

Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary
CO 716 MARITAL THERAPY
Fall Term 2010
Tuesdays 1:15-4:15pm
Professor: Dr. Polischuk

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:

Gurman, A. S. (Ed.). (2008). *Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy* (4th. ed). NY: NY Guilford Press.

Spencer, A. B.; Spencer, W. D.; Tracy, S. R.; & Tracy C. (2009). *Marriage at the Crossroads: Couples in Conversation About Discipleship, Gender Roles, Decision Making and Intimacy*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Recommended:

Stanley, S. M., Thraten, D., McCain, S. & Bryan, M. (1998). *A lasting promise: A Christian guide to fighting for your marriage*. Jossey-Bass.

Weeks, Gerald R. & Treat, Stephen R. (2001). *Couples in treatment: Techniques and approaches for effective practice* (2nd. Ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Brunner-Routledge.

Worthington, E. (2005). *Hope-focused marriage counseling: A guide to brief counseling*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. READING

Reading log and annotated bibliography.

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/video should be included, with the corresponding publisher, date of publication.

Range= 1000 pages (C's) to 2000 pages (A's), textbooks included.

Due on **December 14, 2010. (20% of the grade).**

2. 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 pages in length, APA style. Due on **December 7, 2010. (40% of the grade)**

b. Reaction papers to case-studies and role playing experiential exercises. (40% of the grade). Five written assignments, divided into three (3) case studies and two (2) role-playing situations will comprise the experiential aspect of the course. (Each paper is 8% of grade) The maximum length of each paper is 3 (three) 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. Two-page limit for these papers, to be turned in by the following class session.

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.

CO 716 COURSE OUTLINE

1. Introduction to the course. Overview
Understanding the dyadic system
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
Case study, small group discussion/feedback
4. Approaches in marriage counseling
Role-play groups
Assignment #1: First observational/feedback paper due (vignette)
5. Communication in marriage
Therapeutic stances, and the process: Who says what to whom, with what effect? When and how?
Case study, small group discussion/feedback
Assignment #2: First role-play feedback paper due
6. Cognitive aspects and techniques in counseling
Reframing in counseling
Role-play, discussion/feedback
Assignment #3: Second vignette feedback paper
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
8. Beyond contracts, to a New Covenant paradigm at work.
Assignment #4: Second role-play feedback paper due

9. Intimacy in marriage
Issues of sexuality. Diagnosing sexual factors
Gender conflict, sexual dysfunction, disorders of sexual desire
Unresolved conflicts of psychodynamic nature
Case study #3 feedback paper due

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

Bibliography

Adams, J. E., Dawson, G. & Lancaster, B. (2007). *The case of the hopeless marriage: A nouthetic counseling case from beginning to end*. Timeless Texts.

Anderson, D. & Worthen, D. (1997, Jan.). Exploring a fourth dimension: Spirituality as a resource for the couple therapist. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*. 23, 1, 3-12.

Anderson, R. & D. Guernsey, (1985). *On being family: Essays on a social theology of the family*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Bach, G. R. & Wyden, P. (1968). *The intimate enemy: How to fight fair in love and marriage*. NY: Avon Books.

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Balswick, J. O. & J. K. Balswick (1991). *The family: A Christian perspective on the contemporary home*. Grand Rapids: Baker.

Balswick, J. (1992). *Men at the crossroads: Beyond traditional roles and modern options*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.

Brock, G. W. & Barnard, C. P. (1992). *Procedures in marriage and family therapy*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Brown, J. H., & Brown, C. S. (2001). *Marital therapy: Concepts and skills for effective practice*. Brooks/Cole.

Chapman, G. (1995). *The five love languages*. Chicago: Northfield Publishing.

Chartier, M. (1978) Parenting: A theological model. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*. 6:54-61.

Cook, K. V. & Lee, L. (1992). *Man and woman: Alone and together*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Dunstan, G. R. (1975). "The marriage covenant," in *Theology*, 78, 244-252.

Eggerichs, E. (2004). *Love and respect: The love she most desires; the respect he desperately needs*. Thomas Nelson.

Friesen, D. D. & Friesen, R. M. (1989). *Counseling and marriage*. Resources for Christian counseling, Vol. 19. Dallas: Word Publishing.

Gangel, G. (1977). Toward a biblical theology of marriage and family. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*. 5:55-59; 150-162; 247-259; 318-331.

Gottman, J. M. (1999). *The marriage clinic*. W. W. Norton.

Gottman, J. M. & Silver, N. (2000). *The seven principles for making marriage work: A practical guide from the country's foremost relationship expert*. Three Rivers Press.

Gottman, J. M. (2002). *The relationship cure: Five step guide to strengthen your marriage, family, and friendships*. Three Rivers Press.

Gurman, A. S. (Ed.). (2008). *Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy* (4th ed). NY: NY Guilford Press.

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- Martin, G. R. (1987). *Counseling for family violence and abuse*, vol. 6 in Resources for Christian Counseling. Waco, TX: Word.
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- Spencer, A. B.; Spencer, W. D.; Tracy, S. R.; & Tracy C. (2009). *Marriage at the crossroads: Couples in conversation about discipleship, gender roles, decision making and intimacy*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
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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.