

University of Rhode Island

Department of Human Development & Family Studies

HDF 130G: “THIS IS US”: INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Karina Tavares, MS

Winter JTerm 2026: **January 2nd - January 16th**

Online, Asynchronous Class

E-mail: karina_tavares@uri.edu

Available to meet over zoom as needed

<https://uri-edu.zoom.us/j/4763351787>

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 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.

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. 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

- All required readings will be posted on Brightspace.
- Students **need** to watch the show, *This is Us*, Seasons 1-3. You will have to use Hulu or Disney + to watch the show. There is a student version you can get for \$1.99 a month. Please email me back if this raises any concerns.

VI. CLASSROOM PROTOCOL

For this online course, Brightspace is a large component of 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. There is also a URI Online Learning Orientation (<https://web.uri.edu/online/online-learning-orientation/>) to help you become more comfortable using Brightspace.

Since this is an asynchronous online course, the importance of regular Brightspace logins and active participation cannot be overstated. I will gauge your participation by your regular, on-time postings and responses, and timely assignment submissions.

Each week will include readings, videos, 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. In addition, some of the readings, videos, and/or applied activities will encourage students to explore interdisciplinary and ethical principles. Please refer to the Class Schedule at the end of this syllabus and 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 3 weeks. 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 watching the required episodes, and 4-5 hours completing the “to-do” list for that week (readings, videos, discussion posts, assignments, studying, quizzes).

VII. ASSIGNMENTS

There are several assignments for this class. Some of the details are included here; but all assignments will be discussed in more detail as the semester progresses.

NOTE: SINCE THIS IS AN ACCELERATED COURSE, LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

1. APPLICATION ASSIGNMENTS

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

2.. DISCUSSION PARTICIPATION

To receive discussion points, you will need to partake in the discussion forums associated with each module. You will be expected to post thoughtfully and respond to peer posts if possible. Focus on. Each discussion will require you to reflect on content from the show AND also refer to content from the assigned readings/videos that are on Brightspace.

NOTE: SINCE THIS IS AN ACCELERATED COURSE, YOU WILL HAVE MULTIPLE DISCUSSION POSTS IN ONE WEEK. PLEASE DO YOUR BEST TO RESPOND TO YOUR PEERS POSTS AS WELL (points will not be deducted if you don't respond to peers)

3. **FINAL EXAM :** There will be no final exam for this J-term.

VIII. GRADING

ASSIGNMENTS	DUE DATE	% OF GRADE	POINTS
Application Assignments	Segment 2: Sunday January 11th Assn.1: Module 2 Segment 3: Friday, January 16th Assn 2: Module 4	30%	30 points (15 points each)
Discussion Questions	Segment 1: Tuesday, January 6th Intro post Discussion 1 Discussion 2 Segment 2: Sunday, January 11th Discussion 3 Discussion 4 Segment 3: Friday, January 16th Discussion 5 Discussion 6 Final post	70%	70 points (11 points each + 2 points for intro/final post)
TOTAL:		100%	100 points

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:

A 93-100%	B+ 87-89.5%	C+ 77-79.5%	D+ 67-69.5%
A- 90-92.5%	B 83-86.5%	C 73-76.5%	D 60-66.5%
	B- 80-82.5	C- 70-72.5%	F 59.5% and below

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.

Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments should be prepared by the student. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Students are responsible for turning in all assignments on the due dates.

NOTE: SINCE THIS IS AN ACCELERATED COURSE, LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY & RESPONSE

I am available by email (karina_tavares@uri.edu) I will (almost) always answer your e-mail within 24 hours and am also available to meet on Zoom.

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.

ANTI-BIAS STATEMENT

We respect the rights and dignity of each individual and group. We reject prejudice and intolerance, and we work to understand differences. We believe that equity and inclusion are critical components for campus community members to thrive. If you are a target or a witness of a bias incident, you are encouraged to submit a report to the URI Bias Response Team at www.uri.edu/brt. There you will also find people and resources to help.

COVID PRECAUTIONS

The University is committed to delivering its educational mission while protecting the health and safety of our community. As members of the URI community, students are required to comply with standards of conduct and take precautions to keep themselves and others safe.

X. CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK TOPICS + EPISODES ASSIGNMENTS DUE DUE DATE ■

***S= Season, E= Episode**

<u>WEEK</u>	<u>TOPICS+ EPISODES</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENTS DUE</u>	<u>DUE DATE</u>
SEGMENT 1 Modules 1-3	1. Interdisciplinary perspectives <i>Season 1 E 1 & 2</i> 2. Family Multiculturalism <i>S 1 E 4 & 5</i> 3. Parenting/ Family Dynamics <i>S 1 E 8 & 11</i>	Introduction Post Discussions 1 & 2	TUESDAY JANUARY 6TH AT 11:59 PM
SEGMENT 2 Modules 4-6	1. Aging, Health, Social Care <i>S 1 E 12 & 13</i> 2. Mental Health <i>S 1 E 15 & 18</i> 3. Substance Abuse <i>S2 E 2 & 5</i>	Discussions 3 & 4 Application Assignment 1	SUNDAY JANUARY 11TH AT 11:59 PM
SEGMENT 3 Modules 7 - 9	1. Child development <i>S 2 E 7 & 8</i> 2. Child Behavior/ Body Image <i>S 2 E 12 & 13</i> 3. Death, Trauma, Grief <i>S 2 E 14 & 15</i>	Discussions 5 & 6 Application Assignment 2 Final Discussion Post	FRIDAY, JANUARY 16TH AT 11:59 PM

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.