I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course deals with psychological, theological and practical foundations for the practice of marital therapy. A review of major theories within the framework of contemporary approaches is presented. Also, opportunities for the development and practice of therapeutic skills in assessment, evaluation and treatment of couples are provided.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To consider major psychological, biblical and theological aspects of marriage.

2. To understand and evaluate a variety of strategies and techniques utilized in effective marriage counseling.

3. To consider a range of constructive programs that are designed to prepare and enrich the marital relationship. Aspects of pre-marital therapy will be focused upon.

4. To provide experiential components in the conduct of marital therapy in an effort to provide the student an appreciation of the various techniques and strategies involved.

III. TEXTBOOKS

Required:


**Recommended:**


**IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. **READING**

   **Reading log:** In order to develop an adequate background in marital therapy it is necessary to have a solid and broad familiarity with the available literature. Reading materials may be selected from the bibliography provided, or from other appropriate resources which relate to marriage therapy. In addition, audio/videotapes may be utilized with an equivalence of pages: time (i.e. 20pp/hr.). Such equivalence is to be noted on the reading log. The reading log will consist of an account of dates, sources, and pages accumulated throughout the term. The author, book/chapter/journal article/tape/video should be included, with the corresponding publisher, date of publication. Range= 1000 pages (C's) to 2000 pages (A's), textbooks included. This assignment represents 20% of the grade. Due: **December 18, 2012**.

2. **FINAL EXAM**

   Take home, conceptual and objective in nature, representing the field of marriage and family therapy. Given on December 3rd, and returned on December 10th. Closed-book in nature. It represents 30% of the grade.
3. WRITTEN WORK

a. Term paper: Based on a major approach to marital therapy. Beyond descriptive tones, an analysis/critique and adoption of a major theoretical approach in marital therapy, with the provision of a rationale for such choice. The main body of the paper will be 12 (twelve) pages in length, plus bibliographic references (APA style). It represents 30% of the grade. Due: December 4, 2012.

b. Reaction papers to case-studies and role playing experiential exercises. (20 % of the grade). Five written assignments, divided into three (3) case studies discussed in small groups and two (2) role-playing situations will comprise the experiential aspect of the course. The maximum length of each paper is 2 (two) single-spaced pages. Each paper is due the class period following the case studies/role playing situations presented in class.

For the case-studies, the class will be divided into small groups, considering vignettes of marital discord or dysfunction. Students will discuss each case, reflect upon it, and write a feedback paper.

For the role-play situations, the class will be divided into marital counseling practice groups, with a “couple” and those who counsel. Various class members will dramatize specific marital themes and issues as they are assigned by the professor/chosen by the group members. Other members of the class will have the opportunity to counsel these “couples”. A feedback paper follows such role-play experience.

These are not term papers, but rather observations of the processes involved in the counseling practice sessions, or discussion of vignettes, with statements as to convey the understanding of the primary psychological and theological issues, plus subsequent plans of action.

Plan ahead! Missing a class session will not allow you the opportunity to make up for such assignment, as visual, non-verbal cues and nuances are an important aspect of the role-playing process.

V. PROFESSOR’S CONTACT

Dr. Polischuk may be contacted at: 978-646-4116; mailbox #222, or e-mail pablo@gordonconwell.edu. Students may arrange appointment times by contacting the MACO office; his office is located at the AC lower level.
CO 716 COURSE OUTLINE

1. Introduction to the course. Overview
   Marriage structure, processes and functions
   Biblical foundations, theological reflection

2. Theoretical orientations in marital therapy
   Approaches in marital therapy

3. Getting started: Establishing a therapeutic alliance
   Procedures in marital therapy
   Assessment of marital needs, problems and dysfunctions
   Obtaining a meaningful family history

4. Approaches in marriage counseling
   Systemic integrative approaches in couple therapy

5. Communication in marriage
   Therapeutic issues: Who says what to whom, with what effect? When and how?
   Metacognitive awareness of the process
   Case study, small group discussion/feedback

6. Integrative Cognitive-Behavioral aspects and techniques in counseling
   Small group discussion/feedback
   Assignment #1: Vignette feedback paper due
7. Conflict in marriage and intervention strategies
   Understanding, unraveling, approaching conflictive situations
   Mediating conflicts; fostering adaptive styles
   Techniques in marital contracting: Establishing *quid pro quo's*
   Case study, small group discussion
   Reflection paper #2 due

8. Emotion-focused therapy
   Attachment theory and its applicability in couple therapy
   Small group exercise
   Reflection paper #3 due.

9. Gottman’s approach – applicability and critique
   Destructive and constructive issues in couples transactions
   Small group exercise
   Reflection paper #4 due.

10. Intimacy in marriage
    Issues of sexuality. Diagnosing sexual factors
    Gender conflict, sexual dysfunction, disorders of sexual desire
    Unresolved conflicts of psychodynamic nature
    Case study feedback #5 paper due

11. Beyond quid pro quos: A New Covenant as a paradigm
    Empowering the couple to live the terms of a new deal
    Forgiveness as a process – seen from a metacognitive, dialogical perspective

12. Termination issues in therapy
    Referral of couples
    Strengthening marriages within the church
    Educational and experiential programs
    Review of the course and integration of the material
Bibliography


Please: Consult the Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy – Wiley Interscience/American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, for relevant, updated articles -both for your reading log/paper.