

Lewis & Clark
Graduate School of
Education and Counseling



"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 2022**

Time & Day: Thursdays at 5:30pm

Place: In person. There will be no class on zoom. See participation and attendance policy.

Instructor: Stephanie Oliver, MA, LMFT

Office Hours: Fridays by appointment only

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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 lifespan 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 cases.

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)

PLEASE NOTE: Coursework should be secondary to the health and safety of you and your loved ones. My aim is to prepare you for the gratifying and challenging work of doing couple therapy which can only be successful if you are able to be present and mindful. If you are finding yourself overwhelmed or undermotivated, please prioritize our class time. My hope is that the experiential nature of our work together will go a long way in preparing you for your work as a therapist in the future.

TEXTS:

Greenberg, Leslie S., and Goldman, Rhonda N. *Emotion-focused Couples Therapy: The Dynamics of Emotion, Love, and Power*. 1st ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008. Print.

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

hooks, bell. *All About Love: New Visions*. (2018). New York, NY: William Morrow

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 ONLINE**

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

Recommended Texts:

Glass, Shirley (2003). *Not Just Friends: Rebuilding Trust and Recovering Your Sanity After Infidelity*. New York: Free Press.

Gottman, John Mordechai., and Silver, Nan. *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work : A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert*. New York, NY: Three Rivers, 1999. Print.

Johnson, Susan M. *Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy with Trauma Survivors : Strengthening Attachment Bonds*. New York: Guilford, 2002. Print. Guilford Family Therapy Ser.

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

Johnson, Susan M. *The Practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Levine, Amir., and Heller, Rachel. *Attached : The New Science of Adult Attachment and How It Can Help You Find--and Keep--love*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, an Imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2010. Print.

Lockman, Darcy. *All the Rage : Mothers, Fathers, and the Myth of Equal Partnership*. First ed. New York, NY: Harper, an Imprint of HarperCollins, 2019. Print.

Recommended Journal Articles

Addison, S., & Coolhart, D. (2015). Expanding the therapy paradigm with queer couples. *Family Process*, 54, 435-453.

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 .

Dew, B., & Myers, J. (2000). Gay and lesbian parents: No longer a paradox. *Adultspan Journal*, 2(1), 44-56. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0029.2000.tb00090.x

Downing, J., & Goldberg, A. (2011). Lesbian mothers' constructions of the division of paid and unpaid labor. *Feminism & Psychology*, 21(1), 100-120.

Giammattei, Shawn V. "Beyond the Binary: Trans-Negotiations in Couple and Family Therapy." *Family Process* 54.3 (2015): 418-34. Web.

Goldberg, A. (2013). "doing" and "undoing" gender: The meaning and division of housework in same-sex couples. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 5(2), 85-104.
doi:10.1111/jftr.12009

Loscocco, K., & Walzer, S. (2013). Gender and the culture of heterosexual marriage in the United States. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 5, 1-14.

Nightingale, M., Ibilola Awosan, C., & Stavrianopoulos, K. (2019) Emotionally Focused Therapy: A Culturally Sensitive Approach for African American Heterosexual Couples, *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 30:3, 221-244, DOI: 10.1080/08975353.2019.1666497 3

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.

Anderson, S., & Johnson, L. (2010). A dyadic analysis of the between and within-system alliances on distress. *Family Process*, 49, 229-235.

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.

Johnson, M. P. (1995). Patriarchal Terrorism and Common Couple Violence: Two Forms of Violence Against Women. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 57(2), 283-294.
<https://doi-org.library.lcproxy.org/10.2307/353683>

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. and Mahoney, A.R. (2005), Moving Beyond Gender: Processes that create relationship equality. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 31: 235-258. doi:10.1111/j.1752-0606.2005.tb01557.x

Knudson-Martin, C., & Mahoney, A. (1998). Language and Processes in the Construction of Equality in New Marriages. *Family Relations*, 47 (1), 81-91. doi:10.2307/584854

Koser, K. (2020). Fertility Counseling With Couples: A Theoretical Approach. *The Family Journal*, 28(1), 25–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480719887498>

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.

Moors, A., Ryan, W., & Chopik, W. (2019). Multiple loves: The effects of attachment with multiple concurrent romantic partners on relational functioning. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 147, 102-110. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2019.04.023

Papernow, P. (2018). Clinical guidelines for working with stepfamilies: What family, couple, individual, and child therapists need to know. *Family Process*, 57, 25-51.

Scheinkman, M., & Fishbane, M. D. (2004). The Vulnerability Cycle: Working With Impasses in Couple Therapy. *Family Process*, 43 (3), 279–299. doi: 10.1111/j.1545-5300.2004.00023.x

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Participation** (25 points) & *Show and Tell*

- Attend and participate in **all** class meetings. Due to this class being on a Monday in the summer, there are 3 days off: Memorial Day, Independence Day and Juneteenth. In the event of illness or other emergency, please email the instructor in advance of class. Missed classes may be made up by written reflections on the required readings for the day. If you miss more than one class, for whatever reason, your participation grade will go down because you simply weren't there.
- 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, authenticity and curiosity.
- 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.

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 and one “Show and Tell” during the course.	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, authenticity 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 2 (25 points). We will agree on the date you present and your group members during the 1st or 2nd session of class.

Select a population or issue that interests you. Examples might be LGBTQ+ couples, couples representing a particular race, ethnicity, socio-economic status or religion, people in polyamorous relationships, couples dealing with loss, depression, any type of parenting, infidelity, substance abuse, illness, aging, history of abuse, trauma, etc. Any topic that interests you is appropriate. ***Your presentation will provide a springboard for class discussion of treatment planning for this case.***

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

- Choose a couple from TV or film that interests you. Create a description of this case that illustrates the identified issues. (See following for requirements)
- Summarize socio-contextual issues unique to this couple and how these issues are likely to affect relationship power dynamics. Draw on additional readings outside those assigned for the class to the extent they are helpful. Only do this if you actually come

across something useful, don't just list random articles you haven't read. Authenticity is key!

- Reason the couple is seeking therapy. Tell us this in their words, not therapy language.
- Demographic information describing the couple's social location (age, gender identification, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, culture, religion, education and socio-economic status, disabilities, etc.)
- Brief summary of relevant background information (i.e., significant life transitions such as divorce/deaths and family history, special concerns, etc.)
- Summary of guiding lens questions at the top of Page 17 in SERT book and how these affect the ways they approach the relationship
- What power and sociocultural issues will be important in the therapeutic process?
- Show us a five minute or less clip of the couple in action

Your presentation will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

SOCIOCULTURAL ATTUNEMENT COMPETENCIES	Possible Points	Points demonstrated
Summarizes key socio-contextual issues related to population or history and connects them to likely power dynamics in the relationship and the "circle of care"	10	
Identifies key social contextual/demographic information, very brief history, and reason for seeking therapy (enough information to identify the couple's cycle)	5	
Uses the sociocultural guiding lens questions SERT page 17 of each partner and how these affect the ways they approach the relationship	5	
Identifies power and larger context issues that will be important to the process of therapy for this couple	5	
TOTAL	25	

3. Relationship Schema Reflection Paper (Option 1): (25 points). Due the week of July 11th by your class time. 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 a maximum of 8 pages, double-spaced.

You may use the following questions to stimulate your reflections, as well as my relationship intake questions/attachment interview questions (on Moodle):

- 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 your coping mechanisms?

- 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?
- What blocks you from remaining present? What triggers you? When do you notice yourself exiting from emotion and what do you do when you exit? (withdraw? fix? solve? act like everything is okay?)
- How do you plan to address any problem areas you perceive?

(Option 2) 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.

REFLECTIONS ON PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP SCHEMA OR WORK OF ART	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.	10	
TOTAL	25	

4) **Case Conceptualization and Treatment Plan** (25 points). Due the week of August 8th by your assigned class time.. Using the case you presented, write a 3-5 page case conceptualization and treatment plan based on principles of relational justice and mutual support. Draw on the class discussion and readings to help you apply the model of your choice to your case. 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.

Please make it clear what model /lens you're using and let it help you conceptualize the case and treatment plan.

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 include attention to relational justice and mutual support.	5	
Treatment plan details how goals will be accomplished. (drawing on techniques from SERT, EFT, Gottman)	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 may be 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 or art piece 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

	Topics	Readings & Assignments
May 12th	Getting to know each other, the course, and couples therapy Top Card - self of the therapist Show and Tell: Total Eclipse of the Heart- an overview of attachment theory	Listen before class: "I've Had Better" by Esther Perel (Where Should We Begin? podcast) Season 1 Episode 1 All About Love: Intro and Chap. 1
May 19th	Assessment techniques with couples Infinity note, circle of care	EFCT Chapter 1 All About Love: Chapter 2 & 3 Optional reading: Loscocco, K., & Walzer, S. (2013).
May 26th	Case presentation individual sessions, putting it all together Identifying the cycle Accessing primary emotions Using the circle of care	EFCT Chapter 2 SERT: Pages 1-25 All About Love: Chapter 4 & 5

June 2nd	De escalation: softening and engaging Adult attachment interview Top card Adele & Mayan and Tiff	EFCT Chapter 3 SERT: 79-104, 93-105 All About Love: Chapter 6 & 7
June 9th	Discernment vs. detached partner Vy & Sable	EFCT: Chapter 4 SERT: 27-40 All About Love Chapter 8 & 9 Optional reading: Williams, K., Galick, A., Knudson-Martin, C., & Huenergardt, D. (2013)
June 16th	Affairs/infidelity, emotional affairs Robert and Ale	ECFT Chapter 5 SERT: 121-132 All About Love Chapter 10 & 11 The Love, Happiness, Success Podcast: Sex After Infidelity
June 23rd	Beginning to access primary emotions - relating lived experience to larger social context- explaining what you're doing Practicing enactments Lauren and Michael	ECFT Chapter 6 & 7 Multicultural couples therapy pages 9-23 & 235-252 All About Love Chapters 12 & 13
June 30th	Special SERT presentation by Carmen Knudson Martin	SERT pp. 107-118 Multicultural couples therapy pages 77-98,
July 7th	How differences between individuals show up in couple therapy: race, religion, culture, ethnicity Monka and Kasie	EFCT: Anger in couples Therapy Multicultural Couples therapy 103-118, & 257-273 Optional reading: Nightingale, M., Ibilola Awosan, C., & Stavrianopoulos, K. (2019)

		RELATIONSHIP SCHEMA PAPER DUE
July 14th	Gottman tools and skills Sexual Trauma in couple's work Bella and Leigh	Gottman: entire book Optional: Johnson, Susan M. <i>Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy with Trauma Survivors</i> Biama and Feldhousen (2007)
July 21st	Promoting engagement with disowned aspects of self Complexities of shame Autumn and Courtney	Multicultural couple therapy: Chapter 4 (51-70) SERT: 133-144 EFCT: Sadness in Couple Therapy
July 28th	Disabilities, cycles of power that develop over time Intimate partner violence	Read Case Study before Class: Sam & Angela EFCT: Fear in Couples Therapy Johnson, M. P. (1995).
August 4th	Polyamory, open relationships, non monogamous marriage and couples Substance abuse	Multicultural couple therapy: chapters 17 & 18 ECFT: Shame in Couple Therapy Optional reading: Jordan, L. S., Grogan, C., Muruthi, B. & Bermúdez, J. M. (2017) Moors, A., Ryan, W., & Chopik, W. (2019)
		TREATMENT PLAN DUE