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|  |  | **Spring 2025****LA110 – Tues/Thurs 8:30-9:45** |
| FAMS 1150MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIP SKILLS |  | **Todd A. Spencer, Ph.D., LMFT,CFLE, E-Mail: todd.spencer@uvu.eduPhone: 801.458.9590Office: CB 210HOffice Hours: Thursdays 11:30 – 12:30**  |
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| **Course Description** Guides students in building a lasting intimate relationship of their own and in understanding and teaching relationship maintenance and improvement strategies based on large-scale scientifically derived marriage and relationship principles. Utilizes cutting edge research on factors and issues related to relationship success and outcome including whom and when to marry and how to build stable and happy relationships over time. Stresses increased understanding of desirable relationship outcomes and how to achieve them.**Course Objectives**Upon successful completion of the course students should be able to:1. Analyze the empirical evidence and importance of becoming emotionally and psychologically healthy before and during romantic relationships.
2. Define ethical and moral issues that underpin the study and intervention of marriage and other relationships.
3. Identify the dynamics of family background, gender, singlehood, sex, friendship, attraction dating, and mate selection, and how they influence and relate to romantic relationships.
4. Articulate the roles of work and family as well as material resources.
5. Describe the influence of power, decision making, and communication.
6. Apply skills in conflict resolution within romantic relationships.
7. Examine the dynamics of divorce, remarriage, and step-parenting.

**REQUIRED READINGS:**Markman, H. J., Stanley, S. M., & Blumberg, S. L. (2024). *Fighting for your marriage:*  *Positive Steps for Preventing Divorce and Building a Lasting Love*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.Van Epp, J. (2007). *How to avoid falling in love with a jerk*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. **CONTACTING THE PROFESSOR:**In general, I will reply to e-mails within 48 hours (except weekends, holidays). If you have not gotten a response within 48 hours, please feel free to send another e-mail. **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:** **Weekly Discussions**During the course of the semester there will be 14 total weekly discussions. Discussions will be based off of lectures, readings, and other class activities. For full points you will need to post your initial response to the questions before 11:59PM on Thursdays. For full points you will need to comment on at least 2 students posts before 11:59PM on Sundays. Each discussion is worth 10 pts. Please note that you will be deducted 2 points for each missing comment.**Weekly Quizzes**During the course of the semester there will be 14 total weekly quizzes. Quizzes will be based off of lectures, readings, and other class activities. Quizzes will be due before 11:59PM on Sundays. Each quiz will be worth 10 pts. The purpose of the quizzes is to help prepare you for the midterm and final exams. **Assignments**1. *Personal Reflection Assignments (PRA):* There will be two personal reflection assignments dispersed throughout the semester. All writing assignments should be typed in 12 point font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins and in Times New Roman font. As you write you papers, please break them up into paragraphs and title each section. You do not need a title page.
	1. **Dealbreakers or Expectations:** There are two separate assignment options for PRA #1 depending on your relationship status. Please be sure you do the correct assignment. In addition, although there are several steps for each assignment, this is one complete paper.
		1. **PRA #1a (For single (i.e., unmarried or not in a long-term relationship) students)—Deal Breakers and Expectations (50 points):**
			1. **Deal Breakers** (20 pts.): Write 1-2 pages about your “deal breakers” for romantic relationships. Deal breakers are those elements, events, dynamics, or characteristics about the relationship (or person) that, if present, would “break the deal” or relationship for you. In other words, what must or must not be in the relationship for you to stay in it—any *one* of them is missing/present and the relationship is over. You must also explain *why* it is a deal breaker for you.
			2. **What I’d Like** (10 pts.): Write at least one page about what you would “like” to have in a relationship but it’s not a “deal breaker” for you. For example, you might want someone who cooks well but if they cannot cook well you would still continue the relationship.
			3. **What I Expect** **and What I offer** (20 pts.): Complete the *“What I Expect and What I Offer”* worksheet which can found “Files” on Canvas. You will complete this worksheet on your own outside of class. You are not required to submit this form. You will write at least one page about your observations and experience going through this worksheet.
		2. **PRA #1b (For Married/Long-term relationship students)-Expectations (50 points):**
			1. **What I Expect and What I Offer** (20 pts.): complete the *“What I Expect and What I Offer”* worksheet (this can be found on CANVAS). You will complete this worksheet on your own outside of class. You are not required to submit this form. You will write at least one page about your observations going through this worksheet.
			2. **Where I am Now** (20 pts.): Write at least one page about how those above expectations have influenced your current relationship. It should be at least one page. (10 points)
			3. **Advice for Engaged and Newlywed Couples** (10 pts): Write at least one page about advice you would give to couples who are dating and/or engaged and newlywed.
	2. **PRA #2—Healthy Me Assessment (50 points):** Before we can know another person intimately, we must first know ourselves. In addition, people who are truly emotionally and mentally healthy are also open to view their areas of improvement and accept failure as an opportunity to learn and grow.

For this PRA, you will be asked to do some self-exploration via interviews, assessments, reflection, and writing. This writing assignment will entail several steps. Please write this paper in paragraph form and title each section/step. The paper should be at least 3-4 pages in length. To receive full credit for the assignment, you must complete all of the steps as follows: 1. **My Strengths and Challenges**: Begin the paper by writing at least one page about your personal and relationship strengths. Identify at least three specific strengths that you have when it comes to relationships with others. Then identify at least two areas of challenge that you noticed about yourself that may negatively affect a romantic relationship.
2. **Family and Friend Interviews**: You will interview (in person or on the phone) three friends or family members (one can be a spouse or committed partner) who know you *very* well. Make sure that you interview people you feel emotionally safe with who will not intentionally tear you down. It is important that you take their feedback as constructive and do your best not to be offended or hurt. Do not argue with them or try to explain yourself; rather thank them for their honest feedback. You will ask them the following questions:
	* + 1. What are three aspects of my *personality* or *character* that you like about me and see as strengths?
			2. What is it like to be friends (or in a relationship) with me?
			3. What areas of my personality do you see as challenging, perhaps some “blind spots” (i.e., areas of my personality or behavior areas that I can’t “see” that are difficult to deal with or toxic to others) that need improvement?

After reflecting on their answer, write *at least 1-2 pages* about what you learned from the interviews. You could also write about how it compared to what you wrote about in Step 1. 1. **Becoming Self-Aware**, you will complete the *Self-Knowledge Inventory*, which can be found on Canvas. Please fill this out as best you can. You will *not* turn this in to me or on Canvas. However you will discuss specifically (2 – 3 paragraphs) what you learned about yourself from completing this inventory.
2. **My Family of Origin**, for this part of the assignment you will be asked to look at your family-of-origin\* (FoO) and beyond (aunts, great uncles, grandparents) and how it has shaped you. We learn a lot from our family either explicitly (they tell us directly) or implicitly (it is just implied from behavior or nonverbal messages). For this part of the assignment, you do not need to list the questions and answer them but rather think about them and answer them honestly. This section should be *at least 1 to 2 pages*. Questions to consider in looking at your family background might be:
	* + 1. What did I learn from my primary caregivers (whether they are married, divorced, or never married) about marriage?
			2. What relationship skills (e.g., conflict and communication) did I learn from my FoO?
			3. Are there experiences from my family of origin that I have not yet dealt with? If so, what will I do to deal with or overcome them?

*\*Thinking, writing, or talking about one’s family of origin has the potential to bring up painful experiences and memories. If this is the case for you, please let me know and together we will come up with an alternative part for this assignment that is of comparable workload.*1. *Marriage and Relationship Interview Assignment (MRIA)* (100 points):
	1. **Step #1**: One of the best ways to learn about relationships is to learn from those who are currently in relationships or are seeking to have one. Therefore, you will be asked to conduct several interviews. These interviews should last 10-20 minutes but not last more than 30 minutes. You may interview either family or friends. You may do them in person (which I would prefer) or over the phone or video chat. You may *not* do them via email or text. Please note, when interviewing married (or highly committed) couples, I strongly suggest that you interview those in happy and stable relationships. Before interviewing an individual or couple, make sure they understand that they do *not* have to answer any of the questions. You will not be docked points for questions that they do not answer. However, it is to your advantage to find individuals and couples who are open to answering the questions. I will supply the questions you are to ask. You will notice that some of the questions are the same across relationship statuses. There is a reason for this. It is important for you to see how people answer similar questions depending on their current relationship duration and status.
	2. **Step #2**: You will then write a summary of what was stated in the interviews. I do *not* want a word-for-word transcript. However, you may include a few quotes here and there. Also, please refrain from using your friends and family members’ real names. What I will be looking for when I grade these assignments is that you *specifically integrate it with course material*. For example, if they talk about commitment, you can go to one of the chapters or lectures on commitment and discuss what was said in the interview and how it relates to what was said in class or your textbook. You should be sure to integrate at ***least 5 specific concepts***from the texts and/or lecturefor each MRIA*.* A separate rubric will be provided.

Your paper should be at *5 – 6 pages in length,*10 – 12 point font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins in Times New Roman font. The paper is to be turned in via Canvas.The following is an outline of who you will interview and suggested questions to ask: 1. **MRIA #1—Single, male *and* female friend (at least 18 years old or older):**
2. What is the *best* part about being single?
3. What is the most *difficult* part about being single?
4. What are some of your expectations of marriage (or a long-term committed relationship) and how it will be?
5. What does it mean to you to be emotionally healthy?
6. Why do some marriages fail and others succeed?
7. What do you find most attractive in partners you pursue (e.g., physical, characteristic, personality trait)?
8. What attributes, characteristic traits, and/or virtues do believe are most helpful in committed relationships?
9. **MRIA #3—Newlywed Couples** (a couple who have been married at least 6 months but no more than 5 years):
10. What is the best aspect of being married?
11. What has been the most difficult part in the transition to marriage?
12. What were some of the expectations you had about marriage? Have they been met? Why or why not?
13. Why do some marriages fail and others succeed?
14. (If the couple has a child/children) How has marriage changed with the addition of children?
15. What advice would you give single individuals and dating/engaged couples?
16. What attributes, characteristic traits, and/or virtues have you found to be most important for yourself and your partner?
17. If you could go back and tell yourself something on your wedding day that would have been helpful, what would you say?
18. **MRIA #5: Long-term Married/Partners Couples** (a couple who have been married/together at least 20 years)
	* 1. What is the best aspect about being married?
		2. What are some of the challenges you face now that you didn’t a few years ago?
		3. Why do some marriages fail and others succeed?
		4. What advice would you give a couple at any stage?
		5. What advice would you give single individuals, dating couples, and newlyweds?
		6. How has your marriage changed over the years?
		7. What attributes, characteristic traits, and/or virtues have you found to be most important for yourself and your partner?
		8. If you could go back and tell yourself something on your wedding day that would have been helpful, what would you say?

**Exams**There will be two exams worth 50 points each. The final exam will be comprehensive and will cover what you have learned throughout the semester. **Student Responsibility/Likelihood of Success**If a student needs clarification on any course assignment, then it is his/her responsibility to request clarification from the instructor. To increase the likelihood of successful performance on any course assignment, the student is strongly encouraged to attend class, take notes and read assigned materials.

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| Assignment | Points | Due Date |
| Weekly Discussion  | 140 |  |
| Weekly Quizzes | 140 |  |
| Personal Reflection Paper #1 Deal breakers/Expectations | 50 | February 16th |
| Personal Reflection Paper #2Healthy Me Personal Assessment  | 50 | March 30th  |
| Marriage and Relationship Interview Assignment | 100 | April 22nd |
| Exam #1 | 50 | March 9th |
| Final Exam | 50 | Finals Week |
| Total  | **630** |  |

Grading Scale:94% – 100% = A 80% – 82% = B- 66% – 69% = D+90% – 93.9% = A- 76% – 79% = C+ 63% – 65% = D86% – 89% = B+ 73% – 75% = C 60% – 63% = D-83% – 85% = B 70% – 72% = C- 0% – 59% = F**Additional Considerations:**1. Excused/Unexcused Absence Policy: Acceptable reasons for an excused absence are: a) family emergency/official obligation, b) illness, c) representing the University at official events and d) religious holy days. If a student misses a course assignment due to an excused absence, then she/he must submit written verification. The instructor must receive advance notification for family obligation, University representation, or religious holy day absence. The instructor must be informed of family emergency or illness absence within 48 hours of the first day of absence due to the event. If written verification for an appropriate excuse is received, the instructor will provide a revised due date for either the original assignment or an alternative assignment of equal value. If the student fails to meet the revised due date, then she/he will be given a zero (0) for the assignment.
2. Late Work Policy: Many professors at UVU accept late work. I am not one of those professors. The assignments and their due date are laid out for the entire semester. Nevertheless, I understand there are the occasional extenuating circumstances or official university-excused absences in which I will accept late assignments. It is the students responsibility to notify me in advance if you anticipate difficulties completing an assignment on time.

If you are sick or just absent, you can email me the assignment *before* class begins. Also, if CANVAS is “down” you may email it to me before class begins or you may print it out and bring it to me at the beginning of class.  1. ADA Policy: Students who need accommodations because of a disability may contact the UVU Accessibility Services Department (ASD), located on the Orem Campus in LC 312. To schedule an appointment or to speak with a counselor, call the ASD office at 801-863-8747. Deaf/hard of hearing individuals, email nicole.hemmingsen@uvu.edu or test 385-208-2677.
2. Names and Personal Pronouns: If you prefer to use a name other than the name the University officially uses, please let me know.

 1. Civility in the Classroom: To create and preserve a classroom atmosphere that optimizes teaching and learning, each student shares a responsibility in creating a civil and nondisruptive forum. The student is expected to conduct herself/himself at all times in this classroom in a manner that does not disrupt teaching or learning. In order to assure that all students have an opportunity to gain from time spent in class, each student is prohibited from using cellular phones/pagers/iPods, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers/nonclass materials, sleeping, excessive/loud talking, talking during exams, using tobacco products or engaging in any other form of distraction in the classroom. The student who engages in such behaviors during course assignments (e.g., exams, papers, group projects) will not be permitted to complete or make-up the assignment and will be given a grade of zero (0) for the assignment. In addition, the instructor has the right to limit classroom discussion in order to meet the educational objectives of the class session. The instructor is authorized to take such steps as are necessary if the behavior of the student disrupts the normal classroom procedure. The instructor may remove the student for the single class session in which disruptive behavior becomes continuous and/or serious, and may begin disciplinary proceedings. If the student engages in repeated deviations from expected classroom behavior, then he/she can be referred to Student Judicial Programs for disciplinary action. Violations of the *Code of Student Conduct* may result in serious sanctions, up to and including expulsion.
2. Sensitive Nature of FAMS Courses: Given the dynamics of individual, relational, and familial development, FAMS courses address many sensitive issues; this course is no exception. Lifespan and relational issues occur in the context of sexual, racial/ethnic, political, religious/spiritual, economic/social class, and disability/challenge concerns. The discussion of such issues will increase the student’s knowledge of developmental conditions in the modern world, but the information can be emotionally charged. It is also likely that the student will be exposed to a diversity of viewpoints; some viewpoints might differ substantially from the student’s personal views. If the student chooses to remain in class, then she/he will be expected to respect the diverse viewpoints represented in course material, as well as the viewpoints of his/her classmates. If the student is easily offended by discussion of such issues, then he/she should consider whether to remain enrolled in the course. Finally, if the content becomes emotionally or mentally overwhelming, I urge you to seek outside help from a therapist. These services are provided for current students at $10 per session. The UVU Student Health Services can be contacted at 801-863-8876.
3. Revelation of Personal Information: This course addresses topics that are personal in nature. The student is encouraged to participate in class discussion/presentations, but the student is not required to share personal information with classmates. Also, the student is advised to use discretion in self-disclosure with classmates and the instructor. It is anticipated that fellow students will be respectful and not disclose information that is shared in class, but the instructor cannot guarantee confidentiality of information that the student shares with classmates. Thus, the student is responsible for the information that he/she shares, and should not share information that he/she does not want others to know.
4. Academic Integrity: You may not cheat! If you are discovered participating in any of the following activities you are considered to be cheating: plagiarism, falsification of information, fabricating information, using unauthorized assistance on tests and other assignments, using unauthorized sources on assignments, substituting other student’s work for your own or vice versa, acquiring tests without express permission, copying another person’s work, and other behaviors which give you an unfair advantage over other students or which do not reflect your knowledge and performance. Cheaters will receive a “0" for the assignment involved. Repeat offenders will receive a “0" and “F” for the class. Ongoing cheaters will be referred to the Department Chair or Dean for possible dismissal from school.

In addition to your own academic integrity, I, as your professor, do all that I can to maintain a sense of fairness throughout my classes. Therefore, asking me to allow extra time on assignments without your situation falling under the exceptions described above, is inappropriate. Further, near the end of the semester, I occasionally have students ask me to make special exceptions for them and all additional leniency or additional extra credit to supplement their grade. Remember, in order for me to maintain some sense of academic integrity, I cannot allow this. Otherwise, I would need to allow this for every student in the class. 1. Discrimination:Utah Valley University prohibits any form of (a) discrimination based on one or more protected classes, (Race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual harassment, sexual orientation, gender identity, age (40 and over), disability, veteran status, pregnancy, childbirth, or pregnancy-related conditions, genetic information, or other bases protected by applicable federal, state, or local law) (b) harassment based on one or more protected classes, including sexual harassment, or (c) retaliation.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin at any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Title VI prohibits racial harassment, and such harassment is prohibited in all facets of campus life at UVU. If you encounter this type of discrimination/harassment, you can speak with the EEO Director or the Director of Student Conduct.  Additional information can be found at: <http://www.uvu.edu/equalopportunity/index.html> Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination and harassment in education. Title IX covers discrimination/harassment/Sexual Violence in programs, admissions, activities, and student and employee sexual misconduct. UVU’s policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university, but to students and visitors as well. If you encounter sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination (including discrimination or harassment based on pregnancy, pregnancy related conditions, sexual orientation or gender identity), contact the Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Coordinator. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.uvu.edu/equalopportunity/index.html> or <http://www.uvu.edu/studentconduct/><http://www.uvu.edu/studentconduct/docs/sexualassaultbrochure.pdf>While I am happy to talk with you, about these types of concerns, there are a number of issues that I am required to report to the Title IX Coordinator. Given my duty to report, if you desire anonymity, you should speak with a licensed clinician in student health services who can keep your name confidential while you explore options for support. 1. Disclaimer: This syllabus is subject to change without notice at the discretion of the professor. Each student is held accountable for any syllabus changes verbally announced in class, through email, or on Canvas.
2. AI programs are not a replacement for your human creativity, originality, and critical thinking. Writing, thinking, and researching are crafts that you must develop over time to develop your own individual voice.  At the same time, you should learn how to use AI and in what instances AI can be helpful to you.

The use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Bard, etc.) is permitted in this course for the following activities:* Brainstorming and refining your ideas;
* Fine tuning your research questions;
* Finding information on your topic;
* Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts; and
* Checking grammar and style.

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:* Impersonating you in classroom contexts, such as by using the tool to compose discussion board prompts/responses assigned to you or content that you put into a Teams/Canvas chat.
* Completing group work that your group has assigned to you, unless it is mutually agreed upon that you may utilize the tool.
* Writing a draft of a writing assignment.
* Writing entire sentences, paragraphs or papers to complete class assignments.

You are responsible for the information you submit based on an AI query (for instance, that it does not violate intellectual property laws, or contain misinformation or unethical content). Your use of AI tools must be properly documented and cited in order to stay within university policies on academic honesty. Any student work submitted using AI tools should clearly indicate what work is the student’s work and what part is generated by the AI. In such cases, no more than 25% of the student work should be generated by AI. If any part of this is confusing or uncertain, please reach out to me for a conversation before submitting your work.

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|  | Topic | Reading | Assignments due |
| Week #1: January 6 – January 12 |
|  | Theoretical Foundations of Love and Relationships | No Reading |  |
|  | The Science of Love and Romantic Relationships |  |  |
| Week #2: January 13 – January 19 |
|  | The RAM Plan | Van Epp Ch. 1 – 2 |  |
| Week #3: January 20 – January 26 |
|  | Healthy Me: Becoming Emotionally Healthy | Van Epp Ch. 3 |  |
|  | Healthy Me: Becoming Emotionally Healthy | “Getting Our Hearts Right” Reading |  |
| Week #4: January 27 – February 2 |
|  | Mate Selection: Initial Attraction | Bradbury Reading |  |
|  | Mate Selection: Predictors of Future Marital Happiness and RAM Dynamic #1 | Van Epp Ch. 4 – 5  |  |
| Week #5: February 3 – February 9 |
|  | RAM Dynamic #1: Can We Communicate and Resolve Conflict? And Family Background | Van Epp Ch. 6 & 8 |  |
|  | Violence in Relationships | Stosney Reading |  |
| Week #6: February 10 – February 16 |
|  | RAM Dynamic #1: What are your patterns? | Van Epp Ch. 7 & 9 | **Personal Reflection Paper #1** |
|  | RAM Dynamic #2 & 3: Trust and Reliance | Van Epp Ch. 10 – 11 |  |
| Week # 7: February 17 – February 23 |
|  | RAM Dynamic #4 & 5: Physical Intimacy before Marriage; Commitment | Van Epp Ch. 12 – 13 |  |
|  | Dissolution of Relationships | Tashiro Reading |  |
| Week #8: February 24 – March 2 |
|  | Exam #1 |  |  |
| Week #9: March 3 – March 9  |
|  | Spring Break |  |  |
| Week #10: March 17 – March 23 |
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| Introduction & Five Keys (Intro to the SRH) | Markman Intro. & Ch. 1 |

 | Markman Ch. 14 |  |
| Week #11: March 14 – March 30 |
|  | The Transition to Marriage | Markman Ch. 14 | **Personal Reflection Paper #2** |
| Week #12: March 31 – April 6 |
|  | And Baby Makes Three: The Transition to Parenthood | Claxton Reading |  |
| Week #13: April 7 – April 13 |
|  | Gender and Relationships | Markman Ch. 3 |  |
|  | Protecting and Nurturing Friendship | Markman Ch. 9 - 11 |  |
| Week #14: April 14 – April 20 |
|  | Communication: It’s not about Communication | Markman Ch. 2 |  |
|  | Communication: Filters and Raw Spots | Markman Ch. 4 |  |
|  | Communication: Understanding Negative Patterns | Markman Ch. 5 |  |
| Week #15: April 21 – April 22 |
|  | Understanding Conflict in Romantic Relationships | Markman Ch. 7 – 8 |  |
|  | Beyond the Skills: Core Beliefs in Committed Relationships | Markman Ch. 13 |  |
|  | Sexuality in Intimate Relationships | Markman Ch. 12 | **Marriage Relationship Interview Assignment** |
| Week #16: April 24 – April 230 |
|  | Final Exam | Markman Ch. 12 |  |

 |  | Source MaterialsTextbook:Cozolino, L. (2004). *The Making of a Therapist.* New York, NY: Norton.Miller, W. R. & Rollnick, S. (2012) *Motivational Interviewing - Helping People Change* (3rd Edition). New Gehart, D. R. (2015). *Theory and treatment planning in family therapy: A competency-based approach*. Cengage Learning.Class PoliciesStudents are encouraged to carefully review the OSU Syllabus Attachment for important details and dates. |