

# FOUNDATIONS OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY



**COUNSELING 653**  
SPRING TERM 2010  
3 Credits

## COURSE SYLLABUS

**TIME/LOCATION:** WEDNESDAY EVENINGS, 6:00 pm to 10:30 pm Lincoln Campus  
MAC North East Building

**INSTRUCTOR:** DR. OWEN L. SAUNDERS, Adjunct Associate Professor

Lincoln: 473-1287 (P) 488-1787 (H)

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**REQUIRED TEXTS:** Nichols, M.P. (2008). *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods*. (9<sup>TH</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson; Allyn and Bacon

Nichols, M.P. (1999). *Inside Family Therapy: A Case Study in Family Healing*. Boston, MA; Allyn and Bacon

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Counseling 653 is a three (3) semester hour graduate level course intended for students wanting to develop conceptual knowledge and effective professional skill conducting marital and family therapy.

For those focusing on a career in the mental health field, the course involves an examination of foundation theories, models and methods of intervention with couples and families, with emphasis on *systems theory*. As a student, you will develop family and couple treatment plans, and after practice, you will be able to successfully demonstrate the application of theoretical and practical therapy in simulated family systems cases.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** By the conclusion of the class, you will:

- Recognize the differences between individual and interpersonal therapy; and understand the application of family therapy approaches to resolve individual, couple, and family emotional and behavior difficulty.
- Conceptualize individual, couple and family problems using a systemic framework.
- Appreciate the history of the family therapy movement and contributions of leading theorists.
- Understand key theories and their application, i.e. strategic, psychodynamic, structural, experiential, communication, narrative, cognitive, integrative, behavioral, Bowenian.
- Recognize when, and know how to effectively apply one or more of these theoretical approaches in a specific case; i.e. application of technique and method.
- Know and be able to apply professional clinic and ethical principles governing the practice of marriage and family therapy.
- Identify and be able to effectively use "seven key counseling skills" for conducting therapy.
- Become familiar with family therapy research literature, to include sources of professional information regarding therapy issues.
- Develop and demonstrate competent "therapist in training" level assessment and therapy skills ---which you are able to effectively apply in couple and family cases.

**METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:**

This course will include nine (9) evening sessions, of four hours, thirty minutes (4:30) each. Classes will involve collaborative *cooperative learning* activities, as well as more traditional lecture, demonstration, video recorded therapy methodology demonstrations and role-play instruction.

You will be given extensive background handouts addressing various therapy issues. Lessons will be professionally scripted and attractively presented using Power Point technology ---to facilitate and enhance your understanding and insure complete subject coverage.

In this process, you are encouraged to take an active and collegial stance which involves: (a) working with other graduate students to achieve learning goals; (b) individual accountability for one's own performance in the group and end results; (c) collaboration in developing and practicing role-playing activities, decision making, communicating; (d) providing each other with positive feedback regarding case study and role-play performance; (d) group processing and planning; (e) learning and demonstrating comprehensive knowledge of family therapy theory and methods.

In addition to cooperative group activity, classes will involve discussion, lecture, video, media and student presentations, skill demonstrations and practice therapy sessions.

**ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE, GRADES:**

You will receive two "grades" for this course; one reflecting *academic knowledge and skills*, and one reflecting your *professional skill* development.

*Academic and professional performance grades* are earned on the basis of how well you display "mastery" of course objectives. Your performance, associated with your individual effort and acquired knowledge and skills will be evaluated by the instructor on the basis of several types of information including:

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| 1. Cooperative group role-play therapy exercises ..... | 30%        |
| 2. Family therapy (group) study paper .....            | 10%        |
| 3. Attendance and participation .....                  | 15%        |
| 4. Mid-course exam .....                               | 20%        |
| 5. Final Examination .....                             | 25%        |
|  | <hr/> 100% |

Your *professional development grade* will be based, in-part, on *demonstrated* performance as a therapist in the courses role-play and practice case activities. You will be given opportunities to prepare for role-play "therapy sessions" and practice therapeutic and assessment techniques.

Throughout the course you will receive feedback from the instructor and class on your family counseling performance. You will also have the opportunity to benefit from observing others conduct therapy, watch demonstration and discussion of "model" techniques, and profit from the expertise you can gain from having to technically observe then positively and objectively critique others performance.

Initially, therapy role-play and feedback will not be graded in order to facilitate your ability to learn and try new skills without undue pressure. Later, however, as you develop confidence and skills, your therapy will be graded in role-play and case sessions.

## **DESCRIPTIONS OF GRADED PERFORMANCE LEARNING ACTIVITIES:**

### **1. Role-play therapy exercises:**

Class members are divided into small cooperative learning groups. Each student will be asked to create and/or work with a scripted couple or family case scenario and, with the help of the group, play the role of the therapist working with the couple.

Two or more members will be cast as the couple or family, while the remaining group members observe and conduct their own "as-if-therapist" assessment of the couple or family members. Observing students are also to gauge and record the therapist's methods, using among other things a "seven key skill areas" checklist. Both observers *and* the "couple or family" members who receive therapy, are to provide positive after-session technique and strategies *feedback* to the acting therapist. Checklists with critique notes are to be turned-in to the instructor.

Acting as an observer, your grade is influenced by how well you recognize and can explain family member dynamics, the "role-playing therapists" theoretical method(s), and how well you critique the therapist ---framing your feedback in a positive, appropriate manner. While acting as the therapist, you are graded on competence applying one or more *family therapy* theoretical approach(s) and your skill performing essential couple and family therapy.

Note: It is recognized not all students enter COU 653 with the same experience background in counseling. This class focuses on *developing* your ability to assess and then effectively work to resolve client problem dynamics guided by, and using family system therapy methods and theory. You will be graded on how well, with practice, you can recognize and apply appropriate family-therapy theoretical methods and interpersonal therapy tactics taught in *this* course.

### **2. Family therapy study project and paper:**

You are to write a paper describing (a) what constitutes a "normal" or emotionally and socially "healthy" family. The content of the paper must summarize the characteristics of a normal family or family type system, comprised by a couple of adults and children living together in harmonious functional relationship; i.e., two adults and one or more children in a positive, emotionally healthy social environment relationship. Essentially, the paper must define and illustrate: (a) a definition of what constitutes a "normal/healthy" family and; (b) the characteristics of such a group-system; (c) how life stages are negotiated and (d) emotional needs addressed. The paper is to be brief, three to four, single spaced, pages in length ---with an additional one sheet cover page listing the paper title, author(s), course and date.

Members of cooperative learning groups may develop a paper collaboratively. But regardless of whether the group develops project information collectively or individually, *you* are responsible for the grade derived from the submitted copy and/or version. This project is to be completed and turned-in not later than the date specified on page 7 of this syllabus.

### **3. Examinations:**

Two (2) exams are scheduled, covering specified chapters of material presented in course texts. These exams will consist primarily of multiple-choice items and descriptive response or essay questions calling for a definition or explanation of a specific term or concept.

The second, and final examination, is scheduled for the last class session. It will consist of multiple-choice questions, and a series of items requiring a brief definition of a term or concept, and will also include from one to four longer essay questions. This exam will cover information presented in specified text chapters, lectures, video presentations and group discussions.

Several case scenarios may be presented to which you will be required to state which family therapy theoretical method(s) you would use to most effectively address the dynamics illustrated in the information that is presented.

You are expected to take examinations at their scheduled date and time. *No* advance, make-up, or late examinations will be permitted, except with prior approval of the instructor, or for unforeseen instances of serious illness.

#### 4. Course assignments:

You are assigned several types of written work which are to be turned-in to the instructor, including:

(1) Critique sheets used to record observations during *role-play* therapy exercises.

- Submit the seven key skill areas" checklist *and* Case Formulation and Analysis Form format for each session in which you are either the therapist or the observer.
- May be hand written, as long as they are legible "by the instructor's standards."
- These papers must be turned-in one week following the role-play session. Late submission will result in an automatic reduction in grade for the assignment.

(2) "Normal Family" research and description paper.

(3) One therapy Performance Case.

- Submit the written report *following the format* specified in the Case Formulation and Analysis Form.
- These reports must be typed and meet criteria stipulated in Paragraph 3.

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION:**

1. Study responsibility: There is a very substantial body of knowledge covered in this course. Lessons will emphasize information contained in assigned course text which comprehensively covers the field of family therapy. To broaden the scope of instruction, and develop the professional skills, you will have opportunity to effectively apply theoretical concepts or techniques through such activities as observing and practicing case assessment and therapy techniques. These activities will be structured to give you a chance to benefit from the observations and positive colleague *feedback* of your colleagues and the course instructor.

Even if "something" is not *specifically* mentioned in class, you are still individually responsible for learning the information presented in course textbook, whether or not actually discussed by the instructor.

2. Individual assistance and participation: The instructor recognizes that you are taking this elective course to learn! The structure of instructor led in-class discussions and opportunities afforded by cooperative collaborative learning groups are some of the venues in which questions can be addressed, theories analyzed, and general learning facilitated.

- You are *encouraged* to raise questions during class --so that inquiry will disclose where clarification is needed, and afford opportunity to add depth to lesson activities and resolve questions likely held by more than one person.
- Your comments, personal-life experience, observations, and ideas *are* welcome and *beneficial* to everyone's learning.

It is important *you* be given personal attention. In addition to consultation by the instructor *during* class sessions, to resolve questions not clarified in class, or to address something that concerns you, the instructor will be available after class. But because each session lasts until 10:30 pm, you may wish to make an appointment to visit with the instructor at another time. Appointments are encouraged, but the instructor will be available on short-notice. If you wish to contact the instructor, refer to the telephone numbers listed on Page 1 of this Syllabus. If you live on campus, please call *collect*; the instructor will pay for all long distance from-campus calls.

3. Cancellations: Should bad weather, or unforeseen event, cause cancellation of a lecture session, every attempt will be made to reschedule the class. Please insure the instructor has a current phone number where you can be notified of class changes, or in some cases, if the instructor needs to contact you.

4. Attendance: This graduate course involves not only text study and research, but significantly revolves around demonstrations, discussions, lectures, media presentations and extensive planned learning experiences occurring *in* class. These cannot be duplicated. Just one evening class is equivalent to four, one hour, weekly on-campus lecture sessions.

Therapy methods and techniques are best learned from practice, observation and insight gained from the analysis that occurs during class presentation and discussion. Because how well you will be able to recognize and apply therapy techniques hinges on observation of in-action case situations and the analysis of different presenting conditions modeled by the instructor and colleagues, *no make-up* work is available for missed classes.

You are expected and required to attend all sessions and/or make-up sessions. Grades will be automatically reduced for absence. The exception to this rule would be if you were seriously incapacitated, i.e., ill, or injured, or a significant circumstance existed i.e., death in the immediate family, which unavoidably required your presence elsewhere at a given class time.

5. Grading scale: Letter grades are used to reflect performance. The point value attached to those grades is stated in the Done College Catalog. For the course as a whole, or any single activity where grades are determined, the following guidelines apply:

|    |            |    |           |    |           |
|----|------------|----|-----------|----|-----------|
| A+ | 97 to 100% | B+ | 85 to 86% | C+ | 77 to 78% |
| A  | 90 to 96%  | B  | 80 to 85% | C  | 73 to 76% |
| A- | 87 to 89%  | B- | 76 to 79% | C- | 70 to 72% |

6. Recommended readings, resources and outside class activity: Between class sessions, you are expected to study the course texts, complete designated assignments, *prepare* for group discussion and role-play case demonstration activities.

Because of the comprehensive nature of course texts, no additional required readings are specifically required. The instructor maintains a personal library, and the American Association for Marital and Family Therapy (AAMFT) provides extensive resources for students and practitioners. You are *encouraged* to access their web site at: [www.aamft.org](http://www.aamft.org)

7. Consumer warning: This is not a course about "how-to" have a happy marriage and family. It is a professional counseling course focusing on *therapy technique, methods and strategies* for those already in or intending to enter the mental health field.

8. Professional competencies: One of the hallmarks of this course is the excellent opportunity it affords for you to actually practice and receive "feedback" regarding the effectiveness of your approach to a client, and how well you apply a particular theoretical strategy you have elected to use in a given case. When you subscribe to the class, you can look forward to one of the few opportunities counselors ever experience in their careers to advise colleagues and in-turn, to receive positive suggestions from them.

Also, you can insist upon receiving, and expect the instructor to candidly provide you with individual personal and professional development guidance during course roll play exercises, and before or after class.

As a professional career course engaged in training mental health counselors --- the second grade for the class, and successful completion of course requirements, entails your receiving performance critiques and constructively acting upon suggestions.

9. Additional comments: Keep in mind that while this is a professional course designed to facilitate your effectiveness as a counselor, the primary objective of the class is to teach you how to be effective addressing the needs of *families and couples*.

You cannot get this knowledge and expertise anywhere else.

Therefore, it is important to understand this is not just a repetition of practice of counseling methods you've acquired in other classes. In *this* class you must learn and *demonstrate* methods appropriate for effective therapeutic work specifically with two or more individuals closely associated as *families* or as *related or nonrelated couples* and you are expected to know and be able to use the *theories and techniques* underlying family/marriage therapy.

### **CLASSES, ACTIVITIES AND LESSON OUTLINE**

Following is an outline of scheduled class periods, general lesson and planned learning activity. Also shown are notes to guide study and preparation for class, chapters to be covered in reading, when examinations are scheduled and when assignments are due. Lesson content is subject to change without notice.

| <u>NR:</u> | <u>DATE:</u>                      | <u>LESSON TITLE, SUBJECT OR DESCRIPTION:</u>  | <u>INSTRUCTIONS:</u>                      |
|------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| 1.         | 17 MAR<br>assignment:<br><br>2, 3 | 1. Introduction: The course, objectives and methods; Syllabus<br><br>2. Theories, foundations and perspectives in Family Therapy.<br>3. Preliminary overview: "Roadmap" of family therapy<br><br>4. Clinic Forms<br>5. Terminology<br>6. Clinic Practices: "In the Clinic" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Initial contact; preliminary strategies, legal and ethical practices. Working with managed care companies.</li> <li>b. Assessment; family therapy basic sequence model; initial, middle and termination</li> <li>c. Pragmatic considerations; "getting them back until therapy is working!"</li> <li>d. General clinic case management practices</li> <li>e. Seating: physical layout of an effective therapy setting</li> </ul> 7. Abuse and violence: to treat or separate? Safety, therapy and methods<br>8. Introductions ---getting to know each other and form collaborative study groups. | Text<br><br>Background:<br>Read cptr's 1, |
| 2.         | 31 MAR<br>3 & 4                   | 1. Lecture: Fundamental, "Enduring" concepts of family therapy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Key terms</li> <li>b. History of systems thinking</li> <li>c. Functionalism; Structuralism</li> </ul> 2. Communication Therapy<br>3. Enduring Concepts<br>4. Role-play, demonstration and practice   | Text: Cptr's                              |

| NR: | DATE:                                      | LESSON TITLE, SUBJECT OR DESCRIPTION:  | INSTRUCTIONS:  |
|-----|--|--|--|
| 3.  | 7 APR<br>5,8                               | 1. Bowen Family Systems Therapy<br>2. Experiential Family Therapy<br>3. Theoretical formulations and concepts<br>b. Normal family development<br>c. Development of behavior disorders<br>d. Goals and techniques of therapy<br>4. Role-play therapy practice   | Text Cptr's<br>Video: Bowenian<br>Dr. Philip   |
|     | Therapy<br>Guerin                          |  |  |
| 4.  | 14 APR<br>Chapters<br>lessons<br>Cptr 7,   | 1. Midterm Examination<br>2. Structural Family Therapy<br>3. Adlerian Family Therapy<br>4. Role-play therapy practice  | Review: text<br>1,2,3,4,5, 8 and<br>Study  |
| 5.  | 21 APR<br>6,10,<br>Therapy<br>Coyne        | 1. Strategic and Focused Brief Therapy<br>2. Cognitive-Behavioral Family Therapy<br>3. Role-play therapy practice  | Text Cptr's<br>Video: Strategic<br>Dr. James   |
| 6.  | 28 APR<br>12,13<br>Oriented<br>O'Hanlon    | 1. Solution-Focused Family Therapy<br>2. Narrative therapy<br>3. Discussion support text: <i>Inside Family Therapy</i><br>4. Group discussion: The "Normal Family"<br>in comparison with dysfunctional systems.<br>5. Role-Play; therapy practice  | Text Cptrs<br>▶ Paper Due on Normal Family<br>Review: Supplement Text<br>Video: Solution-<br>Therapy Video ---Bill |
| 7.  | 5 MAY<br>Couples Therapy<br>Reconstruction | 1. Integrative Therapy<br>2. Therapy Approaches, Into the Twenty-First Century<br>3. Emotional Reactivity<br>4. Role-Play; therapy practice  | Video: Difficult<br>Affective  |
| 8.  | 12 MAY<br>15                               | 1. Couple Therapy<br>2. Indulgent Parents; Unique Dysfunctional Parent Dynamics<br>Parent pathology and high incidence common presenting patterns.<br>Clinical case examples, diagnostic markers:<br>Parents and families of "challenged" children: the five parent<br>patterns: denial; undoing; overcompensation; power; normal.<br>○ Mourning process and "ideal child."<br>○ "Its time you sleep in the hallway!"<br>3. Importance of family <i>differential assessment</i> before treatment planning and therapy:<br>The "cause of the behavior may be the child's underlying condition: the "true LD | Text Cptrs 14,   |

- and ADHD;" Developmental delay, Autism, Dyslexia, *avoidance* etc.,
4. Essential role of formal assessment and consultation; holistic assessment and collaboration with schools; physicians, outside agencies.
  5. Referrals and use of consultants in your practice
  - 6 Role-play; therapy practice

9. 19 MAY
  1. Final Examination: will cover all case studies, assignments, text assignments, readings, theory and practices, class discussion, specified handouts and *both* course power point handout notes, lectures and textbooks.
  2. General technique review and optional individually guided role-play therapy practice
  3. Concluding remarks