

FAS 220-THE FAMILY

THOUGHT PAPER OPTIONS

FOR THIS CLASS YOU WILL CHOOSE ANY TOPIC THAT INTERESTS YOU. You have 25 options to choose from.

Papers will be graded on:

Format: General appearance, organization, title page

Grammar: Sentence structure, spelling, punctuation

Thoroughness: Did you answer each question?

Conclusion: A concluding paragraph of at least 10 sentences that identifies what you learned by writing the paper.

Choices for papers:

1. The text lists several major environmental challenges to marriages and families in our society today. Pick 3 that are very relevant to your family and discuss in depth how each of those 3 affected your family. How did your family do in response to each challenge? What do you think your family could have done better in response to each challenge?
2. My Family of Origin: What's your definition of the word "family?" Describe in detail your family of origin. What was distinctive about your family? What was it like growing up in your family? What were some of the weaknesses and strengths in your family? When growing up, how did you see your family as similar to or different from other families you knew?
3. What kinds of interactions did you have with people and who were really different from your family in terms of ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion/spirituality, or other characteristics? How did that interaction affect you and your family? How are those interactions affecting your life now?
4. Using the reference point of either your current partnership, your current family, or your family of origin (either as it is now or when you were a senior in high school), complete the Couple and Family Map (Resource Section A) and obtain a score for family cohesion and family flexibility. Plot your scores onto the Couple and Family Map. What was it like to live in the type of family system you identified on the Couple and Family Map?
5. What are some of the important similarities between friends and lovers?

6. What are the differences? Using Sternberg's concept of love how has your view of love changed over time? Identify both a constructive and destructive intimacy game you've participated in. What was your part? What was the impact on the relationship? What games were used in response to your game? What's the impact of those games on you now?
7. What are the pros and cons of single hood from your perspective? Is dating a good way to select a marriage partner? Do opposites attract or do birds of a feather flock together?
8. What are the best ways to avoid dating violence and abuse? How can you tell whether a relationship is or can be abusive?
9. What are the advantages and disadvantages of cohabitation? Would you choose to include this option in your life? Why? What impact would this have on your family of origin? You children (if you have them)?
10. What is the most effective approach for sex education? Why?
11. Discuss the pros and cons of premarital sexual behavior. How does sexual behavior change over the lifetime of a marriage? What are your thoughts about these changes?
12. What are some of the advantages and limitations of having an egalitarian relationship? Discuss some power dynamics that occurred in your family and the impact they had on the family.
13. Identify the behavior style of each of the members of your family (including yourself) as passive, assertive, or aggressive. Discuss how it feels to use each style, how other people react to the style, and the impact of the styles on the family and on each individual.
14. Describe 10 positive and 10 negative communication behaviors. Which have you seen in your family and what was the effect? How do cultural differences impact communication styles? What are the common types of talk and how do they affect intimacy?
15. Discuss some common myths about conflict and anger. Discuss some destructive and constructive approaches to resolving conflict. Which have you seen in your family and what was the result? What are the 6 steps for resolving conflict? What happens when these are used?
16. How was money handled in your family and what's your reaction to that approach? What are the pros and cons of having a budget? Do you have a savings plan? Do you have a retirement plan? How will you pay for insurance, auto repairs, home repairs, medical expenses, etc.?
17. Discuss the value and limitations of premarital counseling. Would you get premarital counseling or encourage someone you love to do this? Why? What are some of the most common issues newlywed couples face? How do you recommend dealing with these issues?
18. Discuss how you define *middle age*. What are some common struggles of families at this stage? Discuss the process of adolescents leaving home and the effects on both the adolescents and the parent(s).
19. Define *older persons*. What are the common problems of older persons? The benefits of age? What have you learned from an older person? What have you learned about aging?

20. Describe how your family has reacted to a major stressor (car accident, heart attack, divorce, move to another city, etc.). How did your family's reaction make you feel? Do global rating on the cohesion and flexibility scales at four points in time: one month before the event, during the event, one month after the event, and one year later. How did this stressor impact the family's cohesion, flexibility, and communication?
21. Identify the common strengths of couples and families who successfully manage stress. Which of these have you seen in your family? What will you do to develop these strengths in your family now or your family of the future?
22. Discuss the various aspects of adjustment to divorce- emotional, legal, economic, co-parenting, community, and psychological. What is this process of divorce like for the various family members? What are things couples could do to keep their marriage mutually satisfying so that they would not want to divorce?
23. Discuss the impact of childhood physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse on these individuals as adults. Discuss what you know about living in a family that has a member who abuses alcohol or other drugs
24. What are the challenges and strengths of single-parent families? What are the advantages and disadvantages of various types of child custody (mothers with custody, fathers with custody, split custody, and joint custody)?
25. Discuss the challenges and strengths of stepfamilies. If you remarried, what are things you could do to keep your remarriage satisfying and happy?