I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students in this course will watch the hit television series, *This is Us*, and learn about key contemporary issues of human development, family systems, and cultural diversity. This course is designed to help students develop a critical understanding of how individuals develop within the cultural contexts of their families, communities, and social environments. In life, people are presented with decisions that compete with their individual wants and family needs. It is designed to help students grapple with difficult life decisions and consider how to be proactive and intentional in making decisions that will impact their lives, as well as those around them. Students will learn about ethical and societal challenges related to diversity, privilege, prejudice, parenting and child-rearing, life and death, identity, relationships, and health and well-being. Individual and family development is also best understood through an interdisciplinary lens, with appreciation for how biological, psychological, social and cultural processes impact human growth.

II. COURSE-LEVEL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course-level outcomes of this course are for students to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of culturally diverse individuals and families and the impacts of discrimination and racial inequality.

2. Explain key issues of contemporary significance (for example, transracial adoption, foster care, obesity, substance abuse, mental health, death, and relational and marital stressors) relevant to individual and family development.

3. Analyze similarities and differences across the disciplines of human development and family studies, psychology, and sociology as related to key issues of individual and family development.

4. Demonstrate knowledge of how to navigate ethical dilemmas between individual and family needs and goals in a way that promotes ethical decision making in families.

III. GENERAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES

This course fully covers the Diversity and Inclusion Responsibilities (C3) outcome and the Grand Challenges (G) outcome. The course is also a Grand Challenge course.
Diversity and Inclusion Responsibilities (Fully/C3)

1. Demonstrate knowledge of identity development, prejudice, inequality, privilege, and oppression as they relate to culturally diverse individuals and families living in the US.
2. Demonstrates knowledge of the impact of discrimination and racial inequality in culturally diverse families and marginalized communities.
3. Develops problem solving skills related to navigating intersecting cultural identities in individuals and families.
4. Develops an understanding of the experience of marginalized individuals and families living in poverty or disability due to mental and physical illness.

Grand Challenge

This course is a Grand Challenge course, and the following explains how each key component of Grand Challenge courses is met:

Inclusion of complex issues of contemporary significance.

The television series, *This is Us*, is so popular because it addresses many complex issues of contemporary significance. At its core, the story of *This is Us* examines individual and family development across cultural, social, and generational contexts, and explores how these contexts shape physical, mental and social health and wellness. Topics of particular importance for future health and human service professionals to understand and consider, including transracial adoption, obesity, miscarriage, substance abuse, mental health, death, and relational and marital stressors, will be explored. Therefore, the class will select topics of discussion each week based on content from the show, which will provide students opportunities to learn and apply their knowledge.

Interdisciplinary Approach

This course will draw from 3 core disciplines including human development & family studies (HDF), psychology, and sociology. While this course falls within the HDF department, HDF itself is a very interdisciplinary field, and psychology and sociology influence HDF scholars and vice versa. These are three fields of study available for students at URI, and students are often confused (at least initially) about the differences between them. Therefore our goal is to help students understand similarities and differences across these three fields. Almost all topics discussed in the course span multiple fields, so we will work to ensure at least two perspectives are covered for each topic. For example, from HDF we will discuss what defines a family and how family dynamics play a role in shaping human development, while also covering multiculturalism and how growing up in a biracial family has its strengths and challenges, a topic of interest to sociology.
Recognition and Application of Ethical Principles

The television series, *This is Us*, provides many opportunities to discuss key ethical challenges that confront people on a daily basis. Ethical challenges will be examined from a family systems framework, discussing how to navigate conflicts between individual and family needs and goals in a way that promotes ethical decision making in families. Topics such as transracial adoption, gentrification, healthcare, end of life, employment, family workload equity, and child-rearing decisions will provide ample opportunities for students to discuss cultural, personal and family ethical dilemmas that are encountered in society. This will also enable students to grow in understanding how to address ethical dilemmas they may encounter personally and professionally, particularly if they pursue a career as a future health and human service professional.

IV. IDEA OBJECTIVES RELATED TO THE COURSE

This class works to address the following IDEA learning objectives:

1) Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends) related to individual and family development,
2) Learning to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions),
3) Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.

V. REQUIRED READINGS AND TECHNOLOGY

- Students are required to purchase a Skyepack resource to gain access to all the course readings. See the Brightspace site for information on how to access the resource. This will cost $35.
- Students need to watch the show, *This is Us*, Seasons 1-3. These seasons are available on NBC.com with a cable package, or students can access the show through Hulu (www.hulu.com), which currently costs $5.99/month with the first month free.

VI. CLASSROOM PROTOCOL

For this online course, Brightspace is our “classroom.” Please refer to the (START HERE) module for a detailed information on how this course will run via Brightspace, which tools you will need, and how to use those tools. I also encourage you to take the URI Online Learning Orientation: https://web.uri.edu/online/online-learning-orientation/

In this online learning environment, you are expected to be present on the site regularly and make regular contributions. I will gauge your participation by your regular, on-time postings and responses, and timely assignment submissions.

Each week of the course will include readings, videos, applied activities, discussions, and/or quizzes based on the topic of the week. We will also include Guest Lecture videos or facilitated discussions related to faculty and staff interests in HDF and in related disciplines. Throughout
some of the readings, videos, and/or applied activities, students will explore interdisciplinary and ethical principles. Please refer to the Class Schedule at the end of this syllabus and on the Brightspace site for details on how and when you will be expected to contribute to the course.

The syllabus is your map to this course. This course is divided into 5 weeks, with . For each week on Brightspace, you will find the learning objectives for the week, content overview, and a to do list of assigned readings, videos, written assignments, quizzes, and discussion activities.

Each week, you should plan to spend approximately 3-4 hours watching the show, 1 hour in class, and 4-5 hours reading, watching videos, responding to discussion questions, preparing for and completing quizzes or written assignments, or studying for the final exam.

VII. ASSIGNMENTS

There are several assignments for this class. Some of the details are included here; however, all assignments will also be discussed in more detail as the semester progresses. Please Note: Since this is an accelerated course late assignments cannot be accepted.

1. Quizzes

There will be eight quizzes throughout the semester that will be completed on Brightspace. The quizzes will require you to reflect on the TV show and readings, demonstrating an understanding of course concepts and critical analysis skills. These quizzes will involve mostly multiple choice questions. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

2. Application Assignments

There will be four application assignments. Each assignment is meant to help you thoughtfully consider the role of culture, ethics, and interdisciplinary perspectives for the topics discussed in class.

3. Discussion Participation

To receive discussion points, you will need to partake in the discussion forums associated with each module. You will need to post thoughtfully. Since this is an accelerated course with discussion posts daily it can be hard to respond to peers. Please make every effort to respond to a few peers for each post. Each discussion will require you to reflect on content from the show AND also refer to content from the assigned readings and videos that are on the Skyepack resource & on Brightspace.

4. Final Exam

A cumulative final will be given as part of the final module based on key content presented in the course readings and videos.
# VIII. GRADING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>1: Module 1 2: Module 3 3: Module 5 4: Module 7 5: Module 8 6: Module 11 7: Module 12 8: Module 13</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21 points (3 points each with 1 drop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Assignments</td>
<td>1: Module 2 2: Module 4 3: Module 6 4: Module 9</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20 points (5 points each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>All Modules</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29 points (2 points each + 1 point based on overall contribution)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Module 13</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30 points</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 points</strong></td>
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**What Grades Mean on Individual Assignments:**

A = Exceptional or outstanding work.
B = Fully meets undergraduate standards.
C = Unsatisfactory, below undergraduate standards, although all aspects of assignments were completed.
D = Unsatisfactory, below undergraduate standards, some aspects of assignments not done.
F = Failure, assignment incomplete.

**How Final Grades Will Be Determined:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>93-100%</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>90-92.5%</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>87-89.5%</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>83-86.5%</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>80-82.5</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>77-79.5%</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>73-76.5%</th>
<th>C-</th>
<th>70-72.5%</th>
<th>D+</th>
<th>67-69.5%</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>60-66.5%</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>59.5% and below</th>
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IX. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Technology Requirements

Computer access to the internet is required in order to successfully navigate this course. The course is delivered through the Brightspace Learning Management System (LMS) platform, which is a set of web applications designed to work with modern web browsers. Recommended browsers (those with the most QA testing effort against them) are Google Chrome, Safari, and Mozilla Firefox. The mobile versions of these browsers also work well with the majority of operations in Brightspace. Internet Explorer is not recommended.

Grading for Written Work

All written work is expected to meet basic standards of writing proficiency. You are expected to use people-first language and to avoid sexist or culturally insensitive language. Written work will be graded for thoroughness and completeness of content, clarity and logic of presentation (e.g. headings), and evidence of critical thought. In addition, papers will be graded for grammar, syntax, and spelling.

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. A student’s name on any written work, quiz, or exam shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student’s own independent thought and study. Work should be stated in the student’s own words, properly attributed to its source. Students have an obligation to know how to quote, paraphrase, summarize, cite, and reference the work of others with integrity. The following are examples of academic dishonesty:

- Using material, directly or paraphrasing, from published sources (print or electronic) without appropriate citation
- Claiming disproportionate credit for work not done independently; Unauthorized possession or access to exams
- Unauthorized communication during exams
- Unauthorized use of another’s work or preparing work for another student
- Taking an exam for another student
- Altering or attempting to alter grades
- The use of notes or electronic devices to gain an unauthorized advantage during exams
- Fabricating or falsifying facts, data or references
- Facilitating or aiding another’s academic dishonesty
- Submitting the same paper for more than one course without prior approval from the instructors

The issue of digital plagiarism has raised concerns about ethics, student writing experiences, and academic integrity. Be aware that papers may be checked against web pages and databases of existing papers. Although students may never have engaged in intentional plagiarism, many students do incorporate sources without proper citation, which is a violation. Please see me if you are uncertain about how to appropriately cite sources.
A grade of “F” (0 points of the assignment) will be earned if a student is found to engage in academic dishonesty (including all listed above). The instructor will file a Report of Cheating or Plagiarism with the Dean’s Office. Depending on the severity of the dishonesty, students may be assigned a grade of “F” for the course.

**Late Assignments**

Students are responsible for turning in all assignments on the due dates. **Because this is an accelerated course I cannot accept assignments more than a day late with a 5% deduction.**

**Instructor Availability & Response**

I am usually available by email (ebriggs@uri.edu). If you send me an email, I will aim to get back to you within 24 hours. I am also available to meet with students by appointment as needed. Students must email me to schedule an appointment.

**Students with Additional Needs**

Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me as early in the semester as possible so that we may arrange reasonable accommodations. As part of this process, please be in touch with Disability Services for Students Office at 330 Memorial Union, 401-874-2098 (http://www.uri.edu/disability/dss/).

**Academic Assistance**

This is a challenging course. Success requires that students keep pace with the work, understand course concepts, and study effectively. The Academic Enhancement Center (www.uri.edu/aec) is a great place to do this. At the AEC, students can work alone or in groups, and tutors and professional learning specialists are available to help each person learn, manage time and work, and study well. They are open Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Fridays until 1 p.m. All services are free (the coffee is free as well!), and no appointment is needed. You can call them for complete information at 874-2367, or stop by the center on the fourth floor of Roosevelt Hall.

**Note:** The course syllabus is a general plan for the course. Modifications to the course and the course schedule may be made based on the needs of the instructor and the interests of the class.
## CLASS SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module &amp; Due Dates</th>
<th>Weekly Topics &amp; Episodes</th>
<th>Key Concepts &amp; Ideas</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>START HERE Module</td>
<td>Learning Objectives</td>
<td>● Introduction to Ecological Systems Theory</td>
<td>Module 1 Quiz 1 Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due: Jan 4th</td>
<td>How the course works</td>
<td>● Introduction to Ethical Decision Making- Right vs. Wrong Decisions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Access to course materials</td>
<td>● Interdisciplinary Perspectives of human development, psychology, and sociology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Syllabus</td>
<td>● Value of diversity</td>
<td>Module 2 Application Assignment 1 - Due 1/8 Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module 1</td>
<td>Meet the Professor</td>
<td>● Transracial families and the impact on development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due: January 5th by 11pm</td>
<td>Technology requirements</td>
<td>● How to make the best decisions for adopted children’s development</td>
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<td>Student introductions</td>
<td>● Unconscious bias and privilege (White privilege &amp; marginalization)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>● Microaggressions and how to cope with them</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module 2</td>
<td>Parenting styles</td>
<td>● Parenting styles</td>
<td>Module 3 Quiz 2 Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due: January 6th at 11pm</td>
<td>Conscious parenting</td>
<td>● Current issues related to adoption</td>
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<td>Ethical decisions that people must make about difficult situations- Right vs. right decisions</td>
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| Module 4 | Aging, End of Life, and Social Well-Being | • Aging process and older adult demographics  
• End of life decisions  
• Widowhood  
• Caregiving  
• Aging and social isolation | Module 4  
App 1 Due  
Application Assignment 2 Due  
1/11 Discussion |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due: January 8th at 11pm</td>
<td>Watch Season 1, Episodes 12 &amp; 13</td>
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| Module 5 | Mental Health | • Various mental health issues such as Anxiety, Depression, Panic, Perfectionism  
• Societal stigma related to mental health  
• Intergenerational Trauma and how it affects family development | Module 5  
Quiz 3  
Discussion  
App 2 Due |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due: January 11th at 11pm</td>
<td>Watch Season 1, Episode 15 &amp; 18</td>
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| Module 6 | Substance Abuse | • Substance abuse & addiction  
• Consequences of substance abuse on individuals and families  
• Alcoholics Anonymous & other peer support groups | Module 6  
Application Assignment 3 Due  
1/14 Discussion |
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<tr>
<td>Due: January 12th at 11pm</td>
<td>Watch Season 2, Episodes 2 &amp; 5</td>
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| Module 7 | Child Development | • Stages of childhood  
• Healthy Development  
• Adoption & emotional impacts  
• Bi-racial adoptions  
• Child abuse and foster Care | Module 7  
Quiz 4  
Discussion |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due: January 13th at 11pm</td>
<td>Watch Season 2, Episodes 7 &amp; 8</td>
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| Module 8 | Due: January 14th at 11pm | Child Behavior & Body Image | Watch Season 2, Episodes 12 & 13 | • Child temperament  
• Birth order  
• Childhood obesity  
• Obesity and societal stigma and prejudice  
• Eating Disorders | Module 8 Quiz 5 App 3 Due Discussion |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Module 9 | Due: January 15th at 11pm | Death, Trauma, & Grief | Watch Season 2, Episodes 14 & 15 | • Coping with death of a parent  
• Grief, loss, bereavement  
• Stages of grief | Module 9 Application Assignment 4 Due 1/19 Discussion |
| Module 10 | Due: January 19th at 11pm | Marriage & Relationships | Watch Season 2, Episodes 18 & Season 3, Episode 3 | • Role expectations in family - how this may vary by social class  
• Parenting burden  
• Healthy love  
• Gender roles and expectations in marriage | Module 10 App 4 Due Discussion |
| Module 11 | Due: January 20th at 11pm | Socioeconomic Status, Poverty, and Social Justice | Season 3, Episodes 5 & 6 | • Impacts of poverty on individuals and families  
• Impact of Homelessness on well-being  
• Gentrification  
• Families of active duty military and returning veterans | Module 11 Quiz 6 Discussion |
| Module 12 | Due: January 21st at 11pm | Pregnancy & Sexuality | Watch Season 3, Episodes 9 & 16 | • Infertility - decisions and treatment options  
• Premature birth & infant development  
• NICU experiences  
• Adolescent sexual self-identity  
• Sexual orientation and coming | Module 12 Quiz 7 Discussion |
| Module 13 | Tying it All Together | • Course reflection  
• Final assessments | Quiz 8  
Final Discussion  
Final Exam |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|