

**COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS**  
HDFS 517—Fall 2009  
Tues. & Thur., 9:30 PM – 10:45 PM  
SOHE 118

Instructor: David Lambert  
Office Hours: by appointment  
Telephone: 333-4566 (cell)  
E-mail: [dlambert@wisc.edu](mailto:dlambert@wisc.edu)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines the ways in which couple relationships are formed, maintained, and dissolved. Relevant theory and empirical research will be used to examine a range of relationship processes (including attraction, love, intimacy, commitment, power, communication, and conflict) that may have an impact on the development and quality of an intimate relationship. The student will become familiar with theories, research findings, and methodologies used to study features of and changes in intimate relationships.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This course is designed to help students:

- Appreciate the importance of empirically based understandings of the nature of intimate relationships;
- Critically evaluate research studies and theories of human bonding;
- Master the factual material that forms the basis of our current understanding of the nature and dynamics of intimate relationships;
- Analyze the dynamics of relationships in couples from the various theoretical perspectives presented in the text and lectures;
- Learn to use academic resources as well as the web to improve your access to relevant and timely material related to intimate relationships;
- Recognize the diversity of lived experiences that shape individual and relational development;
- Understand how cultural and individual values shape our understanding of relationship ideals and dynamics.
- Further develop critical thinking, reading, and writing skills

### **TEXTBOOK AND ADDITIONAL READINGS**

1. Required: Miller, R. S., & Perlman, D. (2009). Intimate Relationships, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
2. Additional required readings will be made available at the course Learn@UW website throughout the semester.

### **INSTRUCTORS PHILOSOPHY**

It is my belief that each course should be a transformational learning experience for the students and the instructor. This should be especially true in a course about relationships. There are very few courses that have the potential to truly impact your personal lives. If you let it, this one will! Another benefit of this course is that it attracts students from across several majors. Thus, we have the opportunity to gain knowledge from a variety of experiences and perspectives. I hope that through this course we can learn from each other as well as from the material covered.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **Attendance and Class Participation.**

You are expected to come to each class having completed the reading assignment, any activities that were assigned, and be prepared to participate in group activities and discussions. Give-and-take will be encouraged during lecture portions of each class, and group discussions and activities related to one or more important psychological issues will take place regularly. In other words, I will not just stand at the front of the classroom lecturing from the book. It will be YOUR responsibility to be comfortable with any material that is not specifically covered.

### **Exams (150 points).**

During the course of the semester there will be three exams, each worth approximately 50 points, which will serve as our primary form of learning assessment. These exams will cover assigned readings, lectures, discussions, and other course material. Though in general each examination will stress information covered since the last exam (non-cumulative), they may integrate information from prior exams. The exams will consist primarily of multiple-choice questions, with some matching, true-false, or short essay questions. Some of the questions will be on factual material (e.g., definitions) taken directly from the text or lectures, but many of the questions will be conceptual in nature, requiring you to apply a concept beyond the specific discussion found in the text or in lecture. A study guide will be provided 5-7 days before each exam. **The Final Exam will be December 19<sup>th</sup>, from 2:45-4:45 pm.** Exams must be taken in class during the assigned period unless arrangements with the instructor are made prior to the examination period. However, alternative arrangements will only be made in the case of dire emergencies or special situations such as hospitalization.

### **Relationship Analysis Assignments (100 points).**

The purpose of this project is to give each student an opportunity to apply concepts we discuss in class to the analysis of relationships. There will be three analysis papers. The first, Analysis of Annie Hall (20 points), is due next week and will be discussed in class today. The second two analysis papers (40 points each) will be approximately five double-spaced typed pages, and will be chosen from the three options listed below. On **September 22<sup>nd</sup>** you will need to turn in a brief (two or three sentences) description (typed) on each of the two options you intend to do for this assignment. The second paper is due **Thursday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>** and the third will be due **Tuesday November 24<sup>th</sup>**.

Creativity is encouraged and evaluation will also be based on effectiveness in relating course material to the major paper focus. Because you have ample time to plan and complete this paper, and to anticipate schedule conflicts, no extensions will be granted (except for extreme and unavoidable circumstances), and papers will be docked 5 points for every day they are late. Choose two of the following options (More guidelines will be posted on Learn@UW):

1. **Analysis of a Personal Relationship.** Give a narrative account with commentary of a personal, deep relationship in which you yourself are or were involved. Use this option to gain insight about a relationship that was or is important to you, and (importantly) to relate course material to an understanding of it. How did it begin? What were the developmental stages through which it went? What was the nature of conflicts that occurred? Were you both equally committed to the relationship? Which of you first recognized that the relationship was to be a meaningful one? Which of you first recognized that it was to end? What relationship skills did you gain as a result of the relationship? What discoveries did you make about yourself in the relationship process? What will you bring from this relationship to future relationships? More guidelines are available should you choose this option, but creativity is encouraged.
2. **Analysis of Relationships in Film.** In addition to entertaining us, movies offer detailed portrayals of behavior in intimate relationships. Your task is to analyze an intimate relationship in a movie using the models and theories presented in class. You are not to critique the film in terms of its entertainment or artistic value. Rather, you should think carefully about how the actions and events depicted by the characters in the movie can be interpreted by the models or theories you choose.
3. **Couple Courtship Interview.** You will be implementing the Structured Initial Interview (SII), which is a tool some clinicians use in the first meeting with a couple. It is meant to be a reference for the therapist in his/her work with the couple in the evaluation process. It is a diagnostic interview designed help the couple clarify their current interaction patterns or styles by reviewing their courtship experiences. Your paper will consist of your reflections on the interaction between the couple, as well as your evaluation of how well the SII helped to identify interaction patterns or problems in the relationship. You will need to apply terms and concepts we have covered in class. Remember that you are NOT to try and be a therapist though.

## **Group Project (75 Points).**

This assignment requires you to carry out a project that deals directly with the topic of intimate relationships. These projects will include a 25-30 minute presentation to the class at the end of the semester (**December 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>**, and on the Final Day-12/19-if needed). The project should provide an opportunity for you to apply, integrate, and/or expand upon the themes of the course while exploring in depth a topic of some interest to you. You are to work in a group of 3-4 people and to create a product that draws on your collective creative energies.

You have two options available to you. You may 1) conduct a research project and present your results, or 2) create a "dissemination" product—a video, music montage, etc. based on scholarly information. Although guidelines for each product type will be provided, I am open to negotiating other approaches to the project—please consult me.

Your project plan **requires** approval. By **September 29<sup>th</sup>**, your group should hand in a one-page proposal listing your group members and describing in as much detail as possible your plans for the project. Your proposal may be in outline form, it should detail the steps you will take and the end product you hope to achieve. If your proposal involves cooperation with an outside agency or person(s) it should include a contact person and note their approval and understanding of the project.

## **COURSE GRADING:**

My grading is based on two important principles. First, the course grade will be based upon several components, which reflect an appreciation for diverse learning styles. Thus, the grading system is designed to assure that no single element will determine your final grade. Second, I believe in fostering a cooperative learning environment. Thus, grades will not be assigned on the basis of a curve (e.g., 10% A's, 20% B's, etc.), a system that fosters competition rather than cooperation. A cumulative grading system will be used to determine your final grade course. In this way, potentially every student in the class could earn an "A" for the course. The more you help one another, the better everyone will do. You can calculate your grade at any time by dividing the your total points by the total points possible (for example:  $60/75 = 80.0\%$ , B grade).

### Assignments

1) Examinations	150 points
2) Relationship Analysis	100 points
3) Group Project	75 points
<u>Total possible points:</u>	<u>325 points</u>

A	= 92-100%
AB	= 88-91%
B	= 80-87%
BC	= 76-79%
C	= 68-75%
CD	= 64-67%
D	= 56-63%
F	= < 55%

## **EXTRA CREDIT**

I realize that during the course of a semester "stuff" happens. One question I am frequently asked is if there is a possibility for extra credit. Being the big-hearted guy that I am, I will provide you with several opportunities to earn up to an additional 5% of your final grade (25 points total). You can choose one (or a combination) of the following options:

Attending Relevant Presentations: You will receive 5 extra credit points for attending and handing in a short summary of any approved lecture, presentation, etc. that addresses issues we will be discussing in class. If you know of any possible events on or off campus, please let me know so that I can approve them and tell the rest of the class.

Relationships in the Media: Additionally, it is important to be able to connect classroom topics with every-day current events. To this end, you will have the opportunity to earn up to 15 extra credit points by handing in copies and summaries of newspaper, magazine, book, or journal articles related to various aspects of intimate relationships. You will receive 3 points for each article and summary and 2 additional points for making a short (2-3 minutes) presentation on the article in class. However, only one such extra credit opportunity can be done after October 29<sup>th</sup>.

## **CLASS STRUCTURE AND “GROUND RULES”**

- Attendance is necessary if you want to succeed in this class. If you miss one class, you will be missing important information.
- Please respect class times: Arrive promptly and stay for the entire class. Late arrivals, early departures, and other breaks in routine are disruptive to the entire class.
- Do the assigned readings prior to class. This will help you get much more out of the class and will make the class time more interesting and useful for everyone.
- Exams will cover material presented in the lectures, discussions, and movies/videos, as well as the readings. You are responsible for all of this material.
- The class schedule is subject to change. If substantial changes are made, an updated schedule (last two pages of this syllabus) will be posted on Learn@UW. You are responsible for keeping up with any changes in assignments, deadlines, etc. In-class announcements “count” as official notices of policies, deadlines, and changes –so record them. If you are not in class, you should check with a fellow student to see if you missed any announcements.
- If you are unable to attend a class, contact me as soon as you are able to let me know the reason. If you miss a class, please contact a fellow student in the class to get notes, updates of any changes in assignments, etc. Please do not ask me for notes.
- All students are expected to have an email address and to check their email regularly. Email will be used as a means for me to communicate efficiently with the class. Email is also the quickest and most efficient way for you to communicate with me to set up an appointment, ask a question, or reflect on your classroom experience.
- Learn@UW will be used both as a means for students to obtain course readings and materials, and as a means of communication. Important announcements will be posted on the “news” page of our course website as well as by email. Students are responsible for checking for these announcements.
- I expect everyone to listen respectfully and attentively while others are talking. Some of the topics covered in this class may spark strong opinions and challenge your or your classmates’ values. I strongly encourage all students to share their thoughts and opinions, regardless of how “popular” they may be. As such, it is important that we all respect each others’ ideas, and that we respect each other as individuals.

## **ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

The university has strict policies regarding student misconduct, including policies about cheating and plagiarism. You are required to adhere to these policies. For detailed information please refer to The Dean of Students Office brochure "Academic Misconduct Rules and Procedures: Guide for Students" (available by contacting or stopping by the DOS office), or you can get the information from the web page at <http://www.wisc.edu/students/conduct01.htm>

## **SPECIAL NEEDS OR CONCERNS**

I wish to fully include persons with disabilities in this course. Please let me know if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of this course to enable you to fully participate. Information will be kept confidential whenever possible. For questions regarding the University's disability policies and services, contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center, 905 University Avenue, 263-2741.

## **OTHER ISSUES**

If observance of a religious holiday conflicts with the required exercises (assignments, exams, etc.) in this class, contact me as early as possible but at least two weeks prior to the conflict so that accommodations can be made.

## **AND FINALLY...**

Some of the material in this class may provoke feelings about your own relationships. Remember that you are just beginning to study this topic and that we are learning about general processes in relationships that may or may not be relevant to your own relationship. If you are having any non-academic problems (personal, relationship, family, emotional) that are interfering with your work as a student, there are many resources available both on and off campus to help you. I can direct you to some of these resources if you would like.

It is impossible to study relationships without thinking about our own intimate relationships – that would take all the fun out of it! However, the emphasis in this class is the science of relationships. When we think and talk about our how the material we are studying applies to our own lives, it will be important to critically analyze the sources of our ideas, opinions, and beliefs. It is a specific goal of this course to help you become good consumers of information about relationships; sometimes, that will mean questioning your own beliefs, values, and experiences.

\*\*\*\*\* Schedule for HDFS 517: Couple Relationships (Fall, 2009)\*\*\*\*\*

**PLEASE NOTE: *This schedule is subject to change.*** There will be additional readings posted on Learn@UW each week. You will need to download them or read them online). It is your responsibility to keep up with any changes.

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	
Week 1	Thursday, Sept. 3	Introduction to the course.	
Week 2	Tuesday , Sept.8	Annie Hall	
	Thursday, Sept. 10	Ch. 1: Building blocks of relationships	
Week 3	Tuesday , Sept. 15	Ch. 2: Research methods	
	Thursday, Sept. 17		
Week 4	Tuesday, Sept. 22	Ch. 3: Interpersonal attraction	RAA Outline
	Thursday, Sept. 24	Evolutionary Theory (p.32-35, 83-85, Buss, 1994)	
Week 5	Tuesday , Sept. 29	Ch. 4: Social cognition	Project Prop.
	Thursday, Oct. 1	Attachment Theory (TBD)	
Week 6	Tuesday , Oct. 6		Exam One
	Thursday, Oct. 8	Ch. 6: Interdependency	
Week 7	Thursday, Oct. 13		
	Thursday, Oct. 15	Ch. 7: Friendships	
Week 8	Tuesday , Oct. 20	Ch. 8: Love	
	Thursday, Oct. 22		RAA 2 Due
Week 9	Tuesday , Oct. 27	Ch. 5: Communication	
	Thursday, Oct. 29		
Week 10	Tuesday , Nov.3	Ch. 11: Conflict and resolution	
	Thursday, Nov. 5		Exam Two
Week 11	Tuesday, Nov. 10	Ch. 9: Sexuality	
	Thursday, Nov.12		
Week 12	Tuesday, Nov. 17	Ch. 10: Stresses and Strains	
	Thursday, Nov. 19		
Week 13	Tuesday, Nov. 24	Ch. 12: Power, violence, and abuse	RAA 3 Due

	Thursday, Nov. 26	<b>HAPPY THANKSGIVING</b>	
<b>Week 14</b>	Tuesday, Dec. 1	Ch. 14: Fostering Relationships	
	Thursday, Dec. 3	Ch. 13: Dissolution and Loss	
<b>Week 15</b>	Tuesday, Dec. 8	Group Presentations	
	Thursday, Dec. 10	Group Presentations	
<b>Week 16</b>	Saturday, Dec. 19 2:45 pm	Final Exam and Presentations (if needed)	Final Exam