Course Description:
This course covers specialized approaches to resolving adult relationship problems. Theoretical issues, relationship appraisal techniques, and ethical considerations specific to couples therapy will be discussed.

Texts:
Required:

Optional:

Course Objectives:
The primary focus in this course will be on marital/couples therapy. It will cover both theory and strategies and techniques. Students in this class will be expected to:

1) Understand the history, concepts, theories and techniques that are foundational to the practice of couple’s therapy;
2) Monitor one’s own attitudes, values, personal issues and expectations towards marriage to insure that they do not adversely impact future therapy processes;
3) Recognize contextual and systemic dynamics (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, spirituality, religion and social systems) in the definitions of function and dysfunctional couples systems;
4) Develop hypotheses regarding relationship patterns, their bearing on the presenting problem, and the influence of extra-therapeutic factors from an integrative systemic perspective across a course of treatment;
5) Articulate skill used in and rationales for interventions related to couples’ treatment goals and plans;
6) Match treatment modalities and techniques to any special needs (gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and spirituality) of couples;
7) Understand the theory and techniques of the Intersystemic model as it applies to individual, couple, family and group psychotherapy;
8) Recognize ethnical dilemmas in working with couples;
9) Reframe couple problems and recursive interaction patterns.

In addition, students who successfully complete this course will build upon the following

Student Learning Outcomes:
1) Analyze a wide variety of presenting clinical problems in the treatment of individuals, couple, and families from a relational/systemic perspective (SLO # 6);
2) Diagnose mental health using diagnostic and relational categories (SLO # 8);
3) Examine individual and family development across the lifespan (SLO # 9);
4) Define ethical issues related to the profession of marriage and family therapy (SLO # 11).

**General Requirements:**
Students will be expected to:
1) Attend class consistently and punctually. If you are going to be absent, please inform me at your earliest opportunity via e-mail or phone;
2) Complete assigned readings prior to the date of discussion in class;
3) Participate in class discussions. This includes your thoughts, comments and questions regarding the readings and material presented in class. The Long and Young text should be read as quickly as possible in order to give you background information. I expect you to take responsibility for your own learning, so if there is something you want to discuss, including cases relevant to the topic at hand, please take the initiative to bring it up. On a related note, participation in class discussions is to be conducted in a professional and appropriate manner; this means willingness to engage in dialogue and debate from a position of respect for others. I will expect you to have opinions and to be able to express and defend them in a non-judgmental way using logical arguments and data when it is available. When you talk about cases in class please use fictitious names and remember that the rules of confidentiality apply;
4) Participate in class role-plays if there is time as both therapists and clients. (NOTE: All class members need to recognize that a degree of personal risk is involved in this class. Therefore, it is expected that all class participants will abide by professional codes of conduct, including respecting confidentiality, with regard to therapeutic role-plays.)
5) Maintain respect for differences and honor factors that produce diversity in our community, including: age, culture, environment, ethnicity, gender, health/ability, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation, spirituality, and socioeconomic status.

**Method of Instruction:** Lecture

**Graded Assignments:**
There will be three major, graded assignments.

1. **Reframing Exercises:** This assignment will be worth 100 points and is due Sept. 19th.

   If both your reframes meet the criteria for being a reframe you will receive a grade. If not, you will have the opportunity to re-write and re-submit your reframe a week after receiving it back using track edit function so I can see your changes. Your grade would be based on the second attempt with an automatic deduction of 3 points.

   I strongly suggest you partner with other students and critique each other’s reframes. In actual practice, you often seek consultation from your peers. This is an opportunity to seek feedback from peers. Historically, about 40% of students need to re-write one of their reframes. It isn’t as easy as it looks.
Reframing Exercises: Write clinical vignettes of actual cases (which you may get from your practicum or on internship, making sure there are no personal identifying elements), fictionalized cases, or use case material from a text or journal article (make sure you cite the text) consisting of 50-100 words. At the end of each vignette, state whether it is an actual case, fictionalized case, or drawn from a text. The vignettes should be one where the technique of reframing is appropriate. After describing the cases, answer the following questions as succinctly as possible. You should write two vignette’s for couples. Each vignette should then be analyzed using the following seven questions. Each case should not exceed two to three double-spaced typed pages. Question #6 is the most important. Provide a direct quote of what you would say. This question is the key to demonstrate your ability to provide a reframe.

1) How was/were the client(s) framing their problem?
2) How did their frame help to create and/or perpetuate the problem?
3) What new frame did/do you think would/will help the client(s) change?
4) Why did you think this frame would help the client change? Identify the purpose of the reframe.
5) What were the steps you used to help create this new frame? Identify each step or use transcript material to illustrate the process.
6) What was the reframe for this/these client(s)? Directly quote what you might say!
7) What effect or predicted effect did the reframe have on the client system?

Following is an example of a Reframing Exercise with a family but the same principles apply to couples. Please adhere closely to this format.

Reframing Exercise (Family)

Vignette: Seth (41) and Marge (39) were concerned about their 15-year-old son. He had recently started to have what they described as temper tantrums. When they would ask him to do things he would loudly proclaim that he was not going to do what they asked and begin jumping up and down on the floor until the parents relented. The parents were both school teachers who had high standards for their son Jacob. They had created a highly structured family system with clearly defined roles and rules. He had always been the perfect boy, no problems, and now they felt they had lost control over his behavior. They were trying their best to regain control and compliance from him by telling him that he was causing trouble, embarrassment and that his conduct was inappropriate. They had tried time-outs and grounding him as punishment, but these strategies seem to just make Jacob more difficult and oppositional. (Actual case)

Each reframe should not exceed 4 pages. You can write it in 2-3 pages per reframe. Item number 6 is the most important.

1. How was/were the client(s) framing their problem? The parents were clearly framing the problem in terms of Jacob becoming a difficult child who didn’t want to listen to or respect his parents. They viewed his behavior as difficult, embarrassing, inappropriate, and bad.
2) How did their frame help to create and/or perpetuate the problem? The parents did not see the part they played in Jacob’s behavior. The new frame would need to help them connect their behavior to Jacob’s behavior. Second, labeling him negatively made
the problem worse. Finding a way to frame his behavior positively and giving him another way to deal with his problem of too much parental control was the goal.

4) **Why did you think this frame would help the client(s) change? Identify the purpose of the reframe.** The entire family, especially, Jacob needed to understand that his behavior was a response to his parent’s behavior. The purpose of the reframe was to connect his behavior to that of his parents, stop his “bad” behavior, and enable Jacob to deal with his parent’s roles and rules in another way.

5) **What were the steps you used to help create this new frame? Identify each step. Create or use transcript material to illustrate the process.** The first step was to review the family’s dynamics. The therapist asked the family to talk about how they had functioned as a family and how they might be different from other families. Questions were asked to elicit information about how this family had always been governed by having specific rules and roles and what the rules and roles had been for Jacob. Jacob was expected to abide by the family’s rules without question and his role was to be an exemplary student and son in the community. The second step was to talk about Jacob’s developmental history. The parents described Jacob as the perfect son from birth. He had always done what they wanted and been the person they expected him to be. He had never been in any trouble, in fact, he won many awards for his grades, extracurricular activities and was highly regarded in his church.

**Brief Transcript:**

Therapist: How would you describe your son up to the last few months?
Mother: He has always been the perfect son.
Father: I agree.

Therapist: He’s 15 now and he’s never once been a difficult child—not even the terrible two’s.
Parents: No, no problems. He’s been so easy and we’ve been so proud of him.

Therapist: I understand you care a great deal for your son and you are very proud of him. I also know that the two of you have very high expectations of him and a lot of rules to help him grow up to be a good adult. You have done a wonderful job of parenting him. But, unlike other children he has never once gone through periods of normal rebellion and questioned authority. What do you think about this fact?
Father: We never thought of it that way. He’s always been so good.
Therapist: Maybe he’s long overdue for some normal rebellion and kid-like behavior.
You’re both experts on children as teachers. You must see this all the time.

6) **What was the reframe for this/these client(s)?** The therapist offered the following reframe to the parents: Jacob has been a wonderful son and the two of you have been diligent parents. Now you are worried that his behavior is out of control and he isn’t listening to you. You have told me that Jacob has never been difficult or gone through periods of normal rebellion like other kids. Unfortunately, he has missed some developmental stages and he is now making up for lost time. He is also 15 and we all know that being rebellious and oppositional is all a part of an adolescent learning to establish his own identity separate and apart from his parents. I know you want Jacob to grow up to be an independent young man who is well adjusted and a productive member of society. What I am going to ask you to do will be difficult, but it will help Jacob and the family move to the next stage. However, to get to the next stage he is going to have to go backwards first. When you go home I want you to say the following to Jacob, “We are sorry that we have been so hard on you lately and have viewed your behavior so negatively. We now realize that we didn’t encourage you to be like other kids and have normal periods of rebellion. This is a normal thing and we want to help you. Whenever you don’t like something we ask you to do and you don’t want to do it, we
know you need to protest it as loudly as possible and jump up and down until we stop. We also realize that you should have probably done this when you were two and five years old and so on. This fact explains why you jump up and down and scream like a five-year-old. It’s okay now if you act like a five-year-old because you need to make up for missing that stage in you development. After you’ve done your catching up, and you’re ready to be 15 again, we are willing to talk to you about our expectations and rules and act more like parents with a 15-year-old who needs to grow up to be independent.”

7) **What effect did the reframe have on the client system?** Jacob’s initial reaction to his parent’s statement was to be skeptical, confused and angry that they would say that he was acting like a five-year-old. His initial behavior reaction to his parents was to escalate his behavior in order to test whether they were sincere. The parents were realizing that they had set their expectations too high, were too strict, had not given Jacob enough freedom to choose for himself, and needed to help him establish his identity by letting go of some of their control over him. After a couple of weeks, the family dynamic had changed and Jacob was now beginning to renegotiate his role in the family and his parents’ rules for him. The family was moving to a new developmental stage.

**Measurement Procedure:** The evaluation of the reframing assignment will be based upon how well you answer the questions and whether your reframe is in fact, a reframe.

This fulfills Course Objective 1-9 and SLOs 6,8,9,11.

2. **Read the genogram book ASAP in preparation for this assignment.**

Select one specific area of couple functioning and develop a new focused genogram. It may be similar to one already in our book; such as a grief genogram that is similar to the feelings genogram. Consider the following in writing the paper on the focused genogram. You may use the follow items as headings to organize the paper.

a. Why is your genogram of importance?
b. Describe the problem area (incidence, definition).
c. Discuss the theoretical background for the focused genogram.
d. Discuss when to use the particular focused genogram.
e. List the pertinent questions that constitute the genogram.
f. How would this information be used therapeutically? What theories or strategies are most appropriate?
g. If possible, try out your genogram with a client or have another clinician try it out and offer some transcription.

You should submit your idea for your focused genogram no later than **Sept. 26th.** I will let you know whether there is enough literature for the concept to work. You should also check the literature prior to turning in the topic to see what is available. The paper should not exceed six pages. A total of 100 points may be earned for this paper. **This paper is due October 10th.** The paper will be evaluated on how well you develop the questions listed above. The focused genograms in our text can serve as a model of how to develop your focused genogram. Your genogram should cover a different area of couple functioning or if you choose to develop one already in our text approach it from a different theoretical perspective.

**Your genogram paper should not exceed 6 pages plus references.** References should be used for each idea and should be from primary references. Texts you have used in class are usually not primary references.
Measurement Procedure: The paper will be evaluated on the following the general criteria mentioned immediately below and on the use of the outline in developing the paper.

This fulfills course objectives 1-9 and SLOs 6,8,9,11).

3. Research paper. A concisely written 12-3 page paper plus references (double–spaced using APA style. The paper should be saturated with primary references from primary books and mostly journal articles. The number and quality of references is the best indicator of scholarship. It is impossible to write a paper of high scholarship at the last minute. Pick a topic early on and start your literature review. Some topics for this paper are listed below. The research paper can earn you 200 points. In other words, it is counted twice in your grade calculation. Hence, it is the major part of your grade in the course.

   a. cohesiveness
   b. conciseness
   c. comprehensiveness or depth of research (at least 20 journal references that have been published within the past 10 years, fewer if you reference texts which you have read and demonstrate mastery of the textbook in your paper-you should not cite primary texts used in our graduate classes)
   d. application of concepts to clinical practice
   e. evaluation of research for the therapy/techniques, etc.

The paper should be organized around the principles of the Intersystem Approach if it is related to a problem. If it is related to a theoretical approach or is not appropriate for the Intersystem approach then you do not need to use the outline below but submit another outline. The following outline is suggest, but not required.

I. Definition of problem (including incidence, DSM-5) and other definitions, general background information.

II. Etiology
    a. individual
    b. interactional
    c. intergenerational

I. Treatment
    a. individual
    b. interactional
    c. intergenerational

I. Evaluation of research
II. Critique of topic and conclusions
III. References

Note: Some problems may have no literature for some of the topical heading suggested in the outline. You should note this in your paper and extrapolate from the literature or suggest possible connections to etiology and treatment strategies.

Measurement Procedure: The paper will be evaluated on the above general criteria mentioned and on the use of the outline in developing the paper. The paper should conform to all APA guidelines.

This fulfills Course Objectives 1-9 and SLOs 6,8,9,11.

The following topics are a few examples of what you might research:
Topics for Papers: Topics for this paper should be related to couple/marital therapy. You may choose any topic that interests you as long as you have approval from the instructor. Some topics may have too little literature on couple’s therapy and others may have so much that you will need to significantly narrow your focus. Please focus on the literature of the last 10 years although you may need to cite some sources that have historical or other important significance. This paper is an opportunity to become an expert in some area of couples functioning that will give you a niche in your clinical practice and possibly begin to develop a publishable paper. Some example of topics include.

- Common factors of change in couples therapy
- Treating narcissistically wounded couples (include literature on attachment theory)
- Relapse prevention in couple therapy (maintaining change/progress made in therapy; may need to extrapolate from ind. Tx)
- Intimacy (what is it, enhancing intimacy, barriers/fears of intimacy; attachment theory and how it relates to fears; keep focus on clinical application)
- Communication, definition in couples, latest research on communication problems (e.g., Gottman, etc.) and how to improve communication (common communication techniques/interventions)
- Anger in couples, definition, male vs. female expression, problems with anger in couples, interventions, couple violence (types, interventions)
- Conflict resolution or management in couples therapy (new research, theories of conflict in couples, techniques/interventions, EFT approach vs. behavioral approach and how our model bring the two together)
- Working with emotions/feelings/affect in couples therapy (incorporate literature on attachment theory and emotionally-focused therapy; managing emotional intensity in session, new theories about emotion in men and women, techniques to help individuals and couples share feelings)
- Assessment in couples therapy (objective and subjective assessment, focus more on clinical and the concept of case formulation)
- Reframing in couples therapy, types of reframe, new research on effects
- Applications/theory of cognitive therapy to couples therapy (especially new literature)
- Techniques of couple/marital contracting (especially new literature)
- Infidelity (definition/types, differences between men and women, latest theory/techniques, Weeks model, Dr. Hertlein’s model of internet infidelity and treatment, brief comparison of theories of affairs such as Glass and others.

The following schedule is to be kept with regard to the research paper.

Select a topic for approval by **October 3th.** Submit topic and very short description of what you plan to do.
Develop a tentative detailed outline and sample reference list by **November 7th.** A well-structured paper has multiple headings.
Submit final paper by **Nov. 21st. You may submit paper earlier if you like.**

**Grading:**
You may earn 400 points. 90% of the total will earn you an A, 80% a B, 70% a C, 60% a D, and 50% or lower an F. For each day an assignment is late, three points will be deducted unless you have an excused absence consistent with UNLV policy. An A is given for exceptional work only.
## Tentative Schedule of Classes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Do’s and Don’ts</td>
<td>L &amp; Y 1-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Engagement and Evaluation</td>
<td>L &amp; Y 5, 6, 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Reframing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>L &amp; Y 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 5</td>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>L &amp; Y 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 6</td>
<td>Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>L &amp; Y 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 7</td>
<td>Contracting</td>
<td>L &amp; Y 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 8</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>L &amp; Y 15</td>
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<td>Class 9</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 10</td>
<td>Sexual Problems</td>
<td>L &amp; Y 12</td>
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<td>Class 11</td>
<td>Hypoactive Sexual Desire</td>
<td>L &amp; Y 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 12</td>
<td>Homework</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 13</td>
<td>Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 14</td>
<td>Affairs</td>
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<td>Class 15</td>
<td>Affairs</td>
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I will generally follow this list of topics, but may not do so on the particular classes listed. Class discussions may accelerate or slow down coverage of topics. Thus, the list above should be considered the sequence of topics rather than a fixed plan of study. We will not discuss the Long and Young book. It is background reading and so is the genogram book. Please read them as quickly as possible.

### Additional Policies:

**Academic Integrity:** It is expected that all work done for this class will be in strict compliance with the principles of academic honesty and integrity, as outlined in the student catalogue.

**Copyright:** 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

Ethical Behavior: Students will abide by the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) Ethical Guidelines – see www.aamft.org/resources/LRMPlan/Ethics/ethicscode2001.asp there are eight guiding principles – 1) Responsibility to Clients, 2) Confidentiality, 3) Professional Competence and Integrity, 4) Responsibility to Students and Supervisees, 5) Responsibility to research Participants, 6) Responsibility to the Profession, 7) Financial Arrangements, 8) Advertising. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the guidelines and principles. Ethical violations are serious and may lead to disciplinary action, which could lead to separation from the counseling program.

Religious Holidays Policy—Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531.

Transparency in Learning and Teaching—The University encourages application of the transparency method of constructing assignments for student success. Please see these two links for further information:

https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning

https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency

Incomplete Grades—The grade of I—Incomplete—can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student’s control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving “I” grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

Tutoring and Coaching—The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and
services, visit [http://www.unlv.edu/asc](http://www.unlv.edu/asc) or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of the SSC (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TEB second floor.

Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the subject librarian is Susie Skarl. UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students’ access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at [https://www.library.unlv.edu/](https://www.library.unlv.edu/).

**UNLV Writing Center**—One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student’s Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: [http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/](http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/).

**Disability Resource Center (DRC)**—The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, [http://drc.unlv.edu/](http://drc.unlv.edu/), 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

**Rebelmail**—By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students’ Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV’s official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students’ e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu. Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.

**Final Examinations**—The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: [http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars](http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars).