



“We are a community that commits itself to diversity and sustainability as dimensions of a just society” --*Lewis and Clark Mission Statement*

**MCFT 560: COUPLES THERAPY IN MCFT  
SUMMER 2019**

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Time & Day: Section 1—Tuesdays & Thursday 8:30-12:15 May 7-June 13  
Section 11— Tuesdays & Thursday 1:00 - 4:45 May 7-June 13

Place: York 116

Instructor: Carmen Knudson-Martin, PhD

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Section 11—Marla Pallin, MA, [pallin.marla@gmail.com](mailto:pallin.marla@gmail.com)

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

Systems/relational therapies and practices relative to assessment, research, and treatment of couples, with an emphasis on promoting relational justice through addressing power/privilege and the links between neurobiology, emotion, societal context, and couple interaction. Students develop competencies to work with a wide range of couples across the life span and diverse sociocultural contexts, with attention to issues such as intimacy, conflict, co-parenting, spirituality, infidelity, divorce, loss, and illness. Couple therapy for the treatment of trauma and mental health disorders will also be addressed.

**CREDITS:** 3 semester units

**MCFT STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

SLO1.1: Students recognize the impact of power on individuals, families, and communities.

SLO1.2: Students recognize the interconnections among biological, psychological, social systems in people's lived experience.

SLO1.3: Students apply systems/relational theories to clinical case conceptualization

SLO 2.2: Students' clinical practice demonstrates attention to social justice and cultural democracy

SLO 3.2 Students draw on the research literature relevant to family therapy in case planning.

SLO: 4.3 Students demonstrate integration of family therapy theory, equity, and social location issues in clinical practice.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. Recognize how inequities in larger systems create destructive power imbalances in couple relationships (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, spirituality, religion, larger systems, social context) (TS 1.04; KS 45, 53; CC 1.2.1)
2. Recognize the confluence of emotion, societal context, and couple interaction in the moment by moment of couple therapy. (TS 1.04; KS 45, 53; CC 1.2.1)
3. Learn at least one research-based clinical model for couple therapy that promotes relational justice and mutual support. (CC 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.3.2)
4. Practice clinical competencies that empower couples to create an equitable foundation for their relationship. (TS 1.04; KS 45, 53)
5. Apply systems/relational theories and practices to therapy with couples with a range of sociocultural contexts and presenting issues. (CC 1.2.1, 4.3.7)

## **TEXTS:**

### **Required**

Gottman, J. S., & Gottman, J. M. (2015). *Ten principles for doing effective couples therapy*. New York, NY: Norton.

Johnson, S. M. (2005). *Emotionally focused couple therapy with trauma survivors: Strengthening attachment bonds*. New York, NY: Guilford.

Knudson-Martin, C. & Mahoney, A. R. (Eds.) (2009). *Couples, gender, and power: Creating change in intimate relationships*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Co.

Knudson-Martin, C, Wells, M., Samman, S., (Eds.) (2015). *Socio-emotional relationship therapy: Bridging Emotion, Societal Context, and Couple Interaction*. New York: Springer International. (available electronically through Watzek Library)

Rastogi, M. & Thomas, V. (2009). *Multicultural couple therapy*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

### **Recommended** (available through bookstore)

Fishbane, M. D. (2013). *Loving with the brain in mind: Neurobiology and couple therapy*. New York, NY: Norton.

Gottman, J. M. (2011). *The science of trust: Emotional attunement for couples*. New York, NY: Norton.

Johnson, S. M. (2008). *Hold me tight: Seven conversations for a lifetime of love*. New York, NY: Little Brown.

### Assigned Journal Articles

- Addison, S., & Coolhart, D. (2015). Expanding the therapy paradigm with queer couples. *Family Process, 54*, 435-453.
- Anderson, S., & Johnson, L. (2010). A dyadic analysis of the between and within-system alliances on distress. *Family Process, 49*, 229-235.
- Biama, T. R. & Feldhousen, E. B. (2007). The heart of sexual trauma: Patriarch as a centrally organizing principle for couple therapy. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, 19*, 13-36.
- ChenFeng, J., Kim, L., Knudson-Martin, C., & Wu, Y. (2016). Application of socio-emotional relationship therapy with couples of Asian heritage: Addressing issues of culture, gender, and power. *Family Process, 56*. 558-573.
- Dalgleish, T. L. Johnson S., Moser, M. B., Wiebe, S. A., & Tasca, G. (2015). Predicting key change events in emotionally focused couple therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 41*, 260-275.
- Elias-Juarez, M. A., & Knudson-Martin, C. (2016). Cultural attunement in therapy with Mexican-heritage couples: A grounded theory study. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy, 43*, 100-114.
- Jordan, L. S., Grogan, C., Muruthi, B. & Bermúdez, J. M. (2017) Polyamory: Experiences of power from without, from within, and in between, *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy, 16*, 1-19.
- Kim, L. & Esmiol Wilson, E. (2018). Finding a way through: Spirituality and sociocultural meaning in the face of infertility and perinatal loss. In *Socially just religious and spiritual interventions: Ethical uses of therapeutic power* (pp. 87-97). New York, NY: Springer.
- Knudson-Martin, C. (2013). Why power matters: Creating a foundation of mutual support in couple relationships. *Family Process, 52*, 5-18.
- Knudson-Martin, C., & Huenergardt, D. (2010). A socio-emotional approach to couple therapy: Linking social context and couple interaction. *Family Process, 49*, 369–386.
- Lebow, J., Chambers, A. L., Christensen, A., & Johnson, S. M. (2012). Research on the treatment of couple distress. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy, 38*, 145-168.
- Loscocco, K., & Walzer, S. (2013). Gender and the culture of heterosexual marriage in the United States. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 5*, 1-14.
- McFee, M. R., & Monroe, P. G. (2011). A Christian psychology translation of emotion-focused therapy: clinical implications. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 30*, 317-328.
- Papernow, P. (2018). Clinical guidelines for working with stepfamilies: What family, couple, individual, and child therapists need to know. *Family Process, 57*, 25-51.

- Quek, K. & Knudson-Martin, C., Rue, D., & Alabiso, C. (2009). Relational harmony: A new model of collectivism and gender equality among Chinese American couples. *Journal of Family Issues*, 31, 358-380.
- Roddy, M., Nowlan, K., Doss, B., & Christensen, A. (2016). Integrative behavioral couple therapy: Theoretical background, empirical research, and dissemination. *Family Process*, 55(3), 408-422.
- Spencer, B. & Brown, J. (2007). Fusion or internalized homophobia? A pilot study of Bowen's differentiation of self hypothesis with lesbian couples. *Family Process*, 46, 257-268
- Wells, M. A., Lobo, E., Galick, A., Knudson-Martin, C., Huenergardt, D., & Schaepper, J. (2017). Fostering trust through relational safety: Applying SERT's focus on gender and power with adult-survivor couples. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 16, 122-145.
- Wiebe, S. A., & Johnson, S. M. (2016). A review of the research in emotionally focused therapy for couples. *Family Process*, 55, 390-407.
- Williams, K. (2018). Reconnecting after an affair: relationship justice, spirituality, and infidelity treatment. In *Socially just religious and spiritual interventions: Ethical uses of therapeutic power* (pp. 75-85). New York, NY: Springer.
- Williams, K., Galick, A., Knudson-Martin, C., & Huenergardt, D. (2013). Toward mutual support: A task analysis of the relational justice approach to infidelity. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 39(3), 285-298.
- Williams, K., & Knudson-Martin, C. (2013). Do therapists address gender and power in infidelity? A feminist analysis of the treatment literature. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 39(3), 271-284

### **Additional Suggested Texts/Readings**

- Coontz, S. (2005). *Marriage, a history: From obedience to intimacy or how love conquered marriage*. New York, NY: Viking.
- Gottman, J. M., Gottman, J. S., & DeClair, J. (2006). *Ten lessons to transform your marriage*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press
- Gurman, A. S., Lebow, J. L., & Snyder, D. K. (2015). *Clinical handbook of couple therapy*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Johnson, S. M. (2004). *The practice of emotionally focused couple therapy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New York, NY: Brunner-Routledge.
- Lev, A. & McKay, K. (2017). *Acceptance and commitment therapy for couples*. Oakland, CA: Context Press.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### 1. Participation (25 points)

This course emphasizes shared engagement with the assigned readings and development clinical competencies through case discussions and role-plays. Toward this end, you are expected to:

- Attend and participate in **all** class meetings. In the event of illness or other emergency, please email the instructor in advance of class. Missed classes will be made up by written reflections on the required readings for the day.
- Come to class prepared (having read the assignment for the day) and contribute to in-class discussion/activities based on the readings assigned.
- Respectfully engage with other students and/or the instructor in a spirit of openness and curiosity.

Your participation in class activities will be evaluated according to the following rubric:

CLASS PARTICIPATION COMPETENCIES	Possible Points	Points demonstrated
Prompt and dependable presence in the class.	10	
Prepares for class by immersing self in course readings and reflecting on their application to practice.	5	
Engages in course activities with a spirit of openness and curiosity.	5	
Helps to create an atmosphere of safety and mutual respect among all class members.	5	
TOTAL	25	

### 2) Case Presentation -- in groups of three (25 points)

Select a population or issue that fits with the assigned reading and topic for the day you are presenting. ***Your presentation will provide a springboard for class discussion and role play for this case.***

Prepare a 15-20 minute presentation with the following components:

- Summarize socio-contextual issues relevant to your identified topic and how these issues are likely to affect relationship power dynamics, circle of care, and the process of couple therapy. Draw on assigned/suggested readings for this course, as well as additional readings as helpful. (7-10 minutes)
- Create a description of a fictional or real case that illustrates the identified issues. It can be based on a movie, book, a composite of people you know, a case that you are working with, or totally made up based on your readings. The description should include the following information (7-10 minutes)

- Demographic information describing the couple’s social location (age, gender identification, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, culture, religion, education and socio-economic status, disabilities, etc.)
- The reason the couple is seeking therapy.
- Brief summary of relevant background information (i.e., significant life transitions such as divorce/deaths and family history, special concerns, etc.)
- and how these affect the ways they approach the relationship
- How power and socio-contextual issues are part of client experience and how attunement to them will be important to the therapy process.

Your presentation will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

SOCIOCULTURAL ATTUNEMENT COMPETENCIES	Possible Points	Points demonstrated
Summarizes key socio-contextual issues for this population or issue overall and how they potentially affect power dynamics, the circle of care, and the issues to address in therapy	10	
Identifies key social contextual/demographic information, very brief history, and reason for seeing therapy	5	
Identifies power and larger context issues that will be important to the process of therapy for this particular couple	10	
TOTAL	25	

**3. Relationship Schema Reflection Paper: (25 points). DUE May 30.** This paper is an opportunity for you to reflect on your own relationship schema through the lenses of sociocultural attunement and attachment theory. You are expected to reflect on what you have internalized about relationships, particularly intimate ones; how this affects your relationships; and how your relational schema will affect your practice of therapy. The paper is to be 5-7 pages, double-spaced, and referenced using APA style.

You may use the following questions to stimulate your reflections:

- How does your experience in your family of origin, both past and current, affect your attachment style? What issues might bring you to therapy?
- How has your social location and sociocultural experience influenced your attachment experiences?
- What working models of relationships have you internalized? (for example, about trust in intimate relationships? About the possibility of resolving conflict? About what you expect to give and receive in intimate relationships?)

- What does your adult relationship history suggest about your relationship schema? How has this affected your experience with the Circle of Care?
- What behaviors do you currently exhibit that illustrate your attachment style?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of your relationship schema? How has your attachment schema helped you or tripped you up?
- How does your relationship schema affect your conceptualization of the therapeutic relationship?
- How does it contribute to potential areas of reactivity?
- How does your attachment schema and sociocultural experience shape your view of what is a healthy couple relationship? Your belief that people can commit to each other and overcome problems?
- How do you plan to address any problem areas you perceive?

REFLECTIONS ON PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP SCHEMA	Possible points	Points demonstrated
Reflections make connections between personal, familial, and sociocultural histories as they relate to the development of own relational schema.	5	
Reflections demonstrate awareness of self-in-relationship, such as attachment style and associated behaviors, areas of reactivity.	5	
Reflections demonstrate awareness of how own relationship schema may impact development and performance as a couple therapist.	5	
Reflections suggest that course concepts have been applied/integrated in the development of self-of-therapist.	5	
Paper is well written in appropriate APA format.	5	
TOTAL	25	

4) **Case Conceptualization and Treatment Plan** (25 points). **Due June 17** (post on Taskstream). Using the case you presented, write a 3-5 page case conceptualization and treatment plan that includes principles of relational justice and mutual support. Presentation partners may consult with each other as much as you wish; however, each person should write a separate treatment plan.

- a. Provide a brief overview of the partners involved, the reason for therapy, and influence of the sociocultural context (from presentation).
- b. Conceptualize the relational patterns in terms of the Circle of Care and power dynamics and how they relate to the presenting concerns and relationship distress.
- c. Identify overall treatment goals, including a focus on relational justice/mutual support
- d. Outline a plan detailing strategies you will use to help the couple attain the treatment goals.

Your case conceptualization and treatment plan will be graded according to the following rubric.

TREATMENT PLANNING COMPETENCIES	Possible points	Points demonstrated
Provides an overview of the partners involved, the reason for therapy, and influence of the sociocultural context.	5	
Conceptualization includes attention to power dynamics and the four elements of mutual support (Circle of Care)	5	
Treatment goals draw out of the case conceptualization and are clearly stated.	5	
Treatment plan details how goals will be accomplished.	10	
TOTAL	25	



## **CPSY DEPARTMENTAL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

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 maybe seen as an absence that requires make-up work.

## **DISABILITY SERVICES STATEMENT**

If you have a disability that may impact your academic performance, you may request accommodations by submitting documentation to the Student Support Services Office in the Albany Quadrangle (503-768-7192). After you have submitted documentation and filled out paperwork there for the current semester requesting accommodations, staff in that office will notify me of the accommodations for which you are eligible.

## **DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION**

The Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) requires the program to have “established policies for informing applicants and students regarding disclosure of their personal information” (COAMFTE Standard 140.02, 2003). Each student should decide for him/herself what information to disclose. Students are advised to be prudent when making self-disclosures. The program cannot guarantee confidentiality of student disclosures given the group environment, although personal comments should be considered private and confidential – and remain only in the classroom – unless an exception to confidentiality applies.

## **CELL PHONES**

Cell phones must be silenced and text messaging is not allowed during class time. If there is an emergency you may exit the class to use your cell.

## **EVALUATION AND GRADING**

**Grades for this course will be determined as follows:**

Participation	25 pts
Case Presentation	25 pts
Treatment Plan	25 pts
Relationship Schema Reflection	25 pts
Total	100 pts

94-100 = A	90-93.5 = A-	88-89.5 = B+
83-87.5 = B	80-82.5 = B-	78-79 = C+
73-77.5 = C	70-72 = C-	

## COURSE SCHEDULE

	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings &amp; Assignments</b>
Class 1 May 7	Overview: Power, emotion, & social context in couple relationships	KM & M Chap 1, 3-7  <u>Suggested</u> Loscocco & Waltzer (2013) Knudson-Martin (2013)
Class 2 May 9	Power, social identities, intersectionality, and intimate relationships	Addison & Coolhart (2015) KM&M chap 12-16
Class 3 May 14	SERT Phase I Positioning Sociocultural attunement The therapeutic alliance	SERT pp. 1-14, 41-52, 67-78 R&T chap 5  <u>Suggested</u> Anderson & Johnson (2010) Knudson-Martin & Huenergardt (2010)
Class 4 May 16	Phase II Interrupting the flow of power  Infidelity  Case Presentation _____	SERT pp 15-26, 79-91, 121-132, 145-153 Williams & KM (2013)—feminist analysis of infidelity treatment literature  <u>Suggested</u> Williams et al (2013) –task analysis
Class 5 May 21	Mutuality in sociocultural context  SERT Phase III Practicing mutuality  Case Presentation _____	SERT pp 93-105 ChenFeng et al Jordan et al (2017) Spencer & Brown (2007) R&T chap 19
Class 6 May 23	Intimacy, attachment & trauma  Case Presentation _____	Johnson (2002) chap 1-4 SERT pp. 27-40 Wells et al (2017)  <u>Suggested</u> Biama & Feldhousen (2007)
Class 7 May 28	Application of EFT  Case Presentation _____	Johnson (2002) chap 5-7 R&T chap 8 & 17  <u>Suggested</u> Dalglish et al (2015) Wiebe & Johnson (2016)

Class 8 May 30	Ethnic & Racial Contexts	R&T chap 4, 5, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15  <u>Suggested</u> Elias-Juarez (2016)  <b>RELATIONSHIP SCHEMA PAPER DUE</b>
Class 9 June 4	Couple Therapy Research Gottman approach	Lebow (2012) Gottman & Gottman (2015)-whole book  <u>Suggested</u> Roddy (2016) Integrative-Behavioral
Class 10 June 6	Narrative & cultural approaches  Case Presentation _____	R& T chap 3, 6, 13, 16, 18
Class 11 June 11	Co-parenting/stepfamilies  Case Presentation _____	K-M & M chap 8, 9 Quek et al. (2009) Papernow (2018)  <u>Suggested</u> K-M & M chap 10
Class 12 June 13	Special Issues: Spirituality Illness & loss  Case Presentation _____	SERT pp.133-144 R&T chap 7 Kim & Esmiol Wilson (2018)  <u>Suggested:</u> McFee (2011) Williams (2018)
June 17 9 am		TREATMENT PLAN DUE Post on Taskstream