

Introduction to Couples Counseling

CPSY 590

Fall, 2013

"We live in the shelter of each other."

Celtic proverb

Course Description: This class offers an overview of the theory and practice of couples therapy. The focus will be on the practice of Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy and its theoretical underpinnings in attachment theory and neurobiology.

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

James Baldwin

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).
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).
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.

“Suffering is a given; suffering alone is intolerable”

Unknown

Attendance

Class attendance is expected and required. Any missed class time will be made up by completing extra assignments designed by the instructor. Missing more than ten percent of class time may result in failure to complete the class. This would be 4.5 hours of a 45 hour class (3 credits), 3.0 hours for a 30 hour class (2 credits) or 1.5 hours for a 15 hour class (1 credit.) In case of extreme hardship and also at the discretion of the instructor, a grade of incomplete may be given for an assignment or the entire course. In such cases, the work to be submitted in order to remove the incomplete must be documented appropriately and stated deadlines met. Students are expected to be on time to class and tardiness may be seen as an absence that requires make-up work.

“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

Required Text:

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

“For one human being to love another; that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is preparation.”

Rainer Maria Rilke

Recommended Books:

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

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

Johnson, S. (2008). Hold me tight. New York, Little/Brown.

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.

Yglesias, R. (2009). A happy marriage. Scribner: New York.

Recommended Films:

Scenes from a Marriage

Inlaws and Outlaws

Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf

The Freebie

Amour

The Story of Us

The Stories We Tell

The Kids are Alright

Revolutionary Road

Blue Valentine

Hope Springs

"We waste time looking for the perfect lover, instead of creating the perfect love."

Tom Robbins

Evaluation:

Class participation 25 points

Book/film review 25 points

Text synopsis 50 points

Total 100 points

Players and painted stage took all my love

And not those things that they were emblems of...

Now that my ladder's gone

I must lie down where all the ladders start

In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.

W.B. Yeats

Grading:

A = 93-100

A- = 90-92

B+ = 87-89

B = 83-86

B- = 80-82

C+ = 77-79

C = 73-76

"Love is an exploding cigar we willingly smoke."

Lynda Barry

Book or Film Review:

Pick one of the books or films from the recommended lists or select a book or film of your own choice that is relevant to couples and relationships. Write a 2-3 page review summarizing the content and giving your reaction to it. **Due no later than December 1.**

"Marriage is the only adventure open to the cowardly."

Voltaire

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

Lao-Tzu

"The pleasures of love are always in proportion to the fear" Stendhal

Text Synopsis:

Read the entire Greenberg and Goldman text. Write synopses of at least 6 chapters. Each chapter synopsis should be 1-2 pages long and should cover the following:

1. What are the central ideas, concepts, or themes of this chapter.
2. What is your personal reaction to the chapter content?
3. What, if anything, stands out for you in this chapter?

Due no later than December 1.

“Every adult relationship recreates the original relationship. The discovery of love is a rediscovery.”

Sigmund Freud

Schedule:

October 25-26

9:00AM to 5:30PM

Day One: Introduction

 Orienting Continua

 Adult attachment

 Threats to identity and attachment

 Neurobiology of love

 Primary and secondary emotion

Day Two: Emotionally focused therapy

 Attachment repair

 Patterns of interaction

 Demonstrations

***You can add up the parts
but you won't have the sum
You can strike up the march,
there is no drum
Every heart, every heart
to love will come
but like a refugee.***

***Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.***

Leonard Cohen