CO 716: Marital Therapy

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary – Charlotte
Professor: Harv Powers, Ph.D.

Fall Semester 2015:

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop a coherent Christian perspective on marital therapy that emerges from biblical theology and a contemporary systemic frame of reference.

2. To review, within the broad systems framework, major theories that constitute the foundation for current marital therapies.

3. To begin development of proficiency in the dynamic assessment of marriages.

4. To explore in practice the varied techniques and processes involved in marital therapy within the structure of role-play in the classroom environment, augmented by videotapes of clinical application.

5. To survey the key procedural and ethical standards that undergird the practice of marital therapy.

RELATIONSHIP TO MISSION STATEMENT:

Article 3: To train and encourage students, in cooperation with the Church, to become skilled in ministry. The church is committed to the biblical view of marriage and the family and holds a high value for the preservation of the marriage as the cornerstone of the family unit. The family was the first institution created in Scripture and continues to merit the most exalted of positions. Those who are highly skilled in enabling marriages to survive and thrive as God intended are surely fulfilling His perfect will.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE CURRICULUM:

This course builds upon the foundational course, Family Systems Theory and extends the concept of systems theory into this relevant and critical area of counseling. Building upon that systemic perspective and the more generic courses in the various areas of counseling theory and helping skills, Marital Therapy addresses the complex issues of marital distress and how to address them therapeutically.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Achievement of the course objectives will be measured through a variety of assignments and activities as described below. The successful completion of these activities will require each student to spend approximately 135 hours devoted to coursework, both in class and out of class. The following chart indicates how these hours are distributed across the various course assignments. Descriptions of the assignments are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Assignment</th>
<th>Expected Time Commitment (hrs)</th>
<th>Student’s actual time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading &amp; Summary</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Marriage/Family System</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Couple Therapy Reaction Paper</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major Paper</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td><strong>Total Time</strong></td>
<td><strong>135</strong></td>
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TEXTS:


REQUIRED READING:

Jacobson, Neil S. and Gurman, Alan S. (Eds.) *Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy* (4th edition). The Guilford Press, 2008. [Specific chapters will be assigned to each student the 1st day of class. You will be required to produce a two-page summary of your chapters according to the outline given later in the syllabus. These outline summaries will be Submitted to Sakai. **ISBN-10:** 1593858213

Due: October 19, 2015 by 5pm.

Recommended Supplementary Reading:


READING REQUIREMENTS:

Reading Report & Participation in Class Discussions: (20% of final grade)

An acceptable level of competence in systemic marital therapy must begin with the student’s being adequately conversant with the broad range of literature. In order to develop a solid and rather diverse familiarity with the voluminous literature, reading for this course should be chosen from the wide variety of written clinical materials that is available in this subject area. Please attempt to identify specific areas of weakness in your overall understanding of marital therapy, and then direct your choice of reading materials to correct that deficit.

Reading must include Christian Marital Counseling by Worthington and The Practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy by Susan M. Johnson in their entirety and the assigned sections of Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy by Jacobson & Gurman. The grade equivalents for total pages completed are:

1500+ pages = C  
1800+ pages = B  
2100+ pages = A  
2400+ pages = A+

Professionally produced audiotapes and videotapes may also be included up to a maximum of ten hours. One hour of taped information or clinical presentation is considered equivalent to forty pages read. Observation of marital therapy, either taped or live, may also be substituted for reading up to the defined maximum if prior arrangements are made with the professor.

A bibliographic record of your reading should be submitted with your final written work. Annotation is not necessary, but you should carefully report how much was read in each source and include a summary sheet that computes and totalizes the number of pages read from all sources. Please follow these instructions precisely. Submitted to Sakai.

Due: November 21, 2015 by 5pm.
WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy Chapter Outlines:

These two page outlines are incorporated under the reading requirements for the class. Specific chapters will be assigned to students the first day of class. These two page bullet point summaries should follow this outline:

   a. Students Name:
   b. Name of Therapy Model:
   c. Key Theorists:
   d. Background Influences/Roots:
   e. View of Healthy vs. Distressed Couples:
   f. Overview of the Model’s Process:
   g. Role of the Therapist:
   h. Key Interventions & Mechanisms of Change:
   i. Student’s Impression of Strengths & Weaknesses of Approach:

Due: October 19, 2015 by 5pm. Submitted to Sakai

2. Personal Marriage / Family System: (20% of final grade)

Since we are dealing with systemic approaches to marital therapy, it is imperative for the therapist to be aware of the influence of her / his own family system. In addition, it is crucial for the therapist to develop the ability to empathize with people in how they perceive themselves and their relationships. Empathy is often characterized as the ability to "put oneself into another's shoes", or experiencing the outlook or emotions of another being within oneself, a sort of emotional resonance.

Note: This paper is due on the first class session of the second week end. Students will have an opportunity to discuss this assignment during the second weekend. This paper will consist of eight (8) double-spaced pages including the following items:

Note: This assignment is designed to help you understand the impact that your internalized marital model from your family of origin has had on you personally, in your relationships, as well as in your ability to be an effective counselor. You are encouraged to spend a sufficient amount of time in reflection before writing this assignment. Use language that truly describes thoughts and emotions that will make this effort a meaningful exercise for you. Force yourself to be honest and transparent in your responses.

1. Summarize your parent’s background information when they dated & married (example: year, age, occupation, location, extenuating circumstances, etc.). (1 page)
2. Describe your mother’s perspective in how she thinks, feels, and behaves towards your father as they demonstrate love, communicate, and resolve conflicts within their marriage relationship. Provide life examples that would help the reader understand your mother, as she would describe it. (2 pages)
3. Describe your father’s perspective in how he thinks, feels, and behaves towards your mother as they demonstrate love, communicate, and resolve conflicts within their marriage relationship. Provide life examples that would help the reader understand your father, as he would describe it. (2 pages)
4. Now, describe your perspective in how you think, feel, and behave towards your parents as they demonstrate love, communicate, and resolve conflicts within their marriage relationship. Provide life
examples that would help the reader understand you, as you live life with your parents. *(Seriously “step back” and ponder the breadth and depth of how their lives impacted your life and now how your life is making an impact on the lives of others.*  (2 pages)

5. Reflect on the concept of “listening with empathy,” and what the value is of this exercise on the one sharing as well as on the one listening. (1 page)

Due: Friday, October 23, 2015 – First Class on Second Weekend [Paper Copy Delivered In Class]

3. Couple Therapy Reaction Paper: *(10% of final grade)*
Write a brief reaction paper on the videotaped counseling session with RJ and Rosie conducted by Norman Wright which will be viewed in class. This paper is not intended to be research-oriented and requires no documentation, but rather it is a personal clinical observation of the process involved in this counseling session. The reflection should be richly insightful and contain as much vivid clinical detail as possible. Be specific in your observations and opinions of both the counselor and clients. The paper should not exceed three double-spaced pages.

Due: Friday, November 20, 2015 – First Class on Third Weekend [Submitted via Sakai]

4. Major Paper Required for Counseling Students: *(50% of final grade)*
The major paper is an integration paper. A thoughtful and thorough integration of biblical, theological, and psychological data focused upon marriage should be evident in your paper. View this paper as an opportunity to demonstrate how you have assimilated the course content and readings and how you have begun to formulate your overall understanding of marriage and marital therapy. The first part of the paper is more theological in nature, and the second part will demonstrate your own model and methods for conducting marital therapy. Be creative in how you package your model. Please limit your paper to ten to twelve (10-12) double-spaced pages. Use APA style and be sure to include a relevant and useful bibliography. [Submitted to Sakai]

Due: Monday, December 7, 2015 by 5pm. Graduates: Wednesday, December 2, 2015

**ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION**: All written assignments due after classes end should be submitted in electronic form to **SAKAI**. You will not receive returned work that is electronically submitted, of course.
CO 716: MARITAL THERAPY COURSE
OUTLINE –
Fall 2015

Weekend One:
• Introductions & Syllabus Review.
• Framework Issues: Defining therapy, therapeutic power, and establishing a working relationship with couples.
• History & Foundations of Marital Therapy.
• Systemic Thinking & It’s Application to Marital Therapy.
• Biblical & Theological Foundations.
• Exploring a developmental model of marriage.

Weekend Two:
• The impact of one's personal marital models
• Overview of key models of marriage therapy.
• In-depth exploration of Emotionally Focused Therapy.

Weekend Three:
• Understanding & maintaining the core bond.
• Communication & emotional regulation.
• Levels of Conflict Model.
• Testing Instruments.
• Legal and ethical standards.
• Developing expertise as a marital therapist: next steps.
• Course evaluation
Syllabus Addendum

Academic Standards
Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. 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. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing. Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

ADA Policy
The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Cancellation of Class
In the event the seminary has to cancel a class meeting (impending storm, professor illness, etc.), the Registration Office will send out an email (via the GCTS email account) notification to all students registered in the respective course. If the cancelation occurs the day of the scheduled meeting, the Registration Office will also attempt to contact students via their primary phone contact on record. The professor will contact the students (via GCTS account) regarding make-up. If a weekend class is cancelled, the class will be made up during the scheduled Make-Up weekend (see the academic calendar for the designated dates). For more info, consult your Student Handbook.

Extension Policy
Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the end date for the semester as noted on the seminary’s Academic Calendar are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required in this case. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized end date for the semester must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the stated date. Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

Grades
Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade. Grades are posted on-line within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades (unless instructed otherwise). Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party should put their request in writing to the Registration Office.

**Returned Work**
Submitted hard-copy course work will be returned to the students if they provide a self-addressed and postage-paid envelope with their final work. Work submitted without the appropriate envelope will be destroyed after the grade has been assessed and issued.

**NOTE FROM THE PROFESSOR:** PLEASE READ CAREFULLY THE EXTENSION POLICY ABOVE BEFORE REQUESTING AN EXTENSION FROM THE PROFESSOR.

**Virtual Writing Center**

Free assistance in writing papers is available to students through the Virtual Writing Center at Gordon Conwell. The Virtual Writing Center is staffed by Gordon Conwell graduates, or writing tutors with specialized knowledge in writing and/or ESL. Generally, this service is available to students who have completed or are currently enrolled in one of the following three classes:

- CT500 (Introduction to Theological Research)
- CO501 (Introduction to Counseling Research)
- IS502 (Theological Research and Writing)

If you enrolled in GCTS before Fall 2008, you were not required to take one of the three pre-requisites above, and you may request access to the Virtual Writing Center. Also, ESL writing tutors are available to ESL students even if they are not currently enrolled in a degree program. If you do not meet one of these qualifications, but feel you would benefit from using the Virtual Writing Center, contact us and we will evaluate your status.

Email writingcenter@gordonconwell.edu for more information.