



“We are a community that commits itself to diversity  
and sustainability as dimensions of a just society”

- *Mission Statement, Lewis & Clark College*

## MCFT 563-05 TREATMENT ISSUES IN DIVORCE & STEPPARENTING SPRING 2024

---

<b>Time &amp; Day:</b>	Tuesdays Jan 9, Jan 16, Jan 30, Feb 6, Feb 20 from 1-4pm
<b>Place:</b>	York Room # 117
<b>Instructor:</b>	Marcia Michaels, PhD
<b>Office Hours:</b>	by appointment
<b>E-Mail:</b>	<a href="mailto:marcia@lclark.edu">marcia@lclark.edu</a>
<b>Phone:</b>	714-856-4534 (cell); texting available

### CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Applications of systems/relational approaches to treatment of clinical issues. Course offerings address a variety of topics. Each course includes an emphasis on clinical case conceptualization, treatment planning, and intervention.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will address the clinical, ethical, and legal issues unique to couples, with children, who are either contemplating or have already divorced/separated, and those who may be forming new, blended families. Focus is on helping students become more competent when working with this complex family form, including becoming more aware of their own values, beliefs, and biases that may influence their clinical work.

**Prerequisite:** None

**Credit:** 1 semester unit (15 contact hours)

### MCFT STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course promotes the following student learning outcomes:

- SLO 1.3: Students will apply systems/relational theories to clinical case conceptualization.
- SLO 2.1: Students will self-reflect on the implications of own and others' social location in clinical practice.
- SLO 2.2: Students' clinical practice demonstrates attention to social justice and cultural democracy.
- SLO 4.3: Students demonstrate integration of family therapy theory, equity, and social location issues in clinical practice.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, students are expected to:

1. Develop knowledge or skills that expand ability to apply a systems approach to treatment of a particular clinical issue.
2. Apply course content to case conceptualization, treatment planning, and intervention. In this section, these include:
  - a. Apply systemic models addressed in class to conceptualizing the relational nature of change.
  - b. Develop strategies for guiding clinical conversations that help clients overcome oppressive dominant discourses and expand possibilities.
  - c. Increase ability to manage the power of the therapist in relation to both dominant societal discourses and client agency.

**A note about the nature of this course:** This course will involve considerable role play. For your learning to be effective, this will require that you take on the experience of the clients and the ways they construct their identities. Other times, you may be asked to bring your own personal experience into the role of client. At such times, students should determine which experience they wish to process. Be aware that when the role plays work well, hidden or “unthickened” stories of self and/or other may emerge.

## TEXT/READINGS

### Required Texts

Doherty, W. J. & Harris, S. M (2017). *Helping couples on the brink of divorce: Discernment counseling for troubled relationships*. Washington, DC: APA.

Hawkins, A. J., Fackrell, T., & Harris, S. M. (2013). *Should I try to work it out: A guidebook for individuals and couples at the crossroads of divorce*. Provo, UT: Authors.

Note: I believe that Hawkins et al., can be viewed free on Kindle, or purchased for a nominal fee from Amazon.

**Journal Articles** (Free public access to JMF decade review; feel free to review any of the other articles you think are relevant and helpful in this volume)

[https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/17413737/2020/82/1?utm\\_source=ActiveCampaign&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=Zippy+News%3A+5+Things+to+Know+About+Conference+Proposals&utm\\_campaign=Zippy+News+-+2%2F12%2F2020](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/17413737/2020/82/1?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Zippy+News%3A+5+Things+to+Know+About+Conference+Proposals&utm_campaign=Zippy+News+-+2%2F12%2F2020)

Palmer, G. (2017). Emotionally focused family therapy for stepfamilies: Building security for children in the face of complexity and change. In J. Fitzgerald (Ed.), *Foundations for couple therapy: Research for the real world* (pp. 395-403). NY: Routledge.

Papernow, P. L. (2018). Clinical guidelines for working with stepfamilies: What family, couple, individual, and child therapists need to know. *Family Process*, 57(1), 25-51.

Raley, R. K., & Sweeney, M. M. (2020). Divorce, repartnering, and stepfamilies: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82, 81-99.

Sassler, S., & Lichter, D. T. (2020). Cohabitation and marriage: Complexity and diversity in union-formation patterns. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82, 35-61.

Shalay, N., & Brownlee, K. (2007). Narrative family therapy with blended families. *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 18(2), 17-30.

Smock, P. J., & Schwartz, C. R. (2020). The demography of families: A review of patterns and change. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82, 9-34.

### **Movies**

The Squid & The Whale (2005) – in the L&C library; you are able to stream it

What Maisie Knew (2013) – in the L&C library; you are able to stream it

### **Websites/Resources**

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy: <https://www.aamft.org>

AAMFT Code of Ethics: [https://www.aamft.org/Legal\\_Ethics/Code\\_of\\_Ethics.aspx](https://www.aamft.org/Legal_Ethics/Code_of_Ethics.aspx)

American Counseling Association: <https://www.counseling.org/>

Oregon Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists (OBLPCT) Home Page:

<http://www.oregon.gov/oblpc/Pages/index.aspx>

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES, STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES, AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES**

<b>Course Objective</b>	<b>MCFT Student Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>AAMFT Core Competencies &amp; AMFTRB task statements</b>	<b>Evaluated by</b>
1. Develop knowledge or skills that expand ability to apply a systems approach to treatment of a particular clinical issue.	SLO 1.3	CC 1.1.1 CC 1.1.2 CC 2.2.3 CC 4.1.1 CC 4.5.3 TS 01.01 TS 01.02	Participation in course discussion & role play Journal reflections Case conceptualization & Treatment plan
2a. Apply systemic models addressed in class to conceptualizing the relational nature of change.	SLO 1.3	CC 2.2.3 CC 2.1.6 CC 4.1.1 CC 4.5.3	Participation in course discussion & role play Journal reflections

		TS 01.01 TS 01.02 TS 02.02 TS 02.30	Case conceptualization & Treatment plan
2b. Develop strategies for guiding clinical conversations that help clients overcome oppressive dominant discourses and expand possibilities.	SLO 2.2 SLO 4.3	CC 1.2.1 CC 1.3.1 CC 2.3.1 CC 2.3.8 CC 4.1.2 CC 4.3.8 TS 01.04 TS 02.06 TS 03.11	Participation in course discussion & role play Journal reflections Case conceptualization & Treatment plan
2c. Increase ability to manage the power of the therapist in relation to both dominant societal discourses and client agency.	SLO 2.1 SLO 4.3	CC 1.3.1 CC 2.3.8 CC 4.3.8 TS 01.04 TS 05.09	Participation in course discussion & role play Journal reflections Case conceptualization & Treatment plan

## CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

**A note about writing:** All written submissions for this course should be typed. The ability to express yourself and think critically through writing is important to your professional development so please proofread your writing.

### 1. **Participation** (36 points)

This course emphasizes shared engagement with the assigned readings and clinical competencies. 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 expanded written reflections on the required readings for the day or other assignments that are appropriate to show that learning has occurred.
- Come to class prepared (having read the assignments, watched videos, and reflected on the class materials prior to class time).
- Give attention to the instructor and/or other students when they are speaking or making a presentation. No electronic devices may be used, except to access readings or make notes.
- Fully engage in group discussions and role plays.
- Interact with other students and/or the instructor in a respectful fashion.

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

CLASS PARTICIPATION COMPETENCIES	Possible points
Prompt and dependable presence in the class.	6
Prepares for class by immersing self in course readings/videos and reflecting on their application to practice.	10
Engages in course activities with a spirit of openness and curiosity.	10
Helps to create an atmosphere of safety and mutual respect among all class members.	10
TOTAL	36

## 2) Reflective Journal (24 points).

There will be three journal entries for the course. Each entry will be typed, (single-spaced) and be approximately 1-2 pages in length. The entry for each section of the class will reflect an integration of the course materials and classroom experiences. All entries will be uploaded to Moodle with specific due dates for each.

Journal entry 1 is on Discernment Counseling (*due by Tues Jan 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5pm*).

Journal entry 2 is focused on your reflections of the research, practice strategies, and videos outlining how to work with divorced/separated families with minors (*due by Tues Feb 13<sup>th</sup> at 5pm*).

Journal entry 3 is focused on your reflections of the research, theories, and clinical practice when working with step/blended families (*due by Sunday Feb 25<sup>th</sup> at 5pm*).

Throughout the course students are to create a journal that focuses on your personal responses to the following:

1. Specific practice strategies in the readings that are especially meaningful or inspiring to you and reflections on how they would work to create healthy family relationships.
2. Reflections on experience of applying identified strategies to case examples (i.e., in class role plays/observation, examples in readings/videos, or through creative imagination)
3. Conclusions about how you will apply course concepts/materials to your practice.

Your journal entries will be evaluated according to the following criteria

REFLECTIONS ON CLINICAL THEORIES & STRATEGIES FOR DIVORCE/SEPARATION AND STEP/BLENDED FAMILIES	Possible points
--	-----------------

Identifies specific practice theories, clinical strategies, and research covered in the class material and considers how they may or may not be useful or appropriate for all client populations.	2
Reflects upon own experience practicing, observing, or imagining how you might do this work (taking into account awareness of your social location and that of the clients).	2
Draws conclusions about how you will apply course concepts/materials to your practice.	2
Reflections integrate material across readings and represent your thinking as you engage with course concepts.	2
TOTAL	8 (8 x 3 = 24)

### 3) Case Conceptualization & Treatment Plan (40 points).

You will receive a case example, and genogram, of a step/blended family. Using all of the information/materials we cover in class, you will write a case conceptualization and develop a treatment plan for the family. This assignment will be a 5-6 page paper that is submitted in Moodle. The paper is *due by Tuesday Feb 27<sup>th</sup> at 5pm*.

Your case conceptualization and treatment plan paper will be evaluated using the following rubric.

CASE CONCEPTUALIZATION & TREATMENT PLAN	Possible points
Identify the sociocultural experiences of the client that you would need to attune to as the therapist (e.g., how their social location impacts what they think, feel, expect, and do; power differences, etc).	10
Explain how this contextual information, the information specific to step/blended families that we have covered in class, and your own biases/prejudices may impact your assessment and treatment of the client.	10
Develop a treatment plan using one of the models we covered in class (i.e., Papernow's developmental model, Narrative family therapy, Emotionally Focused family therapy). [If you want to use a different therapy model, get approval prior to doing this assignment].	10
Explain your process of treatment as you progress from the beginning stage, through the middle stage, and ending in the final stage of therapy. Include your reasoning re. what gets addressed, when, and with whom.	10
TOTAL	40

### **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 meeting with the Office of Student Accessibility and submitting documentation on the Office of Student Accessibility website. Email [access@lclark.edu](mailto:access@lclark.edu) with any additional questions or concerns.

### **DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION**

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 & GRADING**

Participation	36 pts
Journal (3 entries)	24 pts
Case Conceptualization & Treatment Plan	40 pts
Total	100 pts
94-100 = A	90-93.5 = A-
83-87.5 = B	88-89.5 = B+
73-77.5 = C	80-82.5 = B-
	78-79 = C+
	70-72 = C-

According to Graduate School policy, grades lower than B- may not apply to graduation. Students earning a C+ or lower will need to repeat the course.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE**

	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings and Assignments</b>
Class 1 Tuesday Jan 9	Assessing for divorce and couples therapy – Discernment Counseling	Helping Couples on the Brink of Divorce Doherty & Harris (2017) -Dyadic Adjustment Scale
Class 2 Tuesday Jan 16	Assessing for divorce and couples therapy – Discernment Counseling	Doherty & Harris (2017) continued
<i>Tuesday Jan 23<sup>rd</sup> by 5pm</i>		<i>Journal entry 1 is due in Moodle</i>
Class 3 Tuesday Jan 30	Working with divorcing/divorced couples; legal/ethical issues; co-parenting	- Raley & Sweeney (2020) - Sassler & Lichter (2020) - Smock & Schwartz (2020) - AAMFT & ACA Code of Ethics
Class 4 Tuesday Feb 6	Educational programs for divorcing/divorced couples w/children	-Should I Try to Work it Out: Guidebook (2013) -Watch The Squid & The Whale (2005) or -What Maisie Knew (2013)
<i>Tuesday Feb 13<sup>th</sup> by 5pm</i>		<i>Journal entry 2 is due in Moodle</i>
Class 5 Tuesday Feb 20	Working with blended/stepfamilies; co-parenting	-Palmer (2017) -Papernow, P. L. (2018) -Shalay & Brownlee (2007)
<i>Sunday Feb 25<sup>th</sup> by 5pm</i>  <i>Tuesday Feb 27<sup>th</sup> by 5pm</i>		<i>Journal entry 3 is due in Moodle</i>  <i>Case conceptualization &amp; Treatment plan is due in Moodle</i>