



Foundations, Contextual Dimensions, and Knowledge and Skills of Marriage and Family Counseling

COU 6670

Total Credit Hours: 3 Lecture

Classroom:

Instructor

Course Description

The course affords an opportunity for students in the Master of Science (M.S.) program to specialize in marriage and family counseling. Special emphases are placed on the foundations, contextual dimensions, and knowledge and skills of marital, couple, and family counseling.

Rationale for Course

Many problems of daily living, as well as mental disorders, have contributing factors arising from family dysfunction. In addition, a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms and conditions can be ameliorated through careful attention to family resources and solutions. Marriage and the family represent major contextual factors for understanding and resolving problems and concerns in professional counseling.

The primary focus of this course is to develop an in-depth understanding of the specialization of marriage and family counseling within the counseling profession. Some states require coursework in marriage and family counseling in order to qualify for professional licensure. Graduate programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) must adhere to standards for core curricular experiences and specialized preparation for professional practice. This course is the first in a sequence of specialized studies designed to prepare the student for entry-level experience and ongoing training in marriage and family counseling.

Marriage and family counseling approaches will be analyzed in the context of two trends: evidence-based or empirically supported treatment and psychotherapy integration. The biopsychosocial model will be emphasized. The student will build skills in conceptualizing, evaluating, and applying these approaches. The appropriateness of each approach for multicultural clients will be examined. The relationship between healthy marriage and family life and spirituality will receive special attention.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, the student should be able to

- A. Discuss the family life cycle and intergenerational influences upon individual development, as well as marital and family life;
- B. Identify key contributors and constructs in the history of marriage and family counseling;
- C. Discuss the basic process and structure of marriage and family counseling;
- D. Describe the design and implementation of couple and family groups;
- E. Recognize major ethical, legal and professional issues affecting the practice of marriage and family counseling in various settings;
- F. Demonstrate skills in case management and record keeping;
- G. Demonstrate skills in case conceptualization and treatment planning, as well as, relational and mental diagnosis;
- H. Apply psychodynamic and family of origin approaches, especially in mate selection and marriage counseling;
- I. Apply Bowen family systems approaches, especially in counseling with addictive family systems;
- J. Apply structural family approaches, especially in situations involving either family violence or eating disorder;
- K. Apply strategic and systemic approaches, especially in work with families presenting mental disorders;
- L. Apply solution-focused, narrative and postmodern approaches, especially in multicultural family counseling;
- M. Apply cognitive-behavioral and evidence-based approaches, especially in prevention of childhood disorders such as delinquency;

Prerequisites

Graduate standing; completion of qualifying courses

Instructional Materials

Required Textbook:

Gerhart, D. (2018). *Mastering competencies in family therapy: A practical approach to theories and clinical documentation* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Methods of Instruction

To address these objectives, each week we will study major approaches to marriage and family counseling looking at the following: history of the approach, philosophy and basic assumptions, therapeutic goals, techniques, applications, and its contributions and limitations. We will apply major approaches to real-life case scenarios and learn at least one counseling skill or technique associated with particular models. We will examine current research findings regarding applications of each approach. Finally, based on a study of these approaches, students will be asked to formulate their own personal practice theory of marriage and family counseling.

- CACREP (2016) Standards associated with this course can be found in Appendix A of this syllabus

Instructional methods for this course may include:

- A. Interactive lecture
- B. Discussion
- C. Case study
- D. Demonstration
- E. Audio-visual recording and presentation
- F. Group work
- G. Dyadic work and role play
- H. Student presentation
- I. Computer application
- J. Research and analysis
- K. Written assignment
- L. In-class exercise
- M. Personal reflection

Methods of Evaluation

Objectives will be assessed through multiple means: verification of class attendance and participation, satisfactory completion and timely submission of assignments, submission of a portfolio, and satisfactory performance on two examinations. Each course requirement or assignment will be scored according to a rubric provided in class. Scores will then be converted to letter grades. Grades will be given based on student performance in class, on examinations, and on weekly reaction papers, and on the portfolio.

Attend class and participate in class discussions. Because each class meeting is the equivalent of almost three hour-long meetings, and because there are experiential dimensions to this course, absences greatly affect potential student gains. The student is therefore expected to attend all class meetings. In case of illness or emergency, please notify the instructor prior to class. Alternative assignments may be made in case of an absence.

Complete all reading assignments. Readings should be completed prior to their due date since they will form the basis of classroom discussions.

Complete weekly assignments and bring them to class. Important learning experiences are self-guided and involve outside-of-class exercises and activities. By bringing the materials to class, the student is prepared to share information and insight.

Special topic presentation. Students will be required to do a 15-minute presentation on a selected topic related to family therapy. Students will be provided a list of topics to choose. Students will orally provide peers with current literature and findings. Each student will provide a short bibliography to the instructor of not less than 5 peer reviewed articles/books that were referenced in the presentation. A rubric will be provided.

Clinical case study packet. Students will be required to view a film selected by the instructor. From the film, each student will select a theory from which to create a

case conceptualization plan, clinical assessment, and treatment plan. Although students will submit all three components to the instructor, students will discuss his/her findings via a group discussion. Students will be provided a rubric for the written portion.

Personal practice theory of family counseling. Students will be required to identify his/her individual beliefs about working with families and to also establish a theoretical orientation for working from a systemic perspective. This 6-8 page written assignment will be submitted using APA format. A rubric of the expectations will be provided.

Demonstrate mastery of course content through satisfactory scoring on examinations/in-class Tests. Examinations will be used to measure progress and identify learning needs. Online Tests will be scheduled every week unless announced otherwise. Online Tests should be completed prior to the chapter being discussed in class. Make-up examinations may be arranged at the discretion of the instructor. In-class will be based on the reading assignment or lecture. In-class Tests do not qualify for make-up if student misses the Test.

MC Syllabus Statement

The MC Syllabus contains all policies and procedures that are applicable to every course offered by Mississippi College, both on campus and online. The policies in the MC Syllabus describe the official policies of the University as they relate to instruction and will take precedence over those found elsewhere. It is the student's responsibility to read and be familiar with every policy. The MC Syllabus may be accessed at any time on the MC website at the following: <https://www.mc.edu/provost/mcsyllabus>.

Grading Policy

My goals are to (1) meet the course objectives and (2) ensure fairness. Accordingly, please do not contact the instructor at the end of the course to request an extra assignment, bonus opportunity, or grade change for any reason except an error in the calculation of the final grade. Grade appeals should follow the process outlined in MC Policy 4.20.

Grades will be determined in the following manner	
Class participation and attendance	25
Special topic presentation	50
Clinical case study packet	100
Personal practice theory	50
Tests	150
Total Points:	375

Grading scale:

100-94	=	A
93-87	=	B+
86-80	=	B
79-73	=	C+
72-66	=	C

65-59	=	D
58 and below	=	F

Additional Course Policies

ATTENDANCE

Class attendance is an essential part of college education and students are expected to attend regularly and punctually. Individuals learn through active participation and involvement. There will be experiential components of this course. Cumulative absences will result in a lowered grade or loss of credit.

The university policy will be followed concerning absences. “A student receives an F in any course immediately upon accumulating the following number of absences in that class...4 in classes meeting one time per week”. If the student misses more than the number of class periods specific in the university policy and believes there are reasonable explanations for the absences, he/she may appeal the absences to the Dean of the School in which the course is being taught. Students may obtain a Student Absence Appeal Form from the Dean’s office. Tardiness will not be excused. If a student is late to the class and is marked absent during roll call, that student will be considered absent for the class.

MAKE-UP TESTS

Making up tests is strongly discouraged. Make-up tests will only be given if a student has an excused absence. Make-up tests will be given on the last class period before the final and may be in an essay format.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS (not including tests/quizzes)

Assignments are due at the beginning of class unless instructed otherwise. I will accept late work with the understanding that a 5-point deduction is applied for each day after the deadline.

CELL PHONES and OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Cell phones must be turned off/silenced during class. Laptops and tablets must be used for classroom purposes during class periods. Disregarding this request may affect your grade.

Best Practices

Below is a list of campus resources to assist you in successfully completing this course.

MC Counseling Center

<https://www.mc.edu/offices/mental-health-services/>

MC Student Success Center

<https://www.mc.edu/success/>

MC Accessibility Services

<https://www.mc.edu/offices/accessibility-services/>

Leland Speed Library

<https://library.mc.edu/>

Course Outline / Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading/Assignments Due
Week 1	Introduction	Ch. 1 -2 Quiz
Week 2	Competency and Ethics Issues	Ch. 3 - 4 Quiz
Week 3	Philosophical Foundations Systemic and Strategic Therapies	Ch. 5 Quiz
Week 4	Structural Family Therapies	Ch. 6 Quiz
Week 5	Experiential Family Therapies	Ch. 7 Quiz
Week 6	Student Presentations	Special Topic Presentation
Week 7	Intergenerational Family Therapies	Ch. 8 Quiz
Week 8	CBT and Mindfulness-Based Family Therapies	Ch. 9 Quiz
Week 9	Solution-Based Therapies	Ch. 10 Quiz
Week 10	Narrative and Collaborative Therapies	Ch. 11 Quiz
Week 11	Case Conceptualization	Ch. 12 & 13 Quiz Personal Practice Theory
Week 12	Clinical Assessment Treatment Planning	Ch. 14 & 15 Quiz
Week 13	Progress Notes	
Week 14	Evaluating Treatment Plans & Progress Notes	
Week 15	Student Presentations	Clinical Case Study Presentation
Week 16	Student Presentations	Clinical Case Study Presentation

Disclaimer

The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule proposed in the syllabus as necessary. Modifications will be provided in writing.

APPENDIX A

CACREP 2016 Standards

Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling

- 5. F. 1. a. history and development of marriage, couple, and family counseling
- 5. F. 1. b. theories and models of family systems and dynamics
- 5. F. 1. c. theories and models of marriage, couple, and family counseling
- 5. F. 1. d. sociology of the family, family phenomenology, and family of origin theories
- 5. F. 1. e. principles and models of assessment and case conceptualization from a systems perspective

5. F. 3. a. assessment, evaluation, and case management for working with individuals, couples, and families from a systems perspective

5. F. 3. b. fostering family wellness

Task: Become familiar with major theorists/pioneers in the field and understand and communicate foundations and principals of theories as they apply to the stages of the family life cycle

Assignment: Review videos, class discussions, assigned readings, personal practice theory papers, role-play

Purpose: To understand and appreciate historical roots of the profession and identify how views and perspectives have changed with the societal needs. Therapists must also be able to discern the various theories and models to conceptualize and communicate from a theoretical lens.

Assessment: participation in class discussion, tests, rubric for personal practice theory paper

5. F. 2. n. professional organizations, preparation standards, and credentials relevant to the practice of marriage, couple, and family counseling

5. F. 2. o. ethical and legal considerations and family law issues unique to the practice of marriage, couple, and family counseling

5. F. 2. p. record keeping, third party reimbursement, and other practice and management considerations in marriage, couple, and family counseling

5. F. 3. e. strategies for interfacing with the legal system relevant to marriage, couple, and family counseling

Task: Become aware of family relational patterns; understand the purpose of a family assessment

Assignment: class discussion, assigned readings, employment search, review ACA Code of Ethics, review ethical decision-making model, review ethical dilemmas, review American Counseling Association website and related associations, review MS licensure requirements

Purpose: It is important that students understand the impact of his/her role within the counseling relationship and to also be able to identify appropriate settings and atmospheres that lead to optimal client progress. Students seeking to work with families will need to recognize the make-up of the relationships and the foundational

aspects that create traditional and non-traditional bonds. Maintaining professional memberships and affiliations are vital in maintaining the relevance of counseling with the society. It also promotes networking, additional educational opportunities, and advocacy concerns. Each therapist is responsible for understanding and making ethical decisions in each case/situation. Demonstrating legal practices protects both the therapist and the client. For therapists working independently or performing administrative duties, it is important to remain abreast of changes as it relates to the operational aspects of a practice.

Assessment: Participation in class discussion, tests

- 5. F. 2. a. roles and setting of marriage, couple, and family counselors
- 5. F. 2. b. structures of marriages, couples, and families
- 5. F. 2. c. family assessments, including diagnostic interviews, genograms, family mapping, mental diagnostic status examinations, symptom inventories, and psychoeducational and personality assessments
- 5. F. 2. d. diagnostic process, including differential diagnosis and the use of current diagnostic classification systems, including the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* and the International Classification of Diseases (ICD)
- 5. F. 2. e. human sexuality and its effect on couple and family functioning
- 5. F. 2. f. aging and intergenerational influences and related family concerns
- 5. F. 2. g. impact of crisis and trauma on marriages, couples, and families
- 5. F. 2. h. impact of addiction on marriages, couples, and families
- 5. F. 2. i. impact of interpersonal violence on marriages, couples, and families
- 5. F. 2. j. impact of unemployment, under-employment, and changes in socioeconomic standing on marriages, couples, and families
- 5. F. 2. k. interactions of career, life, and gender roles on marriages, couples, and families
- 5. F. 2. l. physical, mental health, and psychopharmacological factors affecting marriages, couples, and families
- 5. F. 2.m. cultural factors relevant to marriage, couple, and family functioning, including the impact of immigration
- 5. F. 3. c. techniques and interventions of marriage, couple, and family counseling
- 5. F. 3. d. conceptualizing and implementing treatment, planning, and intervention strategies in marriage, couple, and family counseling

Task: Examine current multicultural issues that impact family functioning

Assignment: Class discussions, assigned readings, special topics presentation, clinical case study, role-play

Purpose: Because there exist multiple influences within the family system, a successful clinician must view all factors from a multicultural aspect and must also be comfortable addressing issues within the therapeutic process. Awareness and intentionality are key components when deciphering the appropriateness of a given technique or intervention towards the resolution of the presenting concern.

Assessment: Class discussion, tests, rubric of expectations for case study and presentation