

End of Class Reflection

Overall, I think this class has been one of the best, if not the best, class I've taken so far in college. I learned a lot about the family, and was able to apply a lot of the lessons we learned to my own life. This class helped me learn a lot about the struggles that my own family has had as I've grown up. And this class has been useful in learning ways that I can prevent these same issues from arising in my own family in the future. Each and every lesson from this class included concepts that I will take with me throughout my life and utilize in all of my relationships to make them better.

One of the things I learned in this class is that gender expectations are pretty much completely environmental and socialized. I had definitely learned this previously, but I hadn't really thought about how I can influence my future kids' perceptions of gender until this class. As the textbook says, "gender identity is expressed in how parents decorate their children's bedrooms, the styles and colors of clothing they choose for them, the toys and games children are given, the household chores they are asked to do, and eventually the occupational roles they are expected to fulfill as adults." Since gender is not as black and white as we're always told, I know that I want to raise my children in an environment that allows them to discover who they are without feeling pressure to conform to certain gender stereotypes. Looking back at my own experience, my mom really inspired me to be my own person, and pushed me towards math and science classes since I was interested in them, rather than straying away because I saw them as men's fields. She always let me choose what I wanted to wear and what toys I preferred. I preferred legos, hated dresses, played lots of sports, excelled in math, and aspired to be a doctor. I'm grateful that my mom did not push gender stereotypes onto my brother and I, so that is definitely something that I want to continue with my kids as well.

Another lesson I learned is that there is still a large gender pay gap in the U.S., and this inequality hurts women as well as the family at large. As we learned in the textbook, there is a growing number of single-parent households. A lot of these families have single mothers, and since women are being paid less than men in the U.S., single mothers struggle even more to keep their families afloat when they are raising the children on their own. If the U.S. closed this pay gap, I think we would begin to see better outcomes in the family arena, especially with regards to the children, such as better academic performance, and lower crime rates. I also found it really interesting that the gender pay gap is a problem all across the world. Even in countries like Iceland, where there is less of a gap, there is still inequality.

Another thing I learned is that there is increasing inequality in the U.S. in regards to social class. I found the SPENT game to be really eye-opening, as I learned just how difficult it is to survive and thrive on a low income. Some of the decisions I had to make were really difficult for me, such as whether or not to buy health insurance, whether to go to my grandfather's funeral, or whether to leave my child at home when he was sick so that I could go to work. These decisions were really difficult, but they are ones that lower class families have to make nearly every day. Until this class, I never realized that my family was considered to be in the upper class. My parents always told me growing up that we were part of the middle class, which is definitely what it seems like considering we're not millionaires. But, due to the rising inequality in the social classes, the middle class is getting smaller and smaller as more people are pushed to the ends of the spectrum. I think it was really eye-opening for me to learn that my family is part of the upper class, so I definitely want to be transparent with my children in the future so that they know where we stand in society as well. Since my parents always told me we were a middle class family, I thought my life was "average," and similar to most other Americans, but that is just simply not the case. I want my kids to understand their place in society, and understand the struggles that other people experience, so that they

are more compassionate humans. I want them not to judge, give food to kids at lunch that don't have any, be kind to the kid wearing dirty clothes or old shoes, and be careful about the comments that they make, as they may make other kids feel bad about their place in society.

Another takeaway from this class is how problematic the traditional sexual script is. I found the article "College Students and Sexual Consent" by Jozkowski and Peterson really interesting, but also really disturbing. This traditional sexual script implies that men always want sex and that women will stop the man from initiating sex if she doesn't want it. I definitely think that this has led to an increase in sexual assaults and rapes in America, which is a big concern. Men take on the "male deception" and "male aggression" scripts that may make them less likely to have a conversation with the female about consent. Overall, I found it really disgusting how many men said that they would use deceptive and aggressive tactics to get women to have sex with them. Going forward in my life, I want to make it a priority to talk to my sexual partner and determine our own definition of consent, and make sure we're having really open communication on how we are feeling and making sure that both are comfortable whenever we engage in sexual acts.

Going off of that, another thing I learned is the importance of consent and teaching it to younger children. Consent doesn't really have a standard definition in our culture, which is one reason why the traditional sexual script has become such a problem in our society. So, I think the best way to stop this script is to begin teaching consent to elementary school students. I don't think it makes sense to teach kindergarteners about sex explicitly, but I think there are other ways to teach them consent. I know that with my future children, I want to teach them consent with hugs, for example. I've never been a very affectionate person, so growing up I was always really uncomfortable when extended family members of mine forced me to give them a hug, especially when I was really young. I think it's important for adults to ask children if they can hug them, pick them up, or put them in their lap, without

just assuming the child is okay with it, especially when it is not a parent doing so. I think that this is such an important way to teach kids to maintain control of their own bodies, and know that they ultimately have the full decision on who else is able to touch it. Also, I think that the tea consent video would be really helpful for young elementary school students to see to learn about consent. Then, as they progress throughout elementary school, they should be taught about consent in regards to sexual activity.

I also definitely learned a lot about arranged marriage from *Meet the Patels*. I found it really interesting to learn that arranged marriage is more like dating than I had originally thought. I honestly had pretty negative views of arranged marriage before this class because I thought it caused the women to have very little say in their marriage. I also found it really interesting how much Indian culture values the parent's approval of marriage. This is something that is definitely different from American culture. I think that here in the U.S. parental opinion is important, but it definitely does not hold as much value as it does in Indian culture, where the parents actively help search for partners for their children. I think one of the main takeaways that I learned from this film is that it's incredibly important to learn more about other cultures, and not just assume things about them. Most of what I thought I knew about arranged marriage came from portrayals of arranged marriage in the media, which is definitely not as accurate as learning from people that actually participate in arranged marriage. I honestly really wish that the media would portray arranged marriage in an accurate way, because I found the whole process really fascinating, and it would definitely help people better understand another culture.

Another lesson I learned in this class is that a good way to maintain a relationship and keep it healthy is to look for charitable explanations of behavior in your partner. Mr. de Botton explains how we should look for these explanations in our partners just like we do in children. I found his example really interesting, that when children tell you they hate you,

there is usually another reason that you can pinpoint for this behavior such as tiredness or sickness. If we did this with our partners as well, I definitely think it would prevent a lot of major arguments in relationships. Overall, I just think that this is a really good thing to practice with all of our friends, family, and even strangers. It's actually something that I have tried to put into practice in my retail job. Oftentimes, there will be customers that come in that really frustrate me. I used to go home and complain about the rude customers to my roommate all the time, but after learning this lesson in class, I try to give the customer the benefit of the doubt and assume that they must've just been having a rough day. Overall, I think this practice has made me a lot happier because I am no longer focusing on negative things. So, I think this is a practice that our society at large should try to adopt, because I think that ultimately it would make our society a lot nicer overall. This is definitely a practice that I will take into my current relationship and future ones as well. I think looking at each argument with this mindset will prevent these disagreements from getting out of hand, because it will open a dialogue to try to fix the root of the issue.

Another thing that I learned that I found really interesting was the *Suffocation of Marriage Model*. This was something that I had never heard described before, but it made a lot of sense to me after I related it to my own parent's marriage. I've learned a lot about Maslow's hierarchy before, so I thought it was interesting to hear it described in this way. We often use marriage to try to fulfill our highest needs such as safety and love, but when we rely solely on our partners to fulfill these needs, we are pretty much asking them to fail. I was able to better understand this model by looking at my own parent's relationship. They are definitely living in a suffocating marriage. Throughout the whole course of my life, my dad has put work ahead of our family. He is constantly working so he never really finds the time to invest in his relationship with my mom. My mom, on the other hand, does everything she can for my dad, in order to fulfill all of Maslow's hierarchy needs. Recently, however, my mom has spent a lot

more time working and taking care of her parents, and therefore my parents' relationship has become even more suffocating. I think seeing this negative relationship has really caused a lot of problems in my brother and I's lives. There's constant tension in the house, and he and I are often left in the middle, expected to pick a side. This is something that I definitely do not want to put my kids through in the future, or myself for that matter. However, I also do not want to go through a divorce or make my children have to go through that either. So, I really want to make sure that I work with my husband to prevent a suffocating marriage from occurring, rather than trying to get out of a suffocating one.

Another main takeaway that I have from this class is a way to prevent a suffocating marriage. In the "Is Divorce Contagious?" article, Rhoades explained the importance of setting aside a time each week and a specific place in the house to talk about the relationship and fix any problems before they get out of hand. This is something that I think is important for all couples to practice in order to ensure that their relationship does not get too suffocating, because it allows for open communication and gives each spouse the chance to truly explain how they have been feeling in a safe environment. From this same article, I found it really interesting how the reporter mentioned that her and her husband took time to talk about the ways in which various relationships that they've seen throughout the course of their life have affected their own views of marriage and relationships. I think that this is a really interesting thing to do and is definitely something that I want to talk about with my future romantic partners as well. I know that my view of marriage and relationships has definitely been impacted by my parents' and grandparents' marriages, so I think that this would be really important to talk about to make sure we're both on the same page and understand where some of our views come from.

The last takeaway I have from this class is that physical child punishment, like spanking, really does not work. I was never spanked as a child, and I think it definitely helped me learn

that my body is my own body, and no one else should be able to touch it unless I allow them to. I definitely think that spanking reinforces the idea to kids that they should listen to authority figures and people with power, which can be really dangerous in instances of sexual abuse when the child may think that they did something wrong to deserve the punishment they are receiving, and therefore be less likely to report the abuse. I think one of the most important takeaways from this class is the importance of communication. So, I definitely want to make sure that I communicate with my kids in the future on what they have done wrong and fully explain the punishment. My mom did a really good job of this growing up. She talked my brother and I through our tantrums and always explained why we were getting punished. This allowed my brother and I to ask questions and fully understand the consequences of our actions. This is definitely something that I want to continue with my kids, and ensure that we build a family that really values communication.

I definitely think that these ten takeaways, among other lessons learned in class, will allow me to be a better girlfriend, wife, mother, and person in general. I am incredibly grateful for this class, the friendships I made, and the lessons that I learned. I definitely think that this will be one of my favorite classes in my college career, because of how much I am able to take away from it. I definitely feel well prepared for my future as a wife and mother, and have already begun to implement some of these lessons into my current relationships.