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

SYLLABUS

COURSE NUMBER:  SOWO 852.01

COURSE TITLE:  PRACTICE WITH COUPLES, FALL 2009

INSTRUCTOR:  Anne Jones, MSW, PhD
563 G Tate-Turner-Kuralt
962-6537 (O)
962-7557 (Fax)
(Email) annejone@email.unc.edu

OFFICE HOURS:  Tuesday 1:00 – 1:50 pm or
By appointment

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

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:


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.smartmarriages.com (Coalition for marriage, family and couple education. I highly recommend subscribing to the listserv)

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

Please note: There are many other links related to course material under external links on 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) 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 9:00 AM on 12/14/09.

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:**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role-Play and handout</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Presentation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
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**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
SOWO 852.01 PRACTICE WITH COUPLES

Class 1: 8/25 Overview of Course and Course Requirements
Introductions
Historical perspective of marital and couple therapy
The landscape of couples and families today
Why focus on couples?

Class 2: 9/1 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: 9/8 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: 9/15 Assessing the Couple System
The transition to working systemically
Contraindications for working with a couple
The use of standardized assessments

Class 5: 9/22 Cognitive Behavioral Couples Therapy (CBCT)
Theoretical assumptions
Perspective on healthy and dysfunctional relationship
Therapeutic goals
Cognitive Behavioral Couples Therapy - Arthur Freeman, EdD

Class 6: 9/29 Cognitive Behavioral Couples Therapy (CBCT) Continued
Team Role-play
Common interventions
Applications to relationship education/marriage preparation & enrichment programs
Strengths and limitations

Class 7: 10/6 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: 10/13 Emotionally Focused Therapy Continued
Team Role-play
Stages and associated interventions
Strengths and limitations

Class 9: 10/20 Gottman Method Couple Therapy (The Sound Marital House)

Theoretical Assumptions
Perspective on healthy and dysfunctional relationship
Therapeutic goals

Class 10: 10/27 Gottman Method Couple Therapy (The Sound Marital House) Cont’d
Team Role-play
Key interventions
Strengths and limitations
Applications to male arousal and violence

Class 11: 11/3 Separation, Divorce and Stepfamily Issues
Therapeutic and ethical issues with separating/and divorcing couples
Working with couples considering divorce- William Doherty
Stepfamily life cycle and structural characteristics
Best practice interventions with stepfamilies

Class 12: 11/10 Working with LGBT couples: What therapists need to know—Guest Speaker
Common stressors
Unique strengths
Therapeutic interventions
Ethical issues

Class 13: 11/17 Cultural considerations in couples work
Reflections on our own culture
Common issues in cross-cultural relationships
Imperatives for therapists

Class 14: 11/24 No Class – Happy Thanksgiving!

Class 15: 12/1 Infidelity and Sexual Dysfunction
Kinds and patterns of infidelity
Therapeutic dilemmas
Practice recommendations
Common sexual disorders

Class 16: 12/8
Components of ethical practice
Reflections and Wrap-up
Individual Feedback and Class Evaluations

FINAL PAPER DUE ON MONDAY 12/14/09 9:00AM
SOWO 852 READING LIST

READINGS FOR CLASS 2  9/1 - THE ROLE OF VALUES IN POLICY AND PRACTICE


4. Rasberry/Reich editorials (class handout)


Supplemental Optional Readings:


8. Huston, T, & Metz, H. (2004), The case for (promoting) marriage: The devil is in the details. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 66(4), 943-958. (Reading room, or UNC Library electronic journal, or retrieve from:

READINGS FOR CLASS 3  9/8 – 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 (pgs. 87 – 96 top)


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

Supplemental Optional Readings:


**READINGS FOR CLASS 4  9/15 – ASSESSMENT WITH COUPLES**

   - Chapter 1 – Assessment and Case Formulation
   - Chapter 3 – Balanced Intervention
   - Chapter 4 – Systemic Intervention

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

3. Read case and bring in questions for assessment

Supplemental Optional Readings:


**READINGS FOR CLASS 5  9/22 – Cognitive Behavioral Couple Therapy**
1. Gurman text. Chapter 2, Cognitive-Behavioral Couple therapy


3. Review case in preparation for class

Supplemental Optional Readings:


**READINGS FOR CLASS 6 9/29 – COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL COUPLE THERAPY CONT’D**

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


Chose either one:

3. Gurman text. Chapter 18, Couple therapy for alcoholism and drug abuse
4. Gurman text. Chapter 19, Couple therapy and the treatment of depression

Supplemental Optional Readings:


**READINGS FOR CLASS 7 10/6 – EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED THERAPY**


4. Review case in preparation for class

**Readings for Class 8 10/13 – Emotionally Focused Therapy Cont’d**


Supplemental Optional Readings:


**Readings for Class 9 10/20 – Gottman’s Couples Therapy (The Sound Marital House)**

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

2. Gottman text.
   Chapter 4, The Assessment of Marriage
   Chapter 5, The Disasters and Masters of Marriage

3. Review case for class

Supplemental Optional Readings:

1. Gottman text.
   Chapter 6 – Assumptions and Intervention Overview
   Chapter 7 – Enhancing the Marital Friendship
   Chapter 8 – Solving What is Solvable
   Chapter 10 – Life Dreams and Shared Meaning (just 3 pages!)

Supplemental Optional Readings:

2. Gottman text.
   Chapter 9 – Marital Friendship
   Chapter 11 – Resistance to change

**Readings for class 11  11/3 – 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  11/10 – Working with LGBT Couples**


Supplemental Optional Readings:


**READINGS FOR CLASS 13  11/17 – CONSIDERATIONS OF RACE, ETHNICITY AND CLASS**


4. Gurman text: Chapter 25, African-American couples in therapy

Supplemental Optional Readings:


**READINGS FOR CLASS 14   11/27 – No Class**
1. Research an education/enrichment program (assignment will be handed out in class and posted on Blackboard)

**READINGS FOR CLASS 15  12/1 - THE CRISIS OF INFIDELITY AND COMMON SEXUAL DYSFUNCTIONS**


Supplemental Optional Readings:


**READINGS FOR CLASS 16  12/8 – ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONSIDERATONS**

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


Supplemental Optional Readings: