PURPOSE:
The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to Family Systems Theory. The intent is to introduce students to the most prominent contemporary systems of therapy. This course will thus provide the foundation for further course work in Family Systems Therapies. Students are expected to read critically some of the original source materials summarized in the text, paying particular attention to basic assumptions and the methodologies derived from them. Further, the course will provide an opportunity for evaluating the various theoretical approaches by comparison with biblical/theological concepts of family and family function. The structure of the course will include lecture/discussion, group and individual presentations and appropriate video materials.

COURSE OBJECTIVES -

1. To develop an understanding and appreciation for the history and development of Family Systems Theory.

2. To review major contemporary theoretical formulations and to critique these theories on the basis of biblical-theological declarations about the nature of the human family.

3. To develop an appreciation for the therapeutic implications of the various major theoretical approaches.

4. To review current trends and develop an understanding for the direction of future research and development in the field of Family Therapy.

READING REQUIREMENTS -

Thomas W. Blume. *Becoming a Family Counselor: A Bridge to Family Therapy*.

Recommended Reading - Two books listed in the Bibliography are of particular significance:

Read approximately 1500 pages, not including the textbook. Keep a reading log that is due on Monday, April 19, 2010.

**WRITTEN WORK REQUIREMENTS -**

1. Beginning with the third week of class each student will prepare a three page paper that will summarize and evaluate each of the theories presented.

A brief statement of the basic assumptions of the theory, the major implications for therapy and the leading proponents for the utilization of the theory along with your own personal reflections on the adequacy of the theory from the perspective of a Christian practitioner.

Each of these papers is due one per week from weeks three through eight.

2. A final 10 page paper in which each student will take a particular theoretical approach and write an extensive critique including assumptions, methods and techniques. Such questions as - "Does this theory have an appropriate balance in its design?" - - "How does this theoretical formulation square with the clear Biblical/Theological understanding of the nature of persons, families and function?" "How do I personally find the theory to be appealing to me as a practitioner?"

Appropriate bibliographic support is expected. This last paper is due the last day of class. Monday, April 19, 2010.

**GRADING PLAN -**
Brief Papers: week 3 – 8  25%
Group Presentation       15%
Final Paper            50%
Reading Requirements    10%
SESSION 1 -  
Introduction to the course.  
Assignment of work/presentation groups.  
Discussion of covenant as an integrative entity.  
Learning to think systemically.  

Group discussion: Worldviews of psychology in historical perspective.

SESSION 2 -  
Social Constructionism - Cybernetics - Postmodernism  

Group discussion: Systems theory and Biblical absolutes with respect to family and culture.

SESSION 3 -  
Psychodynamic approaches -  
Murray Bowen  
Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy  
Object Relations Family Therapy  

Group discussion: Questions submitted by presentation group.

SESSION 4 -  
Experiential Approaches -  
Carl Whitaker  
Walter Kempler  

Group discussion: Questions submitted by presentation group.

SESSION 5 -  
Structural Approaches -  
Salvatore Minuchin  

Group discussion: Questions submitted by presentation group.
SESSION 6 -
Communication Approaches
Don D. Jackson
John H. Weakland
Paul Watzlawick
Virginia Satir

Group discussion: Questions submitted by presentation group.

SESSION 7 -
Strategic Approaches/ Milan
Jay Haley
Cloe Madanes

Group discussion: Questions submitted by presentation group.

SESSION 8 -
Behavioral Approaches -
Marital Therapy
Behavioral Family Therapy
Sexual Therapy

Group discussion: Questions submitted by presentation group.

SESSION 9 -
A look ahead - future developments in Family Therapy
The need for integrative models.

Group discussion: Essential ingredients in Family Therapy
Guidelines for integration.

SESSION 10 -
Systems in Review.
Assessment and research in Family Systems Theory.

Group discussion: Looking at ourselves.
Second order cybernetics
Course evaluation by small groups.


