

Western HealthSciences

Brescia School of Food and Nutritional Sciences

FSHD 4220A – Theoretical Perspectives in Family Studies Research Fall 2025

Campus Supports

Western University is committed to a **thriving campus**. For help with:

- Both physical and mental health, go to [Wellness & Wellbeing](#)
- Studying with disabilities, go to [Accessible Education](#)
- Writing skills, go to the [Writing Support Centre](#)
- Learning skills and strategies, go to [Learning Development & Success](#)
- Contacting the ombudsperson, go to the [Office of the Ombudsperson](#)



Your course coordinator can also **guide you** to available campus resources and/or services.

Important Dates

Classes Begin	Reading Week	Classes End	Study day(s)	Exam Period
September 4	November 3–9	December 9	December 10	December 11–22

September 30, 2025, is National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and is a non-instructional day
December 1, 2025: Last day to withdraw from a first-term half course without academic penalty

Contact Information

Course Coordinator/instructor	Contact Information	Office Hours
Dr. Kym Briggs	kbriggs@uwo.ca	Fridays 10:30am -11:30am

NOTE: All course information including grades, assignment outlines, deadlines, etc. are available via [OWL Brightspace](#). Download the Brightspace Pulse App to stay up-to-date on course communication and enable your notification settings within “Communications” in the top toolbar. Check the website regularly for course announcements. If you need assistance, visit [OWL Brightspace Help](#) or contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Calendar Course Description (including prerequisites/anti-requisites):

Students will be introduced to the major theoretical frameworks used by social scientists to explain variation in family life including life span, life course, developmental, social learning, social exchange, social conflict, symbolic interactionist, ecological, family systems and feminist theory perspectives.

Prerequisite(s): Any 0.5 course at the 3000-level or higher from any department in the Faculty of Health Sciences, the Department of Anthropology, the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies, the Department of Psychology or the Department of Sociology; or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this 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.

NOTE: If you wish to enroll in this course without the stated pre-requisite(s), you must obtain written approval from the course instructor. The approval should then be forwarded to your academic counsellor.

Delivery Mode: In-person

Component	Date(s)	Time
Lecture 001		

My Course Description

This course offers an in-depth exploration of the key theoretical frameworks used to understand the complexities of family life across diverse contexts. Students will engage critically with foundational and contemporary perspectives, including life span, life course, developmental, social learning, social exchange, social conflict, symbolic interactionist, ecological, family systems, and feminist theories. Emphasis will be placed on applying these frameworks to real-world issues affecting children, youth, and families, with attention to structural inequalities, cultural variation, and evolving definitions of family. Through discussion, case analysis, and reflection, students will deepen their ability to assess and apply theory to practice and research in the field of Family Studies.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify and describe the major theoretical frameworks used to understand family life, including life span, life course, developmental, social learning, social exchange, social conflict, symbolic interactionist, ecological, family systems, and feminist perspectives.
2. Critically compare and contrast theoretical approaches, evaluating their strengths, limitations, and relevance to contemporary issues facing children, youth, and families.
3. Apply theoretical frameworks to analyze real-world case studies, policy issues, and social phenomena affecting diverse family structures and experiences.
4. Integrate multiple perspectives to develop nuanced understandings of complex social dynamics within families across cultural, economic, and historical contexts.
5. Demonstrate reflective thinking about their own assumptions and positionality when interpreting family experiences through theoretical lenses
6. Communicate theoretical concepts clearly and effectively through written assignments, presentations, and class discussions.

Course Content and Schedule

Week	Class Date	Topic	Study Material	Things due
1	Sept. 4	Course introduction	Syllabus	
2	Sept. 11	Theories	Chapter 1	
3	Sept. 18	Functionalist Theory	Chapter 2	Creative in-class assignment group #1
4	Sept 25	Conflict Theory	Chapter 3	Creative in-class assignment group #2

Week	Class Date	Topic	Study Material	Things due
5	Oct. 2	Symbolic Interactionist Theory	Chapter 4	Creative in-class assignment group #3
6	Oct. 9	Family Developmental Theory	Chapter 5	Creative in-class assignment group #4
7	Oct. 16	Family Systems Theory	Chapter 6	Creative in-class assignment group #5
8	Oct. 23	Social Exchange Theory	Chapter 7	Creative in-class assignment group #6
9	Oct. 30	Feminist Theory	Chapter 8	Creative in-class assignment group #7
10	Nov. 6	Family Ecological Theory	Chapter 9	Creative in-class assignment group #8
11	Nov. 13	Family Stress and Resilience Theory	Chapter 11	Creative in-class assignment group #9
12	Nov. 20	Critical Race Theory	Chapter 12	Creative in-class assignment group #10
13	Nov. 27	Queer Theory	Chapter 13	Creative in-class assignment group #11 **Critical reflection paper due
14	Dec. 4	Course Wrap-up and Conclusions	N/A	**Last date to submit your term project** **Participation grade & comments due

Course Materials You Must Acquire and Their Costs

Required Course Materials

- Allen, K. R., & Henderson, A. C. (2023). Family theories today: A critical intersectional approach (2nd Ed.). Cognella. ISBN 978-1-7935-8230-0.
 - Paperback \$66.95.

Note: We will not be using the additional publisher online platform. You will require the textbook only.

Assessments and Evaluation

Below is the evaluation breakdown for the course. Any deviations will be communicated.

Assignment	Format	Weight	Due Date	Flexibility	Learning Outcome
#1 Participation	Ongoing	15%	December 5, 2025 at 11:55pm	72-hour no late penalty	All
#2 Theory-in-Action. Creative In-Class Presentation	Presentation Style	20%	Ongoing weeks 3-13 (Sign-up for 1 week)	Format flexibility	1,6
#3 Critical Reflection Paper	Written	25%	November 27, 2025 at 11:55pm	72-hour no late penalty	All
#4 Term Project	Mixed format	40%	Choose your own – December 4 at the latest	Flexibility choosing due date. After Dec 4, 72-hours, no late penalty	All

Assignment #1 – Participation

Due: Ongoing

Weight: 15%

Description: Participation in this course is evaluated as a single overall grade. This approach recognizes that meaningful engagement can vary from week to week. It allows students to demonstrate their contributions over the entire term, rather than being penalized for occasional absences or less active weeks. Participation will be assessed using the Western rubric (page 6 of this syllabus) and assigned at the end of term. You will grade yourself. You will submit a short self-assessment at the conclusion of the course to reflect on your participation, using specific examples to support your evaluation.

Your participation grade will reflect the quality and consistency of your contributions to class discussions, group activities, and collaborative learning. High-quality participation demonstrates:

- Evidence of having read and engaged with assigned materials prior to class
- Thoughtful, relevant contributions to discussions
- Active listening and respectful interaction with peers
- Engagement in group work and in-class exercises

Assignment #2 – Theory-in-Action Creative in class

Due: Sign up and select one week only (weeks 3-13)

Weight: 20%

Description: This assignment is an opportunity to bring one of the week's assigned theories to life in a fun, engaging, and creative way. Working in groups, you will sign up for a specific chapter/theory in advance, beginning with the week of September 18. On your group's assigned date, you will present a short (10-30 minutes), interactive activity, demonstration, or creative piece that helps your classmates better understand and remember the key ideas of that theory. You are encouraged to think outside the box, creativity and originality are welcome. All creative tools are permitted. Your presentation should:

- Be approximately 10-30 minutes
- Clearly connect to the assigned theory and illustrate at least one of its core concepts
- Be designed to actively engage your classmates (e.g., short activity, visual demonstration, role play, media clip, interactive quiz, creative analogy)
- Be accessible, inclusive, and respectful of diverse perspectives and experiences
- Be grounded in accurate representation of the theory, drawing from the assigned readings and any additional reputable sources

Assignment #3 – Critical Reflection Paper: Positionality and Perspective

Due: November 27, 2025

Weight: 25%

Description: You will write a short (3-5 page), analytical paper examining how their own personal background, lived experiences, cultural values, and social position influence the way they interpret, critique, and apply family theories. This assignment invites you to engage in reflexive thinking, considering how identity factors such as gender, culture, socio-economic background, family experiences, and educational history shape their theoretical preferences and interpretations.

Guiding prompts may include:

- Which theoretical perspective(s) do you naturally align with, and why?
- How do your personal experiences or values influence your understanding of family life?
- What assumptions or biases might you bring when applying theory to real-world cases?
- What are the limitations of your own lens, and how can you address them as a student, researcher, or practitioner?

The goal is to help you connect theory to self-awareness, recognizing that the frameworks we use are often filtered through personal and cultural perspectives.

Assignment # 4 – Term Project

Due: Choose your own - December 4, 2025, at the latest

Weight: 40%

Description: The term project uses the “Multimedia Suggestions” from the text. Each chapter has “Multimedia Suggestions” at the end. Look for two that interest you the most (just read ahead if you want to complete this assignment early). Use the “Activate your theory app” questions as guidelines to work with the theory. Then, for each, think of how a different theory can illuminate the issues, also. Use the same guidelines to write about the media content, but with the different theory. So, you’re engaging with two chapters’ “Multimedia Suggestions,” and you’re applying two theories to each: the original, plus an extra of your own choosing (each extra must be different). So, four theories in total. Each write-up should be about 5 pages (so for two write-ups, it’ll be about 10 pages) (12-point font, double-spaced, APA-style). Grammar and clarity count toward the mark. Generative AI is not allowed. You will choose and commit to your own deadline. The last possible time and day to commit to turn it in is Dec. 4 at 11:55 p.m. This assignment does require academic consideration with documentation for missing the deadline. In such a situation, it is still expected that you will turn in the project within 72 hours.

General information about assessments

- All assignments are due at 23:55pm EST unless otherwise specified.
- Students are responsible for ensuring that the correct file version is uploaded; incorrect submissions including corrupt files could be subject to late penalties (see below) or a 0.
- Written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin (statement in policies below).
- A student might not receive the same grade as their group members if it is determined that the distribution of work was not equal.

- ✓ After an assessment is returned, students should wait 24 hours to digest feedback before contacting their evaluator; to ensure a timely response, reach out within 7 days.
- ✓ Prior to the filing of a written request for relief, students must attempt to resolve the concern regarding a mark or grade through informal consultation with the instructor. If the student is dissatisfied with the decision of the instructor or does not receive a decision from the instructor, a written request for relief must be submitted to the Undergraduate Chair of the School offering this course, within three (3) weeks from the date that the mark was issued.

The table below outlines University-wide grade descriptors.

Letter grade	Number grade	Description
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

Rounding of Grades (for example, bumping a 79 to 80%)

This is a practice some students request. The final grade documented is the grade that you have achieved. There is no rounding to the next grade level, or ‘giving away’ of marks. Please don't ask me to do this for you; the response will be “please review the course outline where this is presented”.

Information about late or missed assessments:

- ✓ Late assessments without academic consideration will be subject to a late penalty of 1% per hour
- ✓ [insert information about missed tests / makeup tests here]

Course-specific conditions:

- ✓ [Insert information about course-specific requirements that must be met to pass the course]

INC (Incomplete Standing): If a student has been approved by the Academic Advising Office (in consultation with the instructor/department) to complete term work at a later date, an INC will be assigned. Students with INC will have their course load in subsequent terms reduced to allow them to complete outstanding course work. Students may request permission from Academic Advising to carry a full course load for the term the incomplete course work is scheduled.

SPC (Special examination): If a student has been approved by the Academic Advising Office to write a Special Examination and the final exam is the only outstanding course component, an SPC will be assigned. If the class has a makeup exam, the student is expected to write the makeup exam. If the class doesn't have a makeup exam or the student misses the makeup exam for reasons approved by the Academic Advising Office, the student will write the exam the next time the course is offered. Outstanding SPCs will reduce the course load for the term the exam is deferred as outlined in [Types of Examinations](#) policy.

Academic Policies and Statements

Support Services

There are various support services around campus and these include, but are not limited to:

1. Academic Support and Engagement - <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca>

2. Wellness and Well-being - <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>
3. Registrar's Office - <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/>
4. Ombuds Office - <http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/>

The websites for Registrarial Services (<http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>), and the same for affiliated university colleges when appropriate, and any appropriate Student Support Services (including the services provided by the USC listed here: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>) and the Student Development Services, should be provided for easy access.

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

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at: https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.

Statement on Harassment and Discrimination

Western is committed to providing a learning and working environment that is free of harassment and discrimination. All students, staff, and faculty have a role in this commitment and have a responsibility to ensure and promote a safe and respectful learning and working environment. Relevant policies include Western's Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy (M.A.P.P. 1.35) and Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy – Administrative Procedures (M.A.P.P. 1.35). Any student, staff, or faculty member who experiences or witnesses' behaviour that may be harassment or discrimination **must report the behaviour** to the Western's Human Rights Office. Harassment and discrimination can be human rights-based, which is also known as EDI-based, (sexism, racism, transphobia, homophobia, islamophobia, xenophobia, antisemitism, and ableism) or non-human rights-based (personal harassment or workplace harassment).

Student Code of Conduct

The purpose of the Code of Student Conduct is to define the general standard of conduct expected of students registered at Western University, provide examples of behaviour that constitutes a breach of this standard of conduct, provide examples of sanctions that may be imposed and set out the disciplinary procedures that the University will follow. For more information, visit <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>

Absence from Course Commitments

Students must familiarize themselves with the Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate, or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term **without** supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g., December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests (typically scheduled during the last week of the term).

Students should also note that the instructor may **designate** one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Academic consideration requests may be denied when flexibility in assessment has already been included. Examples of flexibility in assessment include when there are

assessments not required for calculation of the final grade (e.g. 8 out of 10 quizzes), when there is flexibility in the submission timeframe (e.g. 72 hour no late penalty period), or when timed assessments (e.g., quizzes) are available over an extended period of time (e.g., when you are given a 72 hour time period to start – and finish – the assessment).

Please note that academic considerations in this course are granted by the academic advisors in your home unit and implemented by the instructor of this course in accordance with information presented in this course syllabus. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the [Student Medical Certificate](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner. If your absence relates to accommodations that are already supported by [Accessible Education](#), please work with your accessible education counsellor regarding your missed course work.

Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the policy for [Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examination dates. The Faculty of Health Sciences has set School-specific dates for these Special Examinations. Please speak with your instructor about the date on which the Special Examination for this course will be held.

Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the policy on [Scholastic Discipline for Undergraduate Students](#).

Plagiarism

Student work is expected to be original. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and could lead to a zero on the assignment in question, a zero in this course, or your expulsion from the university. You are plagiarizing if you insert a phrase, sentence or paragraph taken directly from another author without acknowledging that the work belongs to him/her. Similarly, you are plagiarizing if you paraphrase or summarize another author's ideas without acknowledging that the ideas belong to someone else. All 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 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 Western University and Turnitin.com (www.turnitin.com).

Use of Artificial Intelligence for the Completion of Course Work

Within this course, you may only use artificial intelligence tools (e.g., "ChatGPT") in ways that are specifically authorized by the course instructor. All submitted work must reflect your own thoughts and independent written work.

Re-submission of Previously Graded Material

Without the explicit written permission of the instructor, you may not submit any academic work

for which credit has been obtained previously, or for which credit is being sought, in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.

Use of Statistical Pattern Recognition on Multiple Choice 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.

Accessibility Statement

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 Accessible Education (AE) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation or review [The policy on Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). If you think you may qualify for ongoing accommodation (e.g. separate room to write exams, flexibility with deadlines, etc.) that will be recognized in all your courses, we encourage you to visit [Accessible Education](#) for more information.

Correspondence Statement

The centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at their official university address is attended to in a timely manner. Students are further expected to attend to announcements presented through Brightspace, and to read emails generated in this way.

Use of Electronic Devices

During Exams

Unless you have medical accommodations that require you to do so, or explicit permission from the instructor of the course, you may not use any electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, tablets, cameras, smart glass, smart watches, or iPods) during ANY tests, quizzes, midterms, examinations, or other in-class evaluations. **These devices MUST either be left at home or with your belongings at the front of the room. They MUST NOT be at your test/exam desk or in your pocket. Any student found with a prohibited device will be referred for investigation of a Scholastic Offence, per the policy listed above. The typical first-offence penalty for possession of a prohibited device is zero on the test or exam.**

During Lectures and Tutorials

Although you are welcome to use a computer during lecture and tutorial periods, you are expected to use the computer for scholastic purposes only, and refrain from engaging in any activities that may distract other students from learning. From time to time, your professor may ask the class to turn off all computers, to facilitate learning or discussion of the material presented in a particular class.

Copyright and Audio/Video Recording Statement

Course material produced by faculty is copyrighted and to reproduce this material for any purposes other than your own educational use contravenes Canadian Copyright Laws. Unless explicitly noted otherwise, you may not make audio or video recordings of lectures – nor may you edit, re-use, distribute, or re-broadcast any of the material posted to the course website.

Contingency Plan for an In-Person Class Pivoting to 100% Online Learning

In the event of a situation that requires this course to pivot to online content delivery, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on Brightspace for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be

conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Note that disruptive behaviour of any type during online classes, including inappropriate use of the chat function, is unacceptable. Students found guilty of Zoom-bombing a class or of other serious online offenses may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.

Online Proctoring

Tests and examinations in this course may be conducted using a remote proctoring service. By taking this course, you are consenting to the use of this software and acknowledge that you will be required to provide **personal information** (including some biometric data) and the session will be **recorded**. Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. More information about this remote proctoring service, including technical requirements, is available on Western's Remote Proctoring website at: <https://remoteproctoring.uwo.ca>.

Academic Appeals and Scholastic Offences

Students can file a **request for relief from academic decisions** if the request is based on one or more grounds listed in the policy. Students can read more about the policy [here](#) and a link to the procedures is listed in the Support Services sections of this document.

Students may **appeal** some academic and scholastic disciplinary decisions by a Dean or their designate, to the Senate Review Board Academic (SRBA). Students can read more about the policy [here](#) and a link to the procedures is listed in the Support Services section of this document.