The meaning of marriage is hotly contested today. Does the state have a role in supporting particular goals for marriage (is marriage about contractual assurances or companionship or social stability or procreation or something else?). Can the state legitimately exclude some types of relationships from the status of marriage? Do "civil unions" provide an acceptable alternative to marriage for same-sex couples? On what grounds are other modes of relationships excluded from "marriage" status (e.g. polygamy)? Are the substance and goals of marriage a public issue at all, or a purely private religious/moral issue? This course will explore the historical, theological, philosophical, and legal dimensions of the Western traditions of marriages and study how individuals, moral and cultural communities, and political institutions seek to find a way to balance conflicting demands about what constitutes a legitimate marriage.

This course has two dimensions. First, an in-depth seminar discussion of theory, cases, and literature on the topic of the class. Class sessions will be devoted to interpretation and critical analysis of arguments presented on a range of topics. Second, students will work over the course of the semester to develop a substantial research paper that dives deeply into an aspect of the course topic, completing intermediate steps of the research and drafting process and culminating in a final paper.

This course is a Doyle Seminar, part of the Doyle Engaging Difference Program, a new campus-wide curricular initiative, and gives faculty the opportunity to enhance the student research component of upper-level seminars that address questions of national, social, cultural, religious, moral, and other forms of difference. The Doyle seminars are intended to deepen student learning about diversity and difference through enhanced research opportunities, interaction with thought leaders, and dialogue with the Georgetown community and beyond.

Expectations and Assignments

- You should strive to achieve the ideals of a liberal arts education: free and candid exchange of ideas, rigorous critique of claims, and toleration for considering variant positions.
- Thoughtful reading of the texts in preparation for the class is expected and essential.
- Students should be prepared to participate actively in each week’s seminar discussions. Participation in class is worth 15% of your grade. You are expected to be ‘ready’ to participate at each moment, including ‘being called upon’ and to discuss and analyze the arguments of particular texts. I will take note of students who do well, poorly, or are not adequately prepared for class. To receive the full credit for class participation, you do not need to ask brilliant questions or answer questions correctly in all circumstances; rather, the credit will be received when it is clear that you made a good faith attempt to read and comprehend the material and can ask reasonable questions about the material.
• You may use your laptop computers in class for note-taking, for looking up relevant items on the web related to class issues, for referring to related class readings, and for group work. All other uses of laptops during class time are unacceptable.

• You must adhere to the principles of conduct set forth in the Georgetown University Honor System unconditionally. I assume you have read the honor code material located at www.georgetown.edu/honor, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, “What is Plagiarism?”, “Sanctioning Guidelines”, and “Expedited Sanctioning Process.”
  o Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:
    ▪ In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.
  o Any sign of violations, including plagiarism, dishonesty, or cheating will be referred to the Honor Council and your Dean(s).
  o Any incident of plagiarism will constitute a failure in the assignment and zero credit for that portion of the grade. More severe sanctions may be administered by the Honor Council.

• Attend the class sessions. If you have a legitimate excuse, I need to know it (by email). Otherwise, be there. Legitimate excuses include illness, family situation, or other events or responsibilities that may occasionally draw you away from a regular class meeting. To be legitimate, I need to know about it beforehand, or it may be deemed legitimate if I receive a notice from your dean, in the case of more serious issues.
  o Attendance will be recorded at each class.
  o Excused absences do not yield a grade penalty, although I reserve the right to impose reasonable “make-up” meetings or assignments to ensure that the covered material is satisfactorily understood.
  o You will be penalized for unexcused absences. Penalties for unexcused absences are as follows:
    ▪ 1 grade down (e.g. a B reduced to a C)
    ▪ 2 or more unexcused absences will constitute a failure to complete the requirements of the course satisfactorily. Any student who misses more than two class sessions may be considered to have failed the course.

• Individual research and writing
  o A substantial portion of your grade (75%) will consist in the production of a substantial research paper (25-30 pages) due at the end of the class during the exam period.
  o Intermediate steps will include:
    ▪ Submission of a topic proposal
- Meeting to review topic proposal and research agenda
- Submission of an annotated outline
- Meeting to review outline and remaining research to be completed
  - Timely and satisfactory completion of all intermediate steps will be factored into the final grade of the research paper
  - There will be no late papers accepted past the deadline without a legitimate excuse from your school’s Dean’s office. Failure to complete the final assignment on time will constitute a failure of the course.

- Research presentations
  - The last four class sessions will be devoted to presentations of student research. We will coordinate student presentations so as to develop structured dialogues regarding issues raised in the class. That is, students addressing related issues, from similar or opposing perspectives, will present on the same days.
  - A distinguished scholar may be invited to participate in some or all of these research presentations.
  - Your own presentation and engagement with others will be worth 10% of your final grade.

- Grades: The grading scale for the course will be:
  - A  93-100 Excellent work
  - A- 90-92
  - B+ 88-89
  - B  83-87 Good work
  - B- 80-82
  - C+ 78-79
  - C  73-77 Average work
  - C- 69-72
  - D+ 66-68
  - D  60-65 Poor work
  - F Below 60 Failure to present satisfactory work

Office Hours

My office is located in the Berkley Center, 3307 M Street NW, Suite 200. Office hour times: I am available many times throughout the week for individual or group meetings. Please simply schedule it by email.

Course Materials:

The seminar will involve close textual readings and discussion. Students are expected to attend class with the readings (to refer to, to make arguments from). Some readings are either online (and I provide a link) or they will be made available on the Blackboard site for the course.
PLEASE note that some of the readings and cases will be provided in pdf form on Blackboard and that they are highly edited to focus on the parts relevant for our purpose. The portions I’m asking you to read may only be 1/10th of the total case.

The following books are available for purchase (and will be available on course reserve at Lauinger):

- Nancy Cott, *Public Vows*, Harvard, 0-674-00875-8

**Schedule**

**Week 1 (Aug. 29):**
Introduction: The Case of Marriage  
Margaret Farley, *Just Love*, pp. 1-26  
Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History*, pp. 1-49  
Westermarck, “Monogamy and Polygyny” (selection)

**Week 2-3 (Sept. 5; 10/12):**
Ancient/Medieval Views of Marriage  
Margaret Farley, *Just Love*, pp. 26-50  
Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History*, pp. 53-142  
John Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, pp. 1-193  
Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, pp. 3-43; 121-172  
Augustine, “Of the Good of Marriage”  
*Templum Dei*, Rule 16 (pp. 211-214)

**Weeks 4-5-6**  
(Sep. 17/19; 24/26; Oct. 1/3): Modern and Contemporary Views of Marriage  
Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows*  
Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History*, pp. 145-301  
Margaret Farley, *Just Love*, pp. 207-311  
John Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, pp. 194-215  
Barbara Herman, “Kant on Sex and Marriage”  
Michael Bayles, “In Defense of Monogamous Marriage”  
George Chauncey, *Why Marriage?* pp. 59-86  
Yenor, *Family Politics*, pp. 87-156  
Week 7-8-9
(Oct. 10; 15/17; 22/24):

Marriage and Family as a matter of law

- *Reynolds v. US*
- *Griswold v. Connecticut*
- *Roe v. Wade*
- *Loving v. Virginia*
- *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*
- *Lawrence v. Texas*

*Defense of Marriage Act*

Selected cases on legal restrictions on marriage (e.g. incest, polygamy, age, mental state)

Selected cases on divorce and domestic violence showing changes to the definitions of family/marriage

John Witte, “More than a Mere Contract”

Week 10-11-12
(Oct. 29/31; Nov. 5/7, 12/14):

Civil Unions and Gay Marriage?

Case study: *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*

James Q. Wilson, “Against Homosexual Marriage”
Richard Mohr, “The Case for Gay Marriage”  
George Chauncey, Why Marriage? pp. 87-166  
Gay Marriage and Exemptions  

Week 13 (Nov. 26/28): Student Presentations  
Week 14 (Dec. 3/5): Student Presentations

Final paper due on December 20.