



LEWIS & CLARK COLLEGE

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND COUNSELING  
MCFT 560-01: COUPLES THERAPY IN MCFT  
SUMMER 2016

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Time & Day: Tuesdays, 1:00-4:30 PM, May 12<sup>th</sup> through August 4<sup>th</sup> 2016

Place: York Graduate Center, Room 116

Instructor: Matthew Lovell M.A., LMFT.

Office Hours: Thursdays, 1:00 – 4:00 PM, Rogers Hall, Room 327

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**CATALOG 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.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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.

**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.
2. 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.
3. Consider in-depth at least one model designed particularly for working with couples (e.g. emotionally-focused therapy, pragmatic experiential therapy).
4. 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).
5. 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.
  6. Explore your own assumptions about couple life and marriage, as well as biases for working with diverse couples and marital forms.
  7. Practice de-escalating high conflict couples, screening for domestic violence, structuring therapy with couples, and directing couple interaction/communication.
  8. Understand the role of couple's research in therapy. Understand philosophies and best practices for ethical decision-making. Learn to apply a model of ethical decision making appropriate for clinical work.

### **TEACHING METHODS**

A variety of teaching methods will be utilized during this course in order to achieve the above objectives. Among those methods will be assigned readings, class discussions, reflecting team exercises and experiential activities, and lectures. Students will watch videos clips and engage in group learning tasks and role-play demonstrations.

### **READINGS:**

Weekly readings are to be completed for the day indicated. Students are expected to be prepared to discuss the ideas and concepts discussed in the readings. You are responsible for all of the assigned readings, whether or not they are discussed in class. Please note that there are more readings assigned for some topics than for others.

### **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY/SPECIAL ASSISTANCE**

Lewis & Clark College adheres to a nondiscriminatory policy with respect to employment, enrollment, and program. The College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap or disability, sexual orientation, or marital status and has a firm commitment to promote the letter and spirit of all equal opportunity and civil rights laws.

### **SPECIAL ASSISTANCE**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability and/or you have emergency medical information to share please make an appointment with the instructor as soon as possible.

### **CPSY Departmental Attendance Policy**

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.

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **1. Participation in all classes.**

- Giving attention to the instructor and/or other students when they are making a presentation.
- Demonstrating ability to recognize and use subtle non-verbal communication cues to assess your impact on your peers and participate in class.
- Demonstrating ability to be open about discussing the impact of your comments on your peers.
- Coming to class prepared (having read the assignment for the day)
- Contributing to in-class discussion based on the topics of discusses and the readings assigned. Contributions may include how you feel about the material but merely articulating your feelings is not sufficient. You are expected to put those feelings in context of your thoughts and analysis of the material.
- Engaging in group discussions with attention and energy.
- Asking questions of the instructor and/or other students regarding the material examined in that class.
- Providing examples to support or challenge the issues talked about in class.
- Making comments or giving observations about topics in the course, especially those that tie in the classroom material to "real world" problems, or try to integrate the content of the course.
- Dealing with other students and/or the instructor in a respectful fashion.

- Active listening. Students will be asked questions related to the course's readings randomly in class by other students and by the instructor. Your participation in small group discussions is also required.
2. **On Being a Couple:** The prospect of providing therapy to couples requires developing a sensitivity to the experience of being a couple. While many of you are likely experienced in couple relationships, it is difficult to bring in our own past or current relationship material into a classroom setting. To that end, we will be pairing students up as Mock Couples. It is also possible that these pairings will allow you to experience a partner or lifestyle that is different from your current or past relationships. It is also an opportunity to experience an 'arranged marriage', even if only to a degree, which is valuable because it is not the paradigm of the dominant culture in the United States. You may decide that for the purpose of the class, you are in conflict with your partner, and considering divorce, but you do not get to break up. Once joined, no one can put you asunder, for the duration of the course. You will have to discern, with your partner, the following elements, for use in role-plays:
- How you met, and decided to become a couple
  - How long you have been together
  - If you have, or are planning to have children
  - Who else is in your family (do a conjoint genogram), and how do these other family interact with you as a couple
  - What Religion(s) (if any) you practice
  - Your socio-economic status, or class
  - What your intimate life is like: Who initiates, who does what to whom, how you know you are finished with an encounter
  - Any conflicts, discrimination, oppression, you have encountered as a couple, especially from your Families of Origin.
  - What drives you insane about your partner
  - What you admire about your partner
  - How you do your finances: who contributes what, who pays the bills
  - How are chores divided
  - How power is distributed and expressed
  - What issues bring you to therapy

The couples will be the clients in role-plays. In addition, your partner will be your co-therapist when you are the therapist in role-plays. Please submit a detailed 1-2 page paper outlining your relationship, dynamics, using the above bullet-points as a guide. Be creative, and as detailed as possible in order to make the role-play experiences rich and useful. Also, please submit a 1-page reflection paper on what you learned from the experience of being coupled.

Due August 4 in class

**3. Mini-Lecture:** Each student-pair will sign up to present one or more chapters from Gurman, *The Clinical Casebook of Couple Therapy*. Presentations should be 20-30 minutes with an additional 20-30 minute demonstration, facilitated by the student-pair. Taking intervention cues from the approach to couples therapy enumerated in the chapter. The co-therapy team will select a couple to work with, and work with them in front of the class, as an inspiration for class discussion. Should the co-therapy team take issue with the given approach, it is acceptable to take the demonstration in a different direction, as long as they support this choice. The class will participate by way of observation/discussion.

DUE: Ongoing, beginning May 19 in class.

**4. 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.

DUE: Ongoing, beginning May 19 in class.

**5. Attachment Reflection Paper:** 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 8 pages, double-spaced, and referenced using APA style. 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:

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

Due on July 29 in class

## **EVALUATION AND GRADING**

Because of the skill development nature of this course it is required that students complete all assignments to pass this class.

Attendance and participation	20 pts
Being a Couple/Co-therapy team	20
Mini-Lecture	20
Show-and-Tell	20
Final paper	20

### **FINAL GRADING**

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

### **TEXTS:**

Gottman, J. M. (1999). *The Marriage Clinic: A Scientifically-Based Marital Therapy*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Gurman, A. (2010). *Clinical Casebook of Couple Therapy*. New York: Guilford Press.

Napier, A., & Whitaker, C. A. (1978). *The Family Crucible*. New York: Harper & Row.

Schnarch, D. M. (1991). *Constructing the sexual crucible: An integration of sexual and marital therapy*. New York: Norton.

Articles:

Schnarch, D. (January 01, 2011). Removing the Masks Conventional therapeutic wisdom aside, people typically don't hurt each other because they're out of touch, unable to communicate, or can't help themselves. All too frequently, they do hurtful things with impunity and entitlement simply to gratify their own needs. *Psychotherapy Networker*, 35, 6, 30-35.

Schnarch, D., & Regas, S. (January 01, 2012). The crucible differentiation scale: assessing differentiation in human relationships. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 38, 4, 639-52.

Professional Issues in the Practice of Marriage and Family Therapy. Part II- Ch.3-7, & Part III- Ch. 8-10). (The remainder of the book was covered in CPSY 503.)

Additional readings may be assigned throughout the course and will be available on Moodle.

### COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 – May 12: On Coupling – Overview of Course Requirements, Survey of Theory, Joining.
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Topics:

Models of Couple Therapy

Becoming a Couple

Class Discussion: On Yearning

WEEK 2– May 19: Unique Considerations for Couple Therapy: How is a Couple as a unit of treatment different from other forms of therapy?
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Topics:

Show and Tell

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of EFT  
Discussion of the Family in Napier  
Role Play

Readings: Gurman, Chapter 2; Napier, Chapters 1-4

WEEK 3 – May 26: Containing and Holding

Topics:

Show and Tell

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Solution-Focused

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy

Discussion of the Family in Napier

Role Play

Readings: Gurman, Chapter 3-4; Napier, Chapters 5-8

WEEK 4 – June 2: Building Tension

Topics:

Show and Tell

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Multi-systemic Integration

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Bowen Family Therapy

Discussion of the Family in Napier

Role Plays

Power dynamics in the therapy room

Readings: Gurman, Chapter 5-6; Napier, Chapters 9-13;

WEEK 5 – June 9: Hate in the Countertransference

Topics:

Show and Tell

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Object-Relations Couple Therapy

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Narrative Couple Therapy

Discussion

Role Plays



Readings: Gurman, Chapter 7-8; Napier, Chapters 14-21

WEEK 6 – June 16: Date Night!

Topics:

Show and Tell

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Pragmatic/Experiential

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Relational Empowerment in Couple Therapy

Discussion of the Family in Napier

Role Plays

Readings: Gurman, Chapter 9-10 Gottman, Chapters 1-3; Schnarch Chapters 1-3

WEEK 7 – June 23: Power Dynamics and Social Inequalities: Intimate Partner Abuse.

Topics:

Show and Tell

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Structural

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Emotion-Focused

Role Plays:

Assessing domestic violence

Decisions about seeing partners separately and together

Therapist's ethical considerations relative to power imbalances and relationship

Equality in families and broader society

Readings: Schnarch Article (2011); Gurman, Chapter 11-12; Gottman, Chapters 4-5; Schnarch Chapters 4-6

WEEK 8– June 30: 'Good Enough' Sex

Topics:

Show and Tell

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Feminist/Multicultural Couple Therapy

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of A Short-Term Problem-Focused Approach

Role Plays:

Reading: Gottman, Chapters 6-9; Gurman, Chapter 13-14; Schnarch Chapters 7-10

WEEK 9 – July 7: Dreaming the Dream Onward

Topics:

Show and Tell

(Mini Lecture) Building Intimacy Bridges

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Attachment Repair

Reading: Gurman, Chapter 15-16; Schnarch Chapters 11-12

WEEK 10 – July 14: The Family Within

Topics:

Show and Tell

(Mini Lecture) Internal Family Systems

Reading: Gurman, Chapter 17; Gottman, Chapters 10-12; Schnarch Chapters 13-14

WEEK 11 – July 15: On Being and Becoming

Topics:

Show and Tell

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Existential Couple Therapy

Reading: Gurman, Chapter 18; Gottman, Chapters 13-14; Schnarch Chapters 15-16

WEEK 12 – July 21: Looking Up

Topics:

Show and Tell

(Mini Lecture) Brief Overview of Happily Ever After

Reading: Gurman, Chapter 19; Gottman, Chapter 15; Schnarch Chapter 17

WEEK 13 – July 28: Dreaming the Dream Onward

Topics:

Show and Tell

Reflection Papers Due

This week you will share what you learned from writing your papers with others in the class. **FINAL PAPERS DUE IN CLASS.**

\*\*The following evaluation of objectives must be filled out and turned in on the last day of class.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES-MCFT CORE COMPETENCIES EVALUATION SHEET  
CPSY 566: LEGAL ISSUES IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY**

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TERM: Fall 2012  
Lovell

INSTRUCTOR:

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Please rate each item according to how much you learned about the competency listed. Circle: 1=objective not met 2=objective somewhat met 3=objective adequately met 4=objective more than met

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1. Understand the ethical and legal considerations specifically related to the practice of family therapy (e.g., confidentiality & release of records in relational therapy). Know and follow the AAMFT Code of Ethics, standards of practice, and state laws and regulations for the practice of MCFT.

1                      2                      3                      4

2. Understand the implications of professional issues unique to the practice of family therapy, including contemporary debates in the field (e.g., diagnosis and relational therapies, evidence-based & common factors movements).

1                      2                      3                      4

3. Understand philosophies and best practices for ethical decision-making. Learn to apply a model of ethical decision making appropriate for clinical work.

1                      2                      3                      4

4. Become familiar with family law, family regulating agencies, and actions required of family therapists, (e.g., reporting child abuse & neglect, going to court, responding to subpoenas, working with child protection agencies).

1                      2                      3                      4

5. Develop a beginning understanding of the behavioral health care delivery system, its impact on the services provided, the barriers and disparities in the system, and how institutional barriers prevent members of varying cultural and class groups from using/benefiting from mental health services.

1

2

3

4