

CPY 557 – Couples and Marriage Therapy Theory & Techniques

Rollins College - Winter Park, Florida
Spring Term 2008: January 7 – April 21, 2008
Thursday, 6:45 – 9:15 PM
Cornell Social Sciences, Classroom 226

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Course Description:

Theories and associated techniques of couples and marriage counseling will be explored in CPY 557. This course also explores specific developmental issues and social and political factors affecting couples. A range of therapeutic modalities will be surveyed.

Prerequisites: CPY 550 and CPY 555

Course Structure:

The instructional format of this theories and techniques course will include guided discussion, demonstration, and experiential learning that emphasizing skills training and practice. Case material will be presented regularly in order to assist students in fine-tuning their skills in application of theory and in development of treatment skills. Be sure to complete the assigned reading before each class; otherwise, you will be unable to fully grasp the concepts presented in the demonstrations. Class discussions are an important part of CPY 557. You are encouraged not only to ask questions, but also to add your own experiences and perspectives to the class dialogue. Your class participation will affect your grade. Because of the laboratory nature of this course, it is imperative that students attend class regularly. Traditional class time schedules may be rearranged slightly to accommodate the learning experiences of the course.

Course Goals/Objectives:

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

1. Compare and contrast major theoretical models in systemic marriage & couples therapy.
2. Use different theoretical understandings to diagnosis and provide treatment of symptomatic couples.
3. Conceptualize treatment theories and intervention techniques for couples presenting with normal life span developmental issues
4. Conceptualize treatment theories and intervention techniques for couples presenting with abnormal/dysfunctional marriage/couple functioning.
5. Demonstrate the use of a variety of techniques of couples and relationship counseling.
6. Understand the role of gender and power issues in relationships and address these issues appropriately.
7. Evaluate and apply counseling techniques that are relevant for couples with racial/ethnic, cultural, and compositional diversity.
8. Examine ethical and legal concerns that emerge during couples and relationship counseling.

Confidentiality

In order to provide a safe learning environment for students in the class and to protect the confidentiality of practice clients and class members, students will discuss case material and personal information, reactions, etc. ONLY while in class or privately with other current class members.

Required Texts:

- Gottman, J. M. & Silver, N. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work*. New York: Three Rivers Press
- Young, M. E. & Long, L. L. (2007). *Counseling and therapy for couples*. Pacific Grove, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Special Assignment Texts (do not purchase until receiving assignment)

The following books are provided as a beginning resource for each of the five couples counseling theories – students may identify other related books and resources in addition to or instead of those listed.

Set 1: Integrative Couple Therapy

- Christensen, A. & Jacobson, N.S. (2000). *Reconcilable differences*. New York: Guilford.
- Jacobson, N. S., & Christensen, A. (1998). *Acceptance and change in couple therapy: A therapist's guide to transforming relationships*. New York: WW Norton.

Set 2: Imago Therapy

- Hendrix, H. (1988). *Getting the love you want*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Luquet, W. (1996). *Short-term couples therapy: The imago model in action*. New York: Brunner Mazel.

Set 3: Sexual Crucible Approach to Couples Therapy

- Schnarch, D. (1998). *Passionate marriage: Love, sex, and intimacy in emotionally committed relationships*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Schnarch, D. (1991). *Constructing the sexual crucible: An integration of marital and sexual therapy*. New York: WW Norton.

Set 4: Emotionally Focused Marital Therapy

- Johnson, S. M. (1996). *The practice of emotionally focused marital therapy: Creating connection*. Florence, KY: Brunner/Mazel.
- Johnson, S.M. (2004). *The practice of emotionally focused marital therapy: Creating connection*. New York: Bruner / Routledge. - Second Edition of 1996 book.
- Johnson, S.M., Bradley, B. J., Furrow, A L, & Palmer, G. (2005) *Becoming an emotionally focused couples therapist : A workbook*. N.Y. Brunner Routledge.

Set 5: Solution-Oriented Couples Therapy

- O'Hanlon, B., & Hudson, P. (1995). *Stop blaming, start loving! A solution-oriented approach to improving your relationship*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Weiner-Davis, M. (1992). *Divorce busting: A revolutionary and rapid program for staying together*. New York: Fireside.
- Ziegler, P., & Hiller, T. (2001). *Recreating partnership: A solution-oriented, collaborative approach to couples therapy*. New York: WW Norton.

Required Assignments and Learning Experiences: (100 Possible Points)

1) Case Discussion & Participation (10 points)

Be sure to complete the assigned reading before each class; otherwise, you will be unable to fully grasp the concepts presented in the demonstrations. Class discussions are an important part of CPY 557. You are encouraged not only to ask questions, but also to add your own experiences and perspectives to the class dialogue. Your class participation will affect your grade. Because of the laboratory nature of this course, it is imperative that students attend class regularly.

2) Couple Interview (20 points) **Due: February 7, 2008**

Conduct an interview/assessment of a couple using a strengths-based and positive aspects approach. The purpose of this exercise is for students to increase their comfort level with couples, pay attention to key aspects of communication, and begin practicing assessment skills. Students are advised to inform interviewees that this is not a therapy session and to veer away from intimate matters that may take on a counseling dimension. Students will write a **5-page (double-spaced) reaction paper** on their observations of the interview, communication styles, and other important aspects of the interview.

Preparation for Couple Interview

- Text
Young, M. E. & Long, L. L. (2007). *Counseling and therapy for couples (2nd Ed)*.
Chapter 1: The Couple as a Unique System, pp. 3-21.
Chapter 5: The Assessment of Couples and Their Problems, pp. 95-114.
- Reserve On-Line
Jacobson, N. S., & Christensen, A. (1998). *Acceptance and change in couple therapy: A therapist's guide to transforming relationships*. New York: WW Norton.
Chapter 4, pp. 59-85.
Gottman, J. M. (1999). *The marriage clinic*. New York: WW Norton.
Appendix C, pp. 339-395.

Interview Format

- Prepare a *strengths-based* interview for a couple. Emphasize a line of questioning that inquires about the *positive aspects* of the couple relationship (rather than problematic aspects). Use the questions in the Jacobson & Christensen (1998) chapter as a foundation. You may also wish to incorporate strengths-based questions from the other sources of references.
- Include at least one questionnaire or survey instrument in your assessment (see Gottman, 1999, for several possibilities, or other sources such as your individual theory of study). The couple can complete the questionnaire in advance or at the beginning of the interview so the interviewer can look at it and refer to it as part of the interview process.
- Verbal informed consent should be obtained before scheduling the interview - not required to obtain informed consent in writing, but it is necessary to inform the couple of the purpose of the assignment (see above) and to let them know that neither their names nor any identifying information will be used in your written reaction paper.

Interview Conditions

- For this assignment we want to include as wide range of different types of couples as possible. Students are asked to think about and identify potential couples for interview that will provide a wide diversity of couples. While it will not be possible to represent every different form of married and non-married couples; as much as possible we want to represent dominant and non-dominant couples, couples of different ages and stages of life, couples of short and long

relationship duration, couples of same and opposite sex, couples who are in their first union as well as couples in their second, third or subsequent union...these and all the other multi-cultural differences that are part of the real world of couples.

- Allow approximately 2 hours to conduct the interview. Choose a setting that lends itself well to interviewing—a quiet, private place with a plan to limit distractions (children, other people, ringing phones, etc.)

Five Page Reaction Paper: Guidelines

- Page 1: Provide context about the couple including: first names (or pseudonyms), length of the relationship, ages and gender of children, any relevant historical or demographic information. Avoid using any identifying information about the couple.
- Page 2-5: The paper should be a balance of information about the couple and your thoughts (reaction) to that information. The most important aspect of the paper is your reaction to the process of interviewing the couple...*What was it like for you to be with this couple? How did it feel to you to inquire about the dimensions of their relationship? What issues of yours were tapped into as a result of interviewing this couple?*
- Additional Pages: Attach a copy of all data collection materials used during the interview (surveys, questionnaires, intake data instrument or interview form, lists of questions or activities used).

3) **Theory: Presentation, Demonstration & Discussion** (50 points) Due: As Assigned

Each student will select one of the following theoretical approaches to couples therapy.

- Integrative Couples Therapy
- Imago Therapy
- Emotionally Focused Therapy
- Sexual Crucible Couples Therapy

In teams of 2-3 members, students will develop a comprehensive understanding of the selected couples theory using the books listed in this syllabus, related website(s), available audio or video materials (see list on Page 8 of syllabus), as well as any other relevant materials identified by the team.

Theory Presentation (45-60 minutes)

Prepare and present a comprehensive Power Point guided class presentation designed to educate classmates on the selected theory. The theory presentation should be designed to provide class members with a solid foundational understanding of the theory and the application of the theory. Organize the presentation around the following seven headings:

- 1) Theoretical Foundation
- 2) Assumptions About Normal Couple Development or Functioning
- 3) Development of Behavior Disorders
- 4) Goals of Therapy
- 5) Techniques
- 6) Role of the Therapist
- 7) Evaluation of Theory from a Multiculturalism and Anti-domination Perspective

Provide handouts that delineate information on the highlights of each of the sections. In addition, presenters may also utilize additional handouts/journal articles, video/audio clips, or other visuals that will enhance the learning experience. It is recommended that presenters refrain from “reading” their presentation.

Demonstration of Theoretical Approach & Discussion (30 minutes)

Present a couples counseling case for discussion. Describe how you would utilize the assigned theory to provide treatment to this couple. Fully conceptualize the case – including the individuals and the couple.

- Presenting Problem
- Partner #1
 - Worldview: Demographic, Cultural, Education, Occupation, etc,
 - Personality Dynamics & Style
 - Family-of-Origin History & Influences
 - Health, Mental Health, or Substance Abuse Variables
- Partner #2: Personality Dynamics and Family-of-Origin History
 - Worldview: Demographic, Cultural, Education, Occupation, etc,
 - Personality Dynamics & Style
 - Family-of-Origin History & Influences
 - Health, Mental Health, or Substance Abuse Variables
- Couple Dynamics
 - Strengths and Positive Aspects of the Couple
 - Couple from a “Seven Principles” Perspective
 - History of Relationship
 - Developmental Stage of Couple/Family
 - Satisfaction History
 - Intimacy & Affection
 - Communication Styles
 - Boundaries & External Stressors
 - Power in Relationship
 - Roles & Functions
 - Decision-Making Style
 - Recurring Themes & Patterns
- Treatment Goals

Facilitate Q&A Class Discussion (15-20 minutes)

Pose at least three questions for students to consider – facilitate a discussion around the questions as well as respond to other questions from students.

4) **Couples Counseling Theory & Technique – Checklist** (20 points) **Due: April 12**

The purpose of this assignment is for students to create a 20 item checklist of Theoretical Concepts (with description as it relates to couples) and the Associated Intervention Strategy or Technique. Students are encouraged, throughout the semester, to track/record the theoretical concepts and the corresponding intervention strategies and techniques that most appeal to their evolving theory of counseling. By the end of the term students may well have amassed 60+ items. Completion of this assignment involves determining the 20 Most Powerful/Influential concepts and interventions to include in the checklist. A sample of the checklist is offered:

	Theoretical Concept	Description of Concept (as it relates to couples)	Associated Intervention Strategy or Technique
1	Triangulation	Generally signals an inability within the couple to directly address problems, conflict, tension or differences with their relationship. It could be isolated to a specific issue or could characterize the interaction of the entire relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate direct and open communication around the difficult issue • Block or discourage involvement with the triangulated third entity
2	Individuation		
4	Love Maps		
5	Influence Ability		
6			

Schedule of Classes and Assignments:

	Date	Topic	Reading/Assignments Due
1	1/10	Course overview and syllabus Couples – Couples – Couples	
2	1/17	Multicultural Variables in Couples Counseling	<u>On-Line Reserve</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Franklin: <i>African American couples in therapy</i> Connolly: <i>Lesbian couples: Stressors, strengths & therapeutic implications</i> Laird: <i>Gender in lesbian relationships: Cultural, feminist and constructionist reflections</i> McFadden: <i>Intercultural marriage and family: Beyond the racial divide</i> Sanders: <i>Men together: Working with gay couples in contemporary times</i> <u>Young & Long</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 1: The Couple as a Unique System Chapter 15: Same-Sex Couples
3	1/24	Couples Therapy Overview Gottman Overview - Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work <u>Guest Couple #1</u>	<u>On-Line Reserve</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Johnson: The coming of age of couple therapy: A decade review <u>Young & Long</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 2: Theories of Couples Therapy (Part 1) Chapter 3: Theories of Couples Therapy (Part 2) <u>Gottman</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work</i>
4	1/31	Assessment of Couples <u>Guest Couple #2</u>	<u>On-Line Reserve</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jacobson & Christensen: <i>Acceptance and Change...</i> Chapter 4: Assessment & Feedback, pp 59-84 Gottman Assessment Instruments <u>Young & Long</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 5: Assessment of Couples and Their Problems
5	2/7	Couple Interviews: Discussion of Learning Treatment Planning & Goal Setting	<u>Due</u> Couple Interview Reaction Paper <u>Young & Long</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 4: Integrative Model for Couple Therapy Chapter 6: Diagnosis, Goal Setting, and Treatment Planning
6	2/14	Communication in Couples Intimacy & Sexuality Conflict Resolution and Negotiation	<u>Young & Long</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 8: Communication and Relationship Education Chapter 9: Intimacy & Sexuality Chapter 10: Conflict: Negotiation & Resolution Chapter 13: Counseling Couples w/ Alcohol Problems
7	2/21	No Class – ASGW Conferemce St Petersburg Beach	
8	2/28	Communication in Couples	NOTE: Class Meets 6 – 9:30pm

		Intimacy & Sexuality Conflict Resolution and Negotiation Couples Counseling Skills & Techniques	<u>Young & Long</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 7: Treatment Strategies • Chapter 11: Divorcing Couples • Chapter 12: Extramarital Affairs • Chapter 14: Blending Couples
9	3/6	Presentation #1 Sexual Crucible	<u>Due</u> Presentation #1
	3/13	SPRING BREAK	No class
10	3/20	Presentation #2 Imago Therapy	<u>Due</u> Presentation #2
11	3/29	No Class – ACA Convention: Hawaii	
12	4/5	Practitioners Speak – Practicing LMFT present real world of couples counseling	
13	4/10	Presentation #3 Emotionally Focused Course Evaluations	<u>Due</u> Presentation #3
14	4/17	Presentation #4 Integrative Couples Therapy Couple Counseling Concepts & Interventions	<u>Due</u> Presentation #4 <u>Due</u> Couples Counseling Checklist

Couples and Relationship Counseling

Selected Articles

Available Online

www.burtbertram.com/teaching/

Articles - Due: January 18, 2006

- Franklin, N.B. and Franklin, A.J. (1998). African American couples in therapy. In M. McGoldrick's (Ed.), *Revisoning family therapy: Race, culture and gender in clinical practice*. (pp. 268-281). New York: Guilford Press.
- Connolly, C.M., (2005). Lesbian couples: Stressors, strengths & therapeutic implications. *Family Therapy Magazine*, November-December 2005.
- Laird, J. (2000). Gender in lesbian relationships: Cultural, feminist and constructionist reflections. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 26, 455-467.
- McFadden, J. (2001). Intercultural marriage and family: Beyond the racial divide. *Family Journal*, 9, 39-42.
- Sanders, G. (2000). Men together: Working with gay couples in contemporary times. In Peggy Papp's (Ed.), *Couples on the fault line*. (pp.222-256). New York: Guilford Press.

Article - Due: 1/25/06

- Johnson, S. (2000). The coming of age of couple therapy: A decade review. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 26, 23-38.

Book Chapters – Due: 2/1/06 (Prior to conducting Couple Interview)

- Jacobson, N. S., & Christensen, A. (1998). *Acceptance and change in couple therapy: A therapist's guide to transforming relationships*. New York: WW Norton.
Chapter 4: Assessment & Feedback, pp 59-84
- Gottman, J. M. (1999). *The marriage clinic*. New York: WW Norton.
Assessment Instruments, pp. 339-395.
(see below)

Relationship Assessment Questionnaires

Gottman, J. M. (1999). *The marriage clinic*. New York: WW Norton. Appendix C, pp. 339-395.

Questionnaires can be located at www.burtbertram.com/teaching/
Passcode: counseling

Page	Title	Appropriate for Strengths-Based Interview
	Areas of Strengths Checklist	Yes
	Enjoyable Conversations Scale	Yes
	Love Maps	Yes
	Fondness and Admiration Scale	Yes
	Turning Toward or Away	Yes
	Shared Meanings Questionnaire	Yes
	Accepting Influence	Maybe
	Repair Attempts	Maybe
	Compromise	Maybe
	Areas of Change Checklist: Solvable Problems	No
	Negative Perspective	No
	Start-Up	No
	Gridlock	No
	The Four Horsemen	No
	Flooding	No
	Emotional Engagement and Loneliness	No
	Innocent Victim and Righteous Indignation Scale	No

Note: Obviously you wouldn't use more than 2-3 of these inventories for your couple interview. "Yes" indicates that the instrument will likely illicit strengths. Additionally, I have noted three "Maybe" assessments (you can decide if they are appropriate for your couple).

I suggest you print out the "No" assessments and keep them in your toolbox for future use.

Policies and Procedures:

Instructor Availability – If, at anytime, you wish to discuss any issue related to the class with me, particularly those related to your performance in this class, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am very willing to set up an appointment with you. Please don't wait until it is too late to help make this course a successful and rewarding learning experience for you. Your suggestions and ideas are always welcome, both during class and outside of class.

Attendance Policy – Attendance is required of all students registered and will be monitored. If it is impossible to attend class, notify me as soon as possible. The final grade will be lowered one half of a letter grade for each unarranged absence. Students are responsible for all assignments, lectures, announcements, and class discussions even when not present.

Class will start on time and time agreements for class breaks will be honored. Tardiness on the part of one person disrupts the flow of learning for fellow students. Please be prepared to begin and/or resume class as agreed.

Penalty for late work: Students will forfeit one letter grade (approximately 10% of the possible points) for any assignments turned in beyond the announced deadline.

Method of Evaluation and Grading – Final grades will be based on a point accumulation basis. Students earn points via exams, class presentations and projects, class participation, and other assignments. Points will be converted into a percentage score. Grades will be assigned as follows:

A	= 93-100% of total points	B-	= 80-82% of total points
A-	= 90-92% of total points	C+	= 78-79% of total points
B+	= 88-89% of total points	C	= 73-77% of total points
B	= 83-87% of total points	C-	= 70-72% of total points

Incomplete Policy – Students who are unable to complete course requirements within the time limitations of the semester are responsible for initiating and working out an arrangement with the professor prior to the end of the term in order to receive an “incomplete.” An agreed upon plan for completion must be submitted in writing identifying a date when work will be completed. If the incomplete is not resolved by the end of the following term, the grade will turn into an “F.”

Respect for Individual Differences – The Department of Graduate Studies in Counseling endorses a learning climate that represents diversity and individual differences and encourages the open-minded exploration of differences among individuals. We do not expect all graduates of our program to think the same way, but we do expect that while they are students they will be accepting of differences and strive to understand how other peoples' perspectives, behaviors, and world views are different from their own.

Academic Honesty and Professional Conduct -- Students are expected to comply with the Student Conduct policies of Rollins College and with the ethical guidelines of their professional associations (e.g., American Counseling Association).

The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule and grading policy as needed.