

Couples Therapy: Theory and Practice
PC 3033
Fall, 2017

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Wednesday, 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 couple 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

| <i><u>By the end of the semester, students will:</u></i> | <i><u>Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) & MFT Competencies Domains</u></i> | <i><u>Assessment Signature Assignments</u></i> |
|---|--|---|
| Understand and demonstrate the ability to use evidence-based approaches to couples therapy. | SLO 1 SLO 2 MFTC Domains 1 2, 6 | Case Study Prepare/Enrich training completion Gottman Level 1 training completion |
| Demonstrate the ability to assess and plan treatment for a wide range of couples, couple problems and comorbidities. | SLO 1 SLO 2 MFTC Domains 2,3,4 | Case Study Course Engagement Final Examination Gottman Level 1 training completion |
| Demonstrate awareness and ability to assess of couple diversity (same sex, culturally diverse, etc.) and its impact on assessment, treatment and therapeutic processes. | SLO 3 SLO 4 MFTC Domain 2 | Case Study Theological Integration papers Final Examination |
| Demonstrate awareness and ability to assess and plan treatment for specialized issues related to couples therapy such as domestic violence, sexual problems, divorce, remarriage, | SLO 2 MFTC Domains 3 and 5 | Case Study Course Engagement |

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| Articulate a theological or spiritual framework that supports therapy with diverse couples and is useful in addressing religious issues that arise in couples therapy. | SLO 3 SLO 4 SLO 5 MFTC Domain 8 | Theological Integration papers |
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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 unless otherwise specified.

Due Date Summary:

Prepare/Enrich: September 27, 2017
Theological Paper 1: October 11, 2017
Theological Paper 2: November 8, 2017
Case Study: December 6, 2017
Final Exam: December 13, 2017

1. ***Course Attendance and 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 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 Couples Problems *This is to be completed as an individual assignment. (Due October 11th)*** (maximum: 5 double-spaced pages in Calibri 12 font).

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

What causes couple 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 couple dysfunction and look to 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 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 couple 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 November 8th)

(10 double-spaced pages).

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, transgender, 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, December 13, 2017)*

The final exam will be a 120 question 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.

To better prepare for the exam, students will be provided with a study guide for the final exam in class on October 25th. Students will also be provided the opportunity to take a 50 question practice examination in the library computer lab at their convenience starting the week of October 22nd. Students will have the opportunity to take the practice exam one time during the time period of October 22nd – December 8th.

Course Grade Weights

Course Engagement – 15%

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

Case Study (Case Write-up and Case Conceptualization) - 30%

Final examination - 25%

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 **Wednesday September 20, 2017**. 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 September 27, 2017**. For students who have completed the Prepare/Enrich training prior to class, they will be required to prepare and present a clinical case presentation in which they have previously used Prepare/Enrich with a due date of September 27th. Details regarding the case presentation format will be provided separately to those students who have previously completed the Prepare/Enrich training.

Library Reserve

Gurman, A., Lebow, J. and Snyder, D., ed. (2015). *Clinical handbook of couple therapy, 5th ed.* New York: Guilford Press.

Gurman, A. (2012). *Clinical casebook of couple therapy.* New York: Guilford Press.

Johnson, S. (2004). *The practice of emotionally focused couple therapy: creating connection, 2nd ed.* New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Oliver, M. (1994). *Conjugal spirituality: The primacy of mutual love in the Christian tradition.* Kansas City: Creed & Ward.

CAMS

- Wachtel, E. F. (2017) *The Heart of Couple Therapy: Knowing What to Do and How to Do It*. New York: Guilford Press. Pp.18-30.
- Friedman, E. H. (1990). "A Nervous Condition". *Friedman's fables*. Guilford Press. Pp.17-21.
- Colette,. (1924). *The other woman*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Murakami, H. (1993). "The Second Bakery Attack". *The elephant vanishes*. New York: A.A. Knopf.
- Parker, D. (1931, March 31). Here We Are. *Cosmopolitan Magazine*.
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 52(3), 511.
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a7ed/78521d0d3a52b6ce532e89ce6ba185b355c3.pdf>
- Fraley, R. C., & Shaver, P. R. (2000). Adult romantic attachment: Theoretical developments, emerging controversies, and unanswered questions. *Review of general psychology*, 4(2), 132.
- 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.
- Why Do Marriage Therapists Undertreat Sexual Problems?
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/resolution-not-conflict/201201/why-do-marriage-therapists-undertreat-sexual-problems>

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 Policies

Student responsibility- Class attendance is expected. Read the assigned material prior to each class session and come to class prepared to participate in the discussions. You are responsible for all assignments, material presented in class, as well as in the text. Lectures may supplement, highlight, or bring something entirely different from what is included in the text.

Classroom Behavior - Tardiness and early departures are distracting and not appreciated by me as the instructor, nor your fellow classmates. Please avoid these behaviors unless absolutely necessary. **You are expected to adhere to the following principles during class: 1) no text messaging, phone calls, emailing, or surfing the internet; and 2) no side conversations irrelevant to the class.**

Issues of Privacy and Confidentiality - Given the potentially sensitive nature of the course topics we need a supportive and respectful environment that allows the ability to share viewpoints, experiences, and thoughts. Please do not discuss anything that people share in class with others outside of the class. In other words, please exercise confidentiality, any discussion in the class should stay in the class

Inclusive/Expansive Language – The practice of using inclusive language is encouraged of all LPTS staff, students, and faculty. In classroom discussions and writing assignments it is important to avoid divisive terms that reinforce stereotypes or are pejorative. Please access the following web page for resources to assist in using non-biased language:
<http://www.lpts.edu/academics/academic-resources/guides-policies-and-handbooks/inclusive-and-expansive-language>

Attendance Policy- According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. **Three or more absences (1/4 of the course) will result in a failing grade in the course.**

Late work –Assignments are due at the beginning of class unless otherwise specified. Due dates for every assignment are provided on the course syllabus and course schedule. **An assignment submitted within 24 hours of the due date will only be eligible for 80% of the maximum number of points allotted.**

Assignments submitted more than 24 hours after the due date will not be accepted. There are no make-ups for in-class writing, activities, or the final exam. If you experience extenuating circumstances (e.g., you are hospitalized) that prohibit you from submitting your assignments on time, please let me know. I will evaluate these instances on a case-by-case basis.

Grading Scale

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| A | 96.6-100 |
| A- | 93.6-96.5 |
| B+ | 90.6-93.5 |
| B | 87.6-90.5 |
| B- | 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 |

Writing guidelines - All assignments should be submitted typed in 12-point font using Times New Roman one-inch margins, and double-spaced. Homework assignments assume a certain level of writing skills, and points will be deducted if your writing assignments are

difficult to read due to poor writing. If you need assistance with your writing, please visit the LPTS online writing lab, <http://lpts.libguides.com/OWL>, or schedule an appointment with the academic support center (ASC).

All assignments should be completed using APA format 6th edition.

If you have questions, please see the following resources:

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Purdue Online Writing Lab: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01>

Assignments that do not meet the writing guidelines will be returned for correction and will not be graded until corrected. Assignments will be reduced by 10% for each day (including the initial due date) after the assignment is late due to failure to adhere to the writing guidelines.

Drop/Withdrawal - If you decide to withdraw from this course, you must follow the Registrar's Office's specified procedures. A student can change course load during the first two weeks of regular semesters with no notation on their transcript. After the first two weeks, the student may withdraw and receive a WP or WF notation. Withdrawal from a course during the last four weeks of class will result in a failing grade; withdrawal for medical reasons may be an exception. Students seeking a withdraw-medical (WM) must file a formal written request with the Dean of the Seminary no later than 5 p.m. of the last day of classes of the term in which the course is taught. In the case of medical causes, a student who receives a withdraw-medical will be required to submit to the Dean of the Seminary certification from the treating physician or therapist of the student's ability to resume academic and professional work before being readmitted to classes in the following term or semester.

Academic Honesty - All work turned in to the instructor is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Multiple occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, Student Handbook, p. 16.

Special Accommodations - Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of a semester. Anyone who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me to arrange an appointment within the first 3 class sessions. At the appointment we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs and explore potential accommodations. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

| Course Schedule Fall 2017 (subject to change) | |
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| Topic | Readings/Assignments |
| 9/13 Introduction to the course What is a Good Relationship? Thinking theologically about couples Couples in a Multi | Read the following stories: The Other Woman (1924) Here we are (1931) A Nervous Condition (1990) The Second Bakery Attack (1993) |
| 9/20 Couples in a Multicultural World Relationship Issues in Couples Therapy Couples Therapy and Sexual Issues | Gurman et al. (2015) Ch. 1 Gurman (2012) Ch. 13 Wachtel (2017) Ch. 6 Johnson & Zuccardi (2010) https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/resolution-not-conflict/201201/why-do-marriage-therapists-undertreat-sexual-problems |
| 9/27 Discussion of Prepare/Enrich Attachment and Romantic Love Emotion Focused Couples Therapy Engaging Spirituality in Couples | Fraley & Shaver (2000) Johnson (2004) Chs. 1,2,3 (Library Reserve) P/E training and clinical presentations due |
| 10/4 Gottman Training Research re: Relationship Success or Failure Sound Relationship House Theory | Oliver (1994) Chs. 2,3,4 (Library Reserve) |
| 10/11 Gottman Training Assessment | Section 1: Research and Theory Theological Integration Paper I due |
| 10/16-10/20 Research and Study (No Class) | |
| 10/25 Gottman Training Intervention Conflict Management | Section 2: Assessment Overview Section 3: Assessment: Session 1 |
| 11/1 Gottman Training Building Friendship Shared Meaning Process of Therapy | Section 4: Assessment Written Questionnaires Section 5: Assessment: Sessions 2 and 3 |
| 11/8 Gottman Training Gottman Certified Trainer Q & A | Section 6: Intervention Theological Integration Paper II due |
| 11/15 Select MFT Models of Couples Therapy | Gurman et al. (2015) Ch. 9,10, 13 |
| 11/22 No Class | |
| 11/29 Special Issues in Couples Therapy Affairs, Separation Divorce, Remarriage, | Gurman et al. (2015) Ch. 15,16 |
| 12/6 Couple Case Reflections & Discussion Course Wrap up Evaluations | Case Studies Due |
| 12/11-12/12 Research and Study | |
| 12/13 Final Exam | |