instructor. You may not use a self-reported absence because the exam grade exceeds the 30% threshold that SRAs cover.
- (7) If the student has official documentation, they will arrange a time to take the exam with me. The exam needs to be held within 7 days of the "excused" period (e.g., if the excuse states that the student is unable to take the test until 10.21.2021, they must take the make-up exam by 10.28.2021 at 11:59 pm). The make-up test will be comprised of 2 essay questions and you will be graded on *absolute terms*. This will ensure that other students do not have to wait for long periods of time to receive their grade.
- (8) In cases where there is no approved justification for the absence, the student will receive a grade of 0% on the exam.
- (9) To optimize reliability and validity of your grades, I employ a two-step grading process with (a) the grader grading your exams and essays and (b) my reviewing their assessment of the grade and making adjustments when there is a need. This method ensures reliability and validity in your grades.

Reaction paper (33%)

- (1) You will be asked to write a 1500-word essay about a topic. I will provide detailed instructions about this assignment and rubric for grading the exam 2 weeks before its due date.
- (2) The instructor will read drafts ahead of time and provide "general" advice, if the student asks for feedback in advance.
- (3) Some students expect me to guess their grade based on drafts. You are graded in relative terms
- (4) These essays are due in-class on **December 8, 2021 at 12:30pm.**

- (5) Beyond the official grace period, I will not accept any late reaction papers from individual students. You will automatically transition to Option A (50% midterm exam and 50% final exam).

Final exam

- (1) A final examination will be held during exam week.
- a. Please review steps (1)–(9) in the midterm exam section.
 - b. Content: The exam will be cumulative, with most questions coming from the material after the midterm and the rest coming from questions that a significant portion of the students did not answer properly in the midterm.
- (2) Final exam is to be held on the date designated by the Registrar's Office.
- (3) The final exam will be **online**.

Extra Credit: Participation

- (1) Participation is an important aspect of all my classes. It is also the part that students find very enjoyable. It also helps develop mastery in verbal skill sets necessary to help students perform better in job interviews, team meetings upon employment, and when they enroll in law/graduate schools. We are, however, living in the era of COVID-19 and many of you are logging in remotely. It would be unfair to penalize a student's internet connection is not working, but it would also be unfair for me to penalize students who participate actively. Below is a "hybrid" approach to ensure fairness for all students.
- (2) *Expectations*: You are expected to attend class and have the materials read ahead of class. You should answer questions posed in class or ask questions of your own relevant to the material. You should substantiate your insights with empirical evidence from your readings. You are allowed some leeway in terms of bringing outside material, but it needs to be factually accurate, you need to cite where you read it from, and you need to link with the material being discussed.
- (3) In the seven days between classes, students will be asked to address 5-6 questions in the assignment portion of OWL. This should just be an inventory of your participation. The extra credit participation grade will be computed based on my notes of your participation in class (75%) and your post (25%).
- (4) Daily grades: Roughly, the scores will correspond to the following:
- a. 0: no attendance
 - b. 3: attendance no participation
 - c. 5: attendance with at least one participation
 - d. 7: attendance with 2 or more participations – comments tend to be a hit or miss
 - e. 10: attendance with 2 or more participation and most comments made a significant contribution to class. Of the students who attend and participate more than once, roughly 25% will be given a score of 4.

- f. Midterm and final scores: I will average the daily grades and add them to the midterm and final exam grades.
- (5) Some students are very verbose. Getting to the point quickly is an important skill to develop for the job market. I want you to try to summarize your point of view in less than 2 minutes unless I prompt you to elaborate.
- (6) Some students have a fear of public speaking. I really encourage students to try to verbalize their point of view. In the beginning of class, the students can use the chat function in zoom where they can type their remarks. The remark has to be less than 3 sentences.
- (7) This is a class where we discuss the individual correlates and structural determinants of union formation. It is not a class where we discuss your own dating experiences. Repeated discussions of your dating life and/or sexual history are unwelcome and will be considered “disruptive behavior”.
- (8) To ensure that our class is a pleasant learning environment for everyone, there is a zero-tolerance policy towards disruptive behavior in class. The first time - you will receive a warning in writing; the second time- I will mute you for 3 consecutive classes, preventing you from getting any extra points. The third time – you will be asked to leave the class and I will request that the student be considered for disciplinary action.
- Following the Sociology department’s guidelines, the average final grade for this class will be likely fall in between **80 percent**. The standard deviation will likely fall in between 3 to 4 percentage points. The instructor reserves the right for some discretion depending on class performance.

Important note: There are 2 or 3 assignments in this course. If a student is unable to take both tests, then he/she will (a) receive an incomplete in the course and needs to retake the course in the future or (b) write a 5000- word essay addressing the questions posted for the reaction paper. This essay will be graded in absolute terms.

Note about excuses from Academic Counselling:

- You do not need to get an excuse from Academic Counselling for the extra credit portion of the course (i.e., participation). You will just forego the portion of extra credit for attendance. You can still complete the online portion of the extra credit assignment independent of attendance.
- Excuses must be specific to each test and must indicate the dates for which the student is unable to take the exam. It cannot be a blanket excuse asking that the student be given flexibility for the entire duration of the course.
- As much as possible, I will honor recommendations by Academic Counselling.

Dropping the course

If you foresee not being able to take the midterm and final exams, please consider dropping the course before the November 12, 2021 (i.e., official date for dropping the course). It is solely the student's responsibilities to double check the exact date of drop with his/her academic counsellor of their faculty and department.

How to Contact Me:

E-mail is the best way to contact me. During weekdays, allow for 24 hours until response. During weekends, allow for 48 hours until response.

Grade negotiation

Students are graded on a curve. Research suggests that the likelihood of approaching faculty to verbally negotiate grades are lower for women than for men, more disadvantaged than advantaged students, younger relative to older students, and visible minority relative to other students. As someone committed to fairness, I will not entertain verbal grade negotiations. Within 14 days of receiving your grade, you must write a memo contesting a section of the grade; write down what your answer was, indicate what the write answer was, and explain why your grade deserves to be raised. This approach is taken to ensure that the process is fair and a learning experience.

Without proper documentation, I cannot excuse students from assignments on grounds of compassion. It is also worth noting that I cannot alter grades on grounds of compassion.

Your needs to go to graduate school, medical schools, law school, and/or have a career are not a good reason for why your grade should be adjusted to a higher grade.

If you submit another student's grade as an excuse, I will review both students' grades. Simply put, Student B's answer and grade can serve as a rationale for why Student A's grades deserve to be raised, but it can also be a rationale for why Student B's grades should be lowered. Student B – proceed at your own risk.

IMPORTANT POLICIES

Standard Western Policies except for Policies for Assignment Deadlines

Policies for Assignment Deadlines:

If you miss a due date for an assignment due to illness or for any other unforeseen reason, you must notify your Academic Counselor within 48 hours. Please follow the Academic Counselor's instructions about proper documentation. For example, if your problem is medical in nature, you should hand in a doctor's note to the Academic Counselor for the due date of the assignment. If your Academic Counselor agrees that your reasons are legitimate and are supported by your medical doctor's documentation, you will be allowed to write a makeup exam.

Students must take the midterm **and** the final exam (to be announced by the registrar's office) to receive a grade in this course. If you have a valid excuse from the Dean's Office and/or Academic Counselling, I may enter the option of allowing the student to complete the course by submitting a 5,000 word essay by a deadline specified by the Dean's Office.

A Note on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea 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 scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for 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 (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class:

Laptops are permitted in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are turned off at the beginning of class.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf. Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.html

Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website: http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html

Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Mental Health

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western (http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the [Senate policy](#) are met. Two important exceptions to this rule: SRAs will not be allowed for final examinations or assessments worth more than 30% of a given course (aka all components of this course).

Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a [Student Medical Certificate](#) (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds).

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.html

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to some variation)

Each week, I will also provide you short reading from a popular magazine, radio show, or newspaper that will be the focus of our in-class discussions. I will also allocate some time for you to peruse this material

WEEK 1 (9/8/2021). Class introduction

In class: What does the "average" Canadian family look like? – CBC documentary

WEEK 2 (9/15/2021). How did historical changes shape the institution of marriage?

Davis, K. (1945). “The World Demographic Transition”. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 237: pp. 1-11.

Leastaeghe, R. 2014. “The second demographic transition: A concise overview of its development”. *PNAS* 111(51): 18112–18115. <http://www.pnas.org/content/111/51/18112.full>

Supplementary readings

Coleman, D. (2006). “Immigration and Ethnic Change in Low-Fertility Countries: A Third Demographic Transition”. *Population and Development Review* 32(3): pp. 401-446.

WEEK 3 (9/22/2021). Theories of Marriage

Becker, G. 1974. “Theory of Marriage”. *Economics of the Family: Marriage, Children, and Human Capital*. Ed. Theodore Schultz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
<https://www.nber.org/chapters/c2970.pdf>

Oppenheimer, V. “Theory of Marriage Timing”. *American Journal of Sociology* 94(3): 568-591.

WEEKS 4/5 (9/29/2021-10/6/2021). What is happening to the institution of marriage?

Schwartz, C. and P. Smock. (2020). The Demography of Families: A Review of Patterns and Change. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 82(1): 9-34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12612>.

Cherlin, A. (2020). Degrees of Change: An Assessment of the Deinstitutionalization of Marriage Thesis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, **82(1)**: 62-80. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12605>

Manning, Wendy, Susan L. Brown, and K. Payne. (2021). Does Cohabitation Compensate for Marriage Decline? *Contexts* 20(2): 68-69. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F15365042211012076>

Kuperberg, A. (2019). Premarital Cohabitation and Direct Marriage in the United States: 1956–2015. *Marriage and Family Review* 55(5): 447-475.

WEEK 6 (10/13/2021) Thanksgiving Break

WEEK 7 (10/20/2021) MIDTERM EXAM

WEEK 8 (10/27) Marriage: an institute for the rich?

Edin, K. and J. Reed. 2005. "Why Don't They Just Get Married? Barriers to Marriage among the Disadvantaged". *Future of Children* 15(2): pp. 117-137 (Jstor)

Bloome, D. and S. Ang. (2020). Marriage and Union Formation in the United States: Recent Trends Across Racial Groups and Economic Backgrounds. *Demography* 57 (5): 1753–1786. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-020-00910-7>

Schneider, D., K. Hartnett, and M. Stimpson. (2019). Job Quality and Educational Gradient in Entry into Marriage and Cohabitation. *Demography* 56(2): 451-476. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-018-0749-5>

Optional:

Reeves, R. and C. Pulliam. (2020). Middle class marriage is declining, and likely deepening inequality. Brookings Institute. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/middle-class-marriage-is-declining-and-likely-deepening-inequality/>.

Benjamin R. Karney, (2021). Socioeconomic Status and Intimate Relationships, Annual Review of Psychology, 72, 1, (391-414). [10.1146/annurev-psych-051920-013658](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-051920-013658).

WEEK 9 (11/3): Marriages and racial inequality

Raley, R., Sweeney, M., & Wondra, D. (2015). The Growing Racial and Ethnic Divide in U.S. Marriage Patterns. *The Future of Children*, 25(2), 89-109. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43581974>

Guzzo, K. (2014). New Partners, More Kids: Multiple-Partner Fertility in the United States. *Ann Am Acad Pol Soc Sci*. 2014 Jul; 654(1): 66–86. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0002716214525571>

Zhang, Y. and S. Ang. (2020). "Trajectories of Union Transition in Emerging Adulthood: Socioeconomic Status and Race/Ethnicity Differences in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 Cohort". *Journal of Marriage and Family* 82(2): 713-732.

WEEK 10 (11/10): Exam Review and Individual Consultation for Final Exam

WEEKS 11/12 (11/17-11/24): Mate selection

Schwartz, C. (2013). Trends and Variation in Assortative Mating: Causes and Consequences. *Annual Review of Sociology* 39: 451-470. <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev-soc-071312-145544>

Qian, Z. and D. Lichter. (2018). Marriage Markets and Intermarriage: Exchange in First Marriages and Remarriages. *Demography* 55(3): 849-875.

<https://read.dukeupress.edu/demography/article/55/3/849/167889/Marriage-Markets-and-Intermarriage-Exchange-in>

Schwartz, C. (2010). Earnings Inequality and the Changing Association between Spouses' Earnings. *American Journal of Sociology* 115(5): 1524-1557. [10.1007/s13524-018-0671-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-018-0671-x)

Choi, K. and R. Goldberg. (2021). Fertility Behavior of Interracial Couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 80(4): 871-887.

Choi, K. and M. Tienda. (2017). Marriage-Market Constraints and Mate-Selection Behavior: Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Differences in Intermarriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 79(2): 301-317.

WEEK 13 (12/1): *Examples of interracial unions*

Watch on your own *Loving* or *A United Kingdom*. For those of you writing the reaction paper, the reaction paper will be based on this.

WEEK 14 (12/8): *Finale, Exam Review, and Concluding Remarks*

Reaction papers are due

Final exam: TBD (Registrar's Office)