

Social Constructionist and Critical Family Therapy

CPSY 559

Fall, 2007

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“This is what fools people: a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his life as if he were telling a story.”

Jean-Paul Sartre

Catalogue Description:

This course covers the theory and practice of narrative and social constructionist therapies. The use of questioning techniques to deconstruct clients’ “problem-saturated” stories and the use of externalizing conversations to re-author alternative stories will be discussed and practiced. How internalized cultural discourse and modern practices of power can oppress and constrain clients’ abilities to make desired change will also be examined. The primary focus of the course will be on the application of narrative therapy in work with families.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Describe social constructionist and post-modern perspectives on the development and power of meaning systems.
2. Specify the implications these theories have in regard to counseling practice.
3. Articulate the basic principles of narrative, collaborative and just therapies.
4. Demonstrate beginning proficiency in intervention skills used in narrative therapy including the use of deconstructive questioning, externalizing conversations, re-authoring questions, letters and documents, definitional ceremonies, and the archaeology of unique outcomes.
5. Recognize and discuss the ways that dominant discourses can oppress, marginalize, and disempower certain groups and individuals.
6. Use narrative therapy concepts to assess and conceptualize problems within families.
7. Discuss the construction of professional identities and discourses and the location of “therapy” in the social world of power.

Instructional Methods:

Each class period will consist of a variety of instructional activities including lecture, discussion, role plays, demonstrations, video, and small group experiential exercises.

Required Texts:

Payne, Martin (2006). *Narrative Therapy* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, London.
ISBN: 9781412920131

Reading Packet for CPSY 590, Summer, 2007. Available in CPSY office.

Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated on successful completion of the following class requirements:

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|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Interview: | 60 points |
| 2. Narrative letter: | 10 points |
| 3. Narrative document: | 10 points |
| 4. Class participation: | 20 points |

Total possible: 100 points

Grading scale:

93-100 = A
90-92 = A-
87-89 = B+
83-86 = B
80-82 = B-
77-79 = C+
73-76 = C

Assignments:

1. **Narrative letter and document** (10 points each): Throughout the term we will be doing considerable in-class practice of narrative interviewing. Following one of these interviews, you will write a narrative letter to the client or family employing the principles we will have discussed. Following another interview you will prepare a narrative document to present to the client or family. You may turn in these assignments anytime before the last week of class.
2. **Interview** (60 points): Each student will submit a video tape, DVD, audio recording or written transcript of a narrative interview. The interview should be 30 to 40 minutes in length. It can be with an individual, couple or family and can be an actual interview with a client, family member or friend, or a role play. If using a real client, make sure you get written consent to share the interview. In the interview you must demonstrate your ability to do the following:
 - a. Engage the client or family in an externalizing conversation.
 - b. Deconstruct the problem-saturated story.

- c. Deconstruct any relevant cultural discourse that supports the client's diminished view of self.
- d. Discover unique outcomes that contradict the dominant story.
- e. Begin to incorporate these unique outcomes into the re-authoring of a preferred story.
- f. Summarize the session using the new, preferred language that has been developed.
- g. Collaborate with the client in deciding on an assignment for the next session.

This assignment will be due no later than **November 12** but may be turned in earlier. Students are encouraged to share their interviews in class during one of the final two class sessions. This is optional, but students who do agree to present their interviews to the class will receive 5 points of extra credit on the assignment, as well as the undying respect and gratitude of the instructor.

“No one in the world knew what truth was until someone had told a story. It was not there in the moment of lightening or the cry of the beast, but in the story of those things afterwards, making them part of human life. Our distant, savage ancestor gloried as he told – or acted out or danced – the story of the great kill in the dark forest, and the story entered the life of the tribe, and by it the tribe came to know itself. On such a day against the beast we fought and won, and here we live to tell the tale. A tale much embellished but truthful even so, for truth is not simply what happened but how we felt about it when it was happening, and how we feel about it now.”

J. Rouse

Class Schedule:

September 10: Introduction and overview.

September 17: Payne, Forward and Chapter 1

Bruner, J. (2004) *The narrative creation of self*. In Angus, L.E. & McLeod, J. (eds) The Handbook of Narrative and Psychotherapy. London: Sage Publications

McAdams, D. & Janis, L. (2004). *Narrative identity and narrative therapy*. In Angus, L.E. & McLeod, J. (eds) The Handbook of Narrative and Psychotherapy. London: Sage Publications.

White, M. (1984) *Pseudo-encopresis: From avalanche to victory, from vicious to virtuous cycles*. Family Systems Medicine, 2:2, pp 150-160.

September 24: Payne, Chapter 2

Sykes-Wiley, M. (1994) *Panning for gold. The Family Therapy Networker*, (Nov./Dec. 1994) pp 40-48.

Tomm, K. (1989) *Externalizing the problem and internalizing personal agency. Journal of Strategic and Systemic Therapies* Vol. 8 No. 1, pp 54-59.

Freeman, J., Epston D. & Libovitz, D. (1996). *Playful approaches to serious problems*. Chapters 1 & 4. New York: Norton.

October 1: Payne, Chapter 3

Madigan, S. (1996) *The politics of identity: Considering community discourse in the externalizing of internalized problem conversations. Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 15(1), pp 47-61.

Monk, G. (1997) *How narrative therapy works*. In Narrative Therapy in Practice: The Archeology of Hope. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

October 8: Payne, Chapter 4

Waldegrave, C. and Tapping, C. (1990). *Just Therapy: Social justice and family therapy*. Dulwich Centre Newsletter, (1) pp 6-7 and pp 10-32.

Nylund, D. and Thomas, J. (1994) *The economics of narrative. Family Therapy Networker*, (Nov./Dec.) pp 38-39.

Henley, A. (1995) *Arriving simultaneously with coincidence: Buddhism, phenomenology and narrative therapy*. Presented at Narrative Ideas and Therapeutic Practices: 3rd Annual International Conference.

October 15: Payne, Chapter 5

Freedman, J. and Combs, G. (1996) *Questions*. In Narrative Therapy New York: Norton.

Roth, S. and Epston, D. (1996) *Consulting the problem about the problematic relationship*. In Hoyt, M. (ed.) Constructive Therapies, Vol. 2. New York: Guilford.

October 22: Payne, Chapter 6

Epston, D. (1994). *Extending the Conversation*. The Family Therapy Networker, (Nov./Dec.) pp 31-37.

Johnson, B. (1994) *The anti-depression, anti-suicide group*. Journal of Child and Youth Care, 9:2, pp87-94.

October 29: Payne, Chapter 7

Henley, A. (1994) *Stories that have heart: narrative practices with children and their families*. Journal of Child and Youth Care, 9:2, pp21-29.

Greenberg, L. & Angus, L. (2004). *The contribution of emotion process to narrative change in psychotherapy: A dialectical constructivist approach*. In Angus, L.E. & McLeod, J. (eds) The Handbook of Narrative and Psychotherapy. London: Sage Publications

November 5: Payne, Chapters 8 and 9

Polkinghorne, D.E. (2004) *Narrative therapy and postmodernism*. In Angus, L.E. & McLeod, J. (eds) The Handbook of Narrative and Psychotherapy. London: Sage Publications

McLeod, J. (2004). *Social construction, narrative and psychotherapy*. In Angus, L.E. & McLeod, J. (eds) The Handbook of Narrative and Psychotherapy. London: Sage Publications.

November 12: Payne, Chapter 10

White, M. (1997). *The culture of professional disciplines*. In Narratives of Therapists Lives, Adelaide: Dulwich, pp 11-21.

Parry, A. and Doan, R. (1994). *The re-vision of therapists' stories in training and supervision*. Story Re-visions, New York: Guilford.

"Stories are useful, not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be defeated." **G. K. Chesterton**

God made man because he loves stories." **Elie Wiesel**