Instructor: Michael P. Quirk, Psy.D.
Contact Information:
   Email: mquirk@gcts.edu
   Office hours: email instructor for appointments

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course is intended to introduce students to family systems theory and the application of the various family systems models to counseling. A number of theoretical models will be reviewed and students will gain a knowledge of each model’s assumptions, methods, strengths, and weaknesses. Additionally each model will be evaluated in relation to various biblical/theological understandings of the purpose and functioning of families.

RELATIONSHIP TO MISSION STATEMENT:
Article 3: To train and encourage students, in cooperation with the Church, to become skilled in ministry. The Church and the seminary share the goal of seeing knowledge, skills and attitudes integrated in the person who ministers. Both in traditional degree programs and in continuing education, a combination of careful training and supervised experience in ministry are educational practices essential to achieving that goal.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE CURRICULUM:
CO614 Family Systems Theory, relates to the broader MACC in the following ways:
1. It builds on theory and knowledge gained about individuals and their families from courses including CO610 (Advanced Developmental Psychology), CO500 (Introduction to Counseling), and CO6715 (Psychopathology) by providing basic understanding of systems theory. It enhances the individual perspective of these courses by providing theory and knowledge about family systems models of psychotherapy, and provides students with a context in which to develop understanding of how these apply to assisting clients with presenting issues.
2. It prepares students for their clinical training (CO867, CO868 and CO869) by providing them with models and instruments of family therapy, and the rationales behind them, so that when they enter into practice with clients presenting for treatment, they have models which they can implement to assist these clients with presenting issues. CO614 is a prerequisite for both the Family Therapy course as well as the Marital Therapy course.
3. It provides content students are required to master in order to become licensed professional counselors and/or licensed marriage and family therapists, and contributes to the students’ ability to meet the curricular requirements for licensure, which is one of the key distinctives of the MACC degree at GCTS.
COURSE OBJECTIVES:
1. To gain an understanding of the history and evolution of family systems theory.
2. To understand assumptions, terminology, and therapeutic approaches of the major family systems theories.
3. To critically evaluate each theory with particular emphasis on the interaction of biblical/theological concepts with each theory’s stated or implied views about individual and family functioning.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Successful completion of the course will focus on: class attendance, reading, written evaluation of the readings, an in-class presentation, and a final exam. All writing assignments should be completed in APA style.

REQUIRED READING: 30% of final grade
The following three texts constitute the required reading assignment:


After completing the required reading, each student will need to submit a double spaced, 1000 to 1500 word reaction paper that will address all three required texts. In this paper, students will discuss what they consider useful/helpful and not useful/helpful about the required reading. It is expected that students will display a good understanding and comprehension of the material. This assignment should be uploaded on Sakai no later than 5PM on August 17.

ADDITIONAL READING: 10% of final grade
Students are expected to do additional reading from materials referenced in the required reading, and/or students may choose books/articles related to family systems from other sources. Students may also view video materials of sufficient depth and relevance. After completing these readings, students will be required to submit a double spaced, 500 to 1000 word paper that will critically analyze the additional readings. The paper should include a list, in APA style, of the materials that you reviewed and the number of pages for each source. A minimum of 300 pages is needed to satisfy this requirement. Additional credit of 1% for each 60 pages (with a maximum of 5%) will be given for reading in excess
CLASS PRESENTATION:      25% of final grade
Students are encouraged to gain a deeper understanding of one of the family systems
theories through preparation and presentation of an in-class discussion of your selected
theory. Presentations will be done in groups of 3 students per presentation. Students are
to email their top three choices of theories to the instructor and final group assignments will
be made by the instructor with considerable input from students. All presentations will be
on August 17 and each presentation should be for about 15 to 25 minutes. Each group
should email their presentation to the student worker no later than 5PM on August 12. The
student worker will upload the presentations to Sakai for class access. The presentation
should include: a bibliography of significant writings, a brief history of the theory, and how
the theory could be used in the context of Christian counseling. Students are encouraged
to be strong “advocates” for their theory and they are encouraged to engage the class in a
lively discussion about their model. Theories from which students may choose are the
following:

1. Bowenian family therapy
2. Strategic family therapy
3. Structural family therapy
4. Object Relations/Psychodynamic family therapy
5. Experiential family therapy
6. Solution-focused family therapy
7. Cognitive-Behavioral family therapy
8. Narrative family therapy
9. Family therapy related to gender, culture, economic class and race

ATTENDANCE:      10% of final grade
Attendance for all class sessions is mandatory. If you are unable to attend all class
sessions then the student should contact the instructor and arrange for possible make-up
assignments.

FINAL EXAM:      25% of final grade
There will be one final exam that students will complete “at home”. Exams will be
available on Sakai by August 17 and should be completed by 5PM on September 14.