

Introduction to Marriage and Family Therapy

MFT 428, Fall 2016

Marriage and Family Therapy Program

This course has a pre-requisite of MFT 150: Personal Growth

Required Texts:

Patterson, J., Williams, L., Edwards, T.M., Chamow, L., & Grauf-Grounds, C. (2009). *Essential skills in family therapy: From first interview to termination (2nd ed.)*. New York, NY: Guilford.

Wetchler, J.L., & Hecker, L.L. (2015). *An introduction to marriage and family therapy (2nd ed.)*. New York, NY: Routledge.

A few other readings will be required. These will be posted on webcampus.

Course Description:

This course is a basic examination of marriage and family therapy including professional issues, major theories and techniques, and introduction to marriage and family counseling skills. Focus is for students preparing for marriage and family therapy (MFT) as a field of professional study or for those students who may work with individuals and families (e.g. child welfare, education, healthcare, law, etc).

This course is designed to provide an overview of essential skills required to be successful in the field of marriage and family therapy. Course content includes the development of accurate listening, empathy, reflection, and inquiry skills, ethics and issues related to helping in a multicultural context, and an introduction to some of the core models of relational therapy. The course has a strong applied and experiential approach. A special focus will be on the development of self-awareness dexterity necessary for professionals in family therapy settings. Students will learn and practice helping skills in class and lab sessions that relate to working with individual, families, and small groups. The course is NOT designed to train students to be therapists or counselors – it is merely an introduction to field and the basic skills and models that lay the foundation for the field.

Student Learning Objectives & Goals for Each Student to Attain from the Course:

1. Understand the basic concepts of family therapy
2. Understand the basic tenets of the major models of systemic therapy
3. Be able to note similarities and differences in the major models
4. Conceptualize cases using each of the major models
5. Develop an initial treatment plan
6. Complete a historical and contemporary genogram
7. Present a case using a major family therapy model

These course objectives will be accomplished through a combination of your individual study, interaction with the instructor and classmates, engagement in class activities, and completion of assignments.

General Requirements & Policies:

Confidentiality: During this class, you will be expected to engage in discussions related to reading and/or activities. At times, you may decide to talk about issues that are real and personal to you. If you do, you should choose to disclose only information that you would feel comfortable talking about with your classmates. In this course, however, we will abide by the ethical principles of the field of family therapy. That is, we will assume that nothing that is shared in this course of a personal or confidential nature will be shared with anyone outside of this course. Violations of confidentiality may be considered grounds for course failure.

You are in control of how much you share about your own experience. You are not required to self-disclose. Your grade does not depend on revealing personal information. You can always opt to apply fictional persons, families, or situations you have observed to assignments and activities.

Each of you will be someone who either contributes to the sense of safety in our class or detracts from it. I expect the former.

Class Attendance: Class attendance is required in this course. This course is primarily experiential during class time. Habitual absence from class is not acceptable and will result in failure of the course. An attendance sheet will be passed out at the beginning of each class period. Students are responsible for initializing the sheet for every class period that they attend. If a student is unable to attend class because of an illness, the student may receive attendance credit if they provide a doctor's note stating the illness during the dates of the missed class.

Participation: Participation in class and class discussion is an important part of learning. Students questioning, contributing, and sharing are powerful in the teaching and learning process. Please be considerate of another person's question, viewpoint, and opinion, especially if it differs from your own. A vital part of your university experience is the opportunity to develop understanding and skills in how to interact with diverse people. If something offends you, please respond in a gracious, courteous, and appropriate manner. *I take this very seriously, and will address it with you directly if there are problems.*

Late Assignments: Assignments are due on webcampus on the due dates at 9:30am before class begins. **Any assignment turned in at 9:31am or after on the due date will be considered late and will only be worth half credit** (additional points may be deducted based on adherence to assignment guidelines). **There will be no exceptions.** Extreme and unavoidable situations will be dealt with appropriately, but you must meet with me in-person to discuss what happened.

Weekly Quiz: The quiz is open weekly for only a specific period of time and must be taken within this allotted time. No exceptions will be made for any student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure internet connection and webcampus availability and to submit the quiz after it is completed.

Missed Classes: If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get class notes, resources, materials, or handouts **from a fellow student** or download them from webcampus.

Preparation: You are required to read the assigned reading for the week prior to coming to class. While I may review some key concepts from the readings, I will assume you have already learned the basics of the topic from the readings.

Course Grading: This course and its grading will operate under a policy of non-entitlement. This means students are not automatically entitled to a better grade, an “excused absence”, extra credit, make-up opportunities, or other special considerations due to a unique or unusual situation. Typically and ironically, students who feel entitled usually believe this policy does not apply to them. **Please understand this policy applies to you!**

Conversations in Class: Although this is a class in which large and small group discussion will be encouraged and expected, please keep private conversations with your classmates during class to a minimum. In particular, when there is a lecture, student presentation, or guest presentation, I expect all students to give their full and respectful attention to the presenter. If private conversations continue on a regular basis and pose a problem during lectures and presentations, I will ask those students to leave the classroom.

Ongoing Feedback: I welcome the responsibility to create opportunities for you to learn. If you have suggestions or criticisms, please share those with me. I will not promise to implement what you suggest or to change what you criticize but we do promise to listen and to consider them. My goal is to make this course a rigorous, pragmatic, and rewarding learning experience for you.

Graded Assignments:

Weekly Quizzes (55 points): Because doing the readings is such an integral part of this course (and being an MFT in general), there will be weekly webcampus quizzes for **5 points each**, covering the readings and class notes of the upcoming week. These are designed to assess that you are completing the readings and class notes prior to class lectures and in class activities. The quizzes will be open from Saturday at midnight until Monday at 9:30am from the 3rd week on. There will be 13 quizzes total, but I will drop the lowest 2 scores. That means you may earn 5 points times 11 weeks for a total of 55 points. This means you need to be doing the readings *ahead of time*. It also means you cannot make up quizzes since you have 2 free drops.

Self-as-Helper/Helppee Paper (50 points): This is a 3-4 page, double-spaced, Times Roman 12-point font, typed paper, **Due October 5th**, that is an opportunity for you to analyze a situation in which you either helped somebody or when you felt helped by somebody else. You may identify a situation with friends, family, coworkers, etc. If you choose the **helper** option, the paper should address a situation in which you were helping a person who was experiencing a problem, making a difficult decision, dealing with a difficult time or transition in their life, and you used listening/helping skills to understand. If you choose the **helppee** option, the paper should address a situation in which you were experiencing a problem, making a difficult decision, dealing with a difficult time or transition in your life, or felt really listened to and understood by someone. The topic is flexible, but it should not be about a situation for which there was a simple solution such as fixing a flat tire. Your paper should address the following questions:

Self as Helper Option

- 1) What kind of problem was the person experiencing?
- 2) What kind of relationship did you have with the person you helped?
- 3) What specifically did you do that was helpful? How did the person respond?
- 4) What kind of help did you give? How did you offer it?

Self as Helppee Option

- 1) What kind of problem were you experiencing?
- 2) What kind of relationship did you have with the person who helped you?
- 3) What specifically was helpful in the situation? What did this person do?
- 4) What kind of help did you receive? How was it offered to you?
- 5) What was it that enabled you to accept help from the person who helped you?

5) What enabled you to help the person? How did you pick up that it was okay to help?

6) What did you do to show you were really listening to the person? How did the person demonstrate that you were somebody worth talking to?

6) What made you feel particularly listened to by this person? How did this person demonstrate that he or she listened to you?

Practice Helping Interaction (50 points): This is a 10-15 minute audiotape of a helping interaction/systemic assessment role-play that you will do outside of class with fellow classmates. You will audiotape the role-play, transcribe it, and then write a 4-5 page double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, typed analysis paper of the interaction, due **November 9th**. You will turn in both your audiotape, transcript, and your analysis paper. Your grade will be based on your **systemic analysis** of your helping interaction, as well as for your understanding of a chosen model to hypothesize with. Detailed instructions for this assignment will be posted on webcampus and talked about in class prior to the due date.

In-Field Exploration (145 points): One of the best ways therapists can understand their profession and the nuance of what it is like to be on the “other side of the room” is for them to participate in their own therapy. This is actually a very common occurrence, believe it or not! For this assignment, which I consider to be the capstone of the course, you will be required to attend therapy of your own and unpack what the process is like for you. To complete this assignment, you will need to attend *at least* 3 therapy sessions at UNLV’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) center (702-895-3627) or at the Center for Individual, Couple, & Family Counseling (CICFC) at UNLV (702-895-3106). Because you are all enrolled at UNLV, this service at either clinic is free. You may attend as an individual, with your intimate partner (if applicable), or with your family (if applicable). After each session, you will keep a brief journal that addresses several questions that I will post/discuss in class. Then, at the end of the semester, you will write a summary and relate your experience of being in therapy to the concepts we discussed throughout the semester. If you currently see a therapist, use CAPS, or use the CICFC, you may journal about 3 sessions that you attend *during this semester* to fit the requirement for the assignment. Journal entries will be a max of 2 pages, and your final summary/reflection will be 5-6 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman Font.

NOTES: You will not discuss *what* you talked about (for confidentiality reasons), but instead you will analyze what the process was like. If you choose the CICFC, you *must* inform the intake therapist (your first session) that I am the instructor for your course, so that you are not placed with a therapist that I supervise. This is for ethical and confidentiality purposes. If you choose the CICFC, the intake session DOES NOT COUNT toward your 3 sessions. You may only count sessions that occur after you are assigned a therapist.

It is your responsibility to set up appointments with CAPS or the CICFC and to attend them. You can stop at 3, or you can feel free to continue going if you feel that it is useful. However, you only need to journal about 3 sessions. For each entry (15 points x 3 = 45 points), you will be graded on your ability to thoroughly answer the questions provided and on the depth of your reflection. For the final summary (100 points), you will be graded on your ability to connect course concepts to your personal reflection and unpacking of the process. More specific grading criteria will be posted on webcampus. This assignment is due by **December 7th**.

I am aware that this is a bit of an unconventional assignment that might be more difficult for some. Discomfort and engaging in new experiences is part of learning (and how could we possibly ask clients to do the same as therapists if we aren’t willing to do something new ourselves?), so I am empathic toward that. If you feel particularly uncomfortable with this assignment, I ask that you please speak to me privately in my office hours or through email and I will handle potential alternative assignments on a case by case basis. *You need to let me*

know by September 9th if this applies to you.

Attendance and Participation: This course relies heavily on student participation. The more you participate, the more you will learn. For each class session, you are expected to read the assigned readings before class in order to actively participate in class discussion. **For each class that you miss, I will deduct 6 points from your final point total at the end of the semester (6 points = 2% of your total grade).** Because you are part of a group/team, lab attendance is absolutely essential. More than one missed lab (unexcused absence) will be grounds for lowering your grade by one letter in addition to the lost attendance points. Unless it is an emergency, please discuss any anticipated absences with the instructor. Lab time will be used for a variety of activities include hands-on, practice sessions, role-plays, lab assignments, etc. Attendance will be taken on lecture and lab days so you and your group are expected to maximize the use of lab time. If you have an excused absence from lab, you must make the lab up. Please arrange to do so during my office hours.

Policy for late assignments:

Late assignments will automatically be deducted half credit in addition to any points lost for not completing the requirements of the assignment. Students are responsible for knowing when assignments and quizzes/exams are due. Give yourself ample time to submit your work, as the UNLV computer time stamp will be the accepted time for all submissions. It is expected that you have an understanding of WebCampus and how it operates. Computer problems or time disputes will not be accepted as reasons for late submissions. If a student does not complete assigned work because of a University approved absence (see UNLV policy), students must provide documented evidence of the excused absence. Waiting until the last minute to do the work or having computer problems at the last minute do not count as excused absences.

<u>Assessment:</u>	<u>Points</u>
1. Weekly quizzes (5 points x 11 quizzes).....	55
2. Self as Helper/Helped Paper.....	50
3. Practice Helping Interaction Paper.....	50
4. In-Field Exploration Paper.....	145
a. Journal Entries (3 x 15 points = 45)	
b. Final Summary (100 points)	
<hr/>	
Total.....	300

Grading:

Students will be graded according to their performance on quizzes, assignments, and class attendance/participation. Grades will be calculated by a percentage of points earned in relation to the total points possible in the course. Grades will be based on the following percentages (+ and – will be given):

279 – 300 = A	219 – 230 = C
270 – 278 = A-	210 – 218 = C-
261 – 269 = B+	201 – 209 = D+
249 – 260 = B	189 – 200 = D
240 – 248 = B-	180 – 188 = D-
231 – 239 = C+	0 – 179 = F

Academic Misconduct: Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's

function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at:

<http://studentconduct.unlv.edu/misconduct/policy.html>.

Copyright: The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves 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. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

Students who are caught cheating or violate standards of honesty and copyright in any way will be given a score of "zero" for the assignments, a referral to the Office of Student Conduct, and possibly a failing grade for the course.

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> or call [702-895-3177](tel: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/>.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)—The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <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.

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](tel: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/>.

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>.

Note on Class Organization & Syllabus:

This class is divided up into lecture/discussion days (typically on Wednesday) and lab days (typically on Monday). Lecture/discussion days will consist of lecture, discussions, small group activities, videos, Q&A's, forums, and (possibly) guest lectures. For lab days, you will be assigned to a group that you will work together with throughout the semester on experiential activities and hands-on application of course content.

This syllabus is prepared as a guideline for the course. It is *not* a contract between the professor and student, and the professor reserves the right to modify the syllabus as necessary (i.e., extend or limit discussion on a topic, add additional assignments or readings, subtract assignments or readings, etc.). Students will be notified promptly of any changes.

MFT 428 Class Calendar:

Date/Week	Monday Lab	Wednesday Didactic (BHS 130)	Readings Due*
8/29 & 8/31	Syllabus Day/ Brief History	Beginning Therapists	Intro to MFT Ch. 1 Essential Skills Ch. 1
9/5 & 9/7	<i>No Class – Labor Day</i>	Preparing for Therapy	Essential Skills Ch. 2
9/12 & 9/14	The First Session Quiz 1 Due	General Theoretical Foundations	Intro to MFT Ch. 2 Essential Skills Ch. 3
9/19 & 9/21	Conducting Relational Assessments Quiz 2 Due	Sequences of Interaction	Essential Skills Ch. 4
9/26 & 9/28	Basic Treatment Skills/Interventions Quiz 3 Due	Constraints and Goals	Essential Skills Ch. 6
10/3 & 10/5	Developing a Treatment Focus Quiz 4 Due	Content vs. Process Self as Helper/Helpee Due	Essential Skills Ch. 5
10/10 & 10/12	Working with Couples Quiz 5 Due	Couple Therapy	Intro to MFT Ch. 11 Essential Skills Ch. 8
10/17 & 10/19	Working with Families Quiz 6 Due	Full Family Therapy	Intro to MFT Ch. 10 Essential Skills Ch. 7
10/24 & 10/26	Structural Family Therapy Quiz 7 Due	Genograms	Intro to MFT Ch. 4
10/31 & 11/2	Strategic Family Therapy Quiz 8 Due	Paperwork and Admin	Intro to MFT Ch. 5
11/7 & 11/9	Collaborative Language Therapy Quiz 9 Due	Countertransference/Bias Practice Helping Interaction Due	Intro to MFT Ch. 3 Intro to MFT Ch. 7
11/14 & 11/16	Experiential Family Therapy Quiz 10 Due	Handling Intensity/Alliance	Intro to MFT Ch. 8
11/21 & 11/23	Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Quiz 11 Due	Supervision in MFT	Intro to MFT Ch. 9 Essential Skills Ch. 10
11/28 & 11/30	Earning an MFT degree Quiz 12 Due	Ethical and Professional Issues	Essential Skills Ch. 12
12/5 & 12/7	Termination Quiz 13 Due	Self-Care In-Field Exploration Due	Intro to MFT Ch. 15 Essential Skills Ch. 11
Final Exam	Final Exam Time: December 12th 10:10am – 12:10pm		

*Additional readings will be available on webcampus and will be announced by the instructor when posted.