

# MARRIAGE AND FAMILY SYNTHESIS ESSAY

ENGL 102.2

## WRITING AND RESEARCH

Choose ONE of the following writing situations and write a fully thought out, well organized and properly supported synthesis essay responding to the assignment. Since this is a SYNTHESIS essay, you will be expected to synthesize **at least three sources** from the assigned class readings to support your claims and opinions. Remember that your knowledge and experiences also count as potential sources, just not as your only sources. There is no outside research beyond the textbook required or expected for this assignment.

1. Several of the articles in this section deal with the "myths" of marriage that most Americans "know" to be true. Where did these myths come from and why are they so persistent? This paper should not only identify the myths, but also try to explain their origin and influence on American society. Be sure to determine who your audience is for this paper – are you writing this for people already married, people getting married, who?
2. What ARE the proper gender roles in a marriage? Is it possible to change from the traditional gender roles – is it desirable? **Be very careful that this does NOT become a first-person essay. This essay is not supposed to be about YOUR experiences in a marriage, or what YOU have observed in your friends and family. Base your arguments on the examples and evidence provided in the class readings.** You will most likely have to deal with the concept of what marriage is supposed to be as well as the specific issue of gender roles. Be sure to determine who your audience is for this paper – married people, unmarried, male, female, all of the above, etc. How are they supposed to use this information? Why are you sharing it with them. This is not just a laundry-list of complaints about the opposite gender – at least it's not if you do it correctly.
3. Write an essay explaining whether or not we should recognize gay marriage legally. Both of the essays that are specifically about gay marriage are very careful to deal with it from a legal and social perspective, NOT a religious perspective. Your paper MUST do the same. *You do not have the resources in your readings to support a religious argument. Any paper submitted on this topic that uses a religious foundation for arguing the issue will thus be returned for revision.* You WILL need to use other articles from the unit as well to set up what society's expectations and views of marriage have been and/or are today, not just the two articles specifically about gay marriage.
4. What is the proper role of love in a marriage? You have several historical essays showing that emphasizing love in a marriage is a recent innovation. You also have several essays discussing the fact that marriage is a contract situation with responsibilities and duties, which are way beyond the realm of whether you love the other person or not. Write an essay where you place love in what you think is the proper context for a marriage. How important is it to love the person you are going to marry? How important is love at first sight? Is the emphasis on love in marriage, ironically enough, part of the reason for the high divorce rate? Again, remember your audience – who is going to be reading this essay and how will they use this information? Why do they want to know this? What problem might it solve?
5. Divorce rates are high; everyone knows that. Write an essay explaining the impact of those high divorce rates. Help people see exactly what the divorce rate is and what it means to society. Is it really a negative, or is it historically normal? Why are the divorce rates increasing, when people seem to put so much emphasis on getting married? Given the rate of divorce, most people are either divorced themselves or from a divorced family – what is the social impact of that reality? Be sure to put this argument into a context – most people already know about the high divorce rate, so your paper has no reason to make that fact the focus. Explain what that high divorce rate MEANS – how people are supposed to react and use that information.
6. Everyone likes to point to the media, so this question asks you to explain the role of the media in marriage. Does media reflect the social reality or create/influence that reality? Do people change their beliefs because of what they see on the media, or does the media change to reflect the reality of the culture that creates it? **For this question, you can use outside examples (TV shows, movies, novels, etc), but you also HAVE to use the assigned readings to put those outside examples into context and give them meaning.**

**Be sure to review the back of this page for specific hints/assignment objectives.**

# MARRIAGE AND FAMILY SYNTHESIS ESSAY

ENGL 102.2

## WRITING AND RESEARCH

The successful synthesis essay will contain:

- Clear thesis/purpose
- Multi-paragraph organization that supports and reinforces the main thesis
- Appropriate use of Logos/Ethos/Pathos
- Fully explained background/history/definitions of key terms
- Properly integrated information from at least three outside sources
- Synthesis of multiple outside sources to support individual claims/arguments
- Analysis of the main ideas and information, not just repetition of the sources
- Use of credible academic/professional sources
- Proper use of APA or MLA citation form (both in-text and full citations at the end)
- Proper grammar and sentence structure

Don't assume that your readers are familiar with the issue or the experiments that you have been reading about. Make proper references and summaries of those ideas if necessary. Be sure to explain the basic background of obedience to authority and groupthink to your audience in your essay, as they will most likely NOT be aware of these theories anymore than you were before reading these sources.

Don't just jump into the "good stuff," either. Students have a tendency to want to start arguing their main arguments right from the first sentence or two. Wait a bit. Use the intro to set up the topic—grab our attention. Then slowly work your way into the specifics of the topic, making sure that you have explained the ideas and points as clearly as you can. THEN, after everything is set-up and the reader understands the big picture, THEN you can start getting into the specific argument(s) that you want to present to us.

For your Synthesis Essays, one needs to be in APA format, and one needs to be in MLA format. So if you have already used one format, be sure to use the other.