

George Mason University – Fairfax, VA  
College of Education and Human Development

**EDCD 658 (001): Couples and Family Counseling**

**Instructor: Carol A. Sprang, RN, MA, LCPC**

**Fall 2009**

**Thursdays, 7:20-10:00pm, Robinson Hall B 124**

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Office Hours: Before class by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course provides an overview of the theory and practice of family counseling/therapy since its inception. Major systemic theoretical orientations will be explored. Students will increase skills in critical thinking of assigned reading and self-awareness of the influences in adult life of family-of origin dynamics. Students will broaden their knowledge of issues of trauma and violence in family systems. Students will have an opportunity to explore some of the many preventive and treatment certification programs available to therapists wishing to work with couples and families. *Prerequisites: Admission to counseling and development program and ED CD 603 and 609 taken previously or concurrently; or permission of instructor.*

### **Course Objectives**

1. Students will be able to conceptualize human health and problems and resolutions from a systemic perspective.
2. Students will demonstrate mastery of theory, research and clinical knowledge of 3 schools of family therapy. They will be able to relate them to family life cycle in the context of diversity (ethnicity, race, culture religion, social class, disability, and sexual orientation.)
3. The students will demonstrate clinical skills working with couples/families in clinical setting.
4. Students will be able to identify the interface between family of origin issues and client couple/family issues.
5. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the interface of family counseling and social issues.
6. Students will become familiar with some of the many resources and certification programs to aid and enhance their work with couples. **Relationship to C&D Program Goals and Professional Organization [Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs-CACREP]:**

EDCD 658 is designed for Counseling Students. It is designed for midway through the curriculum in order for the student to be familiar with basic counseling skills and applications, have an understanding of family and couples theory and practical skills. ED CD 658 addresses basic fundamental theory and practice skills. Additional emphasis will be on C&D's basic mission

statement, stressing the need for counselors to demonstrate Advocacy, Leadership, Social Justice, and Multicultural Competencies.

### **Professional Dispositions:**

**Professional Performance Criteria** (Effective February 25, 2003).

The American Counseling Association (ACA) code of ethics requires counselors and counselor trainees to maintain standards of professional competence and possess good moral character. The Counseling and Development Program in the Graduate School of Education at George Mason University has adopted a set of professional performance criteria that is consistent with the ACA code of ethics. Please refer to the dispositions found on the C & D Homepage at:

[http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/counseling/professional\\_performance.htm](http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/counseling/professional_performance.htm)

### **The Graduate School of Education (GSE) expects that all students abide by the following:**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See <http://www.gse.gmu.edu> for a listing of these dispositions.

Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC H12> for the full honor code.

Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See <http://mail.gmu.edu> and click on Responsible Use of Computing at the bottom of the screen.

**NOTE:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the series, programs, or activities of all State and local Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See [www.gmu.edu/student/drc](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc) or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.

### **Course Requirements and Assessment:**

#### **Attendance and Participation:**

Attendance and active participation is required at every class. Please make sure you have read the assigned readings for the week and that you come to class prepared to discuss and critique them. You will be evaluated on the quality of your class participation and the clinical skills and theoretical knowledge you display in role-plays/presentations. Please contact the instructor in advance if you must miss a class. Attendance and participation in every class are critical. Two unexcused absences will result in not receiving credit for this course.

#### **Assignment #1: Journal - Me, Myself and Family Counseling (10 points)**

Please keep a brief weekly journal drawing on your thoughts and feelings as triggered by your reading and discussions. What are some of your positive and negative reactions? What makes couple/family work seem exciting, what makes it seem challenging? As you think about yourself as a possible family counselor, what comes to mind? How will your own individual and family history influence you? Please comment on your expectations, your fears, your anxieties, your goals and your wishes.

**Assignment #2: Genogram:** (15 points; in class component: 5 points)

Family Genogram\*\*

**Complete an accurate genogram of your family. Include at least 3 generations (i.e., you, your parents, and your grandparents). Please identify the following on your genogram**

- Names, dates of marriage/births/deaths/separations/divorces (month & year), cultural/ethnic/religious affiliations for all significant family members.
- Other information like immigration, occupation, education, city/state of residence, illnesses, substance abuse, mental health. Add descriptive information that clarifies relationships as needed (e.g., drug use, in jail, etc.) You may create a “legend” if additional explanation is warranted.
- Show schematically the nature of key relationships (e.g., closeness, distance, conflicts).
- Previous students have found that having interviews/conversations with family members around these areas provide new insight. I encourage you to contact siblings, parents, uncles/aunts, and grandparents for corroborating information. Even responses to such requests can be very informative.
- You may use a sheet of paper larger than 8.5” x 11”. The use of different colors for relational lines, etc. may enhance the presentation of the information. Please do not use pencil (smears too easily). Presentation will be in small groups.

**\*\* This assignment is intended for both academic mastery of one form of family assessment, but also self-reflection for the student. Disclose only the information that you feel comfortable sharing.**

**Assignment # 3: Group Presentation** (20 points)

Groups of five will provide a multi-media presentation on topics pertinent to Family/Couples Counseling and Social Issues. Presentation topics might include: Families living in poverty, sexuality in family and couples, child abuse/trauma, family or domestic violence, divorce/remarriage, parenting, problems of school-age children, issues facing Lesbian/Gay/ Bisexual Families & Couples, etc. Presenters will be asked to provide a seminal article/chapter for classmates to review the week prior to their presentation. The presentation should be between 20-25 minutes in length. Group members will have until the following week to provide a 3-4 page handout to the class and the instructor, summarizing the materials and resources presented. More information will be provided.

**Assignment #4. Dyad Summary and Presentation** (10 points)

Students will divide research, concepts and present (10 -15 minutes) to the class as a dyad (or “couple”) one of the many preventive and treatment programs in Couples Therapy available for further training and recommendation to clients. Any materials (booklets, brochures, etc.) would be appreciated. Please submit a brief outline of main concepts to class.

**Assessment 1: Week \_\_\_7\_\_\_** (20 points)

An in-class objective exam on theories of Family Therapy

**Assessment 2: Take-home final exam (25 points)**

This assignment is similar to the type of task you might be asked to do for your comprehensive examinations. You will be presented with two cases (a family and a couple). Each student must select either case and then use one of the theories presented in class to write a case conceptualization and treatment plan. The following are an example of sections to be included: presenting problem, family functioning, statement of problem from your theoretical position, critique of theory, how it addresses issues of diversity, goals of treatment, initial session, interventions/phases of treatment, and termination. Citations supporting your positions are expected.

The exam is to be typed (with professional appearance) using APA style for font, margins, title page, running heads, etc. Paper and Electronic submission preferable.

Grades will be distributed by number of points possible (100 pts).

A	96 - 100
A-	90 - 95
B+	86 - 89
B	83 - 85
B-	79 - 82
C+	76 - 78
C	73 - 75
C-	69 - 72

***Required Text:***

Gladding, S. T. (2007). *Family Therapy, History, Theory and Practice (4th ed.)*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall

Any Articles/Handouts distributed in class.

***Supplementary Texts:***

Berger, R. & Hannah, M. (1999). *Preventive Approaches in Couples Therapy*. New York, NY: Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group

Carter, B. & McGoldrick, M (2005). *The Expanded Family Life Cycle: Individual, Family and Social Perspectives (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

***Recommended Authors and sources\*:***

\*Gottman, John. Several helpful selections. See [www.gottmaninstitute.com](http://www.gottmaninstitute.com) or Amazon.com.

\*Hendrix, H. (2008). *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide For Couples*. New York, NY: Henry Holt & Co. See [www.gettingtheloveyouwant.com](http://www.gettingtheloveyouwant.com)

\*Johnson, Susan. Emotionally Focused Therapy. See [www.eft.ca](http://www.eft.ca)

\*Siegel, D. & Hartzell, M. (2003). *Parenting from the Inside Out*. New York, NY: Tarcher/Penguin.

## **GMU's HONOR CODE**

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of George Mason University and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the members of George Mason University, have set forth the following code of honor. Any individual who is caught in the act of cheating, attempting to cheat, **plagiarizing**, or stealing will be brought forth before a council of their peers. In the event that the individual is found guilty, he or she will be punished accordingly. Please refer to the university Catalog or Website

[http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC\\_H12](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12) for the full honor code.

**NOTE: All written work submitted in the C&D program courses *must conform to APA standards*.** Students are expected to purchase the APA manual (6<sup>th</sup> edition) and consistently demonstrate successful application of its content. Sample portions of the APA manual appear in the "Style Guides and Manuals" link on the GMU library web guide at: <http://linguistics.byu.edu/faculty/henrichsenl/apa/apa01.html>.

**EDCD 658  
CLASS SCHEDULE**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Activity</b>
1	Sept. 3	Syllabus, Course Description Review; Introduction to Family Therapy and Family Life Cycles	Gladding, Ch.1	Introduction exercise
2	Sept. 10	Characteristics of Healthy and Maladaptive Couples /Families	Gladding, Ch.2	
3	Sept. 17	Introduction to Genograms; The Process of Family/Couples Therapy	McGoldrick, Ch. 3 (Copies available) Gladding, Ch. 4	
4	Sept. 24	Psychodynamic and Bowenian Family Therapies	Gladding, Ch. 6	<b>Genograms Due; Small Groups</b>
5	Oct. 1	Behavioral & Cognitive-Behavioral Family Therapies	Gladding Ch.8	
6	Oct. 8	Structural, Strategic, & Systemic Family Therapy	Gladding Ch. 9 & 10	
7	Oct. 15	Solution-Focused & Narrative Family Therapy	Gladding, Ch. 11	<b>In class Test on Theories</b>
8	Oct. 22	Culturally Diverse Families	Gladding, Ch.14	
9	Oct. 29	Specific Populations in Family Therapy – Single-Parent & Remarried	Gladding, Ch. 12 & 13	<b>Group Presentations</b>
10	Nov. 5	Substance-related disorders, violence, abuse, and infidelity	Gladding, Ch. 15	<b>Group Presentations, cont'd</b>
11	Nov. 12	Couple & Family Enrichment &	Gladding, Ch. 5	<b>Submit Journal</b>

		Therapy	Berger & Hannah, Ch.1	
12	Nov. 18	Preventive & Enrichment Approaches, cont'd	Berger & Hannah	<b>Dyad Presentations</b>
	Nov. 26	<b>NO CLASS – HAPPY THANKSGIVING!</b>		
13	Dec. 3	Imago Relationship Therapy	Berger & Hannah, Ch. 8	Video; Simulated Counseling Session
14	Dec. 10	Ethical, Legal, & Professional Issues	Gladding, Ch. 16 & 17	<b>Take Home Exam Due</b>

Syllabus & Schedule remain open to adjustments based on needs of the Class