CO 716: MARITAL THERAPY

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary—Charlotte
Professor: Sidney L. Bradley

Fall Semester 2012
September 7-8, October 5-6 and November 2-3

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 on task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Marriage/Family System</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple Therapy Reaction Paper</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Paper</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Time</td>
<td>135</td>
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</tbody>
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**TEXTS:**

**ISBN-10:** 0415945682


**REQUIRED READING:**

**ISBN-10:** 1593858213

**Recommended Supplementary Reading:**


**ISBN-10:** 1452636885

**ISBN-10:** 0393702820

**ISBN-10:** 0415947472

**ISBN-10:** 1572308737

**ISBN-10:** 0470485914
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 stated preset 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.

Due: Monday, December 3, 2012
Graduates: Wednesday, November 21, 2012

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

1. 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 weekend. 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 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 5, 2012 - First Class on Second Weekend (Paper Copy Delivered In Class)

2. 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 2, 2012 – First Class on Third Weekend (Paper Copy Delivered In Class)

3. 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.

Due: Monday, December 3, 2012 Graduates: Wednesday, November 21, 2012

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION: All written assignments due after classes end should be submitted in electronic form to: sbradley@gordonconwell.edu. An email response will be sent within 72 hours to confirm that your work has been received if submitted on time. You will not receive returned work, of course.
Weekend One:
- Foundations of marriage and marital therapy
- A brief look at biblical, theological foundations of the marital relationship
- The impact of one's personal marital models
- The role of empathy by the counselor in marital therapy.
- Establishing rapport with clients – husbands and wives.
- Issues in contemporary marital adjustment
- Developing intimacy and companionship as foundations for growth and stability

Weekend Two:
- The strategy of working with couples – an integrated model.
- Developing an understanding of the family system of the marriage
- Communication – getting to the heart of the marital relationship
- Conflict resolution – developing a strategy for turning complaints into a format for reconciliation and restored intimacy
- Review various testing instruments commonly used within marital therapy

Weekend Three:
- Review various models of marital therapy
- Special emphasis on emotionally focused couple therapy
- Review ethical standards and legal factors for marital therapy
- Additional sources of information
- 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 “last day to submit written work,” as noted on the seminary’s Academic Calendar, are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required at this time. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized calendar due date, must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the “last day to submit written work.” 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.