



S.W. 790-007 Minicourse

Working with Couples in Therapy

Instructor: Laura Nitzberg

Fall Term, 2015

Office Hours: By appointment

Some appointments can be made at the School of Social Work before or after class

UMHS office—Department of Psychiatry

Rachel Upjohn Building

4250 Plymouth Road

Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105

Office phone with voice mail: 734-763-6410

Pager for emergencies: 734-936-6266 #7774

E-mail: nitzberg@umich.edu

Class Meets: Thursdays—5:10pm-8:00pm

Dates: Nov. 5, Nov. 12, Nov. 19, Dec. 3, Dec. 10

GENERAL INFORMATION:

In class, you will receive:

1. syllabus
2. Additional printed articles and/or handouts—articles will be on c-tools as well

Although I do not maintain a regular office at the School of Social Work Building, I do have a meeting place here. Please feel free to make appointments with me if you have questions or concerns.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will teach students indications for working with couples in a variety of clinical settings. The course will address barriers that affect client's access to care (insurance, health care constraints, other access problems). Poverty, unemployment, illness negatively impact family functioning and seriously erode relationships. State of the art, evidence-based practice will be emphasized as related to different settings (i.e. psychiatric, medical, community, substance abuse, geriatric, etc). Theories will be taught and critiqued. Evidence-based models will be emphasized and models that do not have a research base will be assessed in terms of their efficacy and appropriateness. Ethnicity, gender, race, class will be addressed as important factors in the models and case presentations. The foremost clinical models will be reviewed with an emphasis on evaluation. The class content will include non-traditional couples, same-sex and transgendered couples, interracial/inter-ethnic couples. There will be an emphasis on life-cycle and case vignettes and clinical presentations will reflect the life-span. Interviewing techniques will be practiced in some role plays. Lectures, video-tapes, guest speakers will be integrated throughout the mini-class.

OBJECTIVES:

1. From this minicourse, students will gain an appreciation of the fundamental aspects of some of the most important models in the field of couple therapy. There will be an emphasis on models that have been shown to be effective in research studies. As we discuss models throughout the course, we will critique the models with respect to their demonstrated (or absence of) evidence.
2. Students will learn the fundamentals of evaluation and be able to match clients with appropriate treatments
3. Students will be acquainted with major interviewing techniques and some of the most widely used interventions.
4. Students will be exposed to the classic theories, articles and books in the field.
5. Students will be taught the importance of self-awareness in this psychotherapy model which produces powerful reactions.
6. Students will learn about the psycho-social factors affecting relationship functioning and be able to identify possible new models that can be used to reach underserved people and people at risk.

RELATIONSHIP TO FOUR CURRICULAR THEMES:

1. Multiculturalism and Diversity Themes are addressed through the discussion of worker-client differences and power/privilege differentials based on culture, ethnicity, race, gender, age, and social class. Social system and case examples, possible interventions and readings will reflect this theme.
2. Social Change and Social Justice are addressed through discussion of differences between problems that are responsive to interpersonal practice interventions and those which result from poverty, discrimination and disenfranchisement and require systemic as well as individual interventions.
3. Promotion and Prevention are addressed through identification of ways to provide early intervention, guidance and advocacy within systems, methods of preventing or depression, child behavioral problems, medical problems due to stress, and other manifestations of relationship stress.
4. *Behavioral and Social Science research* will inform the course, drawing especially on current research in the following areas: human sexual response and sexual difficulties, psycho-sexual development, gender identity, attachment and interaction, trauma/ resiliency/coping, and culture/ethnicity/immigration.

COURSE RELATIONSHIP TO SOCIAL WORK ETHICS AND VALUES:

Social work ethics and values will be addressed within the course as they pertain to issues related to working with clients and colleagues. The NASW Code of Ethics will be used to give students direction about these ethical issues. In particular, this course will focus on client issues, such as confidentiality, privacy, rights and prerogatives of clients, the client's best interest, proper and improper relationships with clients, interruption of services, and termination. Boundaries and confidentiality of members within the couple will be addressed with case examples.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attendance and class participation. Students may not use computers in class and are expected to be involved and participatory. Students must attend all five classes to pass. If there is an emergency or documented illness, there will be a make-up assignment.
2. Satisfactory completion of non-graded, two page assignment on the therapist's values/attitudes about relationships. The paper must meet academic standards. Papers must be well-written, thoughtful and conceptual.
3. Completion of a two page final paper describing two different models of therapy and this paper must include references from the textbook.

Grading: Grade will be satisfactory or unsatisfactory for the course.

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

If you need or desire an accommodation for a disability, I encourage you to contact me at your earliest convenience. Many aspects of the course can be modified to facilitate participation and progress throughout the course. Resources are available (i.e. services for students with disabilities, adaptive technology computing site, etc.) to make learning more effective for you. To the extent permitted by law, the information will be treated as private and confidential.

Religious Observances:

Please notify me if religious observances conflict with class attendance or due dates for assignments so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Due: By Email to instructor by Friday, Nov. 19th at midnight.

Write a two-page paper (double-spaced) about your own biases, subjective views about relationships, gender, the pros and cons of monogamy, marriage, fidelity, infidelity, division of labor, money, parenting. These are the issues that bring people into treatment and I would like for you to give serious thought and reflection about your own views, beliefs that will definitely impact your reaction to your clients.

2. Due: By Email to instructor by Friday , Dec. 10th at midnight.

Write a two-page paper (double-spaced) paper describing two models of couple therapy citing information from your textbook. This paper should be succinct and cover the key defining characteristics that are unique and exemplify the aspects of the model that are distinct from other models. The paper, although very brief, may not be a simple paraphrasing of the book. There are similarities between many of the models but there are also distinguishing factors.

GRADES---PASS/FAIL

REQUIRED TEXT:

Available from Amazon or Guilford. You may choose to purchase a less costly third edition. Text is on reserve.

1. **Gurman, A. Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy—Fourth Edition. Guilford Press: New York and London. 2008. Note: You are welcome to buy a used edition of third edition if that is easier and more cost-effective for you.**

CLASS #1---Nov. 5

1. Introduction to class and participants
2. Review of readings , requirements and schedule
3. Overview of the field of couple therapy—historical review and brief introduction to the prominent models
4. Fundamentals of assessment and evaluation
5. Developmental and Life-cycle themes
6. Contraindications for couple therapy—violence and other conditions that present challenges and obstacles for providing couple therapy
7. Cultural context—a presentation of the impact of poverty, unemployment, war, violence on relationships and what models are possible to help couple/families
8. Presentation of Gottman and Markman’s research and evidence-based practice—a dvd will be shown to highlight research findings that influence current practice in couple therapy

Assigned readings.

1. Gurman –Part I –you will be reading Part I for the first three classes

CLASS #2—Nov. 12th

1. Young adulthood and forming a relationship—how class and culture impact definitions of relationships—case examples as well as didactic material from literature
2. Family of origin themes—a review of models that involve genograms and incorporation of family dynamics
3. Attachment Theory—review of models: object relations, emotion-focused, and integrative-behavioral

4. Gender, Race, Culture, Class in Couples Therapy
5. Sexuality in couples and how to address sexuality in evaluation process and therapy
6. Infidelity—impact on therapy and models for addressing infidelity
7. Role of clinician—neutrality and how to address biases

Case presentations will highlight these models and themes.

CLASS #3—November 19th

1. Imago Therapy
2. Narrative models
3. Interviewing techniques
4. Conflict Resolution interventions
5. Divorce Mediation

Guest Speaker : Dale Simmerman, an experienced therapist, who is trained in Narrative and Imago approaches, will provide experiential exercises to demonstrate these models. Case examples will be presented that illustrate these models.

CLASS #4—December 3

1. Medical illness —review of literature and case examples
2. Psychiatric illness —role of psychoeducation and evidence-based models, including family-focused therapy and evidence-based models for treating depression
3. Substance abuse and its impact on relationships—evidence-based models for working with couples who are struggling with substance abuse
4. A review of psychoeducation, cognitive-behavioral, integrative models
5. Role play

CLASS #5—December 10

Diversity in clinical work with couples.

1. Working with same-sex couples
2. Transitioning and Transgender themes in couple therapy
3. Couples who are negotiating differences in background (race, class, ethnicity)

Guest speaker: Lorraine Shulman, MSW, from UMHS Department of Psychiatry, addiction program, will discuss diversity in clinical practice.