

# **Family Therapy--Theory and Practice**

PCF304-3

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## **Syllabus**

### **Description**

This course provides procedural, theoretical and theological foundations for the practice of family therapy. In this course, students will explore the nature and development of family therapy, its impact on understanding human motivation and relationship systems, and explore its application in clinical practice. This will include a focus on family organization, family subsystems, and transgenerational processes as these apply to assessment, case conceptualization, treatment and theological understandings of family therapy. Through exploring contemporary family therapy approaches, students will have the opportunity to experience a variety of intervention methods and begin the process of formulating a theologically and personally integrated model of family therapy.

### **Objectives**

By the end of the semester, class participants will be able to:

1. Outline the nature and development of family therapy theory.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose and limitation of psychotherapeutic theory as it applies to producing change in human systems.
3. Understand the interaction of class, race, gender, and cultural experience on theory development and intervention procedures.
4. Articulate a broad understanding of family assessment, including interview, genogram and formal tools of evaluation.
5. Discuss a cross-section of historical and contemporary methods of family therapy.
6. Demonstrate a beginning understanding of the basic processes of counseling from intake to termination of therapy.
7. Demonstrate a beginning ability to write and intake assessment and plan a course of treatment for a family.
8. Demonstrate the ability to use systemic categories to conceptualize family organization, family subsystems and transgenerational processes in a therapeutic

context.

9. Understand and utilize Narrative Therapy and Brief Solution-focused in class discussions and case demonstrations.
10. Articulate a statement of how faith, spirituality and theology can be integrated into a personal philosophy and clinical practice of family therapy, and be able to apply this in describing/discussing at least one clinical case.

### **Th.M. and D.Min. Objectives**

1. Th.M. and D.Min. students are expected to complete all of the above objectives at an advanced, rather than beginning level;
2. Th.M. and D.Min. students will demonstrate more complete behavioral scientific and theological analysis in their class assignments;
3. Th.M. and D.Min. students will demonstrate advanced levels of theological and pastoral reflection and relate this work to their current ministry location.

### **Method**

This class will be a combination of lecture, theoretical discussion, and case demonstration. Through an integrating approach to the theoretical, theological and clinical material, participants will be exposed to a variety of family therapy understandings. Class time will be divided roughly equally between theoretical concerns and clinical application.

### **Requirements**

#### ***I. Complete required reading, participate in class discussions and presentations.***

##### **A. Purpose and objectives of assignment**

By completing this assignment, students will:

1. Become oriented to the basic literature of family therapy.
2. Demonstrate that they have completed assigned reading and have organized their thoughts about the reading into a coherent summary;
3. Become competent in discussing basic theoretical and practical issues in the practice of family therapy.

##### **B. Tasks**

1. Each class period, students will turn in a 200 word summary/reaction/reflection paper related to the reading. This paper should demonstrate that the reading was completed and reflect insight, questions, or thoughts the student has about the

- reading.
2. Students are expected to participate in class discussion.

### **C. Evaluation**

Daily papers will be collected and marked as completed, completed well, or not completed. (✓, +, or -). Students will also demonstrate completion of reading assignments by participating in class conversations.

## **II. Reflection Assignment. (20 % of grade)**

### **A. Purpose and objectives for this assignment**

By completing this assignment, students will

1. Engage in conscious, reflective thought with colleagues about spiritual, cultural, religious, and theological issues related to the reading assignment;
2. Begin to develop personally and theologically integrated stands related to family therapy and clinical practice.
3. Learn to articulate theological reflections on clinical/theoretical material in a coherent written form that demonstrates depth of thinking about these matters.

### **B. Tasks**

Each student will participate in a reflection group of 3-5 colleagues. This group will meet, discuss, and construct a position paper describing a **theological** understanding of “family.” What is it? Why? By what authority? How is family to be understood in the light of scripture, church history, and contemporary theology? What issues are at stake? How does a theological understanding intersect with contemporary American life? Be sure to include some consideration of the intersection of race, class, and cultural background a part of this discussion.

This paper must not twelve double spaced pages (APA format).

## **III. Critical Book Review (30% of grade)**

### **A. Purpose and objectives for this assignment**

By completing this assignment, students will

1. Gain a firm beginning understanding of one model of family therapy and how it is applied clinically;

2. Begin to think critically about family therapy theory;

**B. Tasks** (Note additional Th.M. and D.Min. requirements below)

***Step One: Select a book focused on a contemporary family therapy theory that is not a required text.***

***Step Two: Write a critical review of the book (page length: No more than 10 double-spaced pages.)***

Your critical review should include the following:

- A brief summary of the author's reason for writing the book (thesis)
- A depth description of the model of therapy the author is proposing. Please note that you should not try to rewrite the book in a class paper. Instead, distill the model in a form that **you** understand and in which **you** emphasize what is important and de-emphasize what is not.
- A critical assessment of the book and theory. Be sure to address what **you** consider the strengths and weaknesses of the theory and how the authors use it. Point out also where the authors themselves suggest that this theory or approach has limitations and strengths.
- ***The last section of your*** critical review should be a religious/theological evaluation of the theory.

**IV. Clinical Case Study Using Narrative or Solution-Focused Therapy (30% of grade)**  
***(A case will be provided by the professor)***

**A. Purpose and objectives for this assignment**

By completing this assignment, students will

1. Gain a firm beginning understanding of one model of family therapy and how it is applied clinically;
2. Gain the ability to articulate their critical thought processes about family therapy in written professional documents;
3. Begin to apply family therapy theoretical concepts to clinical case contexts;
4. Form a beginning ability to reason clinically about case material, informed by one theory;
5. Gain experience organizing clinical reasoning from one theoretical foundation into basic clinical documents that demonstrate a recursive,

inferential connection between theory, observation, assessment, treatment planning, clinical procedures, and evaluation.

**B. Tasks**

1. *Identify the family to be assessed as assigned by the professor.*
2. *Follow directions in “How to Write an Intake Assessment”*
3. *Provide a genogram and assessment of genogram*
4. *Write a pastoral/theological evaluation of the case that demonstrates your reflective thinking about the client, the problem and the process of helping.*

**V. Final examination (20% of grade)**

**A. Purpose and objectives for this assignment**

By preparing for the final examination and taking the final examination, students will

1. Demonstrate their mastery of the primary body of knowledge presented during the semester and how this knowledge applies to clinical contexts;
2. To gain experience preparing for professional body of knowledge and competency evaluations.

**B. Tasks**

1. Students will prepare for a computerized final examination by using the practice CD distributed during class and other materials necessary to prepare for a comprehensive final examination.
2. Students will take the final examination during the week of finals on computer in the library computer lab. This is a closed book final.

**Due Dates:**

**Book Review: Oct. 21**

**Reflection Paper: Nov. 11**

**Case Study: Last day of class**

**Final Exam: Week of finals**

### Required:

Boyd-Franklin, N. *Reaching Out in Family Therapy: Home-based, School, and Community Interventions*.  
Nichols, M. and R. Schwartz, eds. *Family Therapy: Concept and Method*, 8th. Ed.  
Walsh, F., ed. *Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy*  
Payne, Martin. *Narrative Therapy: An Introduction for Counsellors*

### Recommended references:

Olsen, D. *Integrative Family Therapy*.  
McGoldrick, M. and Gerson, R. *Genograms in Family Assessment*.\*\*Consult in Library  
Graham, L. *Care of Persons, Care of Worlds*.  
L'Abate, L. *Family Assessment: A Psychological Approach*.  
Carter, E. and M. McGoldrick, eds. *The Changing Family Life Cycle*, 2nd ed.  
Gurman, A. and D. Kniskern. *Handbook of Family Therapy*, Vol. 1 and 2.  
Aponte, H. *Bread and Spirit: Therapy with the New Poor*.  
Sprenkle, D. and C. Bailey, eds. *Family Therapy Effectiveness*.  
Walters, M., Carter, B., Papp, P., & Silverstein, O. *The Invisible Web*.  
Neuger, C. *Counseling Women: A Narrative Approach*  
White D. & D. Epston. *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*

## **Important 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.

### **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 to [ltownsend@lpts.edu](mailto:ltownsend@lpts.edu) as an e-mail attachment
- 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.*

### **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.



## SCHEDULE

**Highlighted readings indicate library or e-reserve**

### **I. Introduction to Family Therapy - History, Heritage, and Systemic Presuppositions**

#### **Sept. 16 a: History of MFT**

##### Required reading

Nichols and Schwartz, Ch. 1-4

Walsh, F. Ch. 1 & 2

Lecture: - Syllabus and class requirements  
- Foundations and history of MFT  
- Pastoral counseling and marriage and family therapy  
- Introduction to Pastoral/Theological Reflection  
- Early models and enduring conceptual frames  
- Systems thinking and language

#### **Sept. 16 b: *Basic Counseling Procedures***

##### Required reading:

“How to Write an Intake”

Lecture & Discussion:  
Basic generic counseling procedures  
The clinical interview

### **II. Family Therapy Models and Procedures**

#### ***Classic Schools of Family Therapy***

#### **Sept. 23 *Murray Bowen***

##### Required reading:

Nichols and Schwartz, Ch. 5

McGoldrick, M., Gerson, R., & Schellenberger, S. (1999). *Genograms: Assessment and Intervention*. New York: WW Norton. Chs. 1,2, appendix (191-197), skim rest of book.

Lecture and discussion  
Genogram videotape and demonstration, model of practice

#### **Sept. 30 *Structural Therapy***

##### Required reading

Nichols and Schwartz, Ch. 7  
Walsh, Ch. 4 & 9

## **Video Tape**

### **Oct. 7            *Experiential & Psychodynamic Models***

#### Required reading

Nichols and Schwartz, Ch. 8 & 9  
Walsh, Ch. 5 (Boyd-Franklin: Spirituality & Religion: Implications for Psychotherapy with African American Clients and Families)

Lecture & Demonstration

### **Oct. 14           *MRI & Cybernetics***

#### Required reading

Nichols & Schwartz, Ch. 6  
Walsh, Ch. 7 (Wolin et al: Three Spiritual Perspectives)

Lecture and Demonstration

### **Oct. 21            *Cognitive-Behavioral Approaches to Therapy* **(Book review due)****

#### Required reading

Nichols and Schwartz, Ch.10

### **October 28      *Research and Reading***

#### ***Postmodernity and Family Therapy***

### **Nov. 4            *Solution-Focused Therapy***

#### Required reading

Nichols & Schwartz Ch. 11, 12  
Walsh, Ch. 10 (Doherty: Morality & Spirituality in Therapy)

Lecture and videotape

### **Nov. 11           *Assessment and Treatment Planning* **(Reflection Paper Due)****

#### Required reading

Townsend, *Suicide: Pastoral Responses, Ch. 1*  
“How to Write an Intake”  
Lecture & Discussion  
Genogram and family assessment tools  
Suicide & domestic violence

Videotape and discussion:  
Genogram  
Suicide and domestic violence  
Assessment tools

**Nov. 18**      *Narrative Approaches to Therapy*

Required reading

Payne, ch. 1-4

Lecture and videotape

**Nov. 25**      *Narrative Therapy II*

Required reading

Payne, ch. 5-9

Class Demonstration/Role Play/Discussion: Use of questions

**Dec. 2**      *Emergent Models: Home-Based, School, and Community Interventions*

Required reading:

Boyd-Franklin, *Reaching Out in Family Therapy, Chs. 1-6*

**Dec. 9**      *Integration and Analysis*

Required reading:

Nichols and Schwartz, chs. 14-16