

COUPLES THERAPY
CPSY 560
Lewis and Clark College
Spring, 2013

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"Love takes off masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within."
James Baldwin

Catalogue Description: Systems theory therapies and practices relative to assessment, research, and treatment of couples. Explores cognitive, affective, interactional, and systemic theories of human behavior and change as related to couples.

"Marriage is our last, best chance to grow up."
Joseph Barth

Course Description: This course will focus on the treatment of problems typically encountered by couples. While several different theories of couples therapy will be reviewed, we will concentrate on emotionally focused couple therapy, the sole evidence based approach to couples work. This is a practice class and a significant portion of each class session will be devoted to the practice of couples counseling skills. There will be a great deal of reading for this class, and students will need to come to class prepared to discuss the readings for each week.

*"The concerts you enjoy together
Neighbors you annoy together
Children you destroy together
That make marriage a joy"*
Stephen Sondheim

Course Objectives:

1. Learn to apply family systems theory to working with couples, including an overview of major and evidence-based models for couples therapy. Critique how systems theory and couples models address or fail to address issues of power, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religion, and nation of origin.
2. Consider in-depth at least one model designed particularly for working with couples (e.g. emotionally-focused therapy, pragmatic experiential therapy).
3. Learn about couple relationships and marriage patterns across local, national, and international contexts including diverse couple and marital forms (e.g. LGBT couples, remarried couples, co-habitant couples; Muslim, Hindu & Christian marriages).
4. Consider power dynamics within couples that are supported by larger societal systems of privilege and oppression based on gender, race, class, abilities, nation of origin, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, language, and immigration status.

5. Explore own assumptions about couple life and marriage, as well as biases for working with diverse couples and marital forms.
6. Practice de-escalating high conflict couples, screening for domestic violence, structuring therapy with couples, and directing couple interaction/communication.
7. Understand the role of couple's research in therapy.

"We marry to find safe harbor in a roiling, roaring sea. We marry to avoid gray loneliness in a small room with only a hot plate and a thin cat. We divorce to find ourselves, and free ourselves of self-defeating templates of childhood misery. The chasm that separates us from a partner terrifies us; the prospect of intimacy does too."

Amy Bloom

Related Authorizations

Successful completion of this course is necessary for fulfillment of degree requirements for the Couples, Marriage and Family Therapy specialty in the Counseling Psychology Department. This course is also necessary for gaining access to licensure as a marriage and family therapist.

"Love is an exploding cigar we willingly smoke."

Lynda Barry

Attendance

Class attendance is expected and required. Any missed class time will be made up by completing extra assignments designed by the instructor. Missing more than ten percent of class time may result in failure to complete the class. This would be 4.5 hours of a 45 hour class (3 credits), 3.0 hours for a 30 hour class (2 credits) or 1.5 hours for a 15 hour class (1 credit.) In case of extreme hardship and also at the discretion of the instructor, a grade of incomplete may be given for an assignment or the entire course. In such cases, the work to be submitted in order to remove the incomplete must be documented appropriately and stated deadlines met. Students are expected to be on time to class and tardiness may be seen as an absence that requires make-up work.

"For one human being to love another; that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is preparation."

Rainer Maria Rilke

Instructional Methods

This class will combine lecture, skills practice, role plays, demonstrations, guest speakers, video presentations, and will rely heavily on class discussions.

"Marriage is the only adventure open to the cowardly."

Voltaire

"Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage"

Anais Nin

"Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength; loving someone deeply gives you courage."

Lao-Tzu

Required Texts

Gottman, J. (2000). The seven principles for making marriage work. New York, Three Rivers Press.

Greenberg, L., & Goldman, R. (2008). Emotion-focused couples therapy. Washington DC, American Psychological Association.

Lewis, T., Amini, F., & Lannon, R. (2000). A general theory of love. New York: Vintage.

Real, T. (2002). How can I get through to you? New York, Simon and Schuster.

XanEdu reading packet.

Recommended:

Bloom, A (ed) (1999). Here lies my heart. Boston: Beacon.

Yglesias, R. (2009). A happy marriage. Scribner: New York.

"The value of marriage is not that adults produce children but that children produce adults."
Peter De Vries

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the following class requirements:

1. Active participation in class discussion - 25 points
 2. Show and tell – 10 points
 3. Reading journals – 25 points
 4. Attachment reflection paper or project- 40 points
- Total possible - 100 points

Grading scale: 93-100 = A
90-92 = A-
87-89 = B+
83-86 = B
80-82 = B-
77-79 = C+
73-76 = C

"Every adult relationship recreates the original relationship. The discovery of love is a rediscovery."
Sigmund Freud

Assignment One: Show and Tell. During the term, each student will need to share with the class at least one discovery that provides insight into the workings of couples. This can be a book (fiction or non-fiction), a song, a movie, a TV show, a journal or magazine article, a cartoon or anything else that strikes you as capturing some truth about couples. We will start each class with show and tell and you may choose to share your discovery at any point in the term. When presenting your discovery you will discuss its relevance to the class and its significance to you. If too many people want to share on any given week we may have to postpone someone to the following week.

"I first learned the concepts of non-violence in my marriage".
-Mahatma Gandhi

Assignment Two: Reading Journals: Throughout the term you will turn in 5 one to two page reading journals. These papers should reflect your reactions to one of the books, chapters or articles we have read for that week. There will be a total of 5 reading journals due during the term. Each is worth 5 points. These can be turned in intermittently during the term; however, do not wait until the last week of class to turn them in. Only one journal will be accepted the last week of class.

*'Tis not love's going hurts my days,
But that it went in little ways.*
-- Edna St. Vincent Millay

Assignment Three: Attachment reflection: This paper is an opportunity for you to reflect on your own "attachment story" through the lens of attachment theory. You are expected to reflect on how your attachment style, how it influences your relationship, particularly intimate ones, and how your attachment style will affect your practice of therapy. The paper is to be a maximum of 8 pages, double-spaced, and referenced using APA style. **DUE NO LATER THAN APRIL 9. (40%)** Consider the following questions and relate them to your current attachment style. Do not simply answer these questions but use them to stimulate your reflection.

1. How does your experience in your family of origin, both past and current, affect your attachment style?
2. What does your adult relationship history suggest about your attachment style?
3. What behaviors do you currently exhibit that illustrate your attachment style?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your attachment style? How has your attachment schema helped you or tripped you up?
5. How does your attachment style affect your conceptualization of the therapeutic relationship?
6. How does it contribute to potential areas of reactivity?
7. What schemas or working models do you carry pertaining to attachment?
8. How does your attachment schema shape your view of what is a healthy couple relationship.
9. How do you plan to address any problem areas you perceive?

"The pleasures of love are always in proportion to the fear" Stendhal

Option Two:

Rather than write the paper described above, you may produce a work of art that explores the same themes. You may write a short story or one-act play. You may produce a short film or performance piece. You may produce a painting or other work of visual art. You may write a song or produce a mix CD. This project must reflect the same amount of effort and thought that would go into writing a 10 page paper. Students who select this option will present their work to the class during the last two weeks.

*Once we accept that even between the closest human beings infinite distances continue to exist, we
can live wonderfully side by side. As long as we succeed in loving the distance between one
another, each of us can see each other as whole against the sky.*
Rainer Maria Rilke

Class Schedule

There will be no chapter assignments for the Real, Lewis, or Gottman books. You may read them at your own pace as long as they are completed by the deadlines indicated below.

- January 8: Introduction, course overview.
- January 15: Greenberg, Chapter 1
Hazan, C., Campa, M. & Gur-Yaish, N., *What is adult attachment.*
- January 22: Greenberg, Chapter 2
Shaver and Mikulincer, *A behavioral systems approach to romantic love relationships.*
- January 29: Greenberg, Chapter 3
Cherlin, A., *The deinstitutionalization of American marriage.*
Hazan, C., *The essential nature of couple relationships.*
- February 5: **Finish Reading Lewis**
Greenberg, Chapter 4
Johnson, R., *Of human love*
Richo, D. *Why I love you but don't really see you.*
- February 12: Greenberg, Chapter 5
Fisher, H., *The drive to love: The neural mechanisms for mate selection*
Atkinson, B., *Affective neuroscience and the emotional revolution.*
- February 19: Greenberg, Chapter 6
Doherty, W., *Bad couples therapy.*
Bader, E. & Pearson, P., *Facing our fears.*
- February 26: Greenberg, Chapter 7
Gardner, B., Butler, M. & Seedall, R., *En-gendering the couple-deity relationship: Clinical implications of power and process.*
Schnarch, D. *Inside the sexual crucible.*

- March 5: Greenberg, Chapter 8
Levy, K., Kelly, K. & Jack, E., *Sex differences in jealousy*.
Finzi, S., *Così fan tutte*.
Gottlieb, D., *My cheatin' heart*.
Brown, E., *Getting the message*.
- March 12: **Finish Reading Real**
Greenberg, Chapter 9
Real, T., *A matter of choice*.
Ventura, M., *A dance for your life in the marriage zone*.
- March 19: Greenberg, Chapter 10
Green, Robert-Jay, *Gay and lesbian couples in therapy: A social justice perspective*.
- March 26: Spring Break
Greenberg, Chapter 11
- April 2: Greenberg, Chapter 12
Josephson, G., *Using an attachment-based intervention with same-sex couples*.
Kurdek, L., *Change in relationship quality for partners from lesbian, gay male and heterosexual couples*.
- April 9: **Finish Reading Gottman**
Greenberg, Chapters 13
Attachment Reflection Due
- April 16: Greenberg, Chapter 14

*Players and painted stage took all my love
And not those things that they were emblems of...
Now that my ladder's gone
I must lie down where all the ladders start
In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.
W.B. Yeats*

Love consists in this, that two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other.
-- Rainer Maria Rilke