

**Note:**

**Course content may be changed, term to term, without notice. The information below is provided as a guide for course selection and is not binding in any form, and should not be used to purchase course materials.**

## ***COURSE SYLLABUS***

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### **DBMF 405**

### **DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND BLENDED FAMILIES**

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course provides background to the causes of divorce, the emotional and relational consequences for both children and parents, factors that challenge positive adjustment after a divorce, strategies for successful remarriage, blended family dynamics, current policy issues, and the legal, cultural, and theological implications. Ethical concerns and multicultural factors are also considered.

#### **RATIONALE**

Divorce has both a direct and indirect effect on nearly everybody today. Within the Christian community alone, theological beliefs and debate about divorce and remarriage can be heated and divisive. Yet, for an increasing majority of Americans, it is an emotional and relational reality. Children are often left in the disturbing wake. This course is designed to provide awareness regarding the causes of divorce, the implications on children, families and society, as well as the skills and techniques necessary for helping individuals remarry and join blended families successfully. Time is also spent on the grief following the loss of a spouse to death. This course is offered in an eight-week format and includes extensive readings, experiential observations, exams, a research paper, and interactions with other students via Discussion Board Forums.

#### **I. PREREQUISITE**

For information regarding prerequisites for this course, please refer to the [Academic Course Catalog](#).

#### **II. REQUIRED RESOURCE PURCHASE**

Click on the following link to view the required resource(s) for the term in which you are registered: <http://bookstore.mbsdirect.net/liberty.htm>

#### **III. ADDITIONAL MATERIALS FOR LEARNING**

- A. Computer with basic audio/video output equipment
- B. Internet access (broadband recommended)
- C. Blackboard [recommended browsers](#)
- D. Microsoft Office

#### **IV. MEASURABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- A. Identify realities of the current state of marriages in America.
- B. Recognize and describe relationship patterns of disconnected and unsatisfied marriages, as well as individual and relational variables that predict divorce.
- C. Identify the emotional and relational processes and consequences of divorce for adults and children.
- D. Describe the legal process and requirements associated with divorce.
- E. Develop a personal hermeneutic of divorce and remarriage based on Scripture.
- F. Recognize the effects of marital conflict, divorce, child maltreatment and remarriage on children.
- G. Identify the common issues children have following parental divorce and describe strategies for healthy adjustment.

## V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

- A. Textbook readings and lecture presentations/notes
- B. Course Requirements Checklist
 

After reading the Course Syllabus and [Student Expectations](#), the student will complete the related checklist found in Module/Week 1.
- C. Discussion Board Forums (4)
 

Discussion boards are collaborative learning experiences. Therefore, the student is required to create a thread in response to the provided prompt for each forum. Each thread must be at least 400 words and demonstrate course-related knowledge (Dr. Dobson's assigned works and/or the core text, as well as video/audio content). In addition to the thread, the student is required to reply to at least 2 other classmates' threads. Each reply must be at least 200 words.
- D. Structured Interview Paper 1 – The Blended Family
 

The student will conduct a 45–60-minute interview with parents who are currently part of a blended family (not including personal/extended family members), to discover firsthand the experiences of integrating two families. The student will compile a list of 10 questions to be asked and submitted along with the paper. Finally, the student will write a 3-4-page summary (not including Title Page and References) in current APA style documenting the interview

Potential Questions:

  - How long have you been remarried?
  - What were the most difficult adjustments for you initially in bringing the families together?
  - How did you introduce your children to your new spouse?
  - How was he/she received?
  - What are your current frustrations and challenges?
  - How has being in a blended family been a blessing to you and your children?

- What effects did the divorce have on your children? Did you see any behavioral changes? Academic changes? Mood changes?
- What strategies do you and your spouse employ to bring the family together?
- What role does faith play in your marriage and family?
- Did you go to counseling or a pastor for guidance in any of the transitions? Was it helpful? What did you learn? How did it help you?

E. Structured Interview Paper 2 – Mental Health Professional

The student will locate a mental health professional actively involved in counseling divorced and remarried couples and blended families in the student's local area. The student will prepare at least 10 questions, interview the professional, and summarize his/her findings. The student will write a 3–4-page summary (not including Title Page and References) in current APA style documenting the interview and including a copy of all the questions that were asked.

Potential Questions:

- From your experience, what are some of the most prevalent reasons couples divorce?
- What are the most common challenges you see in the first three months following separation?
- Do you recommend temporary separation as a technique in helping keep couples married? Why or why not?
- What are the biggest adjustments couples have to make during separation? Divorce? Remarriage?
- When and how do you tend to see the effects of divorce manifest in children?
- What are the most difficult adjustments you see in two families coming together?
- How do you counsel divorced individuals with kids to begin dating again? What do you recommend for that process? What common mistakes do you see being made?
- What is your personal theology of divorce and remarriage? How does it fit with what you see and experience in your practice?

F. Theology of Divorce and Remarriage Paper

The student will develop a personal theological position regarding his/her beliefs about divorce and remarriage. The student may want to use *Divorce and remarriage: Four Christian views* from the recommended reading list to build his/her case on God's view of divorce and remarriage. Grading will include proper hermeneutic and biblical support, offering arguments for and against the student's proposed position. Finally, the student will summarize his/her findings and stated position in a 5–6-page paper (not including Title Page and References) written in current APA style.

## G. Quizzes (2)

Each quiz will cover the Reading & Study, Video, and Audio material for the assigned modules/weeks. Each quiz will be open-book/open-notes, contain 10 short answer questions, with no time limit to complete.

## H. 4-MAT Paper

Student will submit a 4–6-page 4-MAT paper for *Helping Children Survive Divorce: What to Expect; How to Help*, by Dr. Hart. The 4-MAT REVIEW system is a way of responding to readings that requires the learner to interact with new ideas on several levels. Detailed instructions and a grading rubric are available in Blackboard.

## VI. COURSE GRADING AND POLICIES

## A. Points

Course Requirements Checklist	10
Discussion Board Forums (4 at 50 pts ea)	200
Structured Interview 1	150
Structured Interview 2	150
Theology of Divorce & Remarriage Paper	300
Quiz 1 (Love Must Be Tough)	50
Quiz 2 (Surviving & Thriving)	50
4-MAT Paper (Helping Children Survive)	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>1010</b>

## B. Scale

A = 900–1010 B = 800–899 C = 700–799 D = 600–699 F = 0–599

## C. Dual Relationships

The faculty is responsible to interact with counseling students in a supervisory capacity/role. As such, faculty may provide students professional principles, guidance, and recommendations as it relates to the context of the student-client setting. The faculty is responsible to avoid dual relationships with students such as entering a student-counselor or student-pastor relationship. Thus, the faculty does not provide personal counseling addressing student personal problems. If a faculty member perceives that a student is in need of personal or professional counseling, then that faculty member will recommend that the student pursue either pastoral or professional assistance from a counselor in their community.

## D. Limits of Confidentiality

Students are encouraged to share prayer requests and life concerns with the professor in this class. Not only will the professor pray for and care for students, but can guide students to appropriate University resources if desired.

However, in the event of a student's disclosure, either verbally or in writing, of threat of serious or foreseeable harm to self or others, abuse or neglect of a minor, elderly or disabled person, victim or witness of a crime or sexual misconduct, or

current involvement in criminal activity, the faculty, staff, administrator, or supervisor will take immediate action. This action may include, but is not limited to, immediate notification of appropriate state law enforcement or social services personnel, emergency contacts, notification of the appropriate program chair or online dean, or notification to other appropriate University officials. All reported information is treated with discretion and respect, and kept as private as possible.

E. Disability Assistance

Students with a documented disability may contact Liberty University Online's Office of Disability Accommodation Support (ODAS) at [LUOODAS@liberty.edu](mailto:LUOODAS@liberty.edu) to make arrangements for academic accommodations. Further information can be found at [www.liberty.edu/disabilitysupport](http://www.liberty.edu/disabilitysupport).

If you have a complaint related to disability discrimination or an accommodation that was not provided, you may contact ODAS or the Office of Equity and Compliance by phone at (434) 592-4999 or by email at [equityandcompliance@liberty.edu](mailto:equityandcompliance@liberty.edu). Click to see a full copy of Liberty's [Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) or the [Student Disability Grievance Policy and Procedures](#).

F. Disclaimer

The resources utilized in this course, as well as any accompanying materials and instruction are intended for educational purposes. They are designed to neither give legal advice nor take the place of appropriate legal, professional or medical consultation. Completion of any module, certificate, course or an entire degree program does not automatically qualify an individual to function as a certified or licensed professional counselor or therapist. Students are advised to check with the specific regulatory or legal requirements that may presently exist in their state, province or country. Liberty University does not necessarily endorse specific religious, philosophical, or political positions found in these resources.

## ***COURSE SCHEDULE***

### **DBPC 405**

Textbooks: Dobson, J. *Love Must Be Tough: New Hope for Marriages in Crisis*. (2007)  
 Hart, A. *Helping Children Survive Divorce: What to Expect; How to Help*. (1997)  
 Papernow, P. L. *Surviving and Thriving in Stepfamily Relationships: What Works and What Doesn't*. (2013).

<b>MODULE/ WEEK</b>	<b>READING &amp; STUDY</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENTS</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<b>1</b>	Dobson: ch.1-4 Hart: ch. 1-7	Course Requirements Checklist Class Introductions DB Forum 1	10 0 50
<b>2</b>	Dobson: ch. 5-9 Hart: ch. 8-14	4-MAT Paper: Hart	100
<b>3</b>	Dobson: ch. 10-13 Papernow: ch. 1-2	Structured Interview 1	150
<b>4</b>	Dobson: ch. 14-17 Papernow: ch. 3-4	DB Forum 2 Quiz 1	50 50
<b>5</b>	Papernow: ch. 5-6	Structured Interview 2	150
<b>6</b>	Papernow: ch. 7, 12-13	DB Forum 3	50
<b>7</b>	Papernow: ch. 8-11	Theology of Divorce & Remarriage Paper	300
<b>8</b>	Papernow: 14-18	DB Forum 4 Quiz 2	50 50
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1010</b>

DB = Discussion Board

**NOTE:** Each course module/week (except Module/Week 1) begins on Tuesday morning at 12:00 a.m. (ET) and ends on Monday night at 11:59 p.m. (ET). The final module/week ends at 11:59 p.m. (ET) on **Friday**.

**VIDEO/AUDIO PRESENTATIONS:**

- Module 1:** *Welcome and Course Introduction*  
Dr. James Dobson and Ryan Dobson (**video presentation**)  
*Facing Divorce: Early Emotions*  
Dr. Tom Whiteman (**video presentation**)  
*The Cost of Divorce (90 second commentary)*
- Module 2:** *Facing Divorce: Moving Toward Acceptance*  
Dr. Tom Whiteman (**video presentation**)  
*Finding True Forgiveness – I & II*  
Dr. R.T. Kendall (**Family Talk radio broadcasts**)  
*Divorce Equals Disease (90 second commentary)*
- Module 3:** *Five Keys to Starting Over*  
Jennifer Cisney Ellers, M.A. (**video presentation**)  
*Finding New Relationships*  
Dr. Tom Whiteman (**video presentation**)  
*Anticipating Problems in Marriage (90 second commentary)*
- Module 4:** *Supporting Your Children through Divorce*  
Dr. Archibald Hart (**video presentation**)  
*Divorce and Happiness (90 second commentary)*
- Module 5:** *Encouragement for Stepfathers – I & II*  
Ron Deal & Bowker (**Family Talk radio broadcasts**)  
*Being a Smart Stepmom – I-III*  
Mrs. Laura Petherbridge (**Family Talk radio broadcasts**)  
*Coping with Anxiety (90 second commentary)*
- Module 6:** *Counseling Teenagers Affected by Divorce and Living in Blended Families*  
Dr. Joshua Straub (**video presentation**)  
*Beating the Baby Blues*  
Dr. Meg Meeker (**Family Talk radio broadcasts**)  
*Forgive Your Parents (90 second commentary)*
- Module 7:** *Divorce and Living in Blended Families*  
Dr. Tom Whiteman (**video presentation**)  
*Single Parent Blues (90 second commentary)*
- Module 8:** *Loss in Marriage: Embracing the Hope of Heaven*  
H. Norman Wright, M.A. (**video presentation**)  
*Dream Big Dreams (90 second commentary)*