



“We are a community that commits itself to diversity and sustainability as dimensions of a just society” --*Lewis and Clark Mission Statement*

**MCFT 563: RELATIONAL JUSTICE IN COUPLES THERAPY
FALL 2020**

Time & Day: Section 1-- Thursdays 9:00-12:00 September 10–October 8

Place: Online (Zoom)

Instructor: Carmen Knudson-Martin, PhD

Office Hours: email to arrange virtual meeting

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CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Therapists often inadvertently reinforce existing power disparities. This class explores how therapists can position their clinical responses to interrupt and transform detrimental power differences in intimate relationships. Using an approach that links emotion, societal context, and couple interaction, the class will focus on moment-by-moment process in couple therapy. Students will learn to identify power dynamics in couple relationships and practice clinical competencies that empower couples to create an equitable foundation based on four elements of mutual support: mutual attunement, mutual vulnerability, mutual influence, and shared relational responsibility.

CREDITS: 1 semester unit

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course promotes the following student learning outcomes:

SLO1.1: Students recognize the impact of power on individuals, families, and communities.

SLO1.2: Students recognize the interconnections among biological, psychological, social systems in people’s lived experience.

SLO 2.2: Students’ clinical practice demonstrates attention to social justice and cultural democracy.

SLO 3.2 Students draw on the research literature relevant to family therapy in case planning and treatment.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The following objectives are in keeping with the AAMFT Core Competencies. At the end of this course, students are expected to:

1. Recognize how inequities in larger systems create destructive power imbalances in couple relationships (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, spirituality, religion, larger systems, social context)
2. Recognize the confluence of emotion, societal context, and couple interaction in the moment by moment of couple therapy.
3. Learn a research-based clinical model for couple therapy that promotes relational justice and mutual support.
4. Begin to develop clinical competencies that empower couples to create an equitable foundation for their relationship.

TEXTS

Recommended

Knudson-Martin, C, Wells, M., Samman, S., (Eds.) (2015). *Socio-emotional relationship therapy: Bridging Emotion, Societal Context, and Couple Interaction*. New York: Springer International. (available online through Watzek library)

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Sept 10

Knudson-Martin, C., & Huenergardt, D. (2010). A socio-emotional approach to couple therapy: Linking social context and couple interaction. *Family Process, 49*, 369–386.

Loscocco, K., & Walzer, S. (2013). Gender and the culture of heterosexual marriage in the United States. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 5*, 1-14.

Knudson-Martin, C. (2015). When therapy challenges patriarchy: Undoing gendered power in heterosexual couple therapy. In C. Knudson-Martin, M. A. Wells, & S K. Samman (eds). *Socio-Emotional Relationship Therapy: Bridging Emotion, Societal Context, and Couple Interaction* (pp. 15-26). Springer

Sept 17

ChenFeng, J., Kim, L., Knudson-Martin, C., & Wu, Y. (2016). Application of socio-emotional relationship therapy with couples of Asian heritage: Addressing issues of culture, gender, and power. *Family Process, 56*. 558-573.

Cowdery, R., Scarborough, N., Knudson-Martin, C., Lewis, M., Shesadri, G., & Mahoney, C. (2009). Gendered power in cultural contexts part II: Middle class African American heterosexual couples with young children. *Family Process, 48*, 25-39.

Recommended

Maciel, J., van Putten, Z., & Knudson-Martin, C. (2009). Gendered power in cultural contexts Part I: Immigrant couples. *Family Process, 48*, 9-23.

Jordan, L. S., Grogan, C., Muruthi, B. & Bermúdez, J. M. (2017) Polyamory: Experiences of power from without, from within, and in between, *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy, 16*, 1-19.

Nice, L., Knudson-Martin, C., Lough, A., Castillo, N., & Doe, K. (2020). Patterns that challenge and sustain mutuality as retired couples negotiate gendered power. *Family Relations*. <https://doi-org.library.lcproxy.org/10.1111/fare.12399>

Sept 24

Connolly, C. (2006). A feminist perspective on resilience in lesbian couples. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, 18*, 137-162.

Richards, J. C., Jonathan, N., & Kim, L. (2015). Building a circle of care in same-sex couple relationships: A socio-emotional relational approach. In C. Knudson-Martin, M. A. Wells, & S. K. Samman (Eds.), *Socio-emotional relationship therapy: Bridging emotion, societal context, and couple interaction* (pp. 93-106). AFTA Springer Briefs in Family Therapy. Springer.

Recommended

Jonathan, N. (2009). Carrying equal weight: Relational responsibility and attunement among same-sex couples. In C. Knudson-Martin & A. R. Mahoney (Eds.), *Couples, gender and power: Creating change in intimate relationships* (pp. 79-103). Springer Publishing. (a PDF of this chapter is posted on Moodle)

Williams, K., & Knudson-Martin, C. (2013). Do therapists address gender and power in infidelity? A feminist analysis of the treatment literature. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 39*, 271–284

Oct 1

Knudson-Martin, C., Kim, L., Gibbs, E., & Harmon, R. (in review). Sociocultural attunement to vulnerability in couple therapy: Fulcrum for changing power processes. *Family Process*, (posted on Moodle)

Recommended

Jonathan, N. & Knudson-Martin, C. (2012). Building connection: Attunement and gender equality in heterosexual relationships. *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy, 11*: 95-111

Nichaleu, A., Choau, S. T., Kang, Y. J. & Knudson-Martin, C. (2016). Doing what it takes to make it work: Flexibility, relational focus, and stability among long-term couples with children. *Journal of Family Issues. 37*, 1639–1657

Reynolds, C., & Knudson-Martin, C. (2015). Gender and the construction of intimacy among committed couples with children. *Family Process, 54*, 293-307.

Oct 8

Wells, M. A., Lobo, E., Galick, A., Knudson-Martin, C., Huenergardt, D., & Schaepper, J. (2017). Fostering trust through relational safety: Applying SERT’s focus on gender and power with adult-survivor couples. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy, 16*, 122-145

Knudson-Martin, C., Wells, M. A., & Samman, S. K. (2015). Engaging power, emotion, and context in couple therapy: Lessons learned. In C. Knudson-Martin, M. E. Wells, & S K. Samman (eds). *Socio-Emotional Relationship Therapy: Bridging Emotion, Societal Context, and Couple Interaction* (pp. 145-153). Springer

Recommended

D’Arrigo-Patrick, E., *Samman, S. K., & Knudson-Martin, C. (2020). Moving from “I” to “we”: A grounded theory analysis of couple therapy with liver patients and their partners. *Family Process*, advanced on-line publication. doi: 10.1111/famp.12528 (to find, you may need to first go to the journal and then search. It is currently in “early view”)

COURSE OBJECTIVES, STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES, AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Course Objective	MCFT Student Learning Outcomes	AAMFT Core Competencies & AMFRTB task statements	Evaluated by
1 Recognize how inequities in larger systems create destructive power imbalances in couple relationships (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, spirituality, religion, larger systems, social context)	SLO 1.1 SLO 1.2	CC 1.2.1 CC 2.3.1 TS 02.08 TS 05.09	Class participation Reflection Paper-criterion 1
2. Recognize the confluence of emotion, societal context, and couple interaction in the moment by moment of couple therapy.	SLO 1.2 SLO 2.2	CC 1.2.1 CC 2.2.3 CC 4.5.3 TS01.04 TS 02.06 TS 02.11	Class participation: Video Observations & discussion Research presentation
3. Learn a research-based clinical model for couple therapy that promotes relational justice and mutual support.	SLO 3.2	CC 4.1.1 CC 4.1.2 CC 4.3.2 TS 01.04 TS 03.11	Research presentation Reflection Paper-criterion 4
4. Begin to develop clinical competencies that empower couples to create an equitable foundation for their relationship.	SLO 1.1 SLO 2.2	CC 2.2.3 CC2.3.1 CC 4.4.1 CC5.4.2 CC 4.1.2 TS 01.04 TS 03.11	Class participation-role plays and discussion Reflection Paper-criterion 2 & 3

LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

We are in this together. We are coming together to learn and develop as family therapists-in-training in an unprecedented time. We did not sign up for sickness, social distancing, the sudden end of our collective lives together on campus, and online classes, yet we face these conditions. Our current global situation requires we adapt physically, behaviorally, mentally and emotionally and be attentive to our relationships with one another, knowing that the resources and privileges available to each of us as we navigate this crisis from our unique intersecting identities vary considerably. It is crucial that we do our best to approach our learning with grace and understanding for ourselves and of each other; that we do not disengage and give up, and instead creatively find and develop our personal and collective sources of resilience.

We remain professional. Responding to the COVID crisis makes visible new challenges and opportunities for the professional practice of family therapy. Like most mental health services during the pandemic, this course will primarily be online via Zoom. This will enable us to achieve the best possible professional development experience while adhering to public health safety precautions. Though gathering from our personal spaces (formerly private), when we gather on Zoom we are entering professional space. Each of us needs to be responsible regarding our surroundings, how we present ourselves, and how we engage--as in any professional venue.

Engaging across virtual space. Like most therapists in the field, we long to meet face-to-face, to connect and engage with each other through all our senses. Engaging across virtual space takes more intentionality. Because our cameras do not move when our eyes/bodies move, we will not always be able to tell who is about to speak or have the experience of direct eye contact. We will need to attend more fully to others and take responsibility for participating in group discussions in ways that expand our prior classroom styles. Like good family therapists, you will need to look for possibilities that this new way of engaging affords--to see and welcome new opportunities for growth arising from our situation.

Guidelines for this Zoom course. Each instructor structures online learning somewhat differently. In this class:

- Open your video so we can all see each other.
- Mute your sound when you are not speaking, except in small breakout groups.
- Use the gallery view in Zoom during class discussion. When the instructor or a student is presenting, switch to speaker view.
- Wave your hand when you want to speak. Feel free to assist the instructor in noticing if someone wants to speak and has been missed.
- Please do NOT use the chat feature in this class.

Requirements for online learning. For the best shared learning experience you will need:

- A quiet space as private as possible given your circumstances
- A computer - PC or Macintosh- with a stable Internet connection. Higher speed Internet connections (cable modem, DSL) are strongly recommended.
- A camera built in or attached to your computer.
- The most current version of the browser Firefox or Chrome.
 - Download Firefox <http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/>
 - Download Chrome <https://www.google.com/chrome/browser/desktop/index.html>

- The most current version of Zoom downloaded as an application on your computer
 - Download Zoom <https://zoom.us/download>
 - Sign in with your Lewis & Clark email account
 - For help and troubleshooting with Zoom, visit the Zoom Help Center: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>
- A "technology back-up" plan.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Participation and Class Preparation** (35 points)

This course emphasizes shared engagement with the assigned readings and videos of couple therapy sessions and development of clinical competencies through case discussions, role-plays, and other interactive activities. Toward this end, you are expected to:

- A. Attend and participate in **all** class meetings. In the event of illness or other emergency, please email the instructor in advance of class. Missing one class is missing 20% of the class.
- B. Prepare for class discussion:
- Read the required articles and identify at least two questions or reflections that you would like to share with the class.
 - When clinical videos are assigned, watch the video through the lenses below and make notes of what you see/wonder about (include the time on the video when each observation occurred):
 - Attunement to sociocultural discourses (what discourses are implicitly or explicitly present; how did or could the therapist appear to respond to or draw on them)
 - Power dynamics that are present and how the therapist interrupted them (or not)
 - What did the therapist do/could have done to move the clients toward mutuality in the Circle of Care?
- C. Respectfully engage with other students and/or the instructor in a spirit of openness and curiosity.

Your participation in class activities will be evaluated according to the following rubric:

CLASS PARTICIPATION COMPETENCIES	Possible Points	Points demonstrated
Prompt and engaged presence in the class.	10	
Comes to class prepared with questions and/reflections on course reading and observations of clinical videos	15	
Engages in course activities with a spirit of openness and curiosity and helps to create an atmosphere of safety and mutual respect among all class members.	10	
TOTAL	35	

2) Brief Research Application Presentation -- (25 points)

In this 10-15 minute presentation, you will briefly summarize one of the suggested research papers, emphasizing what may be relevant to relational justice in couple therapy. Your presentation should include:

- A. Brief summary of what the researchers studied (the research question and method)
- B. An overview of the findings, especially in relation to the influence of societal power processes in couple therapy
- C. Possible applications and/or relevance to equity in couple therapy, including:
 - a. Conceptualization and assessment of power
 - b. Sociocultural attunement
 - c. Facilitating the Circle of Care (mutual vulnerability, attunement, influence, and relational responsibility)

If you wish to include a handout or copy of powerpoint for the class, please send it to the instructor one day in advance.

Your presentation will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

Research Application Presentation	Possible Points	Points demonstrated
Provides a concise overview of the research question and method	5	
Presents an overview of the findings, especially as they relate to the influence of societal power processes in couple therapy	5	
Addresses implications for conceptualization and assessment of power dynamics (what to look for, consider)	5	
Addresses implications for sociocultural attunement (what the therapist may want to be aware of)	5	
Addresses implications for working toward mutuality in the Circle of Care (what may the therapist need to do?)	5	
TOTAL	25	

3) Course Reflection Paper (40 points). Must be posted on Moodle before class on October 8.

Write a 4-6 page paper in which you reflect on your evolving preparation for positioning your clinical work to promote relational justice in couple therapy. Include the following in your reflections:

- a. Concepts from the class that are helpful to you in conceptualizing your role as an equity-informed couple therapist.

- b. Clinical practices or interventions that you are developing or plan to develop that will help you promote equity and mutual support.

- c. Your own responses to power dynamics and socioculturally attuned practice.

- d. As you discuss the above, include references to readings that were significant to you. Paper is within page limit, double-spaced, and in APA style.

Your reflection paper will be graded according to the following rubric.

Reflections on role as an equity-informed couple therapist	Possible points	Points demonstrated
Discusses concepts from the class that are helpful in conceptualizing your role as an equity-informed couple therapist.	10	
Discusses clinical practices or interventions that you are developing or plan to develop that will help you promote equity and mutual support.	10	
Discusses your own responses to power dynamics and socioculturally attuned practice.	10	
Paper is well written in APA style and includes references to course readings.	10	
TOTAL	40	

LATE PAPERS AND PAGE LIMITS

Late papers will be reduced 10% per day. Papers not within the listed page limits will also be reduced 10% per page over or under.

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 maybe seen as an absence that requires make-up work.

DISABILITY SERVICES STATEMENT

If you have a disability that may impact your academic performance, you may request accommodations by submitting documentation to the Student Support Services Office in Albany Quadrangle (503-768-7192). After you have submitted documentation and filled out paperwork there for the current semester requesting accommodations, staff in that office will notify me of the accommodations for which you are eligible.

DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Each student should decide for him/herself what information to disclose. Students are advised to be prudent when making self-disclosures. The program cannot guarantee confidentiality of student disclosures given the group environment, although personal comments should be considered private and confidential – and remain only in the classroom – unless an exception to confidentiality applies.

LINKS TO LEWIS & CLARK GRADUATE SCHOOL ESSENTIAL POLICIES

This course adheres to the general policies outlined in the catalog and student handbook of the Lewis & Clark Graduate School of Education and Counseling. This includes full adherence to the following policies:

- Nondiscrimination: go.lclark.edu/gsec-nondiscrimination;
- Standards for professional student conduct and academic integrity: go.lclark.edu/gsec-conduct;
- Sexual misconduct: go.lclark.edu/titleIX.

CELL PHONES

Cell phones must be silenced and text messaging is not allowed during class time. If there is an emergency you may exit the class to use your cell.

EVALUATION AND GRADING

Grades for this course will be determined as follows:

Participation	35 pts
Applied research presentation	25 pts
Reflection paper	40 pts
Total	100 pts

94-100 = A	90-93.5 = A-	88-89.5 = B+
83-87.5 = B	80-82.5 = B-	78-79 = C+
73-77.5 = C	70-72 = C-	

COURSE SCHEDULE

	Topics	Readings & Assignments
Class 1 Sept 10	Sociocultural Discourse, Power, & Emotion	Knudson-Martin & Huenergardt (2010) K-M (2015) pp. 15-21 Loscocco & Waltzer (2013)
Class 2 Sept 17	Sociocultural Attunement, Therapeutic alliance, & Positioning	ChenFeng et al (2016) Cowdery et al (2009) View Clinical Video 1 Maciel (2009) Research application_____ Jordan (2017) Research application_____ Nice (2020) Research application_____
Class 3 Sept 24	Power in same-sex/queer relationships	Connelly (2016) Richards (2015) View Clinical Video 2 Jonathan (2009) Research application_____ Williams & K_M (2013) application_____
Class 4 Oct 1	Clinical strategies that interrupt power and promote mutuality	Knudson-Martin et al (in review) View clinical Video 3 Jonathan & K-M (2012) research application_____ Nichaleau et al (2016) research application_____ Reynolds & KM (2015) research application_____
Class 5 Oct 8	Intersections of trauma, power, and self-of-the-therapist in couple therapy	Wells et al (2017) K-M, Wells, & Samman (2015) D'Arrigo-Patrick et al (2020) Research application_____ Reflection Paper Due on Moodle before class