Professional Issues and Ethics in Marriage and Family Therapy  
PCf 305-3  
Fall 2008  

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General Course Information  

Description  
This course contributes to the formation of a professional identity for the one who ministers as a marriage and family therapist and/or pastoral counselor. It addresses the ethical foundations for a professional conscience and an analysis of professional ethical codes and issues in the clinical practice and contractual arrangements of marriage and family therapy. Common recurrent problems, such as sexual misconduct, professional identity, clinical issues, administrative responsibilities, dual relationships, confidentiality, power differentials, boundaries, and scope of practice will also be discussed. Attention is given to the core competencies established by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). These areas include family law and the legal system, the importance and procedures of reporting misconduct, and the value of ongoing supervision and consultation in a clinical practice. This is a formative as well as a summative process. The MAMFT candidate is expected to acquire knowledge of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) and AAMFT ethical codes and to integrate this knowledge into a practical philosophy of clinical practice.  

Course Goals and Objectives  

✓ Address these AAMFT Core Competencies as they apply to ethical standards:  

5.1.1 Know state, federal, and provincial laws and regulations that apply to the practice of marriage and family therapy.  
5.1.2 Know professional ethics and standards of practice that apply to the practice of marriage and family therapy.  
5.1.3 Know policies and procedures of the practice setting.  
5.1.4 Understand the process of making an ethical decision.  
5.2.1 Recognize situations in which ethics, laws, professional liability, and standards of practice apply.  
5.2.2 Recognize ethical dilemmas in practice setting.  
5.2.3 Recognize when a legal consultation is necessary.
5.2.4 Recognize when clinical supervision or consultation is necessary.
5.3.1 Monitor issues related to ethics, laws, regulations, and professional standards.
5.3.2 Develop and assess policies, procedures, and forms for consistency with standards of practice to protect client confidentiality and to comply with relevant laws and regulations.
5.3.3 Inform clients and legal guardian of limitations to confidentiality and parameters of mandatory reporting.
5.3.4 Develop safety plan for clients who present with potential self-harm, suicide, abuse or violence.
5.3.5 Take appropriate action when ethical and legal dilemmas emerge.
5.3.6 Report information to appropriate authorities as required by law.
5.3.7 Practice within defined scope of practice and competence.
5.3.8 Obtain knowledge of advances and theory regarding effective clinical practice.
5.3.9 Obtain license(s) and specialty credentials.
5.3.10 Implement a personal program to maintain professional competence.
5.4.1 Evaluate activities related to ethics, legal issues, and practice standards.
5.4.2 Monitor attitudes, personal well-being, personal issues, and personal problems to insure they do not impact the therapy process adversely or create vulnerability for misconduct.
5.5.1 Maintain client records with timely and accurate notes.
5.5.2 Consult with peers and/or supervisors if personal issues, attitudes, or beliefs threaten to adversely impact clinical work.
5.5.3 Pursue professional development through self-supervision, collegial consultation, professional reading, and continuing educational activities.
5.5.4 Bill clients and third-party payers in accordance with professional ethics, relevant laws and policies, and seek reimbursement only for covered services.

✓ Know the AAPC Code of Ethics and the AAMFT Code of Ethics and procedures that apply to the practice of marriage and family therapy.
✓ Know the state (Kentucky), federal, and provincial laws and regulations that apply to the practice of marriage and family therapy.
✓ Recognize situations in which ethical problems and dilemmas arise and understand the process of making an ethical decision.
✓ Know the policies and procedures of the practice of marriage and family therapy in the setting in which you are practicing.
✓ Understand and demonstrate what it means to work within one’s scope of practice.

**Use of Inclusive Language**

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.

_Academic Honesty_

Be careful to fully document any information included in your papers that is not original. Also be aware when you summarize information, even when you give the complete documentation information, your summaries should be in your own words and not retain too much of the original author’s style. Presenting the ideas or writing of someone else as if they were your own is considered plagiarism. Seminary and MFT Program policies on academic honesty will be followed.

_Required and Recommended Materials_

_Required Texts_


_Recommended Texts (on library reserve or on-line)_


Journals and Periodicals

Short articles or handouts may be added as readings required in the course and will be assigned in advance.

Grading

Your grade will be assessed based on the following:

1. Class attendance and demonstration of how reading informs discussion ........ 10 points
2. Theological Reflection Paper ................................................................. 10 points
3. Ethics Decision Making Paper ............................................................. 20 points
4. Ethical and Legal Presentation, Handout, & Brief Paper ....................... 20 points
5. Written Plan for Licensure, Continuing Education, and On-going Learning .... 15 points
6. Professional Plan ................................................................................ 25 points

100 points

Point Scale:  
A  93-100  C+  77-79  
A-  90-92  C  73-76  
B+  87-89  C-  70-72  
B  83-86  D  60-69  
B-  80-82  F Below 60  
Course Requirements

Attendance – In line with Seminary policy, prompt attendance at class sessions is expected out of respect for your fellow classmates as well as the adjunct professor. Unexcused absences of any course experience and tardiness will affect student learning and consequently, the student’s grade. Students experiencing a major life event should contact the adjunct professor as soon as it practical. Students are responsible for material covered during any absence.

Participation – Will be evaluated on your consistent, attentive presence in class. Verbal participation will be evaluated by evidence of receptivity to the questions and ideas of others as well as articulation of one’s own views and comments/questions relevant to reading assignments. Completing assigned readings before class is essential to effective participation.

Written Assignments:

Evaluation of Assignments

All page requirements for written assignments reflect actual written text. **Required bibliographies do not count in paper length.**

Graduate level writing is required. This includes clear organization, correct grammar, careful proofreading and proper citation of sources. Double-spaced 12 font, one inch margins are considered standard in this class unless otherwise specified. Grading of all material will be affected by careless writing. The Academic Skills Center provides instruction on all of these matters.

Description of Assignments

1. Theological Reflection Paper – Due September 22, 2009 (10 points)
   Paper Length: 7 pages

   This paper should reflect your critical thinking on how moral development related to ethics and theology interconnect. You are free to choose your own resources for this paper, but you must demonstrate both the use of outside resources AND your own critical thinking. Suggested resources:

   *Let Your Life Speak*, Parker Palmer
   *Theory of Development*, Wm. Crain
   *Deadly Sins and Saving Virtues*, Donald Capps (particularly chapters 8 & 9)
   *What Money Can’t Buy*, Susan Moyer
   *Vision and Character*, Craig Dykstra
   *The Practice of Pastoral Care*, Carrie Doehring
2. Ethical Decision Making Paper – Due October 8, 2009 (20 points)
   Paper Length: 10 pages

You can select an ethical dilemma on your own, create your own scenario, or use a scenario provided to write this paper. The dilemma must not be one previously discussed in class. You must use a decision-making model to show how you analyzed the dilemma and decided on a course of action. In addition, you must use the grading rubric distributed in class to show how you addressed each competency or why you did not address the competencies. You are free to focus and direct your dilemma and response from either MFT or PC Code of Ethics (or a combination).

Regardless of your choice, at least one paragraph must demonstrate Theological Reflection and critical thinking. However you decide, AAMFT competencies must be present in your response.

3. Ethical/Legal Presentation, Handout, & Brief Paper –
   Presentations will begin on November 5, 2009 (20 points)
   Paper Length: 8 pages

Choose an ethical and/or legal issue to explore. Prepare a handout to accompany your presentation on this topic – be sure the handout helps your classmates learn about the topic and its relation to ethical/legal concerns, and that it contains relevant resources. You will present on the topic for 20-30 minutes. Your brief paper will address, in narrative form, the topic you choose including theological reflection and critical thinking. You have an opportunity to expand on the points made in class and on your handout in your paper.

This assignment is to be done on your own. Presentations will occur throughout the semester. Your handout is due at class time on the day you present with copies for your classmates and instructor. Your paper and handout are due one week after your presentation.

4. Written Plan for Licensure, Continuing Education, & On-going Learning –
   Due November 24, 2009 (15 points)
   Paper Length: 10 pages

Describe how you plan to work toward licensure and what state you anticipate applying for licensure. Demonstrate familiarity with that state’s laws, rules, and requirements for
licensure. Based on that particular state, determine what the requirements are for continuing education once you are licensed and explore options that you will pursue for continuing education. (Note: This may include requirements for ethics training, state law, and/or mandatory reporter training.) Finally, discuss how you will keep up-to-date in the field aside from participating in official continuing education activities.

If you are taking the course as an M.Div. student and do not have any desire to work toward MFT licensure and/or AAMFT or AAPC credentials, you need to complete the assignment as if you were pursuing licensure or credentials.

5. Professional Plan – Due by noon, Thursday, December 17 (25 points)
   Paper Length: 15 pages
   
   a. Describe your professional goals for a career, such as, MFT, Pastoral Counselor, or parish Pastor with concentration of graduate work in MFT and/or PC.
   
   b. Describe jobs you will seek out and how they will advance your professional goals.
   
   c. Imagine yourself in a position consistent with your professional goals. Now: develop your own business card and paperwork that you will need associated with a private practice, agency work, or pastoral counseling as a member of a church staff (e.g. client’s rights form, description of your practice in the form of a brochure, advertising materials, no-secrets policy, explanation of therapeutic approach. You must demonstrate how these documents are responsive to ethical and/or legal issues of AAMFT and/or AAPC.

Class Schedule

Presentations from guest speakers may be part of the class schedule and will be announced in advance.

September 10  Meditation: Wayne Clark
Reading: Lebacqz, Chapters 1 & 2

Come prepared to discuss these two chapters. Introduction to Codes of Ethics for American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) and American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC), and AAMFT Core Competencies. Review of syllabus.
September 15  Meditation: ____________________________________________
Reading:  Wilcoxon, et.al., Chapter 1

September 17  Meditation: ____________________________________________
Readings:  Lebacqz, Chapter 3; Wilcoxon, et.al., Chapter 2

September 22  Meditation: ____________________________________________
Readings:  Lebacqz, Chapters 4, 5, & 6

Theological Reflection Paper due by end of class.

September 24  AAPC Mid-West Region Annual Conference – No class

September 29  Meditation: ____________________________________________
Reading:  Wilcoxon, et.al., Chapter 3; Legal Guidelines, Section A - Chapters 1-5

Be prepared to discuss these chapters through small group activities.  Review of grading rubric (designed by Dr. Megan Murphy) which will be distributed in class, to be used in preparing Ethical Decision Making Paper due on October 8th.

October 1  AAMFT Annual Conference, Sacramento, CA – No class

October 6  Meditation: _______________________________________________
Readings:  Lebacqz, Chapters 7 & 8

October 8  Meditation: _______________________________________________
Reading:  Wilcoxon, et.al., Chapter 4

Ethical Decision Making Paper due by end of class.
October 13  Meditation: ______________________________________
Reading: Wilcoxon, et.al., Chapter 6

October 15  Meditation: ______________________________________
Reading: Wilcoxon, et.al., Chapter 7

October 20  Meditation: ______________________________________
Reading: Wilcoxon, et.al., Chapter 8

October 22  Meditation: ______________________________________
Readings: Wilcoxon, et.al., Chapters 9 & 10

October 27 & 29  RESEARCH AND STUDY WEEK

November 3  Meditation: ______________________________________
Readings: Wilcoxon, et.al., Chapter 11; Lebacqz, Chapter 9

November 5  Meditation: ______________________________________
Readings: Wilcoxon, et.al., Chapter 12

  Beginning of individual ethical and legal presentations. Required class hand outs to be copied by student and distributed on day of presentation.

November 10  Meditation: ______________________________________
Reading: Legal Guidelines, Section A - Chapter 5 thru Section C - Chapter 6
November 12  Meditation: _______________________________

Guest Speaker: Mike Rankin, Executive Director, Kentucky Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
“Kentucky Law and Marriage and Family Therapy Licensure”

November 17  Meditation: _______________________________

Ethical Genogram; Kitchener’s model for ethical decision making. (In-class project. Materials will be distributed to review on November 12th.)

November 19  Meditation: _______________________________

Serious Ethical Issues in Marriage and Family Therapy:
• Sexual involvement with a client
• Development of personal friendships outside of therapeutic relationship
• Multiple clients with multiple confidentialities with one therapist
• Therapist involving client in the therapist’s own personal issues in session

November 24  Meditation: _______________________________

Ethics of Character (in-class project); Material will be distributed to review on November 19th)

Written Plan for Licensure, Continuing Education, and On-going Learning Paper due by end of class.

November 26  Thanksgiving Holiday

December 1  Meditation: _______________________________


Review and be familiar with DSM-IV-TR

Topic: Diagnosis, Managed Care, and Ethics
December 3  
**Meditation:** ________________________________  
**Topic:** Culture on Ethics  

December 8  
**Meditation:** ________________________________  
**Reading:** Michael Freeny, “Better Than Being There,” *Psychotherapy Networker* (March/April, 2001) 31-39 & 70. (Article available on CAMS Student Portal)  
**Topic:** Ethics and On-Line Therapy  

December 10  
**Meditation:** ________________________________  
**Reading:** Article – Arnold A. Lazarus, “Triple Boundary Crossing: From client to friend to client,” *Psychotherapy Networker* (March/April, 2002) 47-49 & 62. (Article available on CAMS Student Portal)  
**Topic:** The On-Going Saga of Dual Relationships: A Multi-Layered Issue  

December 17  
**EXAM WEEK - Professional Plan Paper due to MFT Office by noon.**
Ethics Bibliography

Books

Bucky, S., J. Callan, and G. Stricker. Ethical and Legal Issues for Mental Health Professionals.
Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Publications, 1981.
Gladding, S. T., T. P. Remley, Jr., and C. H. Huber. Ethical, Legal and Professional Issues in the
Guide to Ethical and Legal Practice. Washington, DC: American Association for Marriage and
Family Therapy Publications.
Lageman, A. G. The Moral Dimensions of Marriage and Family Therapy. New York: University
Noyce, G. B. Pastoral Ethics: Professional Responsibilities of the Clergy. Nashville, TN:
Ragsdale, K. H., ed. Boundary Wars: Intimacy and Distance in Healing Relationships. Cleveland,
Vesper, J. H. H. and G. W. Brock. Ethics, Legalities and Professional Issues of Marriage and

**Articles**


Periodicals

*Behavior Today* [Weekly newsletter]. New York: Mental Health & Family Relations Professionals.


*Journal of Counseling and Development* [Published 10 times yearly]. Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and Development.

*Journal of Divorce* [Published quarterly]. New York: Haworth Press, Inc.


*Journeys Magazine.* Fairfax, VA: American Association of Pastoral Counselors.

*Psychotherapy Finances* [Published monthly]. Ridgewood, NJ.

*Psychotherapy Networker Magazine* [Published bi-monthly]. Washington, DC: Psychotherapy Networker, Inc.

*Family Therapy Magazine* [Published bi-monthly]. Washington, DC: American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Publications.

Codes of ethics

AAMFT - The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy

ACA – American Counseling Association
On-line resources

Legal Resources

American Bar Association –
Books - http://www.abanet.org/publiced/practical/books/family/home.html
Family law/sites of interest – http://abanet.org/family/famsites.html
Commission on Domestic Violence – http://www.abanet.org/domviol/home.html

Child Welfare -
Child Abuse and Neglect General Information Packet –
http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/can_infor_packet.pdf
Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Procedures –
Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect –
Children and Domestic Violence –
Child Witnesses to Domestic Violence –
Immunity for Reporters of Child Abuse –
Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect –
Parental Drug Use as Child Abuse –
Reporting Penalties (failure to report and false reports) –

National Exam and State Laws and Licensure

Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards (AMFTRB) –
http://www.amftrb.org/exam.cfm
KY Board of Marriage and Family Therapy

Websites for Other State Licensing Boards
http://www.aamft.org/resources/Online_Directories/boardcontacts.asp

Professional Organizations

American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) – http://www.aapc.org

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) – http://www.aamft.org
  Career & Practice Information – http://www.aamft.org/resources/Career_PracticeInformation/index_m.asp
  State Divisions – http://www.aamft.org/cgi-shl/TWServer.exe/Run:DIVSR

American Family Therapy Academy, Inc. (AFTA) - http://www.afta.org/index.html

International Family Therapy Association (IFTA) – http://www.ifta-familytherapy.org/home.html

National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) – http://www.ncfr.org/