THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

SYLLABUS

COURSE NUMBER: SOWO 852.001

COURSE TITLE: PRACTICE WITH COUPLES, FALL 2011

INSTRUCTOR: Anne Jones, MSW, PhD
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OFFICE HOURS: Monday 1:00 – 1:50 pm or
By appointment (I am flexible)

CLASS WEBSITE: Accessible through https://sakai.unc.edu. This will contain the syllabus, assignment descriptions and grading criteria; lecture notes, cases, and external links. Please check it periodically for announcements and make sure that you are listed for the class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is a clinical seminar, which analyzes the operations and character of couple therapy as a human service approach.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop an understanding of the dynamics of the couple/marital relationship.

2. To understand the professional social work roles, values, and ethics associated with social work intervention specifically to couples and their families.

3. To become aware of your own values, feelings and attitudes about marriage/couple conflict and dissolution.

4. To develop and deepen skills for diagnosis of and implementation of social intervention strategies for marital or relationship difficulties or dysfunction.

5. To understand marital/relationship therapy from a variety of explanatory and practice theoretical perspectives and to develop practice skills consistent with these perspectives.

6. To understand the implications and importance of race, gender, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation on practice with couples.

7. To understand the importance and relevance of the ecological environment and community setting on assessment and intervention with couples.

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REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:


RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOK:

(Note: This book is very inexpensive as it has been in print for some time)

These books are available at the UNC Bookstore or can be ordered on the web (e.g., www.bestbookbuys.com, or www.textbooks.com)

OTHER TEXTS THAT MAY BE USEFUL:


OTHER RECOMMENDED BOOKS:


RECOMMENDED WEBSITES:
http://www.nameonline.net (National Association of Marriage Enhancement)

http://www.smartmarriages.com (Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couple Education)

www.healthymarriageinfo.org (Clearinghouse for resources and information on healthy marriage)

Please note: There are many other links related to course material on our class website

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: This class will examine the theory, practice and utilization of effective therapeutic interventions with couple relationships across the developmental life cycle of dyads. A number of theoretical approaches will be presented. The course will involve lecture, discussion, role-playing and student presentations. It is expected that students will be involved in the course through discussion, role-plays and class presentations. The course builds on knowledge and skills gained in the Foundation classes including SOWO 500, 540, 501, 520, 521.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:
The development of a supportive learning environment, reflecting the values of the social work profession, is essential for the success of this class. A supportive learning environment is fostered by listening to the ideas and views of others, being able to understand and appreciate a point of view which is different from your own, articulating clearly your point of view, and linking experience to readings and assignments. I will appreciate your contributions to making this a safe and respectful class for learning and growth.

ASSIGNMENTS:
There are two written assignments and two experiential assignments. The first written assignment involves journaling three times during the semester. The journal is 2-3 pages and involves relating course material to professional/personal experiences. Due dates are on the syllabus. The second written assignment is a final paper in which you apply one of the theoretical frameworks covered in the course to a written case that I will give you. The paper is due 12:00 PM (Noon), 12/12/11.

The first experiential assignment is a role-play demonstration that is done in groups of 3 and which is planned out ahead of time. The second experiential assignment is a 30-minute team presentation in which you research and present on the “best practices” for working with a particular couple’s
issue or problem. A more detailed assignment description is in the handout, “Assignment Description”.

**Basis for Evaluation:**
- Attendance & participation: 10%
- Role-Play and handout: 25%
- Journal: 15%
- Team Presentation: 25%
- Final Paper: 25%

**Grading System:**
- H = 94 and above
- P = 80 to 93
- F = 69 and below
- L = 70 to 79

**Policy on Incompletes & Late Assignments**
I prefer not to give an incomplete grade and will give incompletes only in compliance with University policy. If an assignment is late (not handed in class on the due date), without prior approval the grade will be reduced 10 points. The grade will continue to be reduced for each day it continues to be late.

**Attendance and Class Participation:** Attendance and participation is worth 10 points. Attendance and participation is required and the class will rely heavily on discussion. It is expected that students will read the material and apply and discuss readings and field experiences in class. Active listening, respect and tolerance for the views of others and a stance of curiosity will all contribute to a safe and stimulating learning environment.

**Policy on Academic Dishonesty:** Please refer to the APA Style Guide, The SSW Manual, and the SSW Writing Guide for information on attribution of quotes, plagiarism and appropriate use of assistance in preparing assignments. All written assignments should contain a signed pledge from you stating that, “I have not given or received unauthorized aid in preparing this written work.”

In keeping with the UNC Honor Code, if reason exists to believe that academic dishonesty has occurred, a referral will be made to the Office of the Student Attorney General for investigation and further action as required.

**Policy on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities which affect their participation in the course may notify the instructor if they wish to have special accommodations in instructional format, examination format, etc., considered.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Class 1: 8/23  Overview of Course and Course Requirements
Introductions
Historical perspective of marital and couple therapy
The landscape of couples and families today
Rationale for focusing on couples

Class 2: 8/30  Marriage Promotion and Government: The Role of Values in Policy Formation and Practice with Couples
Does marriage matter?
The role of class and economics in the formation of families
Practitioner held values and the myth of neutrality

Class 3: 9/6  Developmental Transitions, the Role of Gender Interactions and Factors Associated with Successful Relationships – What the Research Shows
Couples and life cycle stages
Predictors for marital success and dissolution
Gender Differences in Depression: A Marital Therapy Approach - Peggy Papp, MSW
How much does gender matter?

Class 4: 9/13  Assessing the Couple System
The transition to working systemically
Common mistakes in couples work
Guidelines on what to ask and how to ask it
Guest Couple

Class 5: 9/20  Cognitive Behavioral Couples Therapy (CBCT) & the Early Years
Theoretical assumptions
Perspective on healthy and dysfunctional relationship
Therapeutic goals
Cognitive Behavioral Couples Therapy - Arthur Freeman, EdD

Class 6: 9/27  Cognitive Behavioral Couples Therapy and Improving Communication
Team Role-play
Common interventions
Applications to relationship to marriage preparation & relationship enhancement programs; depression and alcoholism
Strengths and limitations

Class 7: 10/4  Emotionally Focused Therapy
Theoretical Assumptions
Perspective on healthy and dysfunctional relationship
Application to trauma and illness
Emotionally focused therapy with Susan M. Johnson

Class 8: 10/11  Emotionally Focused Therapy Continued
Team Role-play
Stages and associated key interventions
Strengths and limitations

Class 9: 10/18  Gottman Method Couple Therapy (The Sound Marital House)
JOURNAL #2 DUE
Theoretical Assumptions
Perspective on healthy and dysfunctional relationship
Therapeutic goals
☞ Live Sessions with Julie Gottman

Class 10: 10/25  Gottman Method Couple Therapy Cont’d & The Middle Years
Team Role-play
Key interventions
Strengths and limitations
Applications to male arousal and violence

Class 11: 11/1  Parenting, Separation, and Divorce Issues
Common parenting stressors
Considering our own values/beliefs on divorce
Therapeutic and ethical issues with separating/and divorcing couples
☞ Working with couples considering divorce- William Doherty

Class 12: 11/8  Working with Remarried Couples and Stepfamilies
Stepfamily life cycle and structural characteristics
Common stepfamily dilemmas
Best Practices
Applications to case

Class 13: 11/15  Working with LGBT Couples: What Therapists Need to Know—Guest Speaker(s)
Common stressors
Unique strengths
Therapeutic interventions

Class 14: 11/22  Cultural, Contextual and Ethical Issues in Couples work
Reflections on our own culture
Common issues in cross-cultural relationships
Ethical considerations for couple and family therapists

Class 15: 11/29  Infidelity, Sexual Dysfunction, & Issues of Aging Couples JOURNAL #3 DUE
Kinds and patterns of infidelity
Therapeutic dilemmas and practice recommendations
Common sexual disorders

Class 16: 12/6  Reflections, Wrap Up and Celebration
Reflections and Wrap-up
Verbal feedback and formal class evaluations

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**SOWO 852 Reading List**

**Readings for Class 2  8/30 - The Role of Values in Policy and Practice**


3. Rasberry/Reich editorials (one page class handout)


Optional Readings:


**Readings for Class 3  9/6 – Developmental and Gender Issues; Factors Associated with Successful Relationships**


   (pgs. 37- top of 56)  
   (pgs. 87 – 96 top)

3. Gurman text. Chapter 23, Gender Issues in the Practice of Couples Therapy

4. Taibbi text. Chapter 1, Theoretical Foundation and Overview

Optional Readings:


**READINGS FOR CLASS 4  9/13 – ASSESSMENT AND GOAL SETTING**

1. Taibbi text.
   - Chapter 2, The Basics: Clinical Goals and Tasks
   - Chapter 3, Presentations, Assessments, and Goals
   - Chapter 4, Beginnings in Action

2. Gurman text. Chapter 16, Couple therapy and Physical Aggression (pgs. 478-486)

Optional Readings:


**READINGS FOR CLASS 5  9/20 – Cognitive Behavioral Couple Therapy and the Early Years**

1. Gurman text. Chapter 2, Cognitive-Behavioral Couple therapy

   - Chapter 13 - Cognitive Techniques (pgs. 175-192)

3. Taibbi text. Chapter 9, The Challenges of the Early Years

Optional Readings:


   - Chapter 11 - Communication Techniques (pgs. 136-48)

Readings for class 6  9/27 – Cognitive-behavioral couple therapy Cont’d

1. Taibbi text. Chapter 5, Clearing the Clutter: Improving Communication,

Choose one: Both utilize cognitive-behavioral concepts and strategies
3. Gurman text. Chapter 18, Couple therapy for alcoholism and drug abuse
4. Gurman text. Chapter 19, Couple therapy and the treatment of depression

Optional Readings:


Readings for class 7  10/4 – Emotionally focused therapy


Optional Readings:


Readings for class 8  10/11 – Emotionally focused therapy Cont’d

Optional Readings:


**Readings for class 9  10/18 – Gottman’s Couples Therapy (The Sound Marital House)**

1. Gurman text. Chapter 5, Gottman Method Couple therapy

   Chapter 4, The Assessment of Marriage
   Chapter 5, The Disasters and Masters of Marriage

Optional Readings:


**Readings for class 10  10/25 – Gottman’s Couples Therapy (The Sound Marital House) continued and the middle years**

   Chapter 6, Assumptions and Intervention Overview
   Chapter 7, Enhancing the Marital Friendship
   Chapter 8, Solving What is Solvable

2. Taibbi text. Chapter 8, Of Money, Sex and Children

Optional Readings

   Chapter 11 - Resistance to change

Readings for Class 11 11/1 – Parenting, Separation and Divorce Issues

1. Taibbi text. Chapter 10, Re-creating the Vision

2. Gurman text. Chapter 15, Separation and Divorce Issues in Couple Therapy


Optional Readings:


Readings for Class 12 11/8 – Working with Stepfamilies

1. Gurman text. Chapter 17, Couple Therapy with Remarried Partners.

2. Taibbi, text. Chapter 12, One Big Happy Family: Working with Stepfamilies.


Optional Readings:


Readings for Class 13 11/15 – Working with Gay and Lesbian Couples


Optional Readings:


**READINGS FOR CLASS 14  11/22 – CULTURA, CONTEXTUAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**


3. Gurman text: Chapter 26, Legal and Ethical Issues in Couple Therapy.

4. Taibbi text. Chapter 14, One Helping Two, Two Helping One

Optional Readings:


6. Gurman text: Chapter 25, African-American Couples in Therapy


**READINGS FOR CLASS 15  11/29 - THE CRISIS OF INFIDELITY, COMMON SEXUAL DYSFUNCTIONS, AND ISSUES OF AGING COUPLES**


4. Taibbi *text*. Chapter 13, The Challenges of Old Age

Optional Readings:


**READINGS FOR CLASS 16  12/6 – REFLECTIONS AND WRAP-UP**

Begin work on final assignment. No assigned readings.