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

SYLLABUS

COURSE NUMBER: SOWO 852.01

COURSE TITLE: PRACTICE WITH COUPLES, SPRING 2009

INSTRUCTOR: Anne Jones, MSW, PhD
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OFFICE HOURS: Monday 12:00 – 12:30pm, Tuesday 1:00 - 1:45pm or
By appointment

CLASS WEBSITE: Accessible through - https://blackboard.unc.edu/

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.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:


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

**OTHER TEXTS THAT MAY BE USEFUL:**


**OTHER RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**


**RECOMMENDED WEBSITES:**
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) and Social Work 802 (Family Stress, Coping, and Social Support).

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 on the last day of class.

The first experiential assignment is a role-play demonstration that is done in groups of 3 or four and which is planned out ahead of time. The other 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 1 1/13 - Overview of Course and Course Requirements
Introductions
Historical perspective of marital and couple therapy
The landscape of couples and families today

Class 2 1/20 - 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 1/27 - 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
How much does gender matter?

Class 4 2/3 Assessing the Couple System
The transition to working systemically
7 Essential Questions
Contraindications for working with a couple
The use of standardized assessments

Class 5 2/10 The Sound Marital House
Assumptions and interventions
Love Maps and Conflict Resolution
Gridlocked problems

Class 6 2/17 Transgenerational Systems Therapy
Theoretical assumptions
Goals and Interventions
Strengths and limitations
Applications to in-law, co-dependency and gay-lesbian issues

Class 7 2/24 Cognitive Behavioral Couples Therapy (CBCT)
Theoretical assumptions
Goals and Interventions
Strengths and limitations
Applications to physical aggression and violence

Class 8 3/3 Relationship Education/ Marriage Preparation & Enrichment Groups
Background and history
Rationale and research
Primary structures
Examples of programs

3/10  SPRING BREAK – No Class

Class 9 3/17  Class 9  Emotionally- Focused Therapy
Theoretical Assumptions
Goals and interventions
Strengths and limitations
Application to trauma and illness

JOURNAL #2 DUE

Class 10 3/24  Social Constructionism /Narrative Therapy
Theoretical assumptions
Goals and interventions
Strengths and limitations
Applications to stepfamilies

Class 11 3/31  Separation, Divorce and Stepfamily Issues
Therapeutic issues and interventions with separating/and divorcing couples
Stepfamily life cycle and structural characteristics
Best practice interventions with stepfamilies

Class 12 4/7  Considerations of Sexual orientation, Race, Ethnicity and Socio-economics in Couples Work
Conceptual frameworks
Life cycle and structural characteristics
Common therapeutic issues and practice interventions

Class 13 4/14  Infidelity and Common Problems
Kinds and Patterns of infidelity
Therapeutic Dilemmas
Practice recommendations

Class 14 4/21  Professional and Ethical Issues
Some common ethical issues
Components of ethical practice
Reflections and Wrap-up
Individual Feedback and Class Evaluations

FINAL PAPER DUE BY THE 29TH
SOWO 852 READING LIST

READINGS FOR CLASS 2    1/20 - THE ROLE OF VALUES IN POLICY AND PRACTICE


4. Rasberry/Reich editorials (class handout)


6. Gottman text: Chapter 1 – Myths and Mistakes of Marital Therapy.

Supplemental Optional Readings:


READINGS FOR CLASS 3    1/27 – DEVELOPMENTAL AND GENDER ISSUES; FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS


2. Gottman text.
   Chapter 2 – Repair and Core Triad of Balance (pgs. 31- top of 56)
   Chapter 3 – The Sound Marital House: A Theory of Marriage

3. Gurman text. Chapter 23 – Gender Issues in the practice of couples therapy

Supplemental Optional Readings:


READINGS FOR CLASS 4 2/3 – ASSESSMENT WITH COUPLES

1. Gottman text. Chapter 4 – The Assessment of Marriage

2. Weeks, R. Treat S. Assessment and Case Formulation

3. Gottman text. Peruse appendixes A, B, C which contain questionnaires and assessment tools. Please bring in an assessment tool to share which reflects a problem or population that you are or would like to work with.

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

Supplemental Optional Readings:


READINGS FOR CLASS 5    2/10 - The Sound Marital House

1. Gottman text. Chapter 6 – Assumptions and Intervention Overview

2. Gottman text. Chapter 7 – Enhancing the Marital Friendship

3. Gottman text. Chapter 8 – Solving What is Solvable

Supplemental Optional Readings:


READINGS FOR CLASS 6    2/17 - TRANSGENERATIONAL SYSTEMS THERAPY

1. Gurman text. Chapter 7 - Transgenerational Couple Therapy


Choose between #s 3 and 4


Supplemental Optional Readings:


Readings for Class 7  2/24 – Cognitive-behavioral couple therapy

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


Supplemental Optional Readings:


Readings for Class 8    3/3 – Relationship education, marriage preparation and enrichment groups


3. Research an education/enrichment program (assignment will be handed out in class and posted on Blackboard)

Supplemental Optional Readings:

couples build a vision for their marriage, *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*,
30(3), 349-358.

**READINGS FOR CLASS 9  3/17 – EMOTIONALLY-FOCUSED THERAPY**


emotionally focused therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 29(3),
299-309.

trauma: the use of emotionally focused marital therapy. *Journal of Marital and

Supplemental Optional Readings:

Relationships: A New Perspective on impasses in couple therapy. *Journal of
Marital and Family Therapy*, 27, 145-155.

**READINGS FOR CLASS 10  3/24 – SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND NARRATIVE THERAPY:**


Work, 48*(2), 228-236.

3. Gottman text: Chapter 10 – Life Dreams and Shared Meaning

Supplemental Optional Readings:

Couple directed therapy in a multicultural context. Chapter 11 Illness
Narratives in Couples and Families (pgs. 119-130).

power: Constructing narratives of sharing relational and positional power,
*Contemporary Family Therapy*, 23(3), 295-308.


**Readings for class 11 3/31 – Separation, Divorce and Stepfamily Issues**

1. Gurman text. Chapter 15, Separation and Divorce Issues in Couple Therapy
2. Gurman text. Chapter 17, Couple Therapy with Remarried Partners.

**Supplemental Optional Readings:**


**Readings for class 12 4/7 – Diversity Considerations**


**Supplemental Optional Readings:**

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**READINGS FOR CLASS 13  4/14– THE CRISIS OF INFIDELITY AND OTHER SEXUAL ISSUES**


Supplemental Optional Readings:


**READINGS FOR CLASS 14  4/21 – ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

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