

COUPLES THERAPY
CPSY 560
Lewis and Clark College
Summer 2009

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"Love takes off masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within."
James Baldwin

Catalogue Description: Systems theory therapies and practices relative to assessment, research, and treatment of couples. Explores cognitive, affective, interactional, and systemic theories of human behavior and change as related to couples.

"Marriage is our last, best chance to grow up."
Joseph Barth

Course Description: This course will focus on the treatment of problems typically encountered by couples. While several different theories of couples therapy will be reviewed, we will concentrate on emotionally focused couple therapy, the sole evidence based approach to couples work. This is a practice class and a significant portion of each class session will be devoted to the practice of couples counseling skills. There will be a great deal of reading for this class, and students will need to come to class prepared to discuss the readings for each week.

*"The concerts you enjoy together
Neighbors you annoy together
Children you destroy together
That make marriage a joy"*
Stephen Sondheim

Course Objectives:

1. Learn to apply family systems theory to working with couples, including an overview of major and evidence-based models for couples therapy. Critique how systems theory and couples models address or fail to address issues of power, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religion, and nation of origin.
2. Consider in-depth at least one model designed particularly for working with couples (e.g. emotionally-focused therapy, pragmatic experiential therapy).
3. Learn about couple relationships and marriage patterns across local, national, and international contexts including diverse couple and marital forms (e.g. LGBT couples, remarried couples, co-habitant couples; Muslim, Hindu & Christian marriages).

4. Consider power dynamics within couples that are supported by larger societal systems of privilege and oppression based on gender, race, class, abilities, nation of origin, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, language, and immigration status.
5. Explore own assumptions about couple life and marriage, as well as biases for working with diverse couples and marital forms.
6. Practice de-escalating high conflict couples, screening for domestic violence, structuring therapy with couples, and directing couple interaction/communication.
7. Understand the role of couple's research in therapy.

"We marry to find safe harbor in a roiling, roaring sea. We marry to avoid gray loneliness in a small room with only a hot plate and a thin cat. We divorce to find ourselves, and free ourselves of self-defeating templates of childhood misery. The chasm that separates us from a partner terrifies us; the prospect of intimacy does too."

Amy Bloom

Related Authorizations

Successful completion of this course is necessary for fulfillment of degree requirements for the Marriage and Family Therapy specialty in the Counseling Psychology Department. This course is also necessary for gaining access to licensure as a marriage and family therapist.

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed one excused absence. Each absence beyond one will result in a half grade reduction for the course.

Instructional Methods

This class will combine lecture, skills practice, role plays, demonstrations, guest speakers, video presentations, and will rely heavily on class discussions.

"Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength; loving someone deeply gives you courage."

Lao-Tzu

Required Texts

Gottman, J. (2000). The seven principles for making marriage work. New York, Three Rivers Press.

Greenberg, L., & Goldman, R. (2008). Emotion-focused couples therapy. Washington DC, American Psychological Association.

Lewis, T., Amini, F., & Lannon, R. (2000). A general theory of love. New York: Vintage.

Real, T. (2002). How can I get through to you? New York, Simon and Schuster.

Schnarch, D. (1998). Passionate marriage. New York, Owl Books.

Additional required readings will be available on course reserve.

Recommended:

Bloom, A (ed) (1999). Here lies my heart. Boston: Beacon.

"When all is said and done it is, of course, always about sex. What else could it be about?"

David Mamet

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the following class requirements:

1. Active participation in class discussion - 20 points
2. Show and tell – 10 points
3. Reading journals – 20 points
4. Attachment project - 50 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

"The value of marriage is not that adults produce children but that children produce adults."

Peter De Vries

Assignment One: Show and Tell. During the term, each student will need to share with the class at least one discovery that provides insight into the workings of couples. This can be a book (fiction or non-fiction), a song, a movie, a TV show, a journal or magazine article, a cartoon or anything else that strikes you as capturing some truth about couples. We will start each class with show and tell and you may choose to share your discovery at any point in the term. When presenting your discovery you will discuss its relevance to the class and its significance to you. If too many people want to share on any given week we may have to postpone someone to the following week.

"I first learned the concepts of non-violence in my marriage".

-Mahatma Gandhi

Assignment Two: Reading Journals: Throughout the term you will turn in 5 one to two page reading journals. These papers should reflect your reactions to one of the books, chapters or articles we have read for that week. There will be a total of 5 reading journals due during the term. Each is worth 4 points. Students who wait until the end of the term to turn in their reading journals will receive no credit.

*'Tis not love's going hurts my days,
But that it went in little ways.*

-- Edna St. Vincent Millay

Assignment Three: Attachment project:

Option One:

This paper is an opportunity for you to reflect on your own “attachment story” through the lens of attachment theory. You are expected to reflect on how your attachment style, how it influences your relationship, particularly intimate ones, and how your attachment style will affect your practice of therapy. The paper is to be a maximum of 10 pages, double-spaced, and referenced using APA style. **DUE NO LATER THAN July 21 . (40%)** Consider the following questions and relate them to your current attachment style. Do not simply answer these questions but use them to stimulate your reflection.

1. How does your experience in your family of origin, both past and current, affect your attachment style?
2. What does your adult relationship history suggest about your attachment style?
3. What behaviors do you currently exhibit that illustrate your attachment style?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your attachment style? How has your attachment schema helped you or tripped you up?
5. How does your attachment style affect your conceptualization of the therapeutic relationship?
6. How does it contribute to potential areas of reactivity?
7. What schemas or working models do you carry pertaining to attachment?
8. How does your attachment schema shape your view of what is a healthy couple relationship.
9. How do you plan to address any problem areas you perceive?

Option Two:

Rather than write the paper described above, you may produce a work of art that explores the same themes. You may write a short story or one-act play. You may produce a short film or performance piece. You may produce a painting or other work of visual art. You may write a song or produce a mix CD. This project must reflect the same amount of effort and thought that would go into writing a 10 page paper. Students who select this option will present their work to the class during the last two weeks.

A lady of forty-seven who had been married twenty-seven years and has six children knows what love really is and once described it for me like this: 'Love is what you've been through with somebody.'

-- James Thurber

Class Schedule

There will be no chapter assignments for the Schnarch, Real, Lewis, or Gottman books. You may read them at your own pace as long as they are completed by the deadlines indicated below.

May 12: Introduction, course overview.

May 19: Greenberg, Chapter 1

Shaver, P. & Mikulincer, M., *A behavioral systems approach to romantic love relationships: Attachment, caregiving and sex.*

- May 26: Greenberg, Chapter 2
Hazan, C., Campa, M. & Gur-Yaish, N., *What is adult attachment.*
Schachner, D., Shaver, P. & Mikulincer, M., *Adult attachment theory, psychodynamics and couple relationships.*
- June 2: **Finish Reading Lewis**
Greenberg, Chapter 3
Cherlin, A., *The deinstitutionalization of American marriage.*
Hazan, C., *The essential nature of couple relationships.*
Buss, D., *The evolution of love.*
- June 9: Greenberg, Chapter 4
Johnson, R., *Of human love*
Richo, D. *Why I love you but don't really see you.*
- June 16: Greenberg, Chapter 5
Fisher, H., *The drive to love: The neural mechanisms for mate selection*
- June 23: **Finish Reading Real**
Greenberg, Chapter 6
Doherty, W., *Bad couples therapy.*
Sternberg, R., *A duplex theory of love.*
- June 30: Greenberg, Chapter 7
Gardner, B., Butler, M. & Seedall, R., *En-gendering the couple-deity relationship: Clinical implications of power and process.*
- July 7: Greenberg, Chapter 8
Levy, K., Kelly, K. & Jack, E., *Sex differences in jealousy.*
Finzi, S., *Cosi fan tutte.*
Gottlieb, D., *My cheatin' heart.*
Brown, E., *Getting the message.*
- July 14: **Finish Reading Gottman**
Greenberg, Chapter 9
Ventura, M., *A dance for your life in the marriage zone.*
- July 21: Greenberg, Chapters 10 and 11
Markowitz, *Understanding the differences.*

Green, Robert-Jay, *Gay and lesbian couples in therapy: A social justice perspective*.

July 28: Greenberg, Chapter 12 and 13
 Diamond, L., *How do I love thee?*
 Josephson, G., *Using an attachment-based intervention with same-sex couples*.

August 4: Greenberg, Chapters 14
 Berscheid, E., *Seasons of the heart*.
 Finish Reading Schnarch
 Greenberg, Chapter 14

Love consists in this, that two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other.
-- Rainer Maria Rilke