

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

**EDCD 658 (001): Couples and Family Counseling**  
**Instructor: Alex L. Pieterse, Ph.D.**  
**Fall 2005**

**Course Time:** Thursdays, 7:20-10:00pm, Robinson Hall B220  
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**Office Hours** Monday, Thursday 5-7pm, by appointment only, Drop-in for urgent needs only

**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. An emphasis will be placed on the area of application of family theory to practice through use of videotapes and family treatment planning and simulated counseling sessions. 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 an issues of social justice. *Prerequisites: Admission to counseling and development program and ED CD 605 and 607 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 families in clinical setting.
4. Students will be able to identify the interface between family of origin issues and client family issues.
5. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the interface of family counseling and social justice concerns

**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. EDCCD 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](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:

Course Objectives 1 through 4 will be assessed in an integrated fashion through the following requirements and assignments:

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 role-plays. 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.

**There are four assignments in this course.**

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

Please provide a 5-10 page reaction paper drawing on your thoughts and feelings as triggered by your reading of "*The Family Crucible*". Please comment on the following areas. How did you respond to the course of family therapy conducted by Napier & Whittaker? What were some of your positive and negative reactions? What made the work seem exciting, what made it seem challenging? As you think about yourself as a family counselor, what comes to mind? Please comment on your expectations, your fears, your anxieties, your goals and your wishes.

**Assignment #2:** (Genogram: 20 points; in class component: 10 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).

**\*\* 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 Justice. Presentation topics might include: Families living in poverty, sexuality in family and couples, family or domestic violence, divorce/remarriage, problems of school-age children, Issues facing lesbian/Gay/ Bisexual Families & Couples. 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 20-30 minutes in length. Group members will have until the following week to provide a 3-5-page handout to the class and the instructor, summarizing the materials and resources presented. More information will be provided.

**Assignment #4. Take-home final exam (30 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 assignment is to be typed (with professional appearance) using APA style for font, margins, title page, running heads, etc. Professional appearance means (as per APA style), no colored paper, onion skin, dot matrix printers, tear-off sheets, cursive type, etc.

**Student Performance Criteria**

Students who perform at the highest level shall earn an **“A” grade**. To perform at this level the student will attend all classes, complete all assigned readings and read several of the recommended readings. The student will demonstrate through his or her class and written comments a high level of critical analysis of the theoretical, research and clinical materials presented in class and through the readings. The student will show the ability to integrate issues of all types of diversity in his or her oral and written work and role-plays. The student’s assignments will be completed and turned in on time and will reflect adherence to the guidelines offered in the syllabus. The written work will show an excellent grasp of systems theory, the ability to examine the similarities and differences between various schools of thought their integration at a higher level. The student will be able to demonstrate his/her understanding of the course material by applying it to role-play situations. The student will be able to reflect on and be interested in working through his/her interface issues. The student will demonstrate an attitude of eagerness towards learning.

Students who meet the following criteria will be awarded a **“B” grade**: The student will attend all classes and will complete all the required all readings. The student will demonstrate through his or her class and written comments an adequate understanding of the theoretical, research and clinical materials presented in class and through the

readings. The student will be able to integrate issues of most types of diversity in his or her oral and written work and role-plays. The student's assignments will be completed and turned in on time and will reflect adherence to most of the guidelines offered in the syllabus. The written work will show an adequate grasp of systems theory, the ability to examine the similarities and differences between some schools of thought and integrate them. The student will be able to demonstrate his/her understanding of the course material by applying some of it to role-play situations. The student will be able to reflect on most of his/her interface issues. The student will demonstrate an attitude of openness towards learning.

Students will earn a **"C" grade** if they match the following criteria: The student will not attend all classes or be frequently late to class at the beginning or following breaks. The student will not have completed all the required readings. The student will demonstrate through his or her class and written comments a barely adequate understanding of the theoretical, research and clinical materials presented in class and through the readings. The student will be unable to integrate issues of certain types of diversity in his or her oral and written work and role-plays. The student's assignments will not be completed or turned in on time and will not follow the guidelines offered in the syllabus. The work will have numerous spelling and grammatical errors. The written work will show an inadequate grasp of systems theory. The student will not grasp the similarities and differences between the different schools of thought nor integrate them. The student will have difficulty demonstrating his/her understanding of the course material during role-play situations. The student will be unable to identify important interface issues. The student demonstrates an attitude of passivity and disinterest towards learning.

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

A = 100 – 96

A- = 95 – 90

B+ = 89 – 86

B = 85 – 83

B- = 82 – 79

C+ = 78 – 76

C = 75 – 73

C- = 72 – 69

***Required Texts:***

Gladding, S. T. (2002). *Family Therapy, History, Theory and Practice (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*.  
Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall

Napier, A., & Whittaker, C. (1978). *The Family Crucible*. New York, NY: Harper & Collins.

**Supplementary Texts:**

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

**Required Reading:**

The following articles will be available on Electronic Reserves. The link to access electronic reserves is:

<http://oscr.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/ers/OSCRgen.cgi>

The password for accessing Electronic Reserves is: \_\_\_\_\_

- Bernstein, A. (2000). Straight therapists working with lesbians and gays in family therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 26(4), 443-454. (yes)
- 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.
- Beitin, B. K., & Allen, K. R. (2005). A multilevel approach to integrating social justice and family therapy. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 24, 19-34.
- Dolan-Del Vecchia, K. (1998). Dismantling White Privilege within Family therapy. In M. McGoldrick (Ed.). *Re-Visioning Family Therapy: Race, Culture and Gender in Clinical Practice*. (pp. 159-175). New York, NY: Guilford Publications.
- Falico, C. J. (1998). The cultural meaning of family triangles. n M. McGoldrick (Ed.). *Re-Visioning Family Therapy: Race, Culture and Gender in Clinical Practice*. (pp. 37-40). New York, NY: Guilford Publications.
- Fraenkl, P. (1997). Systems approaches to couple therapy. In W. K. Halford, & H. J. Markman (Eds.). *Clinical Handbook of Marriage and Couples Interventions*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Gerson, R. (1995). The family life cycle: phases, stages, and crisis. In R. H. Mikesell, D. D. Lusterman, & S. H. McDaniel, (Eds.). *Integrating Family Therapy: Handbook of Family Psychology and Systems Theory*: Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- 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.
- Johnson, T.W., & Keren, M. S. (1998). The families of Lesbian women and Gay men. M. McGoldrick (Ed.). *Re-Visioning Family Therapy: Race, Culture and Gender in Clinical Practice*. (pp. 320-329). New York, NY: Guilford Publications.

- Kliman, J. (1998). Social class as a relationship. In M. McGoldrick (Ed.). *Re-Visioning Family Therapy: Race, Culture and Gender in Clinical Practice*. (pp. 50-61) New York, NY: Guildford Publications.
- LaSala, M. (2000). Lesbians, gay men, and their parents: Family therapy for the coming-out crisis. *Family Process*, 39, 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. (1998). Introduction: Re-Visioning Family Therapy through a Cultural Lens. In M. McGoldrick (Ed.). *Re-Visioning Family Therapy: Race, Culture and Gender in Clinical Practice*. (pp. 3-19). New York, NY: Guildford Publications.
- Rait, D. S. (2000). The therapeutic alliance in couples and family therapy. *Psychotherapy in Practice*, 56, 211-224.
- Slater, S. (1995). Persistent Stressors in Lesbian Couples Lives. *In The Lesbian Life Cycle*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

#### **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 even 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 (5<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**

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings *</u>	<u>Assignment/Activity</u>
1 (9/02)	Syllabus' Course Description and Objectives Review; Introduction to Family Therapy including History and Development.	Napier & Whittaker Gladding 1 & 2 McGoldrick, 1998 (3-19)	
2 (9/09)	Individual & Family Life Cycles; Characteristics of Healthy and Maladaptive Families & Couples.	Napier & Whittaker Gerson, 1995 Gladding Ch. 2.	Family Therapy Video: McGoldrick
3 (9/16)	Expanded Family Life Cycle – Race, Class, Gender. Introduction to Genograms	Boyd-Franklin, 1993. Magnuson, 2003 Kliman, 1998	<b>Assignment #1 Due</b>
4 (9/23)	The Process of Family/Couples Counseling: Psychodynamic and Bowenian Family Therapies	Gladding, Ch. 5. Rait, 2000 Falico, 1998.	Genogram Groups
5 (9/30)	Behavioral & Cognitive-Behavioral Family Therapies	Chapter 7	Genogram Groups CBT family Therapy Video
6 (10/07)	Structural Family Therapy Strategic & Systemic Family Therapies	Chapter 8,9 Gerson et al. 193	Genogram Groups
7 (10/14)	Solution-Focused & Narrative Family Therapies	Chapter 10	<b>Assignment #2 Due</b> Narrative Therapy Video
8 (10/21)	Specific Aspects of Couples Counseling	Fraenkl, 1997 Gerson et al.1993	Family Therapy Video: H. Aponte
9 (10/28)	Specific aspects of race and culture in family counseling	Gladding Ch. 13 Dolan-Del Vecchio, 1998 Beitin, 2005	Group Presentation
10(11/04)	Specific Family Constellations Single –Parent Families and Remarried Families	Chapter 11, 12	Group Presentation Simulated Counseling Session
11	Gay & Lesbian families and	Johnson, 1998	Group Presentation



(11/11)	Couples/ Families of Gay and Lesbian individuals	Lasala, 2000 Slater, 1995	Simulated Counseling Session
12(11/18)	Working with Substance-Related Disorders, Domestic Violence, & Child Abuse in Families	Chapter 14	Group Presentation Simulated Counseling Session
13(11/25)	<b>Thanksgiving Holiday Observed/ NO CLASS</b>		
14 (12/02)	Ethical, Legal & Professional Issues/Family Therapy in Community Agencies	Chapter 15, 16	Simulated Counseling Session
15 (12/09)	<b>FINAL CLASS Couples &amp; Family Therapy Review</b>		<b>Take Home Exam Due</b>

\* Flexibility Clause: Because of the unique mixture of content and experientially based instruction that is the nature of this course, along with variability of student needs, it may be necessary to make adaptations in course activities. Therefore, the course activities outlined in the syllabus are subject to change.