

Couples Therapy: Theory and Practice
PC 3033
Spring, 2017

Jennifer Schiller
jschiller@lpts.edu

Monday, 1:30-4:20 p.m.
 Schlegel Hall 121

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>By the end of the semester, students will:</u>	<u>Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) & MFT Competencies (MFTC:)</u>	<u>Assessment Signature Assignments</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) Prepare/Enrich training completion Gottman Level 1 training completion Book Review
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) Course Engagement 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>	
<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>	<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>Theological papers</p> <p>Final Examination</p>
<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>	<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>Course Engagement</p>
<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>	<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>	<p>Theological papers</p>

Method

This class will be a combination of lecture, participant presentation, theoretical discussion, and case demonstration. Through an integrative 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 by hard copy and by email or downloads on CAMS unless otherwise specified.

Due Date Summary:

Theological Paper 1: February 20

Theological Paper 2: March 20

Case Study: May 1

Book Review (Non-Prepare/Enrich only):

March 6

Final Exam: Last Day of Finals

1. ***Course Engagement:*** Each student is expected to complete required readings and trainings and engage in classroom discussion and engagement. Assignments are expected to be turned in complete and on time in the format required.

Training for Gottman Level 1 is a fundamental part of this course. Attendance at class meetings during Gottman training is mandatory to achieve Level 1 status in Gottman Therapy. Gottman University Outreach does not provide make-up sessions for any missed training time. A student who misses class time during this portion of the course may pass the class however Gottman Level 1 would not be awarded. CEU certificates may be purchased from the Gottman University Outreach program for an additional fee if requested.

Prepare/Enrich training through Life Innovations is to be completed independently by students online. Completion of the training, including passing required quizzes will be evidenced by a certificate provided to the student by Life Innovations. Students are to give a copy of this certificate to the course instructor.

Electronic Technology Policy: This is a low-to-no technology course during class time. There will rarely, if ever, be a need for using laptops, tablets, phones, or other technology that takes attention away from the classroom. A paper notebook will be sufficient. If there is an overwhelming need for technology, please request permission from the professor.

2. **Case Study** (Due: No later than 5:00 pm May 1) This is a multi-part assignment.

- A. ***Videotape a session with an actual or mock client couple using couple therapy methods presented in class.***
- B. ***After the videotaped session, review the tape with the client couple. Analyze the session with the couple and summarize what you and the couple discovered about the session in a two-page written report. This should include impressions of the therapist and of the couple regarding the video-taped session.***

Reflect on these questions in completing your summary:

- How well did the therapist connect with the clients?
 - How well did the therapist and clients define the presenting problem?
 - Did the therapist help the clients set a reasonable goal or work toward a pre-established goal?
 - Can you identify specific segments of the tape where client behavior or comments validate the therapist's assessment conclusions (to be included in the report)?
 - Point out where you see conversation or intervention related to Prepare/Enrich, Gottman Therapy, or Emotionally Focused Therapy such as: pursuer-distancer, relational dances, the Four Horsemen, attachment behavior, turning to or turning away, evidence about the marital friendship, or discussion of specific areas of strength and growth for the couple, 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, explore a specific area of couple growth, attend to issues of attachment, etc.)
 - ***Do not turn in your videotape.***
 - ***Do turn in the Session Summary based on the couple feedback and your assessment of the couple session.***
- C. ***Complete a Case Conceptualization for the couple you videotaped using the format provided. (Case Conceptualization Rubric also provided)***
- The Case Conceptualization documentation will record your observations, assessments, findings, and will help with planning treatment for the couple. These should be organized by methods taught in class. Be sure to include appropriate assessment information gained from your work with the couple or for a mock couple, inferred from your mock session experience.
 - ***You must use information related to couples therapy theory and practice as presented in this course.*** Select assessment tools relevant to the client couples' presenting problem and to the model of therapy utilized with the couple in session.
 - 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 findings from assessment tools. If you are using mock clients, show the responses and results that clients might have had to justify your case conceptualization. Include processes and findings from your work with this couple.

- *Your Case Conceptualization should be written as a professional document. It should be well organized, direct, concise, and demonstrate good clinical logic. All sections of the Case Conceptualization document regarding the client couple should be complete.*

V. *Theological Integration Papers*

Two theological reflection papers are required.

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 format. Since these are short papers, you must write well. Be sure to integrate your study in other theological courses.

- **A Working Theology of Marital Problems** *This is to be completed as an individual assignment. (Due February 20)* (maximum: 5 double-spaced pages in Calibri 12 font).

In order to provide affective pastoral counseling to married couples, we must use our theological and spiritual 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:

What causes marital problems: Couples work requires that we have a theory/theology of why couples have problems that need treatment. In this assignment, move beyond what any one MFT theory would say about marital dysfunction and look to Christian, Theological, and Spiritual understandings of creation, the human person, and couple-ness to provide a grounding context for relating pastorally and theologically to clients.

Think theologically about such questions as:

1. What brings couples to the point of seeking counseling for issues in their marital relationships? What larger issues are at stake? What do couples hope to accomplish in seeking therapy?
2. What do you believe needs to be changed or healed for couples seeking treatment? Think theologically about your theory of change and/or healing and how this relates to working with couples.
3. What do you see as the role/function of the pastoral counselor/marriage and family therapist when working with couples in committed relationships?
4. How does your theological understanding of marital issues guide or influence your choice of theory and approach to working with couples in therapy?

- **A Reflection on Difference in Couple Relationships: What do sources like Gay and Lesbian Theology, Queer Theology, Feminist Theology, theories of polyamory and open couple relationships, or other diverse voices have to offer our theological understanding of marriage and couple-ness?**

This assignment may be completed in small groups of 3-4 students. (Due March 20) (maximum: 10 double-spaced pages in Calibri 12 font).

For this paper you will need to:

1. Read and explore theological literature regarding diversity in the couple relationship.

2. Engage in conversations with colleagues or peers that can expand your thinking on this topic, and
3. Think broadly, deeply, and with a theological lens about the issue of difference.

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 limitations do these sources have? What role has paternalism and male dominance played in traditional theological understandings of male/female roles in couple relationships.
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 one male/one 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 is your understanding of sexuality in marriage impacted by considering the experience of gay, lesbian, transgendered, queer Christians/individuals and others of difference and diverse experience?
6. How do you relate scripture and other voices of authority to your emerging theology of marriage, especially as it is informed by diverse theologies such as Gay, Lesbian, and Queer theologies, Feminist theology, and other voices?
7. What kinds of things might LGBTQ and other couples of difference teach heterosexual/traditional couples about an adequate and informed theology of coupleness, marriage, and sexuality?

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

The final exam will be a multiple choice examination available on the computer in the library. It is meant to: 1) 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

Course Engagement – 15%

Two theological reflection papers – (15% each) 30%

Case Study (Case Write-up and Case Conceptualization) - 35%

Final examination - 20%

Resources and Texts

Required

Gottman University Outreach Level 1 Training

Registration for Level 1 Gottman Couples Therapy training is provided through the MFT office. The cost of \$99 is payable to the MFT office by check made *payable to LPTS*. This fee includes the cost of the Gottman Level 1 manual, in-class video instruction, a question and answer time with a certified Gottman instructor, and a certificate of completion for Gottman Level 1. The fee must be provided to the MFT Administrative Assistant Office at LPTS by Monday, February 13th. This fee is forwarded by us as one payment directly to the Gottman Institute. (A CEU certificate may be purchased directly from the Gottman Institute for an additional payment of \$29.99 at your request)

Life Innovations: Prepare/Enrich training

Training for pre-marital and marital counseling certification through Life Innovations for use of Prepare/Enrich is part of the Couples Therapy course content. Cost of \$75 is *payable directly to Life Innovations online by debit or credit card*. The log-in code will be provided by the course professor the first day of class. Training is to be completed online by each individual student. The student must provide a copy of the certificate of completion to the course professor by March 6th. For students who have completed the Prepare/Enrich training prior to class, a book review will be required with a due date of March 6th. Details regarding the book review format will be provided separately to those students who have previously completed the Prepare/Enrich training.

Selected readings:

- Browning, D., Miller-McLemore, B., Couture, P., Lyon, K., & Franklin, R. (2000). *From culture wars to common ground: Religion and the American family debate*, 2nd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Gottman, J. (2004). *The marriage clinic casebook*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Gurman, A., Lebow, J. and Snyder, D., ed. (2015). *Clinical handbook of couple therapy, 5th ed.* New York: Guilford Press.
- Johnson, S. (2004). *The practice of emotionally focused couple therapy: creating connection*, 2nd ed. New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Johnson, S. and Zuccarini, D. (2010). Integrating Sex and Attachment in Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*. 36(4), p.431-445.
- Oliver, M. (1994). *Conjugal spirituality: The primacy of mutual love in the Christian tradition*. Kansas City: Creed & Ward.
- 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.

Additional Resources

- Chapman, G. (2015). *The five love languages: The secret to love that lasts*. Chicago: Northfield.

- Gottman, J. (1999). *The marriage clinic: A scientifically-based marital therapy*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Gottman, J. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work: A practical guide from the country's foremost relationship expert*. New York: Crown.
- Gottman, J. Ed. (2004). *The marriage clinic casebook*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Gottman, J. & J., (2015). *Ten principles for doing effective couples therapy*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Gray, J. (2002). *Mars and venus in love: Inspiring and heartfelt stories of relationships that work*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Gurman, A. (2012). *Clinical casebook of couple therapy*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Johnson, S. (2005). *Becoming an emotionally focused couples therapist: The workbook*. New York: Routledge.
- Johnson, S. (2008). *Hold me tight: Seven conversations for a lifetime of love*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Long, L. & Young, M. (2007). *Counseling and therapy for couples*, 2nd ed. Belmont: Thomson.
- Maltz, W. (2012). *The sexual healing journey: A guide for survivors of sexual abuse*, 3rd ed. New York: Wm Morrow.
- O'Leary, K., Heyman, R., & Jongsma, A. (2015). *The couples psychotherapy treatment planner*, 2nd ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Ogden, G. (2008). *The return of desire: A guide to rediscovering your sexual passion*. Boston: Trumpeter.
- Oliver, Ms. (1994). *Conjugal Spirituality: The primacy of mutual love in Christian tradition*. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward.
- Piercy, F. and D. Sprenkle. *The family therapy sourcebook*, 2nd ed. NY: Guilford, 1996.
- Schnarch, D. (1997). *Passionate Marriage: Keeping love and intimacy alive in committed relationships*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Spring, J. (1997). *After the affair: Healing the pain and rebuilding trust when a partner has been unfaithful*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Walsh, F. (2010). *Spiritual resources in family therapy*, 2nd ed. New York: Guilford Press.

Course Schedule

Feb. 6

Introduction

Syllabus review
 Course schedule, expectations, and goals
 Nature and history of marriage
 Thinking theologically about couples

Required reading

Families and the Therapeutic, Chapter 7, in Browning, Miller- McLemore, Couture, Lyon, & Franklin. *From culture wars to common ground: Religion and the American family debate, 2nd ed.*. (Library Reserve)

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 in Oliver. *Conjugal spirituality, The primacy of love in Christian tradition.* (Library Reserve)

Feb. 13

The Couple System in the Multicultural World

Required reading:

Chapters 1, 11, 18, & 19 in Gurman, Lebow, and Snyder. *Clinical handbook of couple therapy, 5th ed.* (Library Reserve)

Feb. 20

Theology Paper 1 due.

Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy Attachment and Intimacy

Required reading:

Chapters 1, 2, & 3, Johnson. *The practice of emotionally focused couple therapy: creating connection, 2nd ed.* (Library Reserve)

Chapters 4 & 5, Schnarch, *Constructing the sexual crucible: An integration of sexual and marital therapy.* (Library Reserve)

Feb 27

No Class Meeting: Complete Prepare-Enrich Training or Book Review Assignment

Use time that would be utilized for reading, preparation, and attendance at class to complete the **Prepare/Enrich training**. In the alternative, for students who have completed Prepare/Enrich Training, the time should be utilized for the Book Review requirement.

Mar. 6 **Discussion of Prepare/Enrich process. Book Reviews due/presentations.**

Couples Therapy and Sexual Issues

Required reading:

Chapter 10, Schnarch. *Constructing the sexual crucible: An integration of sexual and marital therapy.* (Library Reserve)

Chapter 24, Gurman, Lebow, and Snyder. *Clinical handbook of couple therapy, 5th ed.* (Library Reserve)

Johnson and Zuccarini. Integrating Sex and Attachment in Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy.* 36(4), p.431-445

Mar. 13 **Research & Study Week: Class does not meet.**

Mar. 20 **Theology Paper 2 Due.**

Gottman Level 1 Training Begins

Research re: Relationship Success or Failure
Sound Relationship House Theory

Mar 27 **Gottman Level 1 Training**

Assessment

April 3 **Gottman Level 1 Training**

Intervention
Conflict Management

April 10 **Gottman Level 1 Training**

Building Friendship; Shared Meaning
Process of Therapy

April 17 **Gottman Level 1 Training Conclusion**

Gottman Certified Trainer Q & A

Required reading:

Chapter 3, Gottman. *The marriage clinic casebook.* (Library Reserve)

Chapters 14 & 20. Gurman, Lebow, and Snyder. *Clinical handbook of couple therapy, 5th*

ed. (Library Reserve)

April 24 ***Special Issues in Marital Therapy: Affairs, Separation, Divorce and Remarriage***

Required reading:

Chapters 15 & 16. Gurman, Lebow, and Snyder. *Clinical handbook of couple therapy, 5th ed.* (Library Reserve)

Chapters 4, & 5. Townsend, *Pastoral care with stepfamilies.* (Library Reserve)

May 1 **Case Studies Due: Couple Case Reflections & Discussion**

Final Exam Information

May 8 **Research & Study – Final Exam to be completed by Thursday, May 11 in the Library.**

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 in

Calibri 12 font.

- All papers are to be submitted electronically on CAMS or by email to the course professor 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 unless stated otherwise in this syllabus.

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.