Fall 2013 – CO614 Family Systems Theory

Course dates: October 29 to December 10
Course location: Boston, room 114
Course hours: 6:00p to 10:00p
Advising Hours: Weds & Thurs 4p – 6p

Professor: Jacqueline Dyer, PhD, MSW, LICSW
Telephone: 617-594-4855 (cell)
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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description
Review the major theories of family systems development with emphasis on a critical analysis of these theories from an orthodox Christian perspective. (Course Catalog)

Course Goal
The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to family systems theory, which will give the students a paradigm from which they will study multiple causes and contexts of behavior. It will explain the general principles of wholeness, and relationships, while tracking the significance of interacting variables within the family systems. The intent is to introduce students to the theoretical foundations of the most prominent contemporary therapeutic approaches to family systems theory. Furthermore, this course will provide an opportunity to evaluate and integrate various theoretical stances that were once considered irreconcilable with biblical or theological concepts of family.

Course Objectives & Outcomes
Upon completion of this course, it is expected that each student will be able to acquire knowledge related to family systems theory and be able to:

1. Develop an understanding an appreciation for the history and development of family systems theory
2. Review major contemporary theoretical formulations and to critique these theories on the basis of biblical and or theological understanding of the nature of the family
3. Develop an appreciation for the therapeutic implications of the various major theoretical approaches for different ethno-racial groups
4. Review current trends and develop an understanding for the direction of future research and development in the field of family therapy
5. Develop leadership skills of being able to present a theoretical framework of systematic family therapy and the basic assumptions underlying these frameworks
Required Texts

Barnes and Noble new $103.00; Nook--$83.00


ISBN-13: 9780199860012; Barnes and Noble new $52.51; used from $30.21

Note:
Other required reading may be assigned during the course of the semester (e.g., reserved books, journal articles, handouts, etc.).

Recommended (find with Library Reference books):

Teaching Philosophy and Code of Behavior
It is my goal as course instructor to introduce students to the material that will contribute to a critical learning process. A critical learning process is one in which the subject material is reviewed and examined so the student can build a better understanding of it. In this way students can develop their own informed opinion about the material. I also provide opportunities for students to apply the knowledge being taught through discussions and various exercises, to increase the student’s ability to interact with and integrate the course material for a more thorough learning experience. Students are encouraged to contribute to the broader discussions even if they have diverse opinions.

I expect students: to be actively responsible for their learning by utilizing the readings and any discussions to help themselves and each other find their own voices as they learn to process the material; to be mutually respectful of as well as to listen to each other and any guest speakers; and to ask questions to get any needed clarifications.

Attendance and Participation
It is important for students to participate in the discussions and apply critical thinking. Therefore, it is expected that all students will attend all classes. However, absence may not always be avoidable so, with the exception of illness, it is the responsibility of the student to consult with the professor of the course prior to the absence. Students remain responsible for assignments and course material and should contact the instructor and your peers for assistance in this regard. PLEASE NOTE: if you miss more than one class, you will have to drop the course.
- All assigned reading will be completed for the designated class session.
- Students should expected to read the assignments and other legitimate sources as well to develop an adequate understanding of family systems theory.
- All assignments are due electronically by midnight on the designated due date.
- Late papers will not be accepted.

**Weight of course activities—**
Participation & Reading, 30%; Presentations, 40%; Papers 1-2, 14%; Final Paper, 16%

*Academic Integrity (from Violations of Academic Integrity section of Student Handbook)*
The seminary considers all breaches of personal and academic integrity to be serious offenses. As such, the seminary has zero tolerance for such behaviors.

Cheating involves, but is not limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination. Duplication of course requirements involves the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructor (see Duplication of Course Requirements). Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source.

**Course Assignments and Grading Rubric**
Each assignment is worth 100 pts and assignment scores reflect the levels of accomplishment indicated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Course Activities</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disorganized or no/poor understanding of theories &amp; assumptions, no incorporation of theology or cultural concerns</td>
<td>Paper #1</td>
<td>(20-49%)</td>
<td>(50-64%)</td>
<td>(65-85%)</td>
<td>(86-95%)</td>
<td>(96-100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates rudimentary understanding of theories &amp; assumptions, some understanding of theology and cultural concerns</td>
<td>Paper #2</td>
<td>(20-49%)</td>
<td>(50-64%)</td>
<td>(65-85%)</td>
<td>(86-95%)</td>
<td>(96-100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates good understanding of theories &amp; assumptions, with good incorporation of theology and cultural concerns</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>(20-49%)</td>
<td>(50-64%)</td>
<td>(65-85%)</td>
<td>(86-95%)</td>
<td>(96-100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates advanced understanding of theories &amp; assumptions, incorporating theology and cultural concerns</td>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>(20-49%)</td>
<td>(50-64%)</td>
<td>(65-85%)</td>
<td>(86-95%)</td>
<td>(96-100%)</td>
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<td>Demonstrates insightful understanding of theories &amp; assumptions, incorporating theology and cultural concerns</td>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>(20-49%)</td>
<td>(50-64%)</td>
<td>(65-85%)</td>
<td>(86-95%)</td>
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<td>Final Course Grade</td>
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Class Sessions

Note: This schedule is for the purpose of guiding the class through the subject matter of the course in a timely and balanced manner, but is subject to change if a change of direction seems appropriate or in the event of unforeseen circumstances.

Class Session 1
Introductions, Syllabus Review
APA Format Review
Introduction: Nichols; Smith
Christian Understanding of Family Therapy: Yarhouse, Preface & Ch 1
Evolution of Family Therapy: Nichols Ch1

Class Session 2
A Comparative Analysis: Nichols Ch 13
Models of Family Therapy: Yarhouse Ch 2
General Systems Theory: Nichols, Ch 3 (to “Conclusions”), Handout
Family Systems Theory Smith Ch 5

Class Session 3
Family Development Theory: Smith Ch 3
Human Ecological Theory: Smith Ch 6
Biosocial Theory: Smith Ch 10
Putting it all together: Discuss your papers

Presentations
Class Session 4
Family Stress Theory: Smith
Conflict Theory: Smith
 Bowenian Theory: Nichols; Yarhouse
Structural Theory: Nichols; Yarhouse; Smith

Class Session 5
Narrative Theory: Nichols; Yarhouse
Experiential Theory: Nichols; Yarhouse
Feminist Family Theory: Smith
Strategic Family Theory: Nichols; Yarhouse

Class Session 6
Cognitive Behavioral Theory: Nichols; Yarhouse
Psychodynamic Theory: Nichols (Psychoanalytic Theory); Yarhouse; Handout
Contextual Family Theory: Yarhouse
Social Exchange Theory: Smith

Class Session 7
Solution Focused Theory: Nichols; Yarhouse
Symbolic Interactionism Theory: Smith
Putting it all together
**Paper #1: Paper due Wednesday of Week 3**
4-6 pg paper (not including cover or reference pages), APA format not required
1. Identify 6 to 10 values within your family that your faith considers important. Using no more than 3 pages, write about a family interaction pattern you are willing to share, then identify and discuss how each of the values you identified played a role (or not) in the situation.
2. Use the next pages to briefly describe the family ecology and the biosocial issues/structures/patterns you can identify.

**Paper #2: Paper due Wednesday of Week 5**
3-6 pg paper (not including cover or reference pages), using a **minimum** of 6 references in addition to the course texts (include use of peer reviewed journals), full APA format
1. **Cover page**
2. **Page 1**—Briefly describe each of any two of the theories covered by the syllabus to date.
3. **Middle Pages**—Based on Paper #1, discuss
   a) how the family pattern described in paper 1 would be interpreted by each theory in light of their basic assumptions
   b) what are the similarities and differences in the assumptions and applications two identified theoretical perspectives for this paper regarding the way the ‘paper #1’ pattern/dynamics would be discussed
   c) compare the compatibility of the basic tenets of your faith and the basic assumptions of each theory
   d) discuss whether it is possible for you to have an analysis of the family that integrates your faith and the theories, based on your comparison in item ‘c’ above
4. **Last Page**—Discuss whether or not your insight into the family patterns has changed, from this analysis (if not, why do you think ‘not’)
5. **Reference page**

**Group Presentation Projects (30-45 mins): Outline submitted for each Presentation**
Participate as a small group to present theoretical approaches to family systems theory. Each group prepares and submits an annotated outline paper (4-6 pages) for each paired-set of theories to the instructor in an annotated outline format, also add a cover page and reference page. Each group member will be responsible to contribute annotations for segments of the outline and to facilitate corresponding segments of each presentation.

The full annotated outline for the presentation (a-d) will be compiled and submitted to instructor and class members, by one of the group members for each presentation and the contributor for each segment of the document should be identified for that section.

*An annotated outline is an outline with a brief description of each subtopic, immediately following the specific subtopic.*
(a) **Summarize** the **basic assumptions** of each theory

(b) Comment upon how each theory aligns with the basic assumptions for one of the denominations represented by the group members (a different denomination can be used for each theory), include biblical citations & references

(c) Evaluate the strengths and gaps of each theory’s basic assumptions for possible work with two different ethno-racial groups identified by your team

(d) Compare the two theories: Do they have similar or different strengths / do they have similar or different gaps in light of application to the two ethno-racial groups?

**Final Paper**

Write a 7-10 pg paper separate from cover and reference pages, full APA format, minimum of 10 references (including course texts, other books, and peer-reviewed articles).

The paper will not be based on a specific school of thought of family systems theory, but will transcend these divisions for the sake of integrating the theories with biblical and theological implications and reference application to an ethno-racial group. The paper must reflect a comprehensive approach for thinking about developing interventions and creating change. In other words, what theories would you integrate into your philosophy of working with families and why, which techniques from each of those theories would you tend to use and why; and how do you think this combination would help you to assist a family to change. Include basic assumptions for the approach you identify and discuss your personal reflections on the adequacy of the theory from your developing perspective as a Christian practitioner.

**Paper due 1 week after last day of course**

**Group Presentations for listed class sessions:**

**Class Session 4**
- Family Stress Theory & Conflict Theory
- Bowenian Theory & Structural Theory

**Class Session 5**
- Narrative Theory & Experiential Theory
- Feminist Family Theory & Strategic Family Theory

**Class Session 6**
- Cognitive Behavioral Theory & Psychodynamic Theory
- Contextual Family Theory & Social Exchange Theory

**Class Session 7**
- Solution Focused Theory & Symbolic Interactionism Theory