COURSE DESCRIPTION
As human persons, we live our lives in relationship to others. Among the most formative and influential of these relationships are those we experience with spouses/life partners, and the members of our family. In the work of pastoral care and counseling, we are frequently called upon to work with couples and families who are seeking to resolve difficulties, improve their relationships, and experience greater joy and fulfillment in their life together. This course is an introduction to the work of marriage and family therapy. We will consider how to gather pertinent information from couples and families, formulate a theoretically-based conceptualization of the issues at hand, and craft interventions designed to help couples and families achieve the goals for which they come to treatment. To do this, we will study a variety of schools of thought that the marriage and family therapist may use to help understand his or her clients. We will consider the pastoral identity of the therapist and the role of this dimension of experience in treatment. We will explore how the therapist’s own experience of family, parenting, being parented, and partnering contributes to her/his outlook on these issues and hence her/his approach to this work. Throughout the course, we will consider the role of culture in shaping one’s expectations and experience of marital and family life.

COURSE FORMAT
Because we will accomplish in 8 weeks online what would be done in 15 weeks in a traditional classroom, self motivation and discipline are extremely important in this course. Students are expected to keep up with all of the weekly presentations in the Learning Space, as well as weekly Discussion Board postings and assignments.

Accessing Materials:
There will be weekly reading assignments from required texts which students should purchase in advance of the course. Links to readings not contained in these texts will be provided. Each week’s materials will be accessible through the “Learning Space” folder in the main course menu. Within the Learning Space is a folder for each module of the course, and within each module, folders for the two weeks that comprise it.

Weekly folders will contain direct links to lectures, power point presentations, videos, additional readings, and any other material related to the week’s topic(s). You will also find the assignments for the modules posted here.

Discussion Boards:
Discussion questions: Each week students will participate in a weekly discussion on the discussion board. Students’ original postings should range in length from 150-250 words. Responses to other students should range in length from 75-100 words.

PLEASE NOTE: Timely responses each week are expected in the discussion forums. Tardiness in posting responses will substantially lower one’s grade for the course, so please plan accordingly. Furthermore, postings should consist predominantly of original thoughts and reactions. Very brief quotes or references may be used to illustrate and support one’s point. Lengthy quotes from the reading material are unacceptable in postings and responses.

REQUIRED TEXTS
The following text books are required. Students must have obtained them by the beginning of the course. The books have not been ordered through the Fordham University Bookstore. Students are free to obtain the books wherever they choose. As noted below, they are all available on the Barnes and Noble website at the time of the drafting of this syllabus. Two of the books may be rented rather than purchased, as noted, if the student so desires.


Reserve Articles in Blackboard

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
1) Students will learn a clinical, pastoral framework for how a pastoral family therapist assesses the dynamics of couples and families. This includes the collection, synthesis, analysis, and interpretation of data.
2) Students will learn how a pastoral family therapist thinks in making use of specific theories and techniques to craft interventions appropriate to the needs of a particular couple/family at different phases of treatment, and will begin to develop their own thinking in this area.
3) Students will develop an awareness of dimensions unique to the pastoral approach to Marriage and Family therapy that will further inform the assessment, conceptualization, and intervention skills they have developed in this course.
4) Students will develop the ability to explore and articulate, in an increasing way and at least for themselves, how their experience of family, parenting, being parented, and partnering has significantly contributed to the persons they are today. This is situated in the context of culture and faith and takes into account the student’s sense of clinical and pastoral identity.
OVERVIEW OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS
1. Weekly readings from assigned texts. (Learning Objective 1, 2)
2. Weekly audio lectures/Powerpoint presentations and videos to be viewed in the Learning Space. (Learning Objective 1, 2)
3. Discussion Questions on the Discussion Board: Students will post responses to weekly questions and will “dialogue” with classmates (Learning Objective 1, 2, 3, 4)
4. Genogram exercise: Students will construct a genogram of their family history. (Learning Objective 2)
5. Couple/Family Assessment: Students will view the film One True Thing and will answer a series of questions about the family in the film. Later in the course, they will write a detailed assessment of the presenting issues of the family depicted, imagining that they had come for family therapy. They will adopt one of the theoretical perspectives learned in this course and discuss an approach to the treatment of this family based on that perspective. (Learning Objective 3, 4)
6. Reflective Exercise: Students will prepare a written reflection on the impact of their own experience of family, parenting, being parented, and partnering on the work of Marriage and Family Therapy. (Learning Objective 4)
7. Students will draft a mission statement for their work with couples and families. (Learning Objective 4)
8. Students will prepare a final paper on a marriage and family topic of interest to them (to be decided collaboratively with the professor). (Learning Objective 1, 3, 4)

COURSE SCHEDULE
Note: “Week Zero” of the course will open on January 5th, 2015. At that time students must log on to Blackboard, review the materials posted there and post an introduction of themselves to their classmates on the Discussion Board. This will also allow students to test out their technology and make sure everything is working properly. In case of technical difficulties, please consult the resources listed at the back of this syllabus.

MODULE ONE – WEEKS ONE AND TWO
Introduction to Marriage and Family Therapy & Assessment of Couples and Families and Theoretical Frameworks for Marriage and Family Therapy

In this module we will begin an overview of the nature of Marriage and Family Therapy in a pastoral context and an exploration of fundamental issues such as culture, communication, resistance, and problem definition. We will explore a clinical, pastoral framework for the initial assessment of couples and families. We will then begin our study of different schools of Marriage and Family Therapy by considering Family Systems Theory.

**Learning Objectives/What Students Will Learn**
Students will learn a clinical, pastoral framework for how a pastoral family therapist assesses the dynamics of couples and families. This includes the collection, synthesis, analysis, and interpretation of data. Students will learn how a pastoral family therapist thinks in making use of specific theories and techniques to craft interventions appropriate to the needs of a particular
couple/family at different phases of treatment, and will begin to develop their own thinking in this area.

**WEEK ONE – Introduction to Marriage and Family Therapy**

**Required Readings**
Nichols, Chapter 1-4, 11  
Gurman, Chapter 1  

**Overview:** Ethnicity and family therapy.

**Assignments**
Students will view the film One True Thing and will answer a series of short questions designed to focus their thinking about the family in the film. This will help prepare students for the family assessment they will prepare later in the course.

**WEEK TWO – Family Systems Theory**

**Required Readings**
Nichols, Chapter 5  
Gurman, Chapter 7  

**Assignments**
Students will prepare a genogram of their family history.

**MODULE TWO – WEEKS THREE AND FOUR**

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY, CONT.**

In this module, we will consider two major schools of thought in the world of Marriage and Family Therapy: Structural Therapy and Solution-Focused Therapy. We will explore the ways in which these theories frame problems, symptoms, and dynamics, and the key interventions that flow from them in beginning, middle, and termination phases of therapy.

We will begin an exploration of special issues in Marriage and Family Therapy: Divorce, Remarriage/Blended families, and Single Parenthood.

**Learning Objectives/What Students Will Learn**
Students will learn how a pastoral family therapist thinks in making use of specific theories and techniques to craft interventions appropriate to the needs of a particular couple/family at different phases of treatment, and will begin to develop their own thinking in this area.

**WEEK THREE – Structural Therapy**
(Special Topic: Divorce, Remarriage & Single Parenthood)
Required Readings
Nichols, Chapter 7
Gurman, Chapter 11

WEEK FOUR – Solution-Focused Therapy
(Special Topic: Infidelity)

Required Readings
Nichols, Chapter 12
Gurman, Chapter 9

MODULE THREE – WEEKS FIVE AND SIX
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY, CONT.

In this module, we will consider two other major schools of thought in the world of Marriage and Family Therapy: Object Relations Therapy and Narrative Therapy. We will explore the ways in which these theories frame problems, symptoms, and dynamics, and the key interventions that flow from them in beginning, middle, and termination phases of therapy. We will continue to explore special issues in Marriage and Family Therapy: Domestic Violence and Child Abuse, and Grief and Loss in Couples and Families.

Learning Objectives/ What Students Will Learn
Students will learn how a pastoral family therapist thinks in making use of specific theories and techniques to craft interventions appropriate to the needs of a particular couple/family at different phases of treatment, and will begin to develop their own thinking in this area.

WEEK FIVE – Object Relations Marriage and Family Therapy
(Special Topic: Domestic Violence and Child Abuse)

Required Readings
Nichols, Chapter 9
Gurman, Chapter 6

WEEK SIX – Narrative Marriage and Family Therapy
(Special Topic: Grief and Loss)

Required Readings
Nichols, Chapter 13
Gurman, Chapter 8

Assignments
Using their initial assessment of the family from the film One True Thing as a base, students will prepare an in depth assessment of the dynamics of this family using one of the five schools of thought they have learned in this course. They will suggest theoretically based directions that they might take with the family and what types of interventions would be called for in the treatment.

**MODULE FOUR – WEEKS SEVEN AND EIGHT**

**TOWARDS INTEGRATION: PASTORAL AND PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In this module we will consider particular issues related to the pastoral dimensions of Marriage and Family Therapy. We will also reflect more explicitly upon the integration of the pastoral counselor’s personal experience with respect to issues of family, parenting, being parented and partnering.

**Learning Objectives/What Students Will Learn**

Students will develop an awareness of dimensions unique to the pastoral approach to Marriage and Family therapy that will further inform the assessment, conceptualization, and intervention skills they have developed in this course.

Students will develop the ability to explore and articulate, in an increasing way and at least for themselves, how their experience of family, parenting, being parented, and partnering has significantly contributed to the persons they are today. This is situated in the context of culture and faith and takes into account the student’s sense of clinical and pastoral identity.

**WEEK SEVEN – Towards Integration: Pastoral and Personal Considerations**

**Required Readings**

Onedera, Chaps 1-2, 13, 15

**Assignments**

Students will complete a reflective exercise designed to guide them through an exploration of their own experience of the issues considered in this course, and how that experience has contributed to who they are and who they wish to be as pastoral counselors working with couples and families. Because this exercise is highly personal in nature, the student’s level of engagement and effort will be the principle consideration. Students will be encouraged to remain emotionally safe when doing this and not to reveal more personal information than is warranted.

**WEEK EIGHT**

**Conclusions**

**Assignments**
Students will prepare a draft of a personal mission statement for their work in Marriage and Family Therapy, using a guide that will be given by the professor.

Students will complete a final paper of 8-10 pages based on a topic related to Marriage and Family therapy and of interest to them. The topic will be decided in collaboration with the professor. In the paper the student will be expected to integrate clinical and pastoral considerations as a way of demonstrating the learning they have achieved in this course.

INFORMATION ON ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
1. Academic Honesty and Integrity: It should go without saying that honesty and integrity are cornerstones of academic and scholarly work. For this reason, plagiarism is a serious offense and will be considered grounds for failure in this course. It is the student’s responsibility to be educated about what constitutes plagiarism. Further information is available on page 30 of the GSRRE Student Guidebook available on the GSRRE website.
2. It is expected that all written work will be prepared in a manner consistent with standards appropriate to a graduate level degree program. This includes, but is not limited to, issues such as grammar, proof reading, and proper usage of one of the style manuals approved by the University.
3. Guidelines for the use of inclusive language as noted in the GSRRE Student Guidebook should be observed in all communications.
4. Students may consult the Student Guidebook for complete information on all academic policies and procedures of the GSRRE.

TECHNOLOGY HELP:
For technical support with the Blackboard course management system, you will need to email blackboard@fordham.edu or call 718.817.2289. For questions about your username and password, you will need to email helpdesk@fordham.edu or call 718.817.3999 (on campus) or 877.366.HELP (off campus).