

**George Mason University – Fairfax, VA**  
**Graduate School of Education and Human Development**

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

**Instructor: Judy A Stone, Ed.D.**  
**Office Hours:** By appointment  
**E-mail:** [jstoned@gmu.edu](mailto:jstoned@gmu.edu)

**Times:** Mondays 7:20-10pm  
**Location:** Robinson Hall A349  
**Phone:** 202-324-2170 (o)  
**Credit Hrs:** 3

**Prerequisites**

EDCD 603

EDCD 609 (course may be taken concurrently)

**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 design individual or group learning contracts to focus on an area of family therapy as it pertains to issues of social justice.

A variety of instructional approaches will be used, including:

- **Lecture.** Although there will be lecturing in class, it is expected that all students will have read the assignments prior to each class meeting, and thus major portions of class time will be devoted to class demonstrations of assessment procedures, case studies, class discussion, role-playing exercises, audio-visual materials, etc.
- **Audio-Visual.** Film media will be used to show examples of how various theories and techniques are applied in actual practice. Although reading about specific theories and techniques is important, actually seeing them in practice is essential to learning.
- **Role-Plays.** There will also be an emphasis upon the use of role-plays to acquire and perfect skills in the treatment of couples and families. Some role-plays will be done in small groups, while others will be performed with the class as a whole.

**Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, student will:

1. Be able to conceptualize human health as well as dysfunction and its resolutions from a systemic perspective.
2. Demonstrate mastery of theory, research and clinical knowledge of three major schools of family counseling/therapy. Students will be able to relate these

- theories to the family life cycle in the context of diversity (ethnicity, religion, social class, disability, and sexual orientation).
3. Demonstrate clinical skills working with families in clinical setting.
  4. Be able to identify the connections between family-of-origin issues and client couple/family issues.
  5. Demonstrate an understanding of the interface of family/couples counseling and social issues.
  6. Be familiar with some of the many resources and certification programs available to aid and enhance their work with couples.

### **Relationship to Professional and Program-Related Goals**

The syllabi of all courses taught at the university are designed to meet the specification of a specialty professional association. The professional association used for the development of this course is the American Counseling Association (ACA). The Code of Ethics and Standards of Care for ACA delineates ethical practice and the following statement demonstrates the basis for this course:

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. EDCD 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.

### **Required Texts**

- Nichols, M.P., & Schwartz, R.C. (2010). *Essentials of Family Therapy* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Needham Heights: Pearson
- Gottman, J.M., Gottman, J.S., & DeClaire, J. (2006). *10 Lessons to transform your marriage*. New York, NY: Three Rivers.
- McGoldrick, M., Giordan, J., & Garcia-Preto, N. (Eds.). (2005). *Ethnicity & family therapy* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Guilford.

### **Recommended Texts**

- McGoldrick, M., Gerson, R., & Shellenberger, S. (1999). *Genograms: Assessment and Intervention* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). NY: Norton. ISBN 0393705099
- Rastogi, M., & Thomas, V. (Eds.). (2009). *Multicultural couple therapy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gottman, J.S., ED. (2004). *The marriage clinic casebook*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

### ***Recommended Reading:***

<p>The professor attempt to have the following articles will available on Electronic Reserves. The link to access e-Reserves is: <a href="http://oscr.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/ers/OSCRgen.cgi">http://oscr.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/ers/OSCRgen.cgi</a> The password for accessing Electronic Reserves is: <u>couples_____</u></p>
---

- Beitin, B.K., & Allen, K.R. (2005). A multilevel approach to integrating social justice and family therapy. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 24, 19-34.
- Bernstein, A. (2000). Straight therapists working with lesbians and gays in family therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 26(4), 443-454.
- Boyd-Franklin, N. (1993). Race, class and poverty. In F. Walsh (Ed.). *Normal Family Processes* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Brinkmeyer, M.Y., & Eyberg, S.M. (2003). Parent-child interaction therapy for oppositional children. In A.E. Kazdin & J.R. Weisz (Eds.) *Evidence-based psychotherapies for children and adolescents* (pp. 204-223). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Constantine, M. G. (2001). Examining multicultural counseling competence and race-related attitudes among white marital and family therapists. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 27(3), 353-62.
- Dankoski, M. E. (2001). Pulling on the heart strings: An emotionally focused approach to family life cycle transitions. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 27(2), 177-187.
- Dolan-Del Vecchia, K. (1998). Dismantling White Privilege with Family Therapy. In M. McGoldrick (Ed.). *Re-Visioning Family Therapy: Race, Culture and Gender in Clinical Practice*. (pp. 159-175). New Your, NY: Guilford Publications.
- Falico, C.J. (1998). The cultural meaning of family triangles. In M. McGoldrick (Ed.). *Re-Visioning Family Therapy: Race, Culture and Gender in Clinical Practice*. (pp. 37-40). New Your, NY: Guilford Publications.
- Gerson, R., Hoffman, S., Sauls, M., & Ulrici, D. (1993). Family-of-Origin frames in couples therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 19, 341-354.
- Haddock, S. A., Zimmerman, T. S., & MacPhee, D. (2000). The Power Equity Guide: Attending to gender in family therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 26(2), 153-70.
- LaSala, M. (2000). Lesbians, gay men, and their parents: Family therapy for the coming-out crisis. *Family Process*, 39(1), 67-82.
- Magnuson, S., & Shaw, H.E. (2003). Adaptations of the multifaceted genogram in counseling, training, and supervision. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 11, 45-54.
- McGoldrick, M., & Carter, B. (2001). Advances in coaching: Family therapy with one person. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 27(3), 281-300.
- Nelson, K. W. & Brendel, J. M. (2001). Therapist perceptions of ethnicity issues in family therapy: A qualitative inquiry. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 27(3), 363-373.
- Peplau, L.A., & Fingerhut, A.W. (2007). The close relationships of lesbians and gay men. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58, 405-424.

- Rait, D.S. (2000). The therapeutic alliance in couples and family therapy. *Psychotherapy in Practice*, 56, 211-224.
- Rastogi, M., & Wampler, K.S. (1998). Couples and family therapy with Indian families: Some structural and intergenerational considerations. In U. P. Gielen and A. L. Comunian, (Eds.), *The Family and Family Therapy in International Perspective* (pp.257-274). Milan, Italy: Edizioni Lint Trieste.
- Santisteban, D., Coatsworth, J., Perez-Vidal, A., Mitrani, V., Jean-Gilles, M. & Szapocznik, J. (1997). Brief structural/strategic family therapy with African-American and Hispanic high risk youth. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 25(5), 453-471.
- Simon, G. M. (1995). A revisionist rendering of structural family therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 21(1), 17-26.
- Vatcher, C. A., & Bogo, M. (2001). The feminist/emotionally focused therapy practice model: An integrated approach for couple therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 27(1), 69-83.
- Wetchler, J. L. (1995). A conservative response to Simon's revision of structural family therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 21(1), 27-31.

### **Assignments**

Students are expected to be critical thinkers and readers. Assigned materials are to be read using the skills of analysis, synthesis, and application. Students' understandings of assigned readings and activities will be reflected through their participation in class.

Written assignments will be graded not only in terms of content and accuracy, but also for proper grammar. Writing style must reflect correct grammar and spelling, proper word usage and vocabulary, accurate sentence structure and syntax, clarity, and fully developed ideas and concepts. Papers should be *double spaced with 12-point font*. Title and reference pages are not included in required page counts. All written work submitted in the C&D program courses **must** conform to APA standards. Students are expected to purchase the APA manual (5<sup>th</sup> edition) and consistently demonstrate successful application of its content. Sample portions of the APA manual appear in the "Styles Guides and Manuals" link on the GMU library web guide. For 2011 updated guidelines see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/08/>.

The following assignments are designed to guide students in accomplishing the course objectives. *Late assignments will be penalized 10% for each day not submitted*. This penalty may only be waived due to a personal emergency for which appropriate documentation (i.e. doctor's note) is provided to the professor. Students will submit assignments via Blackboard by midnight on the date that an assignment is due.

#### **1. 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. Students are expected to attend each class on time and remain for its duration, unless otherwise agreed to in advance by professor and student. Frequent tardiness and/or absences (excused or unexcused) will result in a reduction in letter grade for the class. *More than two absences (excused or unexcused) will result in a failing grade or request to withdraw from the course.*

## **2. Genogram**

Create a genogram of you family.\* Include at least three 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. Students are encouraged to contact siblings, parents, uncles/aunts, grandparents for corroborating information. Relatives’ responses to such requests can be very informative.

If necessary, you may use a sheet of paper larger than 8.5”X11.” The use of different colors for relational lines, etc. may enhance the presentation of the information. Please do not use pencil (smears too easily).

\*This information 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.* Your professor will keep the information you share confidential.

## **3. Take-home Mid-term Exam (via Blackboard)**

The mid-term will consist of multiple choice (80% of grade) and brief essay questions (20% of grade). The exam will be drawn from class lectures and discussions as well as assigned readings. Students will be allowed to use textbooks and notes to assist with the exam, but students may not consult with anyone else regarding exam items.

## **4. Group Presentation**

As part of a group of 4-5 students, deliver a presentation and lead a brief discussion on a topic pertinent to Family/Couples Counseling and Social Issues.

Please provide relevant handouts for the class. The use of multi-media and innovative presentation styles is also encouraged.

Prior to presenting, each group will need to submit a brief outline of its plans for the presentation for approval. The professor will then provide suggestions to further shape your topic. *Proposals are due by 9/26*, but topics and presentation dates are approved on a “first come, first serve” basis. Possible topics include:

- Families living in poverty
- Couples & Sexuality
- Child abuse /trauma
- Domestic violence
- Divorce & remarriage
- Parenting
- Problems of school-aged children
- Issues facing LGBT couples & families

Each presentation should be about 20 minutes in length. Because of time restraints, no group will be allowed to present for longer than 25 minutes. Group members are responsible for keeping track of time and tailoring their presentations accordingly.

**5. Take-Home Final Exam**

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. More details to follow.

**Student Evaluation**

Assignments will comprise the following percentages of each student’s final grade:

Class participation	10%
Genogram	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Group Presentation	20%
Final Exam	25%

In accordance with George Mason University Grading Policy, the following grades may be achieved:

A	100-96
A-	95-91
B+	90-87
B	86-83
B-	82-80
C+	79-76

## COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

### *Student Expectations*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>].
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>].
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

### *Campus Resources*

- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].
- For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>].

### EDCD 658 CLASS SCHEDULE

Week (Date)	Topic	Readings Due	Assignments
1 (8/29)	Introductions Review of Syllabus Intro to Family Therapy History/Background		
(9/5)	<b>NO CLASS LABOR DAY</b>		
2 (9/12)	Health vs. Dysfunction in Couple & Families Individual & Family Life Cycles	Nichols – Ch 3 & 4	
3 (9/19)	Genograms Process of Family/Couples Therapy	McGoldrick – pp 757-763	
4 (9/26)	Psychodynamic Approaches Systemic Approaches	Nichols – Ch 9 & 5	
5 (10/3)	Structural Approaches Strategic Approaches	Nichols – Ch 6 & 7	<b>Genogram Due</b>
6 (10/11) Tuesday	Cognitive-Behavioral Approaches	Nichols – Ch 10	
7 (10/17)	Solution-focused Approaches Narrative Approaches	Nichols – Ch 12 & 13	
8 (10/24)	Culturally Diverse Families Diverse Family Constellations: Single-parent; Remarried & Step Families	McGoldrick, Ch 1, 6, 11, 20	(Midterm Exam on Blackboard)
9 (10/31)	Introduction to Couples Counseling Gottman's Research	Gottman – intro; Ch 1, 4, 5, 7, & 8	<b>Mid-Term Due</b>
10 (11/7)	The Extramarital Affair Emotionally-Focused Couples Therapy Attachment Theory	Gottman – Ch 2	
11(11/14)	Imago Relationship Therapy Sexual Dysfunction & Sex Therapy	Gottman – Ch 9 & 10	<b>Group presentations (1 &amp; 2)</b>
12 (11/21)	Trauma in the Family: Medical Illness, Substance-related Disorders, Domestic violence, child abuse	Gottman – Ch 3 & 6	<b>Group presentations (3&amp; 4)</b>
13 (11/28)	Couples/Family Enrichment Therapy Prevention & Enrichment Approaches Ethical, Legal & Professional Issues		<b>Group presentations (5&amp;6)</b> (Final Exam on Blackboard)
14 (12/5)	<b>NO CLASS</b>		<b>Final Exam Due @ 11:59pm</b>

++Syllabus & schedule remain open to adjustments based on needs of the class+++