

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

Advanced Counseling Strategies
Working with Couples/Families
(EDCD 797 006)

Instructor: Judy A Stone, Ed.D.
Office Hours: By appointment
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Times: Mondays, 7:20pm – 10:00pm
Location: 1070 Krug Hall
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Credit Hrs: 2

Prerequisites
EDCD 658

Course Description

This elective course will focus on the development of advanced level skills and competencies in the practice of family counseling/therapy. Multiple systemic models for practice in a complex, multi-cultural society will be explored. Diverse and emerging contexts for clinical practice will be studied. These contexts include home, school and community-based settings, detention facilities, and health-care settings. Models and techniques from both the modernist and postmodernist traditions will be studied and practiced.

Course Structure

The instructional format of this theories and techniques course will include guided discussion, demonstration, and experiential learning that emphasize skills training and practice. There will be an emphasis upon the use of role-plays and/or volunteer couples and families to acquire and perfect skills in the treatment of couples and families. Most “practice clients” will be seen in the Counseling Lab, Krug Hall. Case material will be presented regularly in order to assist students in fine-tuning their skills in application of theory and in development of treatment skills. Class discussions are an important part of ED CD 797. You are encouraged not only to ask questions, but also to add your own experiences and perspectives to the class dialogue. Your class participation will affect your grade. Because of the laboratory nature of this course, it is imperative that students attend class regularly. Traditional class time schedules may be rearranged slightly to accommodate the learning experiences of the course.

Course Objectives

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

1. Compare and contrast major theoretical models in systemic marriage and family therapy.
2. Conceptualize therapeutic interventions for a range of situations encountered in relationship counseling.
3. Use different theoretical understandings to develop interventions useful in the diagnosis and treatment of symptomatic couples and families.
4. Conceptualize theories for both normal and abnormal or dysfunctional marriage functioning.

5. Demonstrate a variety of techniques of couples and relationship counseling.
6. Understand the role of gender and power issues in relationships and address these issues appropriately.
7. Evaluate and apply counseling techniques that are relevant for couples or families with racial/ethnic, cultural, and compositional diversity.
8. Examine ethical and legal concerns that emerge during couples and family counseling.

Confidentiality

In order to provide a safe learning environment for students in the class and to protect the confidentiality of “practice clients,” students will discuss case material and others’ personal information, reactions, etc. ONLY while in class or privately with other current class members.

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 797 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. EDCCD 797 addresses advanced 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

- Gottman, J.M., Gottman, J.S., & DeClaire, J. (2006). *10 Lessons to transform your marriage*. New York, NY: Three Rivers.
- Patterson, J., Williams, L., Edwards, T.M., Chamow, L., & Grauf-Grounds, C. (2nd edition). (2009). *Essential skills in family therapy*. NY: Guilford. ISBN: 9781-60623-3054).
- Walsh, F. (2002). *Normal Family Processes. Growing diversity and complexity* (3rd ed.) New York: Guilford Press.

Recommended Texts

- Gottman, J.S., ED. (2004). *The marriage clinic casebook*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Rastogi, M., & Thomas, V. (Eds.). (2009). *Multicultural couple therapy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sprenkle, D., Davis, S, & Lebow, J. (2009). Common factors in couple and family therapy: The overlooked foundation for effective practice. NY: Guilford. ISBN: 9781606233252
- Williams, Edwards, et al.(2011). *Essential assessment skills for couple and family therapist*. NY: Guilford. ISBN: 978-1-60918-097-9

Recommended Reading:

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

- Aponte, H. J. (1992). Training the person of the therapist in structural family therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 18, 269-281.
- Christensen, A. & Jacobson, N.S. (2000). *Reconcilable differences*. New York: Guilford
- Doerries, D. B. & Foster, V. A. (2005). Essential skills for novice structural family therapists: A Delphi study of experienced practitioners' perspectives. *The Family Journal*, 13, 259-265. DOI: 10.1177/1066480704273639
- Goodman, R. L. & Amatea, E. S. (1994). The impact of trainee characteristics on the family therapy skill acquisition of novice therapists. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 16, 483-496.
- Hendrix, H. (1988). *Getting the love you want*. New York: Harper and Row.
- James, C., Cushway, D., & Fadden, G. (2006). What works in engagement of families in behavioural family therapy? A positive model from the therapist perspective. *Journal of Mental Health*, 15, 355-368.
- Kindsvatter, A., Duba, J. D., & Dean, E. P. (2008). Structural techniques for engaging reluctant parents in counseling. *The Family Journal*, 16, 204-211. DOI: <http://tfj.sagepub.com/content/16/3/204>
- Luquet, W. (1996). *Short-term couples therapy: The imago model in action*. New York: Brunner Mazel.
- Navarre, S. E. (1998). Salvador Minuchin's structural family therapy and its application to multicultural family systems. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 19, 557-570.
- Nelson, T. S., Heilbrun, G., & Figley, C. R. (1993). Basic family therapy skills IV: Transgenerational theories of family therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 19, 253-266.
- O'Hanlon, B., & Hudson, P. (1995). *Stop blaming, start loving! A solution-oriented approach to improving your relationship*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- O'Leary, K. D., Heyman, R. E., & Jongsma, A. E. (1998). *The couples psychotherapy treatment planner*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Palmer, G. & Johnson, S. (2002). Becoming an emotionally focused couples therapist. *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy*, 3, 1-20.

Rastogi, M. (2009). Drawing gender to the foreground. In M. Rastogi & V. Thomas, Eds., *Multicultural couple therapy*, (pp.257-275). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Scheinkman, M. (2008). The multi-level approach: A road map for couples therapy. *Family Process*, 47, 197-213.

Schultheis, G. M., O'Hanlon, B., & O'Hanlon, S. (1990). *Brief Couples Therapy Homework Planner*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Weiner-Davis, M. (1992). *Divorce busting: A revolutionary and rapid program for staying together*. New York: Fireside.

Ziegler, P., & Hiller, T. (2001). *Recreating partnership: A solution-oriented, collaborative approach to couples therapy*. New York: WW Norton.

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 (5th 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 (20 points)

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 roles plays and in the Counseling Lab. 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. **Literature Search** (15 points) – Every student will search the current relationship therapy literature for one journal article that addresses the impact that gender, culture, power, and dominant theories have on contemporary approaches to relationship counseling. The selected article should reflect multicultural and anti-oppression values in working with couples. The purpose of this experience is to extend the student’s critical evaluation skills and ability to effectively integrate traditional theories and practice with socially responsible approaches to working with couples in contemporary culture. Students will post the selected article on BlackBoard and/or bring enough copies of the article to share with each class member to create individual resource files on this topic. They will also make a brief presentation about the article in class.

3. **Couple Interview** (25 points) – Every student will conduct an interview of a couple using the positive aspects of the assessment information provided. The purpose of this exercise is for students to increase their comfort level with couples, pay attention to key aspects of communication, and begin practicing assessment skills. Students are advised to inform interviewees that this is not a therapy session and to veer away from intimate matters that may take on a counseling dimension. Students will write a 5-page reaction paper on their observations of the interview, communication styles, and other important aspects of the interview. (Refer to detailed guidelines for this assignment on BlackBoard)

4. **Couples/Family Counseling Demonstration** (40 points) – Every student will serve as a therapist or co-therapist for actual, couples/family counseling sessions (45-50 min), with volunteer couples/family or role-played by selected class members. The student will devise intervention strategies from selected theories to address the couple’s/family’s specific concern(s). Each student will also write a self-critique of one of the sessions using the format provided. A debriefing will be shared with the class, for review and feedback. (Refer to detailed guidelines for this assignment on BlackBoard)

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 797 CLASS SCHEDULE

| Week (Date) | Topic | Readings Due | Assignments |
|------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 (10/15) | Introduction & Syllabus Core Competencies Theory of Change Family Life Cycle, Development, Process of Transitions | Patterson chapters 1, 2, 3,5-8 | |
| 2 (10/22) | Guest Lecturer, Trained Gottman therapist | Gottman Text, 10 Lessons... | |
| 3 (10/29) | Psychodynamic Theory, Object Relations, Multi Systemic Therapy (MST) <i>Focus Topic: Sexual Minorities</i> | Walsh Chapter 7 | <i>Counseling Lab Sessions Begin DUE: Lit search articles</i> |
| 4 (11/5) | Divorce/Separation/Single Parents households <i>Focus Topics: Infidelity, Separation/Divorce Mediation</i> | Walsh Chapters 4, 5, 9, 12, 13 | <i>Counseling Lab Debriefings begin</i> |
| 5 (11/12) | Psychoeducational Model Conflict Resolution; Stress Reduction <i>Focus Topic: Reconstituted Families (Premarital and Post Marital)</i> | Walsh Chapters 6, 8, 11 | <i>Counseling Lab Due: Couples Interview Debriefings continue</i> |
| 6 (11/19) | Couples Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (CREBT); Reality; Transactional Theory (TA) <i>Focus Topic: Grief & Loss/ Bereavement (including neonatal and adult child loss)</i> | Research Articles TBA | <i>Counseling Lab Debriefings continue</i> |
| 7 (11/26) | Medical Family Therapy (MEDFT) <i>Focus Topic: Chronic/Terminal Illness</i> | Walsh Chapter 17 | <i>Counseling Lab Debriefings continue</i> |
| 8 (12/3) | Internal Family Systems (IFS) Therapy <i>Focus Topic: Child Abuse/Sexual Abuse/DV</i> | Research Articles TBA | <i>Counseling Lab Debriefings continue</i> |
| 9 (12/10) | Dialectical Behavior Therapy/Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (DBT/CBT) <i>Focus Topic: Personality Disorders</i> | Research Articles TBA | <i>Counseling Lab Debriefings continue</i> |
| 10 (12/17) | Final Class; Wrap up | | <i>Debriefings continue, if needed</i> |

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