

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Education and Human Development

Couples and Family Counseling
(EDCD 658-002)

Instructor: Emily Massey, Psy.D.

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Office Hours: by appointment

Semester: Fall 2010

Times: Thursdays 7:20-10pm

Location: Robinson Hall A, Rm 412

Credit Hrs: 3

Prerequisites:

Admission to CNDV Program

EDCD 603 (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 develop and refine skills through 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 prevention and treatment certification programs available to therapists wishing to work with couples and families.

A variety of instructional approaches will be used, including:

- 1 **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.
- 2 **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.
- 3 **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 the completion of this course, students 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 therapy. Students will be able to relate these theories to the family life cycle in the context of diversity (ethnicity, race, culture religion, social class, disability, and sexual orientation).
- 3 Demonstrate clinical skills working with couples and families in the 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 & Program-Related Goals:

The syllabi of all courses taught at the university are designed to meet the specifications 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. EDCE 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:

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

Recommended Texts:

- 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.

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. All written assignments must be formatted using *A.P.A. style* guidelines (see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/08/> for 2010 updated guidelines) and should be *double-spaced with 12-point font*. Title and reference pages are not included in required page counts.

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 may submit assignments via Blackboard if they are unable to attend class on the date that an assignment is due.

- 1 Class Participation.** 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 class discussions, role-plays, and presentations. 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 your 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 such as immigration, occupation, education, city/state of residence, illnesses, substance abuse, & mental health issues. 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 relevant areas provides new insight. I encourage you to contact siblings, parents, uncles/aunts, and grandparents for corroborating information. Relatives’ responses to such requests can also be quite informative.

If necessary, 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.* Your professor will keep the information you share confidential.

- 3 **Take-Home Midterm Exam.** The midterm exam 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.

Each group will need to submit for approval a brief outline of its plans for the presentation. Your professor will then provide suggestions to further shape your topic. *Proposals are due by 9/16*, 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 about 20 minutes in length. Because of time constraints, 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 the George Mason University Grading Policy, the following grades may be achieved:

A	96 - 100
A-	91 - 95
B+	87 - 90
B	83 - 86
B-	80 - 82
C+	76 - 79
F	75 or below

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. For further information, please refer to the University Catalog or Website at www.gmu.edu.

Plagiarism Statement: Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving that person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; a simple listing of books and articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in an academic setting. Student writers are often confused as to what should be cited. Some think that only direct quotations need to be credited. While direct quotations do need citations, so do paraphrases and summaries of opinions or factual information formerly unknown to the writers or which the writers did not discover themselves. Exceptions for this include factual information which can be obtained from a variety of sources, the writers' own insights or findings from their own field research, and what has been termed common knowledge. What constitutes common knowledge can sometimes be precarious; what is common knowledge for one audience may not be so for another. In such situations, it is helpful, to keep the reader in mind and to think of citations as being "reader friendly." In other words, writers provide a citation for any piece of information that they think their readers might want to investigate further. Not only is this attitude considerate of readers, it will almost certainly ensure that writers will never be guilty of plagiarism. (statement of English Department at George Mason University).

Counseling & Development Program Professional Dispositions:

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

Graduate School of Education Expectations:

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://gse/gmu.edu/programs/counseling/professional_performance.htm 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.

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 or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Readings Due	Assignments
Sept. 2	Introductions Review of Syllabus Introduction to Family Therapy History/Background		
Sept. 9	Health vs. Dysfunction in Couples & Families Individual & Family Life Cycles	Nichols - Ch 3 & 4	
Sept. 16	Genograms Process of Family/Couples Therapy	McGoldrick - pp. 757-763	
Sept. 23	Psychodynamic Approaches Systemic Approaches	Nichols, Ch 9 & 5	
Sept. 30	Strategic Approaches Structural Approaches	Nichols, Ch 6 & 7	Genogram due
Oct. 7	Cognitive-Behavioral Approaches	Nichols, Ch 10	
Oct. 14	Solution-Focused Approaches Narrative Approaches	Nichols - Ch 12 & 13	
Oct. 21	Culturally Diverse Families Diverse Family Constellations: Single-Parent, Remarried & Step Families	McGoldrick, Ch 1, 6, 11, & 20	(Midterm Exam distributed)
Oct. 28	Introduction to Couples Counseling Gottman's Research	Gottman - intro; Ch 1, 4, 5, 7, & 8	Midterm Exam due
Nov. 4	The Extramarital Affair Emotionally-Focused Couples Therapy Attachment Theory	Gottman - Ch 2	
Nov. 11	Imago Relationship Therapy Sexual Dysfunction & Sex Therapy	Gottman - Ch 9 & 10	Group Presentations (1&2)
Nov. 17	Trauma in the Family: Medical Illness, Substance-Related Disorders, Domestic Violence, & Child Abuse	Gottman - Ch 3 & 6	Group Presentations (3, 4, & 5)
Nov. 25	NO CLASS – Happy Thanksgiving!		
Dec. 2	Couple/Family Enrichment Therapy Prevention & Enrichment Approaches Ethical, Legal, & Professional Issues		(Final Exam distributed)
Dec. 9	NO CLASS		Final Exam due @ 11:59pm

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