

HDFS 2313: Courtship and Marriage Spring 2026

Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30 – 1:50 PM
Wooten Hall 322

Instructor Information

Name: Emily McKnight, PhD

Preferred: Dr. McKnight or Professor McKnight

Pronouns: she/her/hers

Email: Emily.McKnight@unt.edu

Office Location: N/A

Virtual Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10 – 3 pm; or Thursdays, 6 – 8 pm (by appointment only)

Appointment scheduler: <https://calendly.com/dremilymcknight/1-on-1-with-dr-mcknight>

Course Description and Objectives

This course provides an in-depth exploration of the dynamics of courtship, marriage, and intimate relationships, guided by the principles outlined in *Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families* (Stinnett et al., 2017, 4th edition). Students will examine the formation, development, and maintenance of intimate partnerships through theoretical, cultural, and practical perspectives. Topics include communication styles, conflict resolution, mate selection, marital satisfaction, parenting, and family systems.

The course emphasizes critical thinking and self-reflection, equipping students with knowledge and tools to analyze relationship patterns, strengthen interpersonal skills, and foster healthy connections. Through discussions, assignments, and projects, students will engage with real-world applications of course concepts to better understand the challenges and rewards of building lasting relationships in contemporary society.

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. Understand the core principles and theories of intimate relationships and family dynamics.
2. Evaluate factors influencing mate selection, courtship behaviors, and marital stability.
3. Analyze cultural and societal influences on relationships and family structures.
4. Develop effective communication and problem-solving strategies for relationship success.
5. Reflect on personal beliefs and values in the context of relationships and family life.

Required and Recommended Materials

1. Stinnett, N., Stinnett, N., DeGenova, M. & Rice, F.P. (2017). *Intimate relationships, marriages, and families* (9th ed.). Oxford.
2. APA Style Blog (free)

Course Prerequisites:

This is a 2000-level course and has no prerequisites.

Course Format:

The course will be in-person, accompanied by modules through the Canvas Learn system at UNT, and will include 14 modules over 17 weeks. Content will primarily be communicated from textbook readings and online materials.

We will explore topics such as relationship conflict, communication, power dynamics, family structures, and more. As a student in this course, the goal is for you to leave the class with healthy relationship skills such as appropriate conflict management, communication, safe dating practices, and knowledge of family dynamics.

Technology requirements for courses with digital materials:

This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, you will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at Learn Anywhere (<https://online.unt.edu/learn>).

How to Succeed in this Course

Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

Culture of Respect

At the foundation of this course are the College of Education's values of equity, lifelong learning, wellness, and social connectedness. As the instructor, I am committed to fostering an inclusive learning environment. I value the diverse perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

All in-class discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming online environment for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please meet with me and let me know. We are all learning together. For more details: [Code of Student Conduct \(https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct\)](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct)

Disability Accommodations

Anyone who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Access (ODA). I rely on the ODA for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. If you have not previously contacted the ODA, I encourage you to do so. I am also available to support you in that process. ODA website has instructions to register: studentaffairs.unt.edu

Communication Practices

How and when? The best way to reach me is via email or by scheduling a one-on-one meeting via Zoom. I will respond to emails within 24-48 hours during weekdays. I am often away from my email on the weekend and cannot guarantee a response.

Why talk with Dr. McKnight? I am committed to supporting students to be successful in this course and beyond. If you have questions about the course material or assignments, or want to talk generally about research or education goals, please reach out. If you are facing challenges that make it difficult for you to engage fully in the course, let's chat. My goal is to partner with you to find solutions and/or connect you to on-campus support.

What if I'm nervous? It is very normal to be uncertain about contacting instructors or attending office hours. But this doesn't need to be the case! Office hours are dedicated student time, and mentoring students is one of my favorite parts of my job. I try my best to reduce barriers by providing multiple modalities for you to reach me. There is no question too small. You are important, and I am glad to meet.

Attendance Policy

This is a **fully in-person** course. You are expected to come to class for **every scheduled meeting (Tuesdays and Thursdays)**, arrive on time, and actively participate in all in-class activities.

Your grade is based not only on what you submit, but also on how you show up.

Attendance in this course is measured by **active, in-person participation**, including:

- Completing in-class assignments and activities
- Contributing to discussions and small-group work
- Engaging with lectures and demonstrations
- Submitting homework and ART activities on Canvas by their due dates

Because this is an in-person course, **learning happens in the room**. There is no online replacement for being present, and material covered in class will not be recreated in Canvas.

To stay on track each week, you are expected to:

1. **Attend class on Tuesdays and Thursdays** and participate actively.
2. **Read the assigned chapter** before or by the scheduled class.
3. **Complete all in-class and at-home assignments** as outlined in the syllabus.
4. **Submit required work on Canvas by the posted deadlines.**

Missing multiple classes or failing to complete work for **two or more consecutive weeks** will put you significantly behind and will impact your grade.

If extenuating circumstances arise (illness, emergencies, etc.), communicate with me **as soon as possible** so we can discuss appropriate next steps.

Your success in this course depends on one simple principle:

Show up, engage, and stay consistent.

Assessing Your Learning

Rubrics and Important Note about Due Dates

*Rubrics for each assignment are posted to Canvas

*In-class Discussion Assignments: These assignments are due at CLASS END, and make-ups are generally not allowed.

*All other assignments are due on Mondays at 11:59 pm.

Summary of Major Course Assignments and Point Allocation

1. Introduction Needs Assessment	10 points
2. Syllabus Quiz	10 points
3. In-Class Discussions: 6 @ 10 points each	60 points
4. ART Assignments: 5 @ 20 points each	100 points
5. Midterm	100 points
6. Final exam	100 points
7. Pecha Kucha Presentation	100 points
8. <u>Pecha Kucha Reflection</u>	<u>100 points</u>
Total points:	580 points

The following grading scale will be used:

A = 522 – 580 points

B = 521 – 464 points

C = 463 – 406 points

D = 405 – 348 points

F = < 347 points

**No late work will be accepted.

Late Work Policy

Timely submission of all assignments is critical for maintaining the flow and integrity of this course. Therefore, **late work is not accepted in this class**. Deadlines are established to ensure fairness and consistency for all students and to keep everyone on track for successful course completion.

To support your success, assignments are posted well in advance (see the Course Schedule below), and discussions open a week ahead, allowing you to plan accordingly. It is your responsibility to manage your time effectively and ensure that all submissions meet the deadlines outlined in the syllabus.

If you have an excused absence (see UNT policy for definitions) impacting your success, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can plan to make up assignments. In some instances, documentation or partnership with the Dean of Students may be required. [UNT Policy 06.039 Student Attendance and Authorized Absences](#)

Course Schedule

Week	Class Date	Topic	Weekly Reading	Due Date	Points Possible
Week 1	1/13/26	Course Introduction			
		Syllabus Quiz		1/13/26	10

Week	Class Date	Topic	Weekly Reading	Due Date	Points Possible
	1/15/26	Intro to Intimate Relationships	Chapter 1	1/14/26	
		Needs Assessment Survey		1/15/26	10
Week 2	1/20/26	Singlehood	Chapter 3	1/19/26	
	1/22/26	In-class Activity 1		1/22/26	10
Week 3	1/27/26	Attraction and Dating	Chapter 4	1/26/26	
	1/29/26	Relationship Lab			
	1/29/26	Pecha Kucha (PK) Topic Selection		2/2/26	
Week 4	2/3/26	Love and Mate Selection	Chapter 5	2/2/26	
	2/5/26	Relationship Lab			
		ART: Your Ideal Mate		2/8/26	20
Week 5	2/10/26	Gender: Identity and Roles	Chapter 2	2/9/26	
	2/12/26	Relationship Lab			
		ART: Gender Talk Patterns		2/15/26	20
Week 6	2/17/26	Power, Decision Making, and Communication	Chapter 9	2/16/26	
	2/19/26	In-class Activity 2		2/19/26	10
Week 7	2/24/26	Qualities of a Successful Marriage	Chapter 6	2/23/26	
	2/26/26	In-class Activity 3		2/26/26	10
Week 8	3/3/26	Marital Relationships over the Family Life Cycle	Chapter 7	3/2/26	
	3/5/26	Relationship Lab			
		ART: What type of Lover are you?		3/8/26	20
Week 9	3/9 - 3/13	SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS			
Week 10	3/17/26	Midterm Exam (Chapters 1 - 7; 9)			100
	3/19/26	Pecha Kucha (PK) Working Session			
		Pecha Kucha (PK) Presentation DUE		3/22/26	100
Week 11	3/24/26	Sexual Relationships	Chapter 10	3/23/26	
	3/26/26	Research Presentation + EC Opportunity		3/29/26	

Week	Class Date	Topic	Weekly Reading	Due Date	Points Possible
Week 12	3/31/26	Family Planning and Parenthood	Chapter 11	3/25/26	
		Pregnancy and Childbirth	Chapter 12	3/30/26	
	4/2/26	In-class Activity 4		4/2/26	10
Week 13	4/7/26	Parent Child Relationships	Chapter 13	4/6/26	
	4/9/26	Parents & Extending Family Relationships	Chapter 14	4/8/26	
		ART: Drawing your Parents' Marriage		4/12/26	20
Week 14	4/14/26	Work and Family	Chapter 8	4/13/26	
	4/16/26	In-class Activity 5		4/16/26	10
		PK Reflection		4/19/26	100
Week 15	4/21/26	Conflict, Family Crises, and Crisis Mgmt.	Chapter 15	4/20/26	
	4/23/26	The Family and Divorce	Chapter 16	4/22/26	
		ART: We Can't Stop the Music		4/26/26	20
Week 16	4/28/26	Remarriage and Stepparenting	Chapter 17	4/27/26	
	4/30/26	In-class Activity 6		4/30/26	10
Week 17	5/5/26	Relationship Lab (Final Q&A)			
	5/7/26	Final Exam (Chapters 8; 10-17)	In-class - CANVAS	10 am - 12 pm	100
Total Points					580

Important UNT Policies

ADA Accommodations Statement

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask

students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](http://www.unt.edu/oda) website (<http://www.unt.edu/oda>). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Academic Integrity Policy

Every student in my class can improve by doing their own work and trying their hardest with access to appropriate resources. Students who use other people's work without citations will be violating UNT's Academic Integrity Policy. Please read and follow this important set of guidelines for your academic success (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>).

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. You have a right to view your individual record; however, information about your records will not be divulged to other individuals without the proper written consent. You are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy in accordance with those mandates at the following link: <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/ferpa.html>

SPOT Course Evaluation

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. SPOT is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available at the end of the semester to allow you to evaluate how this course is taught.

If you have questions about this, or any UNT policy, please email me or come discuss this with me during my office hours.

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