

Couples Therapy: Theory and Practice
PC 3033
January 9th – 18th 2019

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8:30am - 5:00pm
Schlegel Hall 122

Description

This eight day seminar 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.

Course Objectives

- Understand and demonstrate the ability to use evidence-based approaches to couples therapy.
- Demonstrate awareness and ability to assess of couple diversity (same sex, culturally diverse, etc.) and its impact on assessment, treatment and therapeutic processes
- Articulate a theological or spiritual framework that supports therapy with diverse couples and is useful in addressing religious issues that arise in couples therapy

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 email unless otherwise specified.

Due Date Summary:

Prepare/Enrich: January 7, 2019

Theological Integration Paper I: January 9, 2019

Theological Integration Paper II: January 18, 2019

Couples Therapy Case Study: January 28, 2019

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.

2. ***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. 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. Cost of \$75 is *payable directly to Life Innovations online by debit or credit card*. You must use the log-in code **LPTS – PREPARE – TRAIN** to receive the discounted rate of \$75. Training is to be completed online by each individual student using the following link: <https://www.prepare-enrich.com/training>. **The student must provide a copy of the certificate of completion to the course professor by January 7, 2019.** For students who have completed the

3. ***Theological Reflection Paper I***: Maximum: 2 double-spaced pages

Be sure to integrate your study in other theological courses. **Your papers are not to be “fill-in-the-blank” or short answer responses to the questions posed. Use the questions below to formulate an essay reflecting your stands. Use citations where appropriate. Since these are short papers, you must write well.**

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

1. What causes marital/couple problems: Couples work requires that we have a theory/theology of why couples have problems that need treatment. In this assignment, I am asking you to move beyond what any one MFT theory says about marital dysfunction and look to our Christian understandings of creation, the human person, and couple-ness to provide a grounding context for relating pastorally and theologically to clients. I am asking you to think theologically about such questions as:

- Why do couples have problems (what gets —broken or disrupted)? What is there in the nature of human persons that seems to assure marriages/couples will be troubled? Why are some couples more troubled than others? How, theologically, do you understand couple failure? Are there ways that this relates to your understanding of couple-ness and creation? Be sure to consider what you have learned about theological anthropology in other classes. Consider also issues of theodicy, or why evil exists in a world God created good.
- How do theories of couple therapy influence your theological understanding? Do you think that these theories are a —source of revelation in some way that informs theology? How do you see this happening in your own work?

- How does your theological understanding of marital problems guide or influence your approach to couples therapy?

4. *Theological Reflection Paper II:* Maximum: 3 double-spaced pages

1. What needs to be changed or healed in couples seeking treatment?

Think theologically. Relate this to what you stated above.

2. What is the role/function of the therapist is when working with such couples?

Consider the following:

- How does theory inform your theology and theology inform your theory?
- What are the —active ingredients necessary for therapy to be productive?
- What is the role of the therapist, and how does this relate to a Christian understanding ministry?
- Given your theological stands, how do you interpret a couple’s decision, in therapy, to divorce or dissolve their relationship rather than stay married/together? How does this affect your theological commitments? Your understanding of yourself as pastoral therapist? Your assessment of your effectiveness as a couples’ therapist?

5. Couples Therapy 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, EFT, Narrative, Solution Focused, Feminist, or Queer Intersectional Therapies 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, collaboration, identifying unique outcomes, identifying exceptions, deconstruction 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.***

Required Books (on Library Reserve):

- Coontz, S. (2006). *Marriage, a history: How love conquered marriage*. Penguin.
- Flemons, D., & Green, S. (2018). *Quickies: The handbook of brief sex therapy*. Third edition. WW Norton & Company.
- Gottman, J. S., & Gottman, J. M. (2015). *10 Principles for Doing Effective Couples Therapy (Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology)*. WW Norton & Company.
- Greenberg, L. S., & Goldman, R. N. (2008). *Emotion-focused couples therapy: The dynamics of emotion, love, and power*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Reiter, M. D., & Chenail, R. J. (Eds.). (2017). *Constructivist, critical, and integrative approaches to couples counseling*. Taylor & Francis.

Supplemental (not required):

- Chapman, G. (2004). *The five love languages: How to express heartfelt commitment to your mate*. Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing.
- Gurman, A., Lebow, J. and Snyder, D., ed. (2015). *Clinical handbook of couple therapy*, 5th ed. New York: Guilford Press.
- Ziegler, P., & Hiller, T. (2001). *Recreating partnership: A solution-oriented, collaborative approach to couples therapy*. WW Norton & Company.

Additional Required Readings on 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.
- 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

- 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.
- 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 Schedule January 2019(subject to change)	
Topic	Readings/Assignments
1/9 Introduction to the course Thinking theologically about couples What is a Good Relationship? Common Relationship Issues in Couples Therapy	Gottman & Gottman (2015) Chs. 1, 2, & 3 Wachtel (2017) Theological Integration Paper I due
1/10 Couples Therapy and Sexual Issues Couples Case Conceptualization	Flemons & Green, (2018). Chs. 1,2, 3,&4 Johnson & Zuccarini (2010) https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/resolution-not-conflict/201201/why-do-marriage-therapists-undertreat-sexual-problems Gottman & Gottman (2015) Chs. 4 &5
1/11 Special Issues in Couples Therapy: Affairs Divorce/Separation Interpersonal Violence	Flemons & Green, (2018). Chs. 5, 11, & 12 Gottman & Gottman (2015) Ch. 6 & 9
1/14 The History of Marriage Couples in a Multicultural World Common Factors in Couples Therapy	Coontz, S. (2006). <i>Marriage, a history: How love conquered marriage</i> Flemons & Green, (2018). Ch. 8 Reiter & Chenail (2017). Chs. 1& 2 Gottman & Gottman (2015) Ch. 7
1/15 Attachment and Romantic Love Emotion Focused Couples Therapy	Greenberg & Goldman (2008) Chs. 1, 7, 8, & 9 Hasan & Shaver (1987) Farley & Shaver (2000) Reiter & Chenail (2017). Ch. 3 Gottman & Gottman (2015) Ch. 8
1/16 Feminist Couples Therapy Queer Intersectional Couples Therapy	Reiter & Chenail (2017). Chs. 4 & 7 Flemons & Green, (2018). Ch. 9
1/17 Narrative Couples Therapy Solution Focused Couples Therapy	Reiter & Chenail (2017). Chs. 5 & 6 Gottman & Gottman (2015) Ch. 10
1/18 Course Wrap Up	Gottman & Gottman (2015) Ch. 11 Theological Integration Paper II due
Couples Therapy Case Study Due : January 28, 2019	