

# MCFT 511

## Equity in Family Therapy

### Fall 2023

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**Office Hours:** By appointment on Zoom or in Rogers 328

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**Course Times:** Section 1 – Thursday 9:00-12:15pm  
Section 2 – Thursday 1:00-4:15pm  
Section 3 – Thursday 5:00-8:15pm

### CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Development of diversity awareness and knowledge necessary to practice family therapy from liberation and social justice-based frameworks. This includes interrogating multiple embedded systems of power and privilege relative to interconnections of identity and social position. Focus is on helping students become capable family therapists in diverse contexts, including becoming aware of their own beliefs, biases, and prejudices relative to culture, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or physical or mental ability.

**Units:** 3 semester hours (45 contact hours)

**Prerequisite(s):** None

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### MCFT PROGRAM LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course promotes the following student learning outcomes:

SLO 1.1: Students recognize the impact of power on individuals, families, and communities.

SLO 1.2: Students recognize the interconnections among biological, psychological, social systems in people's lived experience.

SLO 2.1: Students self-reflect on the implications of own and others' social location in clinical practice.

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

SLO: 4.3 Students demonstrate integration of family therapy theory, equity, and social location issues in clinical practice.

### COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Nothing in this syllabus will be set in stone or taken for granted. The instructions and outcomes laid out here are a beginning, something we can revise as the course proceeds. These learning objectives, course activities, and assigned readings are intended to set us on a path, but we can amend the path as we go, based on what feels relevant, challenging, or meaningful to you. I encourage you to "talk back" to me and the course as we go.

In this course we will:

- Be curious and critical about what we know about ourselves and others.
- Be bloodhounds for our own implicit biases and assumptions.
- Examine the intersection of systems of power and how those impact our lives and the lives of our clients.
- Practice getting comfortable with being uncomfortable, recognizing those moments as growth opportunities.
- Commit to actions that increase our own awareness, preserve human dignity, and reduce inequity.
- Have epiphanies.

There are some existing course learning objectives that you will want to keep in mind as you will need to review them in your final self-assessment paper. In class, we will discuss how the two sets of learning objectives fit together.

1. Recognize contextual and systemic dynamics (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, spirituality, religion, etc.) that are relevant to client experience.
2. Consider the impact of larger societal systems (e.g., legal system, social services, schools, medical systems, etc.) on clients' health and well-being.
3. Develop awareness necessary to deliver interventions in ways that are sensitive to special needs of clients (e.g., gender, age socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, personal history, larger systems issues of the client).
4. Begin to develop awareness of how to empower clients and their relational systems to establish effective relationships with each other and larger systems.
5. Assess personal response to own history and social location and its impact on interpersonal relationships and clinical practice.

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## INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

The course is designed as an intensive and experiential seminar. Various methods of instruction will be used to accommodate all styles of learning, including lecture, class discussion, small group discussion, reflection, role play, intergroup teaching, in-class activities, in-class films, and more.

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## REQUIRED TEXTS

*I have carefully chosen texts that I believe will provide a wide variety of perspectives on a range of human experiences. It is my hope that you will find them helpful in your personal life and professional career. The total cost of the books (at list price) is around \$300. Many are sold for less on discount sites or are available to rent, some can be borrowed through the library, and some you can listen to on audiobook. I have included the list price of each text as well as any suggestions for making it more affordable. If you have concerns about affording these textbooks, please reach out to me and we will work together to make sure you have access to everything you need to learn in this class.*

Adams, M., Blumenfeld, W. J., Castañeda, C. R., Hackman, H. W., Hopkins, L., Peters, M. L., Shlasko, D., & Zúñiga, X. (2018). *Readings for diversity and social justice (4th ed.)*. New York: Routledge.

- ISBN-13: 9781138055285 (\$74.95)

Cooper, B. (2018). *Eloquent rage: A black feminist discovers her superpower*. St. Martin's Press.

- ISBN-13: 978-1250112880 (\$18.00)
- Two print copies are available at the library.
- You can also listen to the audiobook.

Imani, B. (2021). *Read this to get smarter: About race, class, gender, disability, & more*. New York, NY: Ten Speed Press.

- ISBN-13: 978-1984860545 (\$16.99)
- [Available as an eBook through the library](#) (limited to 1 user at a time)

McDowell, T. (2015). *Applying critical social theories to family therapy practice*. AFTA Springer Briefs in Family Therapy. New York, NY: Springer.

- ISBN-13: 978-3319156323 (\$69.99)
- [Available as an eBook through the library](#) (unlimited users)

McDowell, T. Knudson-Martin, C., & Bermudez, J. M. (2023). *Socioculturally attuned family therapy: Guidelines for equitable theory and practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York, NY: Routledge.

- ISBN-13: 978-1032074412 (\$74.95)
- [Available as an ebook through the library](#) (unlimited users)

Mock, J. (2014). *Redefining realness: My path to womanhood, identity, love & so much more*. New York, NY: Atria.

- ISBN-13: 978-1476709130 (\$16.99)
- [Available as an ebook through the library](#) (limited to 3 users at a time)
- You can also listen to the audiobook.

Stone, D. J., & ChenFeng, J. L. (2019). *Finding your voice as a beginning marriage and family therapist*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- ISBN-13: 978-1138290457 (\$46.95)
- [Available as an ebook through the library](#) (unlimited users)

**Additional readings, videos, or podcasts will be available on Moodle.**

## **RECOMMENDED TEXTS**

*DiAngelo and Saad's texts are highly recommended for all white students to read on their own. If discussing race is new or uncomfortable for you, you may need to read one or both texts to get the most out of class and this program.*

DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. ISBN: 978-0807047415

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES & REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS

### Attendance & Participation

This is a collaborative course and every one of us is essential to and responsible for everyone else's learning. Some of your most significant learning moments will happen in class discussions. As such, we all need to come prepared to participate fully. If you can't prepare for class or finish your work for any reason, please discuss with me and/or your classmates.

To facilitate your preparation for class, I will provide reflection questions for the assigned reading/viewing materials each week. These are provided to stimulate your thinking and processing of the material. I highly recommend that you journal in response to the prompts each week before class.

Owing to the nature of topics discussed and tasks assigned, you may experience some discomfort over the course. It is vital to remain open to these experiences and adopt a "curious" stance while learning new materials. I encourage you to discuss your discomfort in class, so that we may all learn from it together.

### Learning Self-Assessments

At the beginning of the semester, I will ask you to identify your learning goals for this course, as well as how you plan to reach those learning goals. You should also identify potential or actual barriers to you reaching those goals. At the midpoint of the semester, I will ask you to reflect on your progress thus far, how your learning is going, and if there is anything you need to adjust to get where you want to be. These reflections are an opportunity for you to think about not only *what* you want to learn but also *how* you learn.

### Immersion Experience

The goal of this assignment is to practice being aware of your own process of engaging with cultures different from your own. You will be paired with another classmate—ideally someone whose social locations are meaningfully different from your own. Spend at least 5 hours with each other in whatever manner you both choose—in person or virtual, at someone's home or in a public space, sharing food or doing an activity, etc. Engage with each other in ways that help you understand each other's sociocultural context and experience, especially:

- Your partner's support system—significant others, family, friends, community, pets, etc. Meet some of them if possible!
- Cultural, familial, and/or religious values and what they mean to your partner
- Sociocultural expectations regarding work, family, and other significant life choices
- A felt sense of your partner's experiences of privilege and oppression
- The resources available to your partner and what these mean to them

### By Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm:

- Submit a written summary and reflection of your experience to Taskstream. Your paper should be in PDF format, about 3 to 4 double-spaced pages, and references are optional.

- Submit a completed rubric to Moodle. The rubric for this assignment is at the end of this syllabus and on Moodle. You will be grading your own assignment.

Please come to class on October 19<sup>th</sup> prepared to share about your experience.

## Life Map

The goal of this activity is to build awareness of how sociocultural context and systems of power have shaped you and your family. This assignment builds on the critical genogram that you created in MCFT 504. In this activity, you will bring your genogram to life with stories and critical reflection.

- A life map is one way of expressing our histories – where we came from, where we are now, and where we are headed. Symbols, pictures, and drawings are used to represent important events, transitions, learning moments, etc. that stand out along the path of life. You may use any medium you like to share your sociocultural story, provided that it can be seen or accessed by everyone in class—be creative! Briefly include:
  - your journey relative to your experience, attitudes, and awareness of how gender, class, race, sexual orientation, spirituality/religion, nation of origin, migration, physical and mental abilities, and other social and contextual issues intersect in your life
  - specific and concrete ways these intersecting social locations afforded you privilege as well as oppression in your day-to-day life
  - how these sociocultural contexts framed significant events in your life and the resources/strengths that helped you overcome difficult times,
  - the impact of these sociocultural contexts on your journey toward becoming a family therapist and how you think they will inform your clinical work
- You will share your life map during class (15-20 minutes) between October 19<sup>th</sup> and November 16<sup>th</sup> (we will select dates at the beginning of the semester). Then we will have about 10 minutes for classmates to share their reflections on how your life map impacted them (the thoughts or feelings that they experienced). Only reflections that communicate human connection and non-judgment may be shared (like reflecting teams that are used in MCFT practice!).

## Final Self-Assessment

The purpose of this assignment is for you to reflect upon and demonstrate what you have learned in this class. In this paper, discuss what you have learned in relation to the course objectives—both the ones in this syllabus and the ones you created for yourself. Use either Brittney Cooper or Janet Mock’s life story as a case example to illustrate how you might apply what you are learning if you were their family therapist. Choose a time in their life, make up a reason they are seeking therapy, and decide who is coming to therapy with them. Your paper should also include what you still need to learn to achieve the course objectives and your plan for doing so. *The focus of the paper is **you**, rather than the case; the case is a vehicle for you to reflect upon and demonstrate what you are learning and your awareness of what you still need to learn.*

**Before class on December 7<sup>th</sup>:**

- Submit your final self-assessment paper to Taskstream. Your paper should be no longer than 10 pages, including references. You are expected to integrate course readings and material and to use APA formatting and style.
- Submit a completed rubric to Moodle. The rubric for this assignment is at the end of this syllabus and on Moodle. You will be grading your own assignment.

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## **COURSE GRADING**

I will not be grading your work in this course. Instead, I will ask questions and provide feedback on your contributions as we go, to guide your learning and engage with your process. You will also be reflecting on your own learning individually and with your classmates throughout the semester. The intention here is to help you focus on working in a more organic way, as opposed to working as you think you're expected to. If this process causes more anxiety than it alleviates, please reach out to me so we can discuss. If you are worried about your grade, your best strategy is to participate in class discussions, do the readings, and complete the assignments. If an assignment does not feel productive, we can find ways to modify, remix, or repurpose the instructions.

You will create and reflect on your own goals for the course in your Learning Journal. At the end of the semester, you will give yourself a final grade. I reserve the right to change any final grades, as appropriate.

*Note:* According to Graduate School policy, grades lower than B- may not apply to graduation. Students earning a C+ or lower will need to repeat the course.

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## **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 10% 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.

## **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 the 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**

The Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) requires the program to have "established policies for informing applicants and students regarding disclosure of their personal information" (COAMFTE Standard 140.02, 2003). Each

student should decide for themselves 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.

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## Class Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Readings*
1	Sept 7	Set the Stage	RDSJ Essays 1 & 3 Imani Introduction & Ch 1 Stone & ChenFeng Ch 1 & 2 <a href="#">Chemaly article in Times</a>
2	Sept 14	Power, Privilege, & Oppression	RDSJ Essay 7 McDowell ( <i>Critical Social Theories</i> ) Ch 1 Stone & ChenFeng Ch 5 & 6
3	Sept 21	Socioeconomic Class	Imani Ch 3 McDowell ( <i>Critical Social Theories</i> ) Ch 2 Additional readings to be assigned
4	Sept 28	Race & White Supremacy	Imani Ch 5 McDowell ( <i>Critical Social Theories</i> ) Ch 4 DiAngelo (2012) Ch 11, 13 Combs (2019) Okun Cooper (2018) pp. 1 - 68
5	Oct 5	Sex & Heteropatriarchy	Imani Ch 6 McDowell ( <i>Critical Social Theories</i> ) Ch 3 Cooper (2018) 69 - 200 Film to be assigned
6	Oct 12	NO CLASS	<b>Immersion Paper due Sunday 11:59pm</b>
7	Oct 19	Gender & the Binary	RDSJ Section 5 Intro, Essay 63, 74, 76 Cooper (2018) pp. 201 – 275 <b>Life Maps</b>
8	Oct 26	Queer Intersections	RDSJ Essay 66, 73 McDowell ( <i>Critical Social Theories</i> ) Ch 5 Additional reading on Moodle Mock (2014) Part One <b>Life Maps</b>
9	Nov 2	Indigeneity & Colonization	RDSJ Essay 11, 52 Brave Heart & DeBruyn Mock (2014) Part Two

			<b>Life Maps</b>
10	Nov 9	Religion & Immigration	RDSJ Essay 10, 47, 54, 56 Mock (2014) Part Three <b>Life Maps</b>
11	Nov 16	Trauma & Ability	RDSJ Section 6 Intro + one essay of your choosing Excerpt from <i>Body Keeps the Score</i> <b>Life Maps</b>
12	Nov 23	NO CLASS	FALL BREAK
13	Nov 30	Socioculturally Attuned/Equitable Practice	McDowell et al (2018) Ch 1, 2, 3, 14
14	Dec 7	What's Next	Stone & FenCheng Ch 7 & 8 Snyder et al (2016) <b>Final Paper Due</b>

*\*Additional readings will be available on Moodle. Readings and assignments are subject to change. Please refer to Moodle for the most updated information.*

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## Immersion Experience Rubric

Immersion Experience	Possible Points	Points Demonstrated
A. Your goals and what you did	7	
B. Your <b>internal</b> process of seeking to engage with and understand another culture (i.e., what feelings and thoughts we triggered and how you responded to them).	7	
C. What you learned about yourself and what you need to do be able to engage across cultural differences and see through the lens of others.	7	
D. How your experience relates to the concepts covered in the classroom.	7	
TOTAL	28	

## Final Self-Assessment Rubric

Course Objectives	Marginal (1pt)	Emerging (2 pts)	Proficient (3 pts)	Accomplished (4 pts)
<b>Recognize contextual and systemic dynamics (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, spirituality, religion, etc.) that are relevant to client experience.</b>	Minimally aware of how sociocontextual processes impact interpersonal relationships: identifies variables but makes no connection with what these mean in people's lives.	Somewhat aware how sociocontextual processes impact interpersonal relationships: names relevant factors with limited illustration of their felt experience in people's lives.	Generally aware of how sociocontextual processes impact interpersonal relationships: identifies relevant factors and describes a sense of how people experience these in their lives.	Consistently aware of how sociocontextual processes impact interpersonal relationships: identifies relevant factors and illustrates how people experience these in their
<b>Consider the impact of larger societal systems (e.g., legal system, social services, schools, medical systems, etc.) on clients' health and well-being</b>	Minimally aware of the ways larger systems (medical, legal, etc) impact clients' lives. Identifies systems without articulating their connection and impact on health and well-being.	Somewhat aware of the ways larger systems (medical, legal, etc) impact clients' lives. Identifies a limited sense of their connection to and impact on health and well-being.	Generally aware of the ways larger systems (medical, legal etc) impact clients' lives. Identifies their connection to clients' personal/relational health and well being.	Consistently aware of the ways larger systems (medical, legal etc) impact clients' lives. Identifies their connection to clients' personal /relational health and well-being.
<b>Develop awareness necessary to deliver interventions in a way that is sensitive to special needs of clients (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, personal history, larger systems issues of the client).</b>	Limited recognition of how therapist interventions can be sensitive to clients' unique socio-contextual experiences and thus likely to inadvertently reinforce societal inequities.	Emerging understanding of own and others' sociocultural contexts and their salience to the clinical experience. Describes some openness to engaging across differences and interest in learning experiences to build knowledge, skills, intercultural engagement.	Emerging understanding of own and others' sociocultural contexts and their salience to the clinical experience. Describes openness to engaging across differences and identifies needed learning experiences to build knowledge, skills, intercultural engagement.	Demonstrates understanding of own and others' sociocultural contexts and their salience to the clinical experience. Not only comfortable but excited about growth and looks forward to working addressing issues of privilege and oppression. Identifies specific areas for continued development.
<b>Begin to demonstrate awareness of how to empower clients and their relational systems to establish effective relationships with each other and larger systems.</b>	Minimal identification of issues of privilege and oppression, cultural differences, or differentiation between cultural values and to be respected and issues of power and privilege.	Emerging identification of issues of privilege and oppression, cultural differences, and differentiation between cultural values and to be respected and issues of power and privilege. Limited application to clinical empowerment.	Identification of issues of privilege and oppression, cultural differences, and differentiation between cultural values and to be respected and issues of power and privilege. Developing application to clinical empowerment.	Identification of issues of privilege and oppression, cultural differences, with clear differentiation between cultural values to be respected and issues of power and privilege. Demonstrated application to clinical empowerment.
<b>Self-assessment of personal response to own history and social location and its impact on personal relationships and clinical practice.</b>	Minimal curiosity and willingness to examine own personal history and biases, social location and accountability; limited recognition of how issues of power play out in interpersonal relationships and practice and/lacks humility.	Some curiosity and willingness to examine own personal history and biases, social location and accountability; emerging recognition of how issues of power play out in interpersonal relationships and practice and/or beginning to show humility.	Developing curiosity and willingness to examine own personal history and biases, social location and accountability; Growing recognition of how issues of power play out in interpersonal relationships and practice and/or reflecting humility.	Consistently curious and willing to examine own personal history and biases, social location and accountability; Demonstrated recognition of how issues of power play out in interpersonal relationships and approaches practice with humility.
<b>Paper is clearly written and organized, well referenced, and conforms to APA style.</b>	Style of writing is hard to follow and poorly organized without focused introduction and conclusion. References are limited and there are significant errors in APA style.	Writing is sometimes hard to follow with some organization problems. References are limited and/or there are errors in APA style.	Writing is generally clear and easy to follow. Paper is organized and most points are well articulated. Paper is appropriately referenced with minimal APA errors.	Writing is exceptionally clear and easy to follow. Major points are well articulated and organization provides an excellent overview of the issues and conclusions. Paper is well referenced with no APA errors.