

Couple's Therapy: Theory and Practice

PCS 303-3

Spring, 2015

Loren Townsend
ltownsend@lpts.edu

Description

This course provides theological, theoretical and practical foundations for the practice of couple therapy. In this course, students will explore the development of marital therapy, foundations for assessment of couple problems, and the practical application of current evidence-based methods for assessing and treating couple problems. Readings, lectures and practical applications will be framed within a family systemic context and grounded within reflective theological understandings of the human person in relationship. Students will have the opportunity to experience a variety of intervention methods and begin the process of formulating a theological and personally integrated model of marital/couple therapy.

Definition

The terms “couple” and “marital” are used interchangeably in this course to describe relationships in which people have formed a covenant of exclusive commitment to each other. This definition does not rely on legal or religious affirmation of such a covenant, and is intended to be inclusive of heterosexual and same-sex couples. The course will be sensitive to a broad spectrum of couple, racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity.

Objectives

<u><i>By the end of the semester, students will:</i></u>	<u><i>Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) & MFT Competencies (MFTC:)</i></u>	<u><i>Assessment Signature Assignments</i></u>
Understand and demonstrate the ability to use evidence-based approaches to couples therapy.	SLO 1: able to conduct multicultural, evidence-based therapy with individuals, couples and families that meets entry-level professional standards. SLO 2: Graduating students will demonstrate a broad knowledge of systemic theory and MFT treatment models and flexibly apply these in evidence-based practice. MFTC: .1.1.1 Understand systems concepts, theories, and techniques ...foundational to MFT, 1.1.2 Understand theories and techniques of individual, marital, couple, family, and group psychotherapy, 3.1.1 Know which models...are most effective for presenting problems 4.1.1-Comprehend a variety of individual and systemic therapeutic models... 6.1.1-Know the extant MFT literature, research...	Case Study (Rubric)
Demonstrate the ability to assess and plan treatment for a wide range of couples, couple problems and comorbidities.	SLO 1: able to conduct multicultural, evidence-based therapy with individuals, couples and families that meets entry-level professional standards.	Case Study (Rubric) Final Examination

	<p>MFTC: 1.1.4: Understand the risks and benefits of ...couples ... psychotherapy</p> <p>1.3.1: Gather and review intake information...balanced attention to individual, family, community... contextual factors</p> <p>1.4.1-Evaluate case for appropriateness...</p> <p>2.1.4-Comprehend...assessment...appropriate to presenting problem...</p> <p>2.1.3-Understand the clinical needs and implications of persons with comorbid disorders</p> <p>2.2.2...systematically integrate client report, observations...test results...to guide assessment process</p> <p>2.3.9-Elucidate presenting problem</p> <p>3.3.2-Prioritize treatment goals</p> <p>2.3.5 Screen and develop adequate safety plans for substance abuse, child/elder maltreatment, domestic violence, physical violence, suicide...</p> <p>3.4.3 Evaluate level of risks, management of risks, crises and emergencies</p> <p>4.5.3-Articulate rationales for interventions related to treatment...</p> <p>5.1.2 Know professional ethics and standards of practice [for] MFT</p>	
Demonstrate awareness and ability to assess of couple diversity (same sex, culturally diverse, etc.) and its impact on assessment, treatment and therapeutic processes.	<p>SLO 1: able to conduct multicultural, evidence-based therapy with individuals, couples and families that meets entry-level professional standards.</p> <p>SLO 4: able to use a multicultural approach to MFT that attends appropriately to religious, cultural, racial, economic, gender, and sexual orientation diversity in client systems, client-therapist systems, supervisory systems, and broader social systems.</p> <p>MCTC: 2.1.1 Understand principles of human development, sexuality, gender,...couple and family processes...</p> <p>4.3.2 Deliver interventions in a way that is sensitive to special needs of clients</p> <p>4.5.1 -Respect multiple perspectives</p>	<p>Case Study (Rubric)</p> <p>Class Presentation (Rubric)</p> <p>Theological papers (Rubric)</p> <p>Final Examination</p>
Demonstrate awareness and ability to assess and plan treatment for specialized issues related to couples therapy such as domestic violence, sexual problems, divorce, remarriage,	<p>SLO 4: able to use a multicultural approach to MFT that attends appropriately to religious, cultural, racial, economic, gender, and sexual orientation diversity in client systems, client-therapist systems, supervisory systems, and broader social systems.</p> <p>MFTC: 1.1.1 Understand systems concepts, theories, and techniques ...foundational to MFT.</p> <p>2.1.4 Comprehend...assessment... appropriate to presenting problem...</p> <p>4.1.1 Comprehend a variety of individual and systemic therapeutic models...</p> <p>4.3.1 Match treatment modalities...to client's needs, goals and values</p>	<p>Case Study (Rubric)</p> <p>Class Presentations (Rubric)</p>
Articulate a theological or spiritual framework that supports therapy with diverse couples and is useful in addressing religious issues that arise in couples therapy.	<p>SLO 5: able to use a theologically informed and clinically appropriate framework to integrate religious and spiritual factors into the practice of Marriage and Family Therapy.</p> <p>MFTC: 4.3.2 Deliver interventions in a way that is sensitive to special needs of clients</p>	Theological papers (Rubric)

Method

This class will be a combination of lecture, participant presentation, theoretical discussion, and case demonstration. Through an integrating approach to the theoretical, theological and clinical material, participants will be exposed to a variety of couple's therapy understandings, while being afforded the opportunity to explore one or two systems of change and therapy. Class time will be divided roughly equally between theoretical and practical concerns.

Requirements

All assignments must be turned in as downloads on CAMS unless otherwise specified.

Due Date Summary:

Theological Paper 1: March 25

Theological Paper 2: April 29

Case Study: May 6

Final Exam: Last Day of Finals

All Papers to be submitted on CAMS

1. ***Class Presentation.*** Each student will cooperate in a dyad or small group to lead class discussion related to one of the topics listed below. Class leaders are expected to begin preparation in class reading, but expand their investigation beyond the reading assigned to all.

Presentation 1 (March 11, Physical Aggression)

Presentation 2 (April 22, Affairs)

Presentation 3 (April 22, Drug & Alcohol Abuse)

Presentation 4 (April 29, Legal and Ethical Issues)

2. ***Case Study (Due: No later than 5:00 pm May 6)*** This is a two-part assignment.

A. ***Videotape a session with a mock client couple using couple therapy methods presented in class. After the videotaped session, review the tape with the client couple. Analyze the session with the couple and write a report summarizing what you and the couple found about the session:***

- How well did the therapist connect with the clients?
- How well did the therapist define the presenting problem?
- Did the therapist help the clients set a reasonable goal?
- Identify specific segments of the tape where client behavior or comments validate the

- therapist's assessment conclusions (which will appear in the write-up below). That is, point out where you see pursuer-distancer relational dances, the Four Horsemen, attachment behavior, turning to or turning away, evidence about the marital friendship, etc.
- Identify specific sections of the tape where methods or interventions learned in class were implemented. Identify the theory or technique used. Analyze how well the intervention or approach was used and its effect on the session. (Did you, for example, use a Dreams within Conflict intervention, identify secondary reactive positions with clients, etc.)
 - ***Turn in only the report. Do not turn in your videotape.***

B. *Write an Intake Evaluation for the couple you videotaped using the case study format provided in CAMS.*

- The case study will observe, assess, conceptualize, and plan treatment for a couple organized by methods taught in class (Gottman, EFT, Schnarch, Behavioral Sex Therapies, Oliver). Be sure and use appropriate materials from your assessment package (II above).
- Use *footnotes* in your paper to **annotate how the theories you studied in class affect your assessment, conceptualization and treatment plan.** (For instance, you make a statement about your couple's conflict and make a conclusion about the conflict--supply a note to show me which theory is influencing you and how. I want to be able to read your paper and clearly track how you are using the theories studied in class.)
- ***You must use assessment tools presented in class.*** Select assessment tools relevant to the clients' presenting problem. Demonstrate that you know which assessment tools are appropriate and that you know how to use them. If you are presenting an actual couple, guard identities carefully and present your finding from assessment tools. If you are using mock clients, show the responses and results that clients MIGHT have had to justify your assessment and treatment plan. Include processes and findings in the Clinical Assessment section of the case study.
- ***Your case study should be written as a profession document, not an essay. It should be well organized, direct, concise, and illustrate good clinical logic. You should be able to complete the report in no more than 5 pages (excluding any footnotes).***

V. *Theological Integration Papers—You may work in groups of 3-4 and turn in one paper for the group.*

Two theological reflection papers (maximum: 7 double-spaced pages each). Be sure to integrate your study in other theological courses. ***Your papers are not to be “fill-in-the-blank” or short answer responses to the questions posed. Use the questions below to formulate an essay reflecting your stands. Use citations where appropriate and make certain these citations are in APA form. Since these are short papers, you must write well.***

➤ **A working theology of marital problems (Due March 25)**

In order to provide good pastoral counseling to married couples, we must use our theological understanding of marriage, marital dysfunction, and sexuality to ground our understanding of marital problems and recovery. I am asking you in this paper to articulate:

1. What causes marital problems: Couples work requires that we have a theory/theology of why couples have problems that need treatment. In this assignment, I am asking you to

move beyond what any one MFT theory says about marital dysfunction and look to our Christian understandings of creation, the human person, and couple-ness to provide a grounding context for relating pastorally and theologically to clients. I am asking you to think theologically about such questions as:

2. What needs to be changed or healed in couples seeking treatment? Think theologically. Relate this to what you stated above.
3. What is the role/function of the pastoral therapist when working with such couples?
4. How does your theological understanding of marital problems guide or influence your approach to couples in therapy?

➤ **A Reflection on Difference: What do GLBTQI voices and sources like Gay and Lesbian Theology, or Queer Theology have to offer our theological understanding of marriage and coupleness? (Due April 29)**

For this paper you will need to: 1) Read and explore Gay and Lesbian Theologies or Queer Theology sources, 2) initiate conversations with GLBT colleagues, and 3) think broadly and deeply about this issue. (A few resources will be on CAMS for this assignment.)

Consider the following:

1. How do our inherited or accepted theologies participate in what how we construct what is meant by “couple” or “married”?
2. What is the source of what traditional theologies’ conception of marriage and coupleness? What strengths and limits do these sources have?
3. What is your image of “what God intends” for human marital sexuality, and how do you support this? Pay careful attention to your hermeneutic approach and exegetical practice when supporting your arguments with authority from tradition and scripture. Be sure to attend to how your approach to issues and theology may be colored by unexamined teachings or assumptions.
4. Usually, theologies of coupleness and marriage are grounded in arguments of form or nature—only male/female coupling can produce children and therefore propagate the species. What do you make of these arguments, and what problems do you see with them, if any?
5. Consider sexuality in committed couples and marriage. How does your understanding of sexuality in marriage change by considering the experience of gay, lesbian, transgendered, and queer Christians?
6. How do you relate the scripture to your emerging theology of marriage, especially as it is informed by Gay, Lesbian, and Queer theologies?
7. What kinds of things might LGBTQ couples teach heterosexual couples about an adequate theology of coupleness, marriage, and sexuality?

VI. *Final examination (In Library Computer Lab, week of finals)*

Final exam will be a multiple choice examination on computer in the library. It is meant: 1) to test your mastery of the knowledge expected in this course, 2) approximate and prepare you for the MFT Exit Examination, and 3) help you prepare for the national MFT examination you must

take prior to licensing.

Course Grade Weights

3. Two theological reflection papers—15% each (30%)
4. Class Presentation—15%
5. Case study and Evaluation Packet—30%
6. Final examination—25%

Texts

Required

Gottman, J. (1999). *The marriage clinic: A scientifically-based marital therapy*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Johnson, S. (2005). *Becoming an emotionally focused couples therapist: The workbook*. New York: Routledge.

Maltz, W. (2012). *The sexual healing journey: A guide for survivors of sexual abuse*, 3rd ed. New York: Wm Morrow.

Oliver, Ms. (1994). *Conjugal Spirituality: The primacy of mutual love in Christian tradition*. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward.

Gurman, A. ed. (2008). *Clinical handbook of couple therapy*, 4th ed. New York: Guilford Press. (*Selected chapters*)

Selected reading from:

Schnarch, D. (1991). *Constructing the sexual crucible: An integration of sexual and marital therapy*. New York: Norton.

Townsend, L. (2000). *Pastoral care with stepfamilies: Mapping the wilderness*. St. Louis: Chalice Press.

Piercy, F. and D. Sprenkle. *The family therapy sourcebook*, 2nd ed. NY: Guilford, 1996. (*On library reserve*)

Recommended

O'Leary, K., Heyman, R., & Jongsma, A. (1998). The couples psychotherapy treatment planner. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Schedule

Foundations

Feb 11

Introduction

Overview, requirements and goals
Systemic assumptions and foundations
Nature and history of marriage
Thinking theologically about couples

Required reading

“A Practical Theology of Families,” Chapter 10 in Browning, Miller-McLemore, Couture, Lyon, & Franklin. *From Culture Wars to Common Ground: Religion and the American Family Debate*. (Library Reserve)
Gurman, (2008). A framework for the comparative study of couples therapy (Ch. 1)

Couples Therapy in a Multicultural Framework

Required reading:

Sue, D. W. and Sue, D. (2008). The superordinant nature of multicultural counseling. In Sue and Sue, *Counseling the culturally diverse*, 5th ed. Pp. 29-52.
Sue, D.W. and Sue D. (2008). Racial, gender, and sexual orientation microaggressions: Implications for counseling and psychotherapy. In Sue and Sue, *Counseling the culturally diverse*, 5th ed. Pp. 105-130

Feb. 18

Gottman I

Required reading

Gottman, Ch. 1 - 5

Class leader: Jonathan Shippey, LMFT, certified Gottman trainer

Feb 25

Gottman II

Required reading:

Gottman, Ch. 6-10

Class leader: Jonathan Shippey, LMFT, certified Gottman trainer

Mar. 4

Gottman III

Required reading:

Gottman, Ch. 11-15

Class leader: Jonathan Shippey, LMFT, certified Gottman trainer

Mar. 11 ***Couple Therapy and Physical Aggression***

Required reading:

Gurman, Ch. 16

- Group presentation/discussion

Same-sex Couples (Guest Speaker)

Required reading:

Gurman, Ch. 24

Mar. 18 ***Research and Reading***

Mar 25 ***Sexual Dimensions of Marital Therapy (Theological Paper 1 due)***

Required reading:

Schnarch, Chs 2 & 4
Oliver

Class leader: Sherry Steinbock, LMFT, certified sex therapist

April 1 ***Sexual Dimensions of Marital Therapy***

Required reading:

Schnarch, Chs 5 & 10

Class leader: Sherry Steinbock, LMFT, certified sex therapist

April 8 & 15 ***Emotionally-Focused Couples Therapy***

Required reading

Johnson, S. (2005). *Becoming an emotionally focused couples therapist: The workbook.*

Class leader: Jonathan Shippey, LMFT.

April 22 ***Special Issues in Marital Therapy—Affairs***

Required reading:

Gurman, Ch. 14

Group presentation & discussion

Special Issue in Couples Treatment—Drug & Alcohol Abuse

Required reading:

Gurman, Ch. 18

- Group presentation/discussion

April 29

Solution-focused Couples Therapy (Theological Paper #2 due)

Required reading:

Gurman, Ch. 9

Case study

Special Issues in Couples Treatment: Legal and Ethical Issues

Required reading:

Gurman, Ch. 26

May 6

Special Issues in Couples Treatment—Separation & Divorce (Case study due)

Required reading:

Townsend (2000), *Pastoral Care with Stepfamilies*, Ch.4 (pp 53-72)

Gurman & Jacobsen, Ch. 15

Therapy with Remarried Couples

Required reading:

Townsend (2000), *Pastoral Care with Stepfamilies*, Ch. 5

Gurman, Ch. 17

Class Policies

Grading: Grade Scale and Philosophy

A	96.6-100
A-	93.6-96.5
B+	90.6-93.5
B	87.6-90.5
C	85.6-87.5
C+	83.6-85.5
C	81.6-83.5
C-	79.6-81.5
D	70.6-79.5
F	Below 70.6

Individuals admitted to graduate study are expected to perform consistently and well in academic work. This is translated into grades in the following way:

1. Basic mastery of the body of knowledge at a level expected in graduate study will earn scores in the B to B+ range.
2. Grades of A- are granted for work which demonstrates
 - basic mastery of the body of knowledge, and
 - independent thought about the subject matter.
3. Grades of A are granted for work which demonstrates
 - mastery of the required body of knowledge,
 - independent thought about the subject matter, and
 - creative/integrative use of the material, exceptional writing which integrates the material into a student's own system of thought, and/or exceptionally well done or articulate research.

Attendance

Learning is a complex activity that requires conceptual and experiential participation by those who wish to learn. Student attendance and participation is fundamental to the way the learning environment is structured for this course. Attendance and participation is required to earn a passing grade. While circumstances may require an adult learner to miss class occasionally, absence from more than 10% of the classroom experience will affect student learning and (consequently) the student's grade. Extreme circumstances, such as health problems, family concerns, etc. must be discussed with the professor *prior* to multiple missed classes. Students unable to attend at least 75% of classes are advised to drop the class prior to the registrar's WP deadline, or receive a failing grade.

Form for Writing Assignments

- All papers submitted for grades must be written in APA approved style and be double-spaced.

- All papers are to be submitted electronically on CAMS unless otherwise stated.
- All sources used in writing assignments must be cited appropriately and according to APA style. ***Failure to cite sources is plagiarism. You must give credit for quotes and ideas used in your writing. Papers submitted for grades that demonstrate plagiarism will receive a failing grade, and students will be subject to the seminary policy regarding plagiarism.***

Late assignments

Late assignments will lose ½ grade point per day without prior arrangement with professor. Papers are due by midnight (e-mail) on the assigned day.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will result in class failure and referral to the Dean of the Seminary for disciplinary action. All use of another's material ***must*** be documented and appropriately cited.

Incompletes

Incompletes will be granted only for serious personal or family illness or crises and must be negotiated prior to the last day of classes.

Inclusive language is a seminary policy

Learning is fundamentally concerned with communication, self-expression, and personal and social transformation. Learning respects individuals, their feelings, their value and worth, and their particular potential for contribution to common knowledge and community virtue. Learning is fundamentally and intentionally inclusive.

Since all learning is inherently ethical and political, and theological discourse has been traditionally patriarchal and gender exclusive, the Seminary has established a policy, in the interest of constructing an inclusive and egalitarian community, that the language (symbols, metaphors) used in our class discussions and written work shall be gender inclusive and respectful of all persons and groups as valued human creatures of God.

Racism also permeates our society and is detrimental to any learning environment. We need to use language, symbols, and metaphors that honor our commitment to racial inclusiveness.