

I am Ross Enochs and I will be your instructor for the online course Marriage and the Family from Religious Perspectives. I thought it might be helpful if I included a brief biography to let you know about my experience in religion. I graduated from Colgate University in New York with a B.A. in Religious Studies in 1985. I then went on to graduate work at the University of Virginia where I received my M.A. and Ph. D. in Religious Studies with a concentration in American Religious History. I taught part-time at Boston College, Merrimack College, and Marian College of Fond du Lac. From 1999 until 2022, I was an assistant professor at Marist College in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies. I am now semi-retired and teaching as a part-time instructor. At Marist I have taught a variety of courses including Introduction to Religion, Marriage and the Family from Religious Perspectives, Religion in American, Christianity, Catholic Thought and Spirituality, Judeo-Christian Scripture, Native American Religion and the Catholic Missions, and others. I am married and have four children, all adopted from Russia. I am Roman Catholic.

This is not an easy class. In this class we will be learning to analyze religious, theological and ethical issues concerning marriage. One of the great problems with regard to religion today is that most people think that they understand religion. Most people have the comfortable confidence that they have figured out religion. The problem with this assertion is that very few people study religion, and unless you spend some time studying religion, you really do not understand it. Today people spend far more time on the internet and the cell phone than they would ever commit to the study or practice of religion. When you graduate from college, most of you will have very little free time to study religion; new jobs, new friends, dating, marriage, new houses will most likely push religion out of your immediate interest. We have eight weeks, so you might as well commit some time to it now. I promise you, there will be some surprises for all of you.

This class is not like a daytime talk show on television; we are not here to share our feelings about our relationships or vent about our relationships. The purpose of this class is not to advocate for a particular denominational viewpoint, but rather the purpose of this class is to study the Jewish and Christian theology of marriage. We will be reading books by Catholics, Protestants and Jewish people. This is a religion class, not a sociology class, and we will be learning about Jewish and Christian doctrines, ethics and virtues; if you are not interested in this, you should consider taking another class.

Fulfilling the obligations of marriage is the primary way that many people practice their religion. How people treat the members of their families is what constitutes a large portion of the practice of their religious obligations. Most of you in this class will probably get married, and, statistically speaking, about 40% of marriages end in divorce in America. When and whom you marry will be the decisions that determine a great deal of your future happiness or lack thereof. Through the ages religious people have reflected on marriage and it may be a good idea to see what some of these people have to say before you jump into marriage. By examining observations of others concerning the ways that marriage tests people, you may avoid some of the common mistakes that people fall into because of their lack of knowledge of marriage. You *can* study marriage, and if you do, you will understand what you are getting into; you can have time to prepare for situations that you will inevitably face in the marriage journey. I also think that it is sad that in the last few decades an increasing number of people are not interested in getting married. Many perceive it to be too difficult or they have seen others fail and suffer the hardships of the

aftermath. It is sad that fear or unwillingness to face that which is difficult can deter people from something that could be the greatest thing in their lives.

If you really study marriage, you can avoid the mistakes that so many make. If you understand the purpose of marriage, then you will be prepared when confronted with the tests that marriage brings. As Marist students, you are some of the brightest young men and women in the country. You will most likely get good jobs when you graduate Marist. Most of you will experience material prosperity and what many call success. So the way that you will most likely mess up your life is through your marriage. That is why this is an extremely important course. If, for example, you graduate from Marist with a degree in biology, but decide not to continue with biology in your career, that is not really a great problem. You can always go to graduate school in some other discipline. However, if you get married and things go badly, especially if children are involved, this can mean long years of frustration and misery – I have seen this happen so many times with many of my friends.

The books assigned for the course contain many good insights that will help you to pick the right person to marry, and also help you to be the right person for someone else to marry. In this course I do not present my personal ideas on marriage, but rather I discuss the ideas on marriage of great scholars and ministers who have lived through many struggles and advised couples on how to endure in their commitments. That is why it is a good idea to read the books for this class. Some students who take this course, do not even buy or read the books. However, if you do not bother to do the reading, you may miss something that might have helped you to select the right person to marry. You might miss an idea that would have helped you to understand what your partner needed or an idea that would have helped prevent divorce. In contrast, if you don't read your trigonometry books, you may never be able to find the length of a side of a triangle using sine, cosine and tangent – but since just about no one needs to do this, it is not that big of a deal. If you do not read the books for this class, you might just pick the wrong person to marry, end up getting divorced, spend tens of thousands of dollars in divorce court, go through bankruptcy, foreclosure, lose your children in custody battles, and go through years of misery and anguish. So be sure to do the reading assignments for this class.

The first thing you need to do is to buy **hard copies** of the books that are listed on the syllabus. I have links to Amazon and you can buy used paperbacks to save some money if you like. I also have readings in the "content" tool. For the first week, we have no written assignments due, but the next week we will have a "questions" assignment due; in this assignment you will be required to answer questions about the readings. If you try to use Google to answer the questions for the class assignments, it will not work well. It is not so much that Google will give you the wrong information, but rather that it will not give you the answers to the questions that I am asking.

Each week your post for the discussions is due Sunday night by 8:00 PM. You only have to post once each week. Some weeks, there will be several topics for discussion. Even though there are several different topics, you do not have to post in all the topics. Each week, you only have to post in one topic - any topic that you like.

Knowledge of marriage can profoundly cut the odds that you will go through divorce. Marriage is not just a gamble on fidelity or responsibility. You can know the character of the person you decide to marry. Some things are certain. Many people just do not take the time to examine the character of their future spouse, and many do not know what to look for in a spouse. They just

tend to follow the platitudes of popular movies and magazines when making decisions about marriage – and, in America, the result is that about 40% of marriages end in divorce.

I hope you enjoy the course and I hope you find it challenging,

Best wishes,
Ross Enochs

Required Texts: You are required to buy hard copies of the following six books. You need to make sure you have the right book. For your papers and assignments you will be taking quotes from the books and if you are quoting from the wrong book, you will receive a zero on the assignment and you will not be able to resubmit your paper. Just to clarify, you may include quotes from any sources in your papers, but you must include quotes from the required books.

The Road Less Traveled by M. Scott Peck http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/0743243153/ref=sr_1_1_up_1_main_olp?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1324312095&sr=1-1&condition=used

Sacred Marriage by Gary Thomas https://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/0310337372/ref=sr_1_2_olp?s=books&sprefix=sacred+marriage%2Cstripbooks%2C161&crd=3GNGJYHAC5PU5&keywords=sacred+marriage+by+gary+thomas&qid=1597008752&sr=1-2&dchild=1

The Narcissism Epidemic by Jean Twenge https://www.amazon.com/Narcissism-Epidemic-Living-Age-Entitlement/dp/1416575995/ref=sr_1_3?crd=2DZEGZ218MPLO&dchild=1&keywords=narcissism+epidemic&qid=1612658037&sprefix=narcissism+epidemic%2Caps%2C261&sr=8-3

Between Two Worlds by Elizabeth Marquardt. http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/0307237117/ref=sr_1_1_up_1_main_olp?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1324312585&sr=1-1-spell&condition=used

The Wonder of Boys by Michael Gurian http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/1585425281/ref=sr_1_1_up_1_main_olp?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1324312716&sr=1-1&condition=used

The Female Brain by Louann Brizendine https://www.amazon.com/Female-Brain-Louann-Brizendine/dp/0767920104/ref=sr_1_1?crd=20AQNLFN5MCOH&keywords=the+female+brain+by+louann+brizendine%2C+m.d&qid=1641937405&sprefix=the+female+brain+by+louann+brizendine%2C+m.d%2Caps%2C76&sr=8-1

I realize that six books seems like quite a bit of reading, but you will only be reading selections from these books. If you would like to buy these books used, I have provided hyperlinks to Amazon. You can, of course, buy these books anywhere you like.

You will also need a Bible; any version of the Bible with the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament is fine. You do not have to buy a hard copy since there are several free versions of the Bible available online: *The New American Bible* <https://bible.usccb.org/bible> is a Catholic Bible, and the *NIV The New International Version*, <http://www.biblica.com/bible/browse-books/> is a Protestant Bible.

