

“Reflective Professionals Building Learning Communities”

COURSE TITLE

COUN 431: Couple and Family Systems Study

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

name
office
phone number
email

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An in-depth look at family systems, including a family’s developmental and life cycles. Attention will be given to various contemporary family structures with a focus on family assessment of contemporary problems such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and sexual dysfunction. Comparison of a systemic view and the traditional medically modeled psychological and psychiatric view will be addressed. Students will also study the assessment of families through the use of standardized instruments.

PREREQUISITES

Admission to the Family Sequence, or consent of instructor, and COUN 420

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

- Gottman, J. M. & Silver, N. (2000). *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*. Three Rivers Press.
- Touliatos, J., Perlmutter, B.F., & Straus, M.A. (Eds.). (1990). *Handbook of Family Measurement Techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Walsh, F. (Ed.) (2002). *Normal Family Process*. New York: Guilford Press.

INSTRUCTIONAL MODE

Lecture, dialogue and student research in teams will complement each other

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course will prepare the student for an understanding of

1. the intergenerational development of family life;
2. the process of family development across the life cycle and the comparison of differences in the life cycle of various types of family structures, including families in transition, dual-career families and blended families;
3. use of assessment instruments with couples, families, and pre-marital couples; and
4. assessment and basic systemic treatment strategies with couples experiencing a sexual dysfunction, substance abuse, and violence.

REQUIRED PROJECTS/ACTIVITIES

This course will take an in-depth look at systemic ideas, both in the natural world, and as they apply to human families. The family life cycle, a developmental perspective of family growth, and the process of systems as they change will be looked at in depth. Contemporary family stressors such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and sexual dysfunction will be examined with regard to assessment, and basic treatment strategies will be discussed. Also discussed will be the dual career families and families in transition (divorce and remarriage). The student will also be introduced to several family assessment instruments and their operation, and will be required to use one of these with a family.

Course work will include

1. Read selected chapters from the texts, and be prepared to take an active role in class discussions. A brief synopsis of the articles you read will be due on the day that topic is discussed. In groups of two, you will lead the group discussion of various assigned readings;
2. Team Family Assessment. In teams, students will investigate a family using at least three different assessment devices and a genogram, and will present an in depth case study of between 8 and 10 pages, co-authored;
3. Contemporary Family Research. In teams, students will investigate one of the following family types and present their findings to the class: Same-sex couple/family, single parent family, step/blended family, two parent intact family, older delayed parents family, unmarried family, families constellating around a chronic illness, etc. This work is to include theory and a case study application and will be between 8 and 10 pages, co-authored; and
4. Contemporary Family Dysfunction Assessment and Treatment. In teams, students will choose and study one of the following family systems dysfunctions: Substance abuse in a family context, domestic violence, child or adolescent problems, i.e., Opposition Defiant Disorder, failure in school, delinquency, or sexual relationships problems such as impotency or vaginismus. Your findings will be reported to the class, and should include a comparison with a traditional model, and a proposed preventative model. This works is to be between 8 and 10 pages, co-authored.

Suggestion

Concepts of use for all the papers might include: linear vs. circular causality, equifinality, homeostatic vs. homeodynamic, complimentary relationship, mutual constraint, holon, entropy and negentropy, isomorphism, self-corrective feedback loop, cybernetics, error activated, recursion, nested systems, autopoiesis, second-order cybernetics, and multiverse.

GRADING POLICY

Grading will be based on the following:

Team Family Assessment paper	30 % of Grade
Contemporary Family Research paper	25 % of Grade
Contemporary Family Dysfunction Assessment and Treatment paper	25 % of Grade
Individual Reflections paper	20% of Grade

100-95=A; 94-85=B; 84-75=C; Below 74 = Fail

INFORMED CONSENT

In compliance with the American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics regarding counselor training, and because the Department of Counselor Education at Northeastern Illinois University is a clinical training program as well as a graduate degree program, admission to this department indicates that an admitted student agrees to self-disclosure of personal information in papers, journals, discussions and other assignments for the purposes of self-reflection and awareness and improvement of interpersonal skills.

Assessment of Learning

The following chart indicates the relationship of the learning/performance objectives of this course, the standards of the Department of Counselor Education (DCE), the College of Education (COE), CACREP, and the means by which learning is assessed.

COUN 431 Course Objectives	DCE Objectives	COE Objectives	CACREP Standards	Means of Assessment
Intergenerational	1d. major theories of counseling/psychotherapy, understanding of theory and practice	foundations, human development	B1. life cycle dynamics, development in a multicultural society, intergenerational influences, socioeconomical status	family assessment family research
Life cycle	1b. theories, concepts, principles about normal and abnormal development	human development	B1. life cycle dynamics, development in a multicultural society, intergenerational influences, socioeconomical status B3. preventive approaches in pre-marital counseling, skills training, relationship enhancement	family assessment family research family dysfunction
assessment instruments	2a. didactic, self-assessment, group process activities 2b. supervised laboratory practice, probing, verbal and nonverbal interaction, statements, summarization, self-disclosure	assessment	C2. interviewing, assessment and case management skills, systemic interventions C3. preventive approaches with families, couples and other systems	family assessment family dysfunction
domestic violence, substance abuse	1c. social and cultural change within a pluralistic society	content assessment	B2. human sexuality issues, strategies for resolution C4. socioeconomic disadvantage, discrimination and bias, interventions for resolution	family dysfunction

STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Northeastern Illinois University does not discriminate against employees or students on the basis of disability. In addition, the university provides reasonable accommodations for both employees and students with disability. Students seeking reasonable accommodations in the classroom should contact the Accessibility Center/HELP, A-118 (phone 773/442-5495, 5496, or 5497; TDD 773/442-5499). The University Policy on Services for Students with Disabilities may be found at: <http://www.neiu.edu/%7EDeanSt/survival/disabilities.pdf>. Students should feel free to meet with the instructor, in confidence, at any time to discuss any reasonable accommodations or removal of barriers that may hinder full inclusion and participation in the course and their learning experience.

COURSE SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
	Introduction and Overview of Systemic Processes	
Week 1	Normal Family Process	Walsh, Ch. 1 & 6
Week 2	Normal Family Process	Walsh, Ch. 7 & 8
Week 3	Normal Family Process	Walsh, Ch. 10 \$11
Week 4	Contemporary Family Research	Walsh, Ch. 13 & 14
Week 5	Paper Due	Discussion
	Family Assessment, Part 1	Handouts
Week 6	A Family of Origin Scale	Hovestadt, et al. (1985)
	The Circumplex Model	Walsh, Ch 2
	Family Assessment, Part 2	Walsh, Ch 3 & 4
Week 7	Family Assessment Measure III	Handouts
		Guest Speaker
Week 8	Family Assessment, Part 3	Read 2 articles from list
	Domestic Violence	
	Family Assessment, Part 4	Guest Speaker
Week 9	Substance Abuse	Read 2 articles from list
		Gottman
	Family Life Cycle, Part 1	Read 2 articles from list
Week 10	Coupling and Human Sexual Dysfunction, Part 1	
	Contemporary Family Dysfunction	Discussion
Week 11	Assessment and Treatment paper due	
	Family Life Cycle, Part II	Gottman
Week 12	Life With Children, Part II	
	Family Life Cycle, Part III	Gottman
Week 13	Retirement and Beyond, Part III	
Week 14		
	Team Family Assessment Presentations Due	
Week 15		
	Conclusion of Class	
Week 16	Individual Reflections Paper Due	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Sex Therapy

Brotto, L. A., & Heiman, J. R. (2007). Mindfulness in sex therapy: Applications for women with sexual difficulties following gynecologic cancer. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*. 22(1), 3-11.

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