

Seton Hall University
Professional Psychology and Family Therapy
CPSY 6601-Couple and family dynamics: A systemic perspective
Spring 2017
(3 credits)

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Office hours: TBD, by appointment (e-mail the instructor)

Class day & time: Wednesdays, 5:00-7:10pm

Course Description

This course is designed to provide an overview of the history and theories of couple and family therapy (CFT). Students will learn about the systemic epistemology, foundational theories, and evidence-based models of CFT. Students will also gain a developmental and multicultural understanding of family interactions and transitions.

Course objectives

1. Students will be familiar with the core concepts of systems theory and understand how it applies to couple and family therapy.
2. Students will be able to identify the challenges and tasks associated with the developmental stages of the family life cycle.
3. Students will be able to understand couple and family dynamics in their ecological context and identify the multisystemic factors that influence individual behaviors.
4. Students will become familiar with the major theoretical approaches to couple and family therapy, including evidence-based intervention programs for specific behavior and relational problems.

These objectives are consistent with the core MFT competencies 1.1.1, 2.1.1, 2.2.3, 2.3.3. They also support student's progress towards the objectives of the MFT program (see program outcome #1 and student outcomes #2 and 4).

Required Readings

All readings are located in the content folder of the course Blackboard. Two of the required readings are available as e-books on the SHU library website. One of the required readings is available on the APA website (follow the link).

1) History of couple and family therapy:

Goldenberg, H., & Goldenberg, I. (2009). The revolution and evolution of family therapy and family psychology. In M. Stanton & J. H. Bray (Eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of family psychology* (pp. 21-36). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

2) *Systems theory:*

Stanton, M. (2009). The systemic epistemology of the specialty of family psychology. In M. Stanton & J. H. Bray (Eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of family psychology* (pp. 5-20). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

3) *Family structural processes*

Minuchin, S. (1974). *Families & family therapy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Chap 3 & 5)

4) *Family transgenerational processes:*

Hargrove, D. S. (2009). Psychotherapy based on Bowen family systems theory. In J. H. Bray & M. Stanton (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Family Psychology* (chap 19). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

MacGoldrick, M., Gerson, R., & Petry, S. (2008). Genograms: Mapping family systems. In *Genograms: Assessment and interventions* (3rd Edition, Chap 1). New York, NY: Norton.

5) *Strategic family therapy:*

Haley, J. (1987). *Problem solving therapy* (Chap. 3 & 4). San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.

Madanes, C. (1981). *Strategic Family Therapy* (Chap. 2). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

6) *Family developmental processes & resilience:*

Walsh, F. (2012). *Normal family processes: Growing diversity & complexity* (4th ed.) (Chap. 1, 3, & 17). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

7) *Ecological systems theory:*

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *The American Psychologist*, 32(7), 513-531.

8) *Adult attachment and couple dynamics:*

Driver, J., Tabares, A., Shapiro, A. F., & Gottman, J. M. (2012). Couple interaction in happy and unhappy marriages. In F. Walsh (Ed.), *Normal family processes: Growing diversity & complexity* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press

Johnson, S. (2008). Emotionally focused couple therapy. In Gurman, A. S. (Ed.), *Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy* (pp. 107-137). New York, NY: Guilford.

Schachner, D., Shaver, P. R., & Mikulincer, M. (2003). Adult attachment theory, psychodynamics, and couple relationships. In S. M. Johnson & V. E. Whiffen (Eds.), *Attachment processes in couple and family therapy* (pp. 18-42). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

9) *Couple relationships in middle and late adulthood:*

Mitchell, B. A. (2016). Happily ever after? Marital satisfaction during the middle adulthood years. In J. Bookwala (Ed.), *Couple relationships in the middle and later years* (pp. 17-36). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Lodge, A. C., & Umberson, D. (2016). Sexual intimacy in mid- and late-life couples. In J. Bookwala (Ed.), *Couple relationships in the middle and later years* (pp. 115-134). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Smith, T. W., & Baron, C. E. (2016). Marital discord in the later years. In J. Bookwala (Ed.), *Couple relationships in the middle and later years* (pp. 37-56). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

10) Adolescence:

American Psychological Association (2002). Developing adolescents: a reference for professionals. Available on the APA website at:

<http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/develop.pdf>

11) Ethical issues:

Gottlieb M. C., Lasser, J., & Simpson G. L. (2008). Legal and ethical issues in couple therapy. In A. Gurman (Ed.), *The clinical handbook of couple therapy* (pp.698-717). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

12) Separation, divorce, and blended families:

Lebow, J. (2008). Separation and divorce issues in couple therapy. In Gurman, A. S. (Ed.), *Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy* (pp. 459-477). New York, NY: Guilford

Papernow, P. L. (1993). *Becoming a stepfamily: Patterns of development in remarried families* (Chap 1 and 2). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

13) Postmodern perspectives:

Brown, C. & Augusta-Scott, T. (2007) Introduction. In C. Brown & T. Augusta-Scott (Eds.), *Narrative therapy: Making meaning, making lives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
E-book available on SHU Library website.

O'Connell, B. (2012). *Solution-focused therapy* (Chap. 2 & 3). London: SAGE Publications.
E-book available on SHU Library website.

Student Performance Evaluation

1. Participation/attendance (20% of the final grade – 20 points): Students will complete all assigned readings prior to each course and reflect on these readings using the following prompts:

(1) This week's readings introduced me to a new concept/theory: _____
(provide a definition or the key principles of the theory). (.5pt)

(2) One way I could use this new concept or theory to understand human behaviors and interactions in therapy is _____. (.5pt)

(3) What was not clear about this week's readings is _____. (.5pt)

Students will post their reflections on Blackboard by Monday 8pm, prior to each class meeting (e.g., Students submit their reflections on 01/16 for the 01/18 class). The instructor has created

an online journal for this purpose. Students are expected to write at least 5 sentences for each prompt. There will be 10 journal entries, each worth 1.5 points. Students will also contribute to class discussions by sharing their reactions to materials discussed in class. Class participation is worth 5 points.

2. Contemporary evidence-based family treatment models: What does the research say? (Student Class Presentation, 20% of the final grade--20 points): For this assignment, students will prepare a 20 to 30 minute oral presentation and a handout that they will distribute to their peers on the day of the presentation. The purpose of this exercise is to introduce the class to existing scientific knowledge about evidence-based family therapy models for specific clinical problems. The instructor will provide specific guidelines for completing this assignment together with a grading rubric (see the course Blackboard).

3. Mid-term exam (30% of the final grade—30 points): The mid-term exam will include multiple choice and short-answer questions that will require students to integrate knowledge gained from class discussions, lectures, and readings. The instructor will provide a list of terms referring to specific knowledge areas the students are expected to master.

4. Final exam (30% of the final grade—30 points): The final exam will consist of a vignette describing a family and short-answer questions asking students to conceptualize the client and the problem using their knowledge of the family life cycle, systems and ecological systems theory, and health-promoting couple dynamics.

5. Genogram (Extra credit – 5 points): Students will receive specific instructions on how to develop and interpret their family genogram.

Grading Scale

94-100	A	90-93	A-
87-89	B+	84-86	B
79-82	B-	76-78	C+
73-75	C		

Students' Responsibilities

Students are responsible for:

(1) Attending all classes (if unable to attend all classes for medical or other reasons, please email the instructor to discuss the situation prior to the scheduled absence. Students may not miss more than 2 classes. Students who miss more than 2 classes will only receive credit for class participation (5 points deducted from the final grade).

(2) Completing their reading logs by the scheduled date and time (late assignments will not receive credit – 1.5 points/week).

(3) Participating in class and group discussions

Because these behaviors constitute evidence of professionalism, they are a requirement for passing this course.

Important Notes

Students with Disabilities: Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Civil Rights Restoration Act, students at Seton Hall University who have a visual, hearing, physical, and/or learning disability, may be eligible for accommodation in this course. Should a student require such accommodations, he or she must contact the Office for Disability Support Services (DSS), Room 67, Duffy Hall, at 973-313-6003. The student will work with DSS to develop a plan for accommodations. For more information, visit <http://www.shu.edu/offices/disability-support-services/getting-started.cfm>

Academic Integrity & Dishonesty: According to the Graduate Bulletin, “all forms of dishonesty whether by act of omission, included, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and knowingly furnishing false information to the University are prohibited and may elicit University sanctions of suspension or expulsion.” I will contact students suspected of being academically dishonest and consult with the Program Director and Department Chair regarding further actions.

Cell Phone/Pager Policy: When class begins, please turn your cell phone and/or pager to the off or mute position. Loud beeps, sounds, songs, and rings from these devices are disruptive. However, I understand that emergencies can occur, so if you are expecting to be contacted during our class time, please advise me of this before class, turn your volume to ‘low’ or vibrate, and seat yourself near the exit of the room, so you can be excused without disturbing the class.

Attendance: Regular attendance is expected. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to contact me or another student to obtain materials missed.

Tentative Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
Week 1 Jan. 11	• Introduction & orientation to the course • What is a family?	Walsh (2012, Chap 1)
Week 2 Jan. 18	• Marriage and Family Therapy: Brief history of the field • The systemic epistemology of couple and family therapy: Core concepts	Goldenberg & Goldenberg (2009) Stanton (2009) Reading Log #1
Week 3 Jan. 25	• Systemic epistemology: Core concepts (cont'd) • Family Resilience • Structural & Communication processes in family systems	Stanton (2009) Walsh (2012, Chap. 17) Minuchin (1974, Chap. 3) Reading Log #2
Week 4 Feb. 1	• Structural & Communication processes in family systems (Cont'd) • Mapping family structure and transactional patterns • Overview of structural and strategic family theories	Haley (1987, Chap. 3 & 4) Madanes (1981, Chap. 2) Minuchin (1974, Chap. 5) Reading Log #3
Week 5 Feb. 8	• Ecological systems theory • Overview of family theories that focus on contexts (Transgenerational family theory)	Bronfenbrenner (1977) Hargrove (2009) Reading Log #4
Week 6 Feb. 15	• Overview of family theories that focus on contexts (Cont'd) • Family genograms	McGoldrick, Gerson, Petry (2008) Reading Log #5
Week 7 Feb. 22	• Discuss midterm questions • Family Life Cycle: Developmental processes- Becoming a couple	Walsh (2012, Chap. 3) Reading Log #6 Family Genogram DUE (extra credit/optional)
Week 8 Mar. 1	Midterm Examination (in classroom)	

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
Week 9 Mar. 8	Spring Break – No class	
Week 10 Mar. 15	Healthy v. unhealthy couple functioning: - Theory of adult attachment in couple relationships - Gottman's research - Evidence-based couple therapy models	Schachner et al. (2003) Johnson (2008) Driver et al. (2012) Reading Log #7 Student presentations (adult substance misuse-Leslie & Raisa)
Week 11 Mar. 22	- Family Life Cycle (Cont'd)-- Becoming parents - Evidence-based parent training programs	Walsh (2012, Chap. 3) Student presentations (Taryn & Doug)
Week 12 Mar. 29	- Family Life Cycle (Cont'd) -- Adolescence - Evidence-based family therapy for adolescent-focused problems	Walsh (2012, Chap. 3) APA (2002) Student presentations (juvenile delinquency-Brian & John)
Week 13 Apr. 5	- Family Life Cycle (Cont'd) -- Couple relationships in the middle and later years - Prepare for final exam	Mitchell (2016) Smith & Baron (2016) Lodge & Umberson (2016) Reading Log #8
Week 14 Apr. 12	Family Life Cycle (Cont'd) -- Separation, divorce, stepfamilies (Course meets online using Blackboard)	Lebow (2008) Papernow (1993)
Week 15 Apr. 19	Post-modern perspectives: Narrative and solution-focused approaches to family functioning	Brown & Augusta-Scott (Intro, 2007) O'Connell (Chap. 2 & 3, 2012) Reading Log #9
Week 16 Apr. 26	- Ethical issues in CFT: Overview - Prepare for final exam	Gottlieb et al. (2008) Reading Log #10
Week 17	Final Examination (Online) DUE by May 3	

