

Principles and Practices of Marriage and Family Therapy I
MFT 764, Section 001, Fall 2007

Department of Marriage and Family Therapy

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| Professor: | Stephen T. Fife, Ph.D. | Class Time: | Monday 1:00-3:45pm |
| Office: | MPE 115 | Room: | MPE 233 |
| Phone: | 895-3117 | Office Hours: | Mon. 12 & 4pm; Tue. 10-11am; |
| Email: | stephen.fife@unlv.edu | | Wed. 10am-12pm |

Required Texts & Readings:

Nichols, M. P., & Schwartz, R. C. (2006). *Family therapy: Concepts and methods* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Gehart, D. R., & Tuttle, A. R. (2003). *Theory-based treatment planning for marriage and family therapists*. Toronto, Canada: Brooks/Cole.

Additional required readings posted on WebCampus.

Optional Texts/Readings:

Slife, B. D., & Williams, R. N. (1995). *What's Behind the Research? Discovering Hidden Assumptions in the Behavioral Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Course Description:

Principles and Practices of Marriage and Family Therapy I focuses on the process of family therapy, beginning skills necessary for family counseling, theoretical foundations in systems theory, as well as classical major models of family therapy. This class prepares students to assess families and conduct family counseling from a variety of therapy approaches. Students taking this class must be admitted to the MFT Program.

Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes (SLO):

Students will build upon their existing knowledge of the philosophy and history of family therapy and its underlying theoretical framework of systems theory. Students who successfully complete this course will:

1. Identify major models of family therapy and be able to apply them conceptually and clinically.
2. Utilize critical thinking principles to evaluate family therapy models.
3. Evaluate family therapy models for congruency between theory, interventions, contextual factors, and goals for therapy.
4. Understand historical and contemporary models and trends in family therapy.
5. Develop the ability to conceptualize cases from a systemic perspective.
6. Understand and develop basic therapeutic skills that facilitate working with families.

Method of Instruction:

Classroom instruction will include a combination of lecture, group discussions, and clinical role plays.

General Requirements & Policies:

Students are expected to:

1. Attend class consistently and punctually. If you know you are going to be absent, please inform me at your earliest opportunity. You are responsible for obtaining all material when you miss a class. Missing class time will have a negative effect on your learning and likely your grade.
2. Complete assigned readings prior to the date of discussion in class and be prepared to participate respectfully in class discussions with questions and comments from the readings, the information presented in class, and your own ideas.

3. Complete assignments by the beginning of class on the date they are due. All assignments must be typed in 12-point font with 1-inch margins. **Please staple papers** in upper left corner. No folders, binders, etc. please.
4. At the graduate level, learning is primarily student-generated and is supplemented by course instruction. Therefore, the responsibility rests upon the student to master the material.
5. My responsibility as the instructor includes thorough preparation and presentation of concepts and skills that will help you succeed in your work with individuals, couples, and families. I am also responsible for managing the classroom and maintaining an environment conducive to student learning and growth.

Graded Assignments:

Assumptions & Applications Assignments (10 points each)

Measurement Procedure: Students will be evaluated on their successful completion of the assignment.

This fulfills SLO 1-6 and department educational outcomes (DEO) 3-6, 10, 13.

Treatment Plans (10 points each)

Students will be given a case study (on WebCampus) of a couple or family for each MFT Theory/Approach we study during the semester. You will prepare theory-based treatment plan for each of the approaches we study. The preparation of the treatment plans is intended to help facilitate your mastery of the material and help you prepare for the final exam, MFT 773 (Practicum), and the licensing exam.

Measurement Procedure: Students will be evaluated on how well they demonstrate their knowledge of the information presented in assigned reading and class discussion.

This fulfills SLO 1-6 and department educational outcomes (DEO) 3-6, 10, 13.

Family Therapy Application Paper (50 points)

The family therapy application paper should be 6-8 pages (typed, double-spaced) and is to be written for a professional audience using APA style (you may use first person language). You are required to include at least *five* sources in addition to your textbook. All sources should be referenced in the paper and included in a reference section at the end of the paper according to APA style. (5 points) The paper is comprised of two (2) parts (The first part should be about $\frac{3}{4}$ of your paper, and the second part about $\frac{1}{4}$):

1. You will apply a given *family therapy theory that we have studied this semester* to a couple or family. You can choose to examine your family of origin, your family of procreation, a family in public life or in a movie/book, or a family you are working with or have worked with in the past as a clinician (if you choose this option, be sure to take steps to protect client confidentiality). Your paper should include sections addressing the following:
 - a. Brief introduction of the family members (5 points)
 - b. Conceptualization and Description of the family's problems, interaction patterns, individual behaviors, and overall functioning *in terms of your chosen theory*. (15 points)
 - c. Description of actual (or proposed) interventions to promote change and growth *according to your chosen theory* and actual (or expected) outcomes/changes. (15 points)
2. You will discuss your own reflections about the theory.
 - a. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach? (5 points)
 - b. How comfortable/successful would you be using this approach? Why or why not? (5 pts.)

Measurement Procedure: Students will be evaluated on the degree to which they demonstrate an understanding of the theory, complete the above criteria, and write in a professional manner.

This fulfills SLO 1-6 and department educational outcomes (DEO) 3-6, 10, 13.

Final Exam (100 points)

The final exam will be comprehensive and will consist of short answer and essay questions. Be prepared! Measurement Procedure: Students will be evaluated on the degree to which they demonstrate understanding of the ideas presented in the *assigned readings* and in *class discussions*.

This fulfills SLO 1-6 and department educational outcomes (DEO) 3-6, 10, 13.

Participation Points (10 points)

Students will be required to attend class, participate in class discussions, in-class assignments, and role-plays. It is also expected that students will be respectful of their classmates' learning. *Any unexcused absence beyond one absence will result in a loss of 5 participation points. Arriving late for class three times will be counted as one unexcused absence.*

Measurement Procedure: Attendance will be taken and quality of participation noted for each class period.

This fulfills SLO 1-6 and department educational outcomes (DEO) 3-6, 10, 13.

Policy for late assignments & unexcused absences:

Assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Late assignments will be penalized 10% of the grade earned per day late. Unexcused absences on exam days and in-class assignments cannot be made up and will result in a score of zero (0) for the exam or assignment. Students must provide documented evidence of an approved excused absence.

Grading:

Students will be graded according to their performance on exams, assignments, and class participation. Grades will be calculated by a percentage of points earned in relation to the total points possible in the course. Grades will be based on the following percentages (+ and – grades will be given):

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|--------------|--------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 93 – 100 = A | 73 – 76 = C | Attendance & Participation | 10 points |
| 90 – 92 = A- | 70 – 72 = C- | Weekly Assignments (10) | 100 points |
| 87 – 89 = B+ | 67 – 69 = D+ | Theory Application Paper | 50 points |
| 83 – 86 = B | 63 – 66 = D | <u>Final Exam</u> | <u>100 points</u> |
| 80 – 82 = B- | 60 – 62 = D- | Total: | 260 points |
| 77 – 79 = C+ | Below 60 = F | | |

Additional Policies:

Disability Statement: The UNLV Disability Resource Center (DRC) houses the resources for students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137. Their numbers are: (702) 895-0866/VOICE; (702) 895-0652/TDD; and (702) 895-0651/Fax. For additional information please visit www.unlv.edu/studentlife/drc.

Religious Holidays: As indicated by UNLV policy, any student missing classes or other assigned work due to religious holiday observance shall have the opportunity to make up that work during the term. It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor at least **2 weeks prior** to any observed holiday.

Academic Integrity: All members of the UNLV community share a responsibility to uphold the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility, and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy as outlined in the student catalog. **Students who violate standards of academic integrity will be given a failing grade for the class.** UNLV requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely

responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Copyright and fair use policies can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright>

Cell Phones & Pagers: Please turn off cell phones and pagers during class, unless you have made arrangements with the instructor prior to the class period.

Personal Criteria: As a counselor in training, you are constantly being evaluated for your fitness for this profession in every class. This evaluation is subjective and based on your class participation, evaluation of other assignments, interpersonal interactions with other students and clients, if appropriate, etc. Students who do not meet the following criteria may have their grade reduced in the course, be administratively dropped or “red flagged” for a discussion by the faculty as a whole. The following criteria are used in this evaluation: 1) being empathic; 2) being genuine; 3) being accepting; 4) being open minded and non-dogmatic; 5) being self-reflective and having an internal locus of control; 6) being mentally healthy; 7) being capable of building alliances; 8) being competent in knowledge and skills. (Neukrug, E. (1999). *The World of the Counselor*. Pacific Grove, CA.: Brook/Cole.)

Ethical Behavior: Students will abide by the American Counseling Association (ACA) Ethical Guidelines. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the guidelines. Ethical violations are serious and may lead to disciplinary action, which could lead to separation from the counseling program.

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

Part 1: Assumptions and Assessment

Discuss the assumptions that the theory has about the following:

1. According to this theory, describe individual and family problems.
2. What relationship do the past and/or family of origin have with the present for individuals and family relationships?
3. What meanings do symptoms have in this theory?
4. According to this theory, how does change occur?
5. According to this theory, describe healthy individuals and families.
6. Who are some of the primary figures in the development of the model(s) and what are their contributions?
7. Compare and contrast the assumptions of this model with the assumptions of one that we have already studied.

Part 2: Clinical Application

Discuss the clinical application of the theory by answering the following:

1. What are the treatment goals for this approach? What outcomes are anticipated?
2. What is the role of the therapist, and how does a therapist engage with the family?
3. What does assessment focus on?
4. Describe the preferred interventions.
5. What are the strengths and limitations of this approach?
6. Compare and contrast the clinical application of this model with one that we have already studied.

Tentative Class Calendar:

| Date | Topic | Readings | Assignments Due & Quizzes |
|--------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| 8/27 | Introduction and Course Overview Introduction to AAMFT/NAMFT | | |
| 9/3 | <i>Labor Day Recess – No Class</i> | | |
| 9/10 | Philosophical & Historical Foundation of MFT; Fundamental Concepts of Family Therapy; Early MFT Models and Techniques | Nichols & Schwartz Ch 1-4 | “My Beliefs” Assignment and N & S Ch 1-4 Assignment Due (see WebCampus) |
| 9/17 | Does Family Therapy Work? MFT Research and Practice Developing Treatment Plans | N & S Ch 16 Gehart & Tuttle Ch 1 | |
| 9/26 | Bowen Family Systems Therapy | N & S Ch 5 | Ch 5 Assumptions & Applications |
| 10/1 | Bowen Family Systems Therapy | Assigned Reading G & T Ch 8 | Intergenerational Family Therapy Treatment Plan |
| 10/8 | Structural Family Therapy | N & S Ch. 7 | Ch 7 Assumptions & Applications |
| 10/15 | AAMFT Conference Report; MFT Guest Speaker | | |
| 10/22 | Structural Family Therapy | Structural Readings (2) G & T Ch 2 | Structural Family Therapy Treatment Plan |
| 10/29 | Strategic Family Therapy | N & S Ch 6 | Ch 6 Assumptions & Applications |
| 11/5 | Strategic Family Therapy | Strategic Reading G & T Ch 3 | Strategic Family Therapy Treatment Plan |
| 11/12 | <i>Veteran’s Day Recess—No Class</i> | | |
| 11/19 | Experiential Family Therapy | N & S Ch 8 | Ch 8 Assumptions & Applications |
| 11/26 | Experiential Family Therapy | Assigned Reading G & T Ch 6 & 7 | Experiential Family Therapy Treatment Plan |
| 12/3 | Emotionally-Focused Therapy | Assigned Readings | Theory Application Paper Due |
| 12/10 | Final Exam: December 11 (Monday), Time: TBA | | |

Note: This syllabus is prepared as a guideline for the course. It is *not* a contract between the professor and student, and the professor reserves the right to modify the syllabus as necessary (i.e., extend or limit discussion on a topic, add additional assignments or readings, subtract assignments or readings, etc.). Students will be notified promptly of any changes.