

**Psychology 643: Couple and Family Therapy**  
**Francis Marion University**  
**Fall Semester 2023**

**Class Meetings:** Thursdays, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**Room:** LEMC Room 110

**Instructor:** Matthew Hagler, PhD

**E-mail:** Matthew.Hagler@fmarion.edu

**Phone:** 843-661-1574

**Office/Office Hours:** CEMC 109-B or virtual (if virtual needed, email in advance).

Tuesdays 1:00-2:10 PM, Wednesdays 11:00 AM-12:30 PM, Thursdays 3:45 – 5:00 PM,  
or by appointment (email to request)

### **Course Description**

Overview of theoretical assumptions and concomitant assessment and treatment strategies associated with the major models of couple and family therapy, including cognitive-behavioral, Bowenian/family systems, object relations/psychodynamic, structural, and strategic. Examination of cultural diversity and ethical/professional issues in clinical work with couples and families.

### **Course Objectives**

- Develop ability to think and conceptualize individuals and relationships in terms of systems and reciprocal determinism.
- Understand and apply various psychological theories for understanding and treating couples and families
- Increase awareness of sociocultural dynamics and diversity in clinical work with couples and families.
- Understand and apply ethical and professional standards to clinical work with couples and families.

### **Course Structure**

This course will meet once a week. As a graduate-level seminar, the emphasis is on group discussion and skills practice, although I will supplement with short lecture to convey key information. We will make extensive use of demonstration videos and in-class role-play. It is essential that you come to class on time and prepared (i.e., up-to-date with the readings) to actively participate.

### **Required texts**

Goldenberg I., Stanton, M., & Goldenberg, H. (2017). Family therapy: An overview. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. Cengage Learning.

Gurman, A., Lebow, J., & Snyder, D. (2015). Clinical handbook of couple therapy. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Guilford.

Napier, A.Y. & Whitaker, C. (2011). The family crucible: The intense experience of family therapy. Harper.

Additional readings and supplementary materials will be posted on Blackboard.

## Course Requirements and Grading

- 1. Attendance and Participation (15%):** This is an experiential, once-a-week class, so your attendance and active participation are essential for mastery of the material. For each class period, I will rate your level of participation on a 4-point scale, contributing to 15% of your course grade (1% per session with one “freebie”). If it becomes clear to me that students are not doing the assigned readings, I will also implement reading quizzes that will contribute to participation grades. Absences may be *excused* for legitimate medical reasons, family emergencies, or religious holidays, and are at my discretion. Except in extreme circumstances, I cannot excuse an absence if I am not informed in advance. *To receive credit for an excused absence, you will need to submit reading notes for all assigned readings from that day, due at the beginning of the next class. Unexcused absences will result in a 0 for participation day.* **However, please note that per FMU policy and our program’s accreditation standards, students who exceed 2 absences (for any reason) must be dropped from the course.**
- 2. Family Crucible Discussion Leader (10%):** Individually, you will facilitate a 30-minute discussion about the Family Crucible reading that is due on a given week (we will assign weeks at the beginning of the course). You will a) summarize what happened b) share your thoughts about how the reading relates to current/past course content and c) Pose questions to the class for discussion about the reading and/or current or past course content. You will also turn in a copy of your summary and discussion questions to the instructor via email by the time class begins on your presentation date. It is fine to submit this content in bulleted form. A more detailed description of this assignment will be distributed in class and posted on Blackboard.
- 3. Genogram Project and Paper (20%):** For this project you will create a genogram depicting 3 generations of your family (including your generation). The genogram should not just be a “family tree” but also must depict relationships (e.g., cutoffs, enmeshments, and conflicts) and other information about individuals that you learn. You can interview family members, go over diaries or letters, or research photographs and other objects to reach a deeper understanding of family of origin patterns. You may find help developing a genogram using professional genogram maker software but this is not necessary or required - any drawing software or Word can work. You can also hand-draw your genogram but it should be neat and legible. A legend is required. You will include a paper (4-5 pages, double spaced, 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins) analyzing the family patterns, themes, and relationships depicted based on course content (you are welcome to draw from any/all theoretical orientations). If needed, contact the instructor to discuss alternative options for this assignment. A more detailed description of this assignment will be distributed in class and posted on Blackboard.

- 4. Mock Family Treatment/Role Plays (40%):** At the beginning of the course, students will be assigned to a “family” with a certain theme and/or structure. The family group will then cooperatively assign membership roles (e.g., mother, father, step-parent, child, grandparent, etc.) and will creatively elaborate upon and make more realistic their “family” history, interaction patterns, and presenting concerns. Each group will also serve as a treatment team for another group mock family, and your performance in your role as a family member and in your role as a therapist will contribute to your grade. Components of this assignment will unfold over the course of the semester and will entail going on outings as a family and writing reflection papers, conducting a mock intake session and writing an intake report, writing a case conceptualization and treatment plan from a specific theoretical perspective (or integrating 2 orientations), and conducting 2 mock sessions in class (1 as family member, 1 as therapist), with a reflection paper for each. A more detailed description of this assignment will be distributed in class and posted on Blackboard.
- 5. Final Exam (15%):** We will have a take-home final exam for this course primarily comprised of application-based essay questions. You will have a week-long window to complete the exam. It is untimed and open-book, open-note. **However, you are not allowed to work with a classmate.**

### **Communication**

Outside of class time, my primary way of communicating with you will be e-mail. E-mail also will be the easiest way for you to reach me. I generally will respond to e-mails within 24-hours during the week. If you do not hear back from me within 48 hours (except over the weekend/breaks), please feel free to follow up. You are able to call my office and leave me a voicemail, but this is not typically the most expedient way of getting as response. It is important to you check your FMU e-mail daily (during the week), as I will frequently use e-mail to update you, send out readings and assignments, etc. I will also actively update and maintain the course’s Blackboard page and post readings and assignments there.

### **Disability Accommodations**

I am happy to provide all approved accommodations to support the success of students with disabilities. In order to receive accommodations, I must receive an official letter from the Office of Counseling and Testing (843-661-1840). It is also helpful for us to meet during office hours early in the semester to discuss your accommodations so that I can be sure to provide them in a way that meets your needs.

### **Classroom Civility**

Respect of others and participation is expected. Also, out of respect for the instructor and your fellow students, turn off all electronic communication devices before class begins. Do not text message, e-mail, or chat during class. If there is an emergency and you are expecting a critical text/email/call during class, please speak to me beforehand.

### **Computer Use in Class**

Those using computers to take notes must be offline during class. I can often tell when students are browsing the internet rather than taking notes, and I will politely ask you to

go offline. Repeated infractions by multiple students could result in a change in this policy (e.g., a ban on computer use in class). I reserve the right to ask students to put away their computers at any time during class, or to make a class period “computer-free” in order to facilitate discussion.

### **Late Assignments and Requests for Extensions**

Generally, I will penalize late submission of assignments (10 points will be deducted for every day the assignment is late). In the case of personal or family emergencies or extenuating circumstances, you must contact me as soon as you anticipate an issue or need an extension in order to discuss possibilities of accommodations. The earlier you ask for an extension, the more likely I am to grant it, so it is in your best interest to look ahead to foreseeable events (e.g., religious holidays, family events). I am unlikely to grant a request for an extension that is made close to or after the due date except under extreme circumstances (e.g., emergencies). Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and I cannot guarantee any request will be granted.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

A university is a community of scholars, and all students are expected to act in ways that uphold the integrity of this community. Academic dishonesty is a serious breach of the principles of this University and of civil, ethical conduct everywhere and, thus, will not be tolerated.

Although academic dishonesty cannot be precisely defined to include all aspects of academic misconduct, the following statements have been provided to serve as a guide:

- Cheating includes, but is not limited to wrongfully giving, taking, or presenting any information or material by a student with the intent of aiding him/her/themselves or any other person on any academic work which is considered in any way in the determination of the student’s grade.
- Plagiarism involves the use of the ideas or writings of another person without acknowledgment of that use. Lack of knowledge for proper citation will not excuse violations of plagiarism. You also are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you have the permission of that person. All work submitted for grading must be your original work for the specified course. This means you cannot turn in assignments, papers, or portions of assignments or papers from other courses, past and present, for grading as your original work in this course. Submissions of self-plagiarism will be treated as plagiarism.
- Other forms of academic misconduct include but are not limited to: using or contributing to unapproved test files, using any outside source(s) during an exam (unless specifically permitted by the instructor), discussing the content of course quizzes and exams with students who have not yet taken them, utilizing other electronic devices to access sources during a lockdown exam, and communicating with anyone in any form, aside from the course instructor during an exam.

Academic dishonesty and any other forms of academic misconduct, whether encountered or suspected, will be reported to the Provost’s Office and dealt with in accordance with the FMU Honor Code, outlined in the FMU Student Handbook.

Academic dishonesty and other misconduct will also result in anything from a zero on the assignment to a failing grade for the course, solely at the discretion of the instructor.

Unless told otherwise, in writing, all work in the course should be done on your own and in your own words. All papers, exams, and extra credit turned in to me are expected to be your original work and only your work – No help from other students. Students are encouraged to seek help from professors without penalty.

### **Important Mental Health Statement**

As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, health issues, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, and/or lack of motivation. These concerns, or other stressful events, may lead to diminished academic performance or may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Students are encouraged to seek help when this is the case. An excellent place to start is with the Office of Counseling and Testing at 843-661-1840.

### **A Note on Self-Disclosure**

Increasing insight and awareness of your own family dynamics, history, and culture are essential to your effectiveness as a family therapist. For this reason, some degree of self-disclosure during class discussions and reflection papers will be necessary. Of course, you can be selective about what you share, and I expect that each of us will choose to keep certain sensitive or painful experiences to ourselves (if this is the case, I would encourage you to privately reflect on your decision-making process and the meaning/impact of these decisions). I will be modeling this throughout the semester, so you will learn a lot about me and my family (maybe more than you'd like!). **Please treat each other's self-disclosures as you would treat confidential client information, and do not share beyond this space.**

### **MPCAC Standards Addressed in Course**

**A.1 Ethical/Legal Standards and Policy:** Demonstrates knowledge and application of ethical concepts, and awareness of legal issues regarding professional activities with individuals, groups, and organizations

- a. Knowledge of ethical, legal and professional standards and guidelines:  
Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of relevant ethical/ professional codes, standards and guidelines, laws, statutes, rules, and regulations

**A.2 Professional Values and Attitudes:** Exhibits behavior and comportsment that reflect the values and attitudes of counseling and psychology

- a. Evidences adherence to professional values throughout professional work
- b. Demonstrates understanding of counseling and psychological practice as an applied behavioral science
- c. Maintains professionally appropriate communication and conduct across different settings
- d. Assesses personal accountability and accepts responsibility for own actions
- e. Demonstrates concern for the welfare of others
- f. Displays an appropriately defined professional identity

**B.1** Evidence-based theories and practice of counseling and psychotherapy (Knowledge): Demonstrates knowledge of individual and group theories of counseling and psychotherapy consistent with program orientation and goals

**C.1** Multiculturalism and diversity (Knowledge and Self-Awareness): Demonstrates knowledge and self-awareness in working with individuals, groups, and communities who represent various cultural and personal backgrounds and characteristics

- a. Demonstrates knowledge and awareness of self, as shaped by individual and cultural diversity (e.g., cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status) and context.
- b. Demonstrates knowledge and awareness of others, as shaped by individual and cultural diversity and context.

**J.1** Social/organizational/community basis of behavior: Demonstrates knowledge of individuals in the context of their environment and how the environment (e.g., geographical, ideological, demographic, familial, institutional) affects functioning.

**J.2** Social/organizational/community basis of behavior: Demonstrates understanding of the use of systems changes (whether by prevention or intervention) to enhance the functioning of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and/or institutions.

**Tentative Schedule: Subject to change**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Projects</b>
8/24	Introduction and foundational concepts	Goldenberg Ch 1 & 4 (50 pg) Sanders (2008) (9 pg)	<i>Family Crucible</i> discussions assigned
8/31	Foundational concepts (cont.) and cultural diversity	Goldenberg Ch 2 & 3 (53 pg) <i>Crucible</i> Foreword & Ch 1 (14 pg)	
9/7	Intergenerational and Bowenian Extended Family Systems Therapy Genograms	Goldenberg Ch 8 (33 pg) Dunn & Levitt (2000) (17 pg) <i>Crucible</i> Ch 2 (22 pg)	Genogram project assigned
9/14	Structural Family Therapy	Goldenberg Ch 10 (28 pg) Tadros & Finney (2018) (7 pg) <i>Crucible</i> Ch 5 & 7 (31 pg)	Mock therapy project and roles assigned
9/21	Psychodynamic Family Therapy	Goldenberg Ch 7 (32 pg) Sussal (1993) (13 pg) <i>Crucible</i> Ch 8 & 9 (29 pg)	

9/28	Strategic and Communications Family Therapy	Goldenberg Ch 11 (30 pg) Briones et al. (2008) (22 pg) <i>Crucible</i> Ch 10, 12, & 13 (24 pg)	
10/5	Cognitive-Behavioral Family Therapy	Goldenberg Ch 12 (30 pg) Willoughby & Doty (2010) (10 pgs)	Genogram project and paper due at 11:59 PM
10/12	NO CLASS	Do mock family outings!	Outing reflections 1 due before class
10/19	Role-play intakes in class	No readings Role-play mock therapy intake sessions (in class)	Outing reflection 2 due before class
10/26	Professional and Ethical Issues	Goldenberg Ch 6 (20 pg) Hecker & Murphy (2015) (10 pg) <i>Crucible</i> Ch 14 & 15 (20 pg)	Mock therapy intake report due at 11:59 PM
11/2	*Class will be virtual*  Special issues in couples therapy	Gurman Ch 1 (22 pg)  Weeks et al Ch 2 & 3 (34 pg)  <i>Crucible</i> Ch 16 & 18 (31 pg)	
11/9	Emotion-focused & Gottman Couples Therapies	Gurman Ch 4 & 5 (52 pg)	
11/16	Affairs, Separation, & Divorce	Gurman Ch 15 & 16 (33 pg) Allan (2016) (15 pg) <i>Crucible</i> Ch 19 & 20 (21 pg)	Mock therapy case conceptualization and treatment plan due at 11:59 PM
11/23	Thanksgiving – No class		
11/30	Last day of class!	No readings  Mock therapy sessions (in class)	3 <sup>rd</sup> outing reflection due before class
12/4	Mock therapy session reflection due at 11:59 PM		
12/11	Final exam due at 11:59 PM		