



Introduction to Marriage and Family Counseling

COU 6666 |

Total Credit Hours: 3 hrs Lecture

Classroom:

Instructor

Course description

This course is designed to provide an in-depth survey into the field of marriage and family therapy with a focus on a systems perspective, including history, core concepts, and seminal figures. Students will be exposed to the classic schools of therapy, and recent developments in the field. Structural, communication, and behavioral approaches to family therapy will be examined, as well as ethics, legal issues, and current research. Students will also explore various methodologies and techniques for use in counseling.

Rationale for Course

The effectiveness of a marriage and family therapist is based on the knowledge of the “inner workings” of a family, as well as the knowledge of various approaches to bring about constructive change. The effective therapist learns to recognize subtle differences that make each family and each presenting problem unique. Based on those differences, the therapist can draw from the various models and techniques of therapy to establish a strong therapeutic base for use in the counseling session. This course is designed to provide the novice therapist with a strong background in family therapy, while encouraging personal and professional growth and awareness.

V. LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

- A. Describe the foundations of systemic theory;
- B. Identify, compare, and contrast the early development of various models of counseling;
- C. Evaluate how personal values, worldviews, and experiences may influence family counseling;
- D. Apply a systemic perspective to clinical situations and develop appropriate treatment planning based on client context and/or structure;
- E. Demonstrate an understanding of assessments and interventions based on the models of family therapy
- F. Recognize the following factors in relation to family therapy: racial, ethnic and cultural heritage; nationality, socioeconomic status; family structure and development in a multicultural society; age, gender, sexual orientation, religious and spiritual beliefs, occupation, physical and mental status, equity issues.

To address these objectives, each week we will study major approaches in family therapy; looking at the following: history of family therapy, important concepts of schools of thoughts, current research and evaluation of family therapy. We will apply major approaches to real-life case scenarios and learn at least one counseling skill or technique associated with particular models. Finally, based on a study of these approaches, students will be asked to create their own theoretical map to guide their approach of family counseling.

STANDARDS

2016 CACREP MARRIAGE, COUPLE, AND FAMILY COUNSELING (MCAFC)

Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling (MCAFC)

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, theory application 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, advocacy presentation

- 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, genogram and family of origin paper

Prerequisites

Graduate Standing. The course can be used towards a Master's or Ed.S. degree.

Instructional Materials

Nichols, M. P. & Davis, S. D. (2021). *Family therapy: Concepts and methods* (12th ed.). Pearson.

American Psychological Association. (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Supplemental peer-reviewed journal articles

Methods of Instruction

Instruction 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 assignments
- L. In-class exercise
- M. Personal reflection

REQUIRED PRACTICES

Required practices in this course include reading, research, writing, in-class and out-of class assignments, case presentations, role-plays. The student will use the computer to address learning objectives, complete assignments, and demonstrate competency or mastery.

Methods of Evaluation

Objectives will be assessed through multiple means: verification of class attendance and participation, satisfactory completion and timely submission of assignments, and satisfactory performance on examinations/tests.

Specific course requirements include the following.

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 before class. Alternative assignments may be in case of an approved absence.

Complete all reading assignments. Readings should be completed before 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 out-of-class exercises and activities. By bringing the materials to class, the student is prepared to share information and insight.

Demonstrate mastery of course content through satisfactory scoring on examinations/in-class tests. Mid-term and final examinations will be used to measure progress and identify learning needs. The examination will be scheduled for particular dates. Make-up examinations may be arranged at the discretion of the instructor. In-class tests will be given at the beginning of the class and will be based on the reading assignment coordinated with the date of class. In-class tests do not qualify for make-up if the student misses the tests.

Genogram and Family of Origin Paper

Part A - Family Genogram: You will construct a 3-generational genogram (you, parents, and grandparents) identifying the following:

- (1) Name and nature of relationship to you
- (2) Dates of important events (e.g., births, unions or marriages, separations or
- (3) Identity reference groups (e.g., religious affiliation, race, ethnicity, sexuality)
- (4) Vocational information (occupation, education, etc.)
- (5) Mental health information, addictions, and medical information
- (6) Other important information (divorces, death, orientation, nationality, etc.) for all family members

Part B - Family of Origin Paper: Integrate the ways your family of origin may have contributed to the foundation of your values, perceptions, attitudes, position, and cognitive view of the world. Using APA format, this paper should be between 4-5 pages (excluding cover and reference) .

This exercise is aimed at developing academic skills such as assessment and case conceptualization. However, it is also designed to increase students' self-awareness and is personal in nature. Be sure to only share what feels comfortable to you.

Family therapy personal application. Students will be required to demonstrate an understanding of family theory by applying a chosen theory to a personal family situation/difficulty to a theory of their choice.

Students will write a case plan using one family theory based on a personal family situation. The plan will demonstrate how the student will address the difficulty based on: (a) assessment of the problem (ex. identify some questions

you would ask yourself if you were your client), (b) conceptualization of the problem (what is your hypothesis or guess about how this problem started, is maintained and what could happen without a change?), (c) interventions (what would you recommend to yourself to create a change or interrupt the pattern?). Lastly, the student must explain his/her decision for choosing the theory, why he/she believes the application would work, and the challenges in implementing this approach. The student will also briefly summarize (in one paragraph) one peer-reviewed article that represents the evidence/research of the chosen family therapy. The paper must be no more than three pages (excluding the cover and reference page) and written in APA format. A rubric will be provided.

Submission and presentation of advocacy issues of a current event from a family perspective.

Students will be required to research a current event (which took place within the current or previous semester) that involves an advocacy issue. Students will use peer reviewed/AP articles to obtain information regarding the issue. Based on the information the student will explain what/how this is an advocacy issue, what are the roles of the family members and the institutions/systems involved, what therapy would best apply to the situation, the goals, assessment(s), and appropriate techniques for the case. the student will also submit a one-page reflection about his/her experience completing this assignment.

Grades will be determined in the following manner:

Advocacy presentation 100

Genogram 200

Theory application 100

Tests/Exams est. 200

Possible points 600

Grading scale

100 - 94 A

93 - 87 B+

86 - 80 B

79 - 73 C+

72 - 66 C

65 - 59 D

58 and below F

Final score = Obtained points/Possible points

Point system is subject to change

Students are responsible for maintaining record of their own grades; individual grades will not be addressed in class

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.]

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>.

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.

The last day to drop a course for the semester is listed in the current class bulletin. Students cannot withdraw after that date with a W (passing) unless the three following criteria are met:

- extenuating circumstances (clearly outside of the student's control);
- passing the course at the time of withdrawal, and
- does not have excessive absences at the time of withdrawal

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.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

When a student has as an acceptable reason for failing to complete a course on time, his or her record will be marked "incomplete" by the faculty member. The I grade is not to be abused to provide preferential treatment for a student who is unprepared through choice or carelessness. It is given only when circumstances beyond the student's control, such as illness on examination, make it impossible to complete the course on schedule. The faculty member informs the student of the postponed date for completion of the work, which should be as soon as possible after the emergency that made the delay necessary but no later than the end of the next semester. An I that is not removed by the deadline becomes an F whether the student remains in school or not. In extraordinary circumstances, the student may petition the Vice President for Academic Affairs for an extension of the deadline.

To receive an I grade the student fills out a special form obtained from the Registrar's Office and pays a fee. Upon completion of course requirements, the faculty member uses the Permanent Record Change form to submit a new grade to the Registrar. The faculty member, not the student, turns the grade into the Registrar's Office. An I cannot be removed by repeating the course; if the course is repeated, the I becomes an F and counts among the hours attempted and grade point hours, as does the new grade.

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/>

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Date	Topic(s)	Reading Assignment/Exam Due
Week 1	Introduction/Expectations of Class Syllabus & Assignment Review	Syllabus; Bring or have access to ACA Code of Ethics to next class meeting ****all chapter exams close at 12noon the day of class; exams are posted on Canvas
Week 2	Ethics	Read Chps 1 - 3; Take Chps 1 - 3 exams before next class
Week 3	No class - Labor Day	

Week 4	Evolution Fundamental Concepts Basic Techniques	Read Chps 4; Take Chp 4 exam before next class
Week 5	Bowen	Read Chp 5; Take Chp 5 exam before next class
Week 6	Strategic	Read Chp 6; Take Chp 6 exam before next class
Week 7	Structural	Read Chps 7 & 8; Take Chps 7 & 8 exams before next class Due: Genogram @ 11:59pm
Week 8	Experiential	Read Chps 8 & 9; Take Chps 8 & 9 exams before next class
Week 9	Psychoanalytic Cognitive-Behavioral	Read Chps 12 & 13; Take Chps 12 & 13 exams before next class
Week 10	Solution-Focused Narrative	Read Chps 10 & 11; Take Chps 12 & 13 exams before next class
Week 11	Family Therapy in 21 st Century Tailoring Treatment	Read Chps 14 & 15; Take Chps 14 & 15 exams before next class Due: Theory application @ 11:59pm
Week 12	Comparative Analysis Family Therapy Research	****all advocacy outlines and reflection papers due @ 11:59pm

Week 13	Due: Advocacy Presentation	
Week 14	Thanksgiving break	
Week 15	Due: Advocacy Presentation	Final Exam ***Exam will open on 12/9 from 7pm - 11:59pm
Week 16	No class - Final Exam	

