

# **Divorced and Remarried Families: Theory and Clinical Foundations**

PC 3133  
Spring 2004

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*This online syllabus should be used to gain a better understanding of the content and focus of a course. The syllabus given out in the class may differ from this online version and its content supersedes that of the online syllabus.*

## **Course Description**

Divorced and remarried families are becoming a North American cultural norm. This course focuses on understanding these complex families from sociocultural, developmental, theological, and family process perspectives. Implications for marital and family therapy and pastoral care with divorced and remarried families will guide the context learning in this class.

## **Goals**

By the end of the semester, class participants will be able to:

1. Articulate an understanding of divorce and divorce processes informed by social, cultural, emotional, and theological contexts;
2. Discuss in a theological, clinical, and cultural framework the effects of divorce and remarriage on individual and family self interpretation in social and religious contexts;
3. Articulate an understanding of the varieties of divorced and remarried life in American culture and how these interact with religious and social identity and meaning;
4. Demonstrate a beginning ability to think theologically about divorce and remarriage processes; and
5. Discuss clinical and pastoral care processes, goals, and interventions with divorced and remarried families in a critically informed manner.

## **Additional Th.M and D.Min. Goals**

1. To complete all goals listed above;

2. To demonstrate an advanced ability to reflect theologically on divorced and remarried family issues and pastoral care within that context;
3. To engage in depth analysis of at least one dimension of remarried families and/or their care.

## Requirements

1. *Complete all required reading and participate in class discussions about reading.*

- **Purpose and objectives of assignment**

By completing this assignment, students will:

1. Become oriented to the basic literature of divorce and remarriage studies,
2. Become competent in discussing basic issues in divorce and remarriage,
3. Become acquainted with the diversity of divorce experience and cultural conversations about divorce and remarried families in American life.
4. Develop personally and theologically integrated stands related to divorced and remarried families.

2. *Class Discussion Leadership (20%)*

- **Purpose and objectives for this assignment:**

By preparing this assignment, students will carefully read and give conscious thought to one dimension of the literature used in class. Through leading class discussion, students will:

1. Learn to consolidate and organize their understanding of the applicable literature into a form that can be communicated to peers and potential clients;
2. Learn to focus their own opinions about a complex human phenomenon and its theological and behavioral scientific ramifications;
3. Learn to interact in a professional context with peers about intense and controversial material.

- **Task:** Each class member will facilitate class discussion either individually or in a dyad. Presenters in dyads will lead two class presentations. Class leaders for the day will be expected to:

1. Provide an outline for the class of material to be presented for the day,
2. Be creative in an interactive format to involve the class in the material to be presented, and

Presenters are encouraged to use in-class interview and other media to demonstrate assigned issues related to divorced and remarried families. Pay particular attention to literature, art, cinema and other cultural representations of divorced and remarried families that might be helpful for your presentation.

Each class presentation will be graded. Dyads may opt for an average for their presentations, or select one leader for each presentation who will receive the grade for that presentation.

5. ***Critical Book Review (40%)*** Due October 23 \*(note additional D.Min. Requirements)

- **Purpose and objectives for this assignment:**

By completing this assignment, students will:

1. Gain a beginning knowledge of counseling strategies for divorced and remarried people;
2. Consolidate learning from reading into a brief articulation of the counseling theory reviewed.

- **Task:** Read thoroughly a text that is marked by a ***double asterisk*** in the ***Supplemental Texts*** section of this syllabus. Other texts must be approved by the professor. In no more than two double-spaced pages, summarize the approach to therapy provided by the work. In no more than three additional pages, outline your critical evaluation of the therapy model presented. Be sure to include theoretical, theological, and personal perspectives.

- **Th.M and D.Min. Expectations:** D.Min. students will provide a book review that demonstrates doctoral level critique and analysis. Reviews must include substantial theological analysis and pastoral reflection related to the book.

3. ***Research Project (40%)*** Due the last day of class.

- **Purpose and objectives for this assignment:**

By completing this assignment, students will:

1. Gain in-depth understanding of one dimension of divorce, single parenting, and/or remarriage in which they have a specific interest;
2. Gain expertise in using appropriate database resources for research in this field;

1. Experience a beginning qualitative research task;
2. Gain an appreciation for the human realities in divorce and remarriage framed by a rigorous approach to understanding human experience;
3. Learn to give conscious and intentional thought to theological and pastoral meanings at the intersection of human experience (i.e. divorce and remarriage), behavioral scientific knowledge, and pastoral practice;
4. Learn to articulate research findings and observations in a way that is consistent with professional dissemination of information (i.e. the written report as a means of professional communication);

- **Tasks:**

**Preliminary task: Form a research group, or decide you will work independently.** You may form a research group of 3 or 4 to complete this project. Tasks may be divided. Grades for the group will be assigned based on the final write-up.

- ✓ **Task One–Question:** Select either 1) an interesting question you have about divorce, single parenting, remarriage, or stepfamilies; or 2) a particular kind or constellation of divorced/remarried family about which you want to know more. Articulate your question, concern, or interest in one paragraph. Questions can relate to any dimension of divorced and remarried life, and/or to social, theological, spiritual, or emotional factors in family life or congregational life as it relates to divorced and remarried families. **Your statement of problem or question is due March 6.**
- ✓ **Task Two--Literature review:** Go to the literature (i.e., the library) and investigate your question or interest in family constellation as thoroughly as possible. Be sure to explore both books and journals. Write a review of what others have discovered about your topic. Be clear, focused and concise. Include a statement of which data bases you used for your search (e.g. ATLA, Psych Abstracts, etc.).
- ✓ **Task Three–Investigation and Interview(s):**
  - 1) Arrange an interview (or interviews) with one or more families who exemplify your question or are examples of the kind of family you are investigating. ***Be certain to gain informed consent for the interview and any recording by using the attached form. Be sure to attach this signed form to your paper.***
  - 2) Assisted by your literature review, construct a set of questions for your interview that will lead families to talk about their experience in the area(s) you are investigating. You should include a copy of your guiding questions in the body of your paper, or attach them as an appendix.

3) Conduct your interview(s) in a way that elicits experience rich (i.e. “thick”) descriptions of what it is like to be a divorced, single parent, or stepfamily. Take careful notes or tape record (with permission) your interviews to help you in your write-up.

✓ **Task Four–Write-up:** Write a summary of what you discovered through your interview(s).

1) Relate this specifically to your question, your reason for asking the question, your individual interview questions, and your family(s)’s responses to the interview.

2) Use quotations, stories, etc. from the interview(s) to illustrate your findings.

3) In your write-up, attend to fidelity with your interviewed family’s self revelation and your interpretation of their experience.

4) Attend to what themes you can identify from the interviews that relate to your question. Summarize how these reflect or relate to cultural, emotional, religious, and traditional family process issues.

5) Summarize how your interview(s) supported or did not support what you learned in the literature review.

6) What did you learn about your question? Did you gain new knowledge from your interview? Was old knowledge confirmed? Did new questions arise? Was the investigation valuable to you, the family, or to learning about future ministry or therapy with divorced and remarried families? How?

✓ **Task Four A--Theological and Pastoral Reflection:** The final section of your paper should be a substantial theological reflection relating to your question, research, and conclusions. What theological questions arose for you? What theological issues are at stake in the question, the family’s responses, and your conclusions? How do traditional theological themes and religious practices intersect, impact, or miss the realities of the families you studied? What implications do you see for pastoral ministry? For constructive theology? For pastoral counseling/marriage and family therapy? What spiritual issues are at stake for the families? For churches? For our culture? Be creative. Feel free to focus on one or two issues and explore these in depth, or to outline a broader theological agenda around which the church must reflect for informed ministry with divorced and remarried families.

✓ **Th.M and D.Min. Expectations:** Students will complete the study described above. D.Min. students should pay particular attention to a thorough and well written literature review, and should attach a copy of their search document to

the paper (i.e. document your search). In the final section (task four), D.Min. students must demonstrate advanced levels of theological and pastoral reflection and relate this to their current ministry placement.

## ***Texts***

### **Required:**

- Dowd, N. (1997). *In defense of single-parent families*. New York: New York University Press. ISBN: 0-8147-1869-8
- Marquard, E. (2005). *Between two worlds: The inner lives of children of divorce*. NY: Crown. ISBN: 0-307-23710-9
- Townsend, L. (2000). *Pastoral care with stepfamilies: Mapping the wilderness*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press. ISBN 0-8272-2966-6
- Wallerstein, J., Lewis, J, and Blakeslee, S. (2000) *The unexpected legacy of divorce*. New York: Hyperion. ISBN: 0786863943
- Whitehead, Barbara, *The divorce culture* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1997). ISBN 0-679-43230-2

### **Supplemental\* Texts (Library Reserve)**

- Bray, James and John Kelly, *Stepfamilies: Love, marriage and parenting in the first decade* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998).
- \*Browning, D., Miller-McLemore, B, Couture, P., Lyon, K. and Franklin, R. (1997). *From Culture Wars to Common Ground: Religion and the American Family Debate*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- \*Hanson, S. et al (Ed.). (1995). *Single parent families: Diversity, myths, and realities*. New York: Haworth Press.
- \*\*Isaacs, M., Montalvo, B., and Abelsohn, D. (2000) *Therapy of the difficult divorce*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc.
- \*Schwartz, L. and Kaslow, F. (1997). *Painful Partings: Divorce and Its Aftermath*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- \*\*Margery, A., Neely, V. & Maas., S. (2000). *Counseling Single Parents: A Cognitive-Behavioral Approach*. New York: Springer Publishing Co.
- \*\*Morawetz, A. (1984). *Brief therapy with single-parent families*. New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers.
- \*\*Visher, E. and Visher, J. (1996). *Therapy with stepfamilies* . New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1996.

## *Schedule*

### *Introduction*

Feb. 7            **Divorce in History, Law, and Culture**

Lecture

### *Social Analysis: American Divorce*

Feb. 12           **The Divorce Culture I**

Reading: Whitehead. *The Divorce Culture*, chs. 1-3  
Browning, et al., ch. 2

Feb. 14           **The Divorce Culture II**

Reading: Whitehead. *The Divorce Culture*, chs. 5-8

### *Personal Perspectives*

Feb. 19           **Divorced Persons: Spiritual, Religious and Pastoral Care Issues**

Reading: Schwartz and Kaslow, *Painful Partings*, ch 8, Appendix F.  
Anderson, Browning, et. al, *The Family Handbook*, ch 3  
\*\*Review your religious tradition's stand on divorce (i.e. the Book of Order, Book of Discipline, oral tradition, etc.)

Class Discussion: Come prepared to discuss your religious tradition's stand on divorcing couples, your own understanding of divorce dynamics, and personal experiences related to the experience of divorce and care of divorcing persons. In preparation for class, outline a pastoral care strategy consistent with your faith community's theology for responding to divorcing persons' spiritual and religious needs.

Feb. 21           **Divorce as Gendered Experience—Women and the Experience of Divorce**

Feb. 26 **Divorce as Gendered Experience—Men and the Experience of Divorce**

Feb. 28 **Restructuring Family Life Through Divorce**

Reading: Dowd, N. *In Defense of Single-Parent Families*, ch. 1-3

Mar. 4 **Single Parenting: Mixed Blessings**

Reading: Dowd, N. *In Defense of Single-Parent Families*, chs. 5-7

### ***Growing Up With Divorce***

Mar. 6 **Snapshot 3: Children’s Experience of Divorce**  
**Video: The Squid and the Whale**

Mar. 11 **Discussion of Squid and Whale**

Mar. 13 **From Child to Adult in Divorced Families I**

Reading: Wallerstein, J. *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*, chs. 1-5

Mar. 18 **From Child to Adult in Divorced Families II**

Reading: Marquard, E. *Between Two Worlds*, chs. 1-2

Mar. 20 ***Easter Holidays***

Mar. 25 & 27 ***Spring Reading Days***

Ap. 1 **From Child to Adult in Divorced Families III**

Reading: Wallerstein, J. *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*, chs. 7-11

April 3 **From Child to Adult in Divorced Families IV**

Reading: Marquard, E. *Between two worlds*, chs. 3-5

April 8 **From Child to Adult in Divorced Families V**

Reading: Wallerstein, J. *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*, chs. 12-16

April 10 **From Child to Adult in Divorced Families VI**

Reading: Wallerstein, J. *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*, chs. 17, 19, 22

April 15      **Family Law and Family Therapists: Guest Speaker**

April 17      **From Child to Adult in Divorced Families VII**

Reading: Marquard, E. *Between Two Worlds*, chs. 6-8

***Remarriage and Stepfamilies***

April 22      ***A Sociocultural and Theological Frame***

Reading:      *Pastoral Care with Stepfamilies*, chs 1-3

April 24      ***The Dynamics of Grief. Grief as Foundation***

Reading:      Townsend, *Pastoral Care with Stepfamilies*, ch 4

April 29      ***Remarriage***

Reading:      Townsend, *Pastoral Care with Stepfamilies*, ch 5

May 1        ***Children in Stepfamilies***

Reading:      Townsend, *Pastoral Care with Stepfamilies*, chs 6 - 7

May 6        ***Spiritual, Theological and Pastoral Care Dimensions***

Reading:      Townsend, *Pastoral Care with Stepfamilies*, chs 8 - 9

May 8        ***Pastoral Counseling with Stepfamilies***

Class discussion: Case Studies and treatment plans

***Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary***  
***Consent for Interview and Recording***

I, \_\_\_\_\_, the undersigned, hereby agree to be interviewed by \_\_\_\_\_ as part of an educational project. I understand that what I say during the interview will be used to complete requirements of a class assignment and may appear in a non-published paper presented to the interviewer's professor. I further agree for our interview conversations to be recorded in order to assure accuracy of the interviewer's representation of my statements on this class assignment. All tapes will be erased when the assignment is complete. I also understand that the interviewer will protect my privacy by using fictitious names of those interviewed and all family members when writing the class project.

I agree to the above conditions:

Name	Signature	Date
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Name	Signature	Date
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Name	Signature	Date
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Name	Signature	Date
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Consent is required of all persons over the age of 18. Minor children's must have parent or guardian's consent.

## Appendix II: Class Policies

### *Grading: Grade Scale and Philosophy*

A	96.6-100
A-	93.6-96.5
B+	90.6-93.5
B	87.6-90.5
C	85.6-87.5
C+	83.6-85.5
C	81.6-83.5
C-	79.6-81.5
D	70.6-79.5
F	Below 70.6

Individuals admitted to graduate study are expected to perform consistently and well in academic work. This is translated into grades in the following way:

1. Basic mastery of the body of knowledge at a level expected in graduate study will earn scores in the B to B+ range.
2. Grades of A- are granted for work which demonstrates
  - basic mastery of the body of knowledge, and
  - independent thought about the subject matter.
3. Grades of A are granted for work which demonstrates
  - mastery of the required body of knowledge,
  - independent thought about the subject matter, and
  - creative/integrative use of the material, exceptional writing which integrates the material into a student=s own system of thought, and/or exceptionally well done or articulate research.

### *Attendance*

Learning is a complex activity that requires conceptual and experiential participation by those who wish to learn. Student attendance and participation is fundamental to the way the learning environment is structured for this course. Attendance and participation is required to earn a passing grade. While circumstances may require an adult learner to miss class occasionally, absence from more than 10% of the classroom experience will affect student learning and (consequently) the student's grade. Extreme circumstances, such as health problems, family concerns, etc. must be discussed with the professor *prior* to multiple missed classes. Students unable to attend at least 75% of classes are advised to drop the class prior to the registrar's WP deadline, or receive a failing grade.

### *Form for Writing Assignments*

- All papers submitted for grades must be written in APA approved style and be double-spaced.
- All papers are to be submitted electronically to [ltownsend@lpts.edu](mailto:ltownsend@lpts.edu) as an e-mail attachment

All sources used in writing assignments must be cited appropriately and according to APA style.