SWGS 6403

Course Description

This course provides an overview of clinical interventions which see individual clients as part of their family system. It adopts the family systems theoretical orientation while taking into consideration the impact of the larger ecological context on the family and the individual. Various family therapy approaches are introduced in terms of their theoretical framework, assessment, and intervention strategies. The overall family systems perspective is also adopted in understanding individuals even when the whole family cannot be engaged in treatment. Various forms of families such as single-parent, separated/divorced, remarried, adopted families, gay and lesbian couples as well as families of diverse cultural and racial background will be also examined as they impact on assessment and the treatment process. A selected number of specific topics in working with families will also be discussed. Throughout the course attention will be given to the various stages of family treatment from engagement to assessment and intervention.

Place of Course in the Curriculum

This is an elective course in the advanced clinical practice concentration.

Course Objectives

At the completion of the course, students are expected to:

1. Be able to view individual clients in the context of their family using the family systems perspective, and see the family as the unit of change whether or not the whole family can be involved in the treatment process.

2. Effectively engage families in treatment and to build rapport with family members so that they as clinicians could be accepted into the system to help effect change.

3. Be able to assess families in terms of its internal dynamics, family strengths, the impact of family life cycle, and the ecological context including the sociocultural background.

4. Attain an understanding of the theoretical framework of at least five approaches of family therapy, including structural, strategic, solution-focused, experiential, multi-generational, narrative, and cognitive-behavioral family therapy, and be able to intervene with families using techniques and strategies derived from these approaches.
5. Be able to apply the various family therapy approaches in an integrative manner.

6. Attain a deeper understanding of the various issues working with families, including engaging young children in the treatment process, couples therapy, divorced and remarried families, families with chronic illness, and worker’s interface issues in working with families.

7. Understand the influence of the larger sociocultural context, including the impact of ethnicity, social class, gender, and sexual orientation, and the various family forms such as single-parent, separated/divorced, remarried and adopted, gay and lesbian families as they impact on the whole treatment process from engagement to assessment and intervention.

8. Understand the impact of economic disadvantage on vulnerable populations such as immigrant families.

9. Appreciate the importance of the spiritual dimension in working with families.

10. Be able to select from various treatment approaches with families based on evidence-based support.

**Required Texts To Be Selected From the Following:**


**Recommended Text:**


**Class Format**

Class format consists of a combination of didactic lectures, film viewing, class discussion, and experiential exercises which would include role play and small group exercises. Students will have the opportunity to share some materials from their field placement to illustrate the subject matter under discussion and to enhance the integration between class and field.

**Course Requirements**

**A. Instructional Expectations**

To successfully complete this course, students will be expected to participate in 15 class sessions of one hour and fifty minutes each and 10 hours of guided instruction.

**B. Guided Instruction**

Guided instruction for this course will include activities from the following list. Assignment details and grading criteria for each activity will be provided by the classroom instructor (see individual instructors’ syllabi).

1. Students will submit a three generational genogram and a culturegram of their family.

2. Students will view at least four assigned films that depict various family types, structures, situations, and dynamics. The classroom instructor will assign questions that require the student to demonstrate in writing how they would work with the family depicted in the film. Questions may be related to the following areas:
   - Engaging the family
   - Family assessment
   - Selecting a family therapy practice model
   - Planning an intervention using a selected family therapy practice model
   - Termination

3. Explore 2 or more cultures through a family interview. Highlight the family rituals and traditions and identify the family strengths that are gained from these cultures.

4. Explore 2 or more cultures through a family interview. Highlight the prevailing family attitudes toward at least five different areas (e.g., physical illness, mental illness, immigration, alcoholism/drug use, marriage/divorce, out-of-wedlock births, gay and lesbian lifestyles, grief and loss, religion/spirituality). Is there a consensus or are there differing attitudes within the family? Discuss any factors that influence these attitudes (e.g., age, gender, level of acculturation, generation, socioeconomic class).
C. Assignments

Classroom instructors will require a minimum of two assignments that will take the form of written papers, exams, and/or group presentations.

Grading Criteria

Grading will follow the School's guidelines for grading assignments (see attached). Classroom instructors will announce the relative weight of each assignment, guided instruction activity, and expectations regarding participation in arriving at the student's final grade.

Course Outline

UNIT I: FRAMEWORK FOR FAMILY SYSTEMS WORK

A. Framework for working with families:
   1. Definition of family and family as the unit of intervention
   2. Differences between individual-oriented and family-oriented treatment
   3. Challenges in working with families

B. Theoretical Framework of the Family Systems Perspective
   1. Key concepts in family systems perspective & their practice implications:
      a. The systems context
      b. Linear Vs circular causality
      c. Process Vs content
      d. Here-and-now Vs history
      e. Relational Vs individualistic emphasis
   2. The cultural context of families

C. Engaging the Family
   1. The initial interview: dos and don’ts
   2. Joining and accommodation with the family
   3. Balance between rapport building and information gathering
   4. Contracting with the family
   5. Cultural considerations in engaging families

D. Understanding and Assessing the Family Structures & Dynamics
   1. Assessing the family structures and dynamics
   2. Assessing strengths/resilience and stressors of families
   3. The Temporal & Larger Context of the Family
      a. Family life cycle stages and their impact on families
      b. Diverse family forms and implications for family dynamics
      c. Use of ecomap: the ecological assessment
Readings:

A. & B. Framework for working with families & Theoretical Framework for Family Systems:


Goldenberg, H. & Goldenberg, I. (2008). Family therapy: An overview. Ch. 1, Adopting a family relationship framework; Ch. 2, Family development: Continuity and change; Ch. 3, Gender, culture, and ethnicity factors in family functioning.


Nichols, M. P. and Schwartz, R. C. (2006). *Family therapy concepts and methods (7th ed.).* Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Ch1: The foundations of family therapy; Ch. 2: The evolution of family therapy; Ch. 3.: Early models and basic techniques: group process and communications analysis; Ch. 4: The fundamental concepts of family therapy.


C. **Engaging the Family**


the first interview, pp. 9-47.

Chpt 7: Forming the therapeutic system.


Chpt. 3: The initial interview.

York: Guilford Press.  Ch. 5: In the beginning: Great expectations: Ch. 6: Great 
beginnings II.

D. **Understanding and Assessing the Family Structures & Dynamics**

Brown, J. E. (1997). The question cube: A model for developing question repertoire in 
training couple and family therapists. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 23, 
27-40.


Chpt 3: A family model; Chpt 5: Therapeutic implications of a structural approach.


Palazzoli, S., Boscolo, L., Cecchin, G., & Prata, G. (1980). Hypothesizing - circularity - 
neutrality: Three guidelines for the conductor of the session. *Family Process*, 19(1), 
3-12.

*Assessing Family Strengths*


**Assessing Family’s Life Cycle Stages**


**Assessing the Ecological Context of Families**


**Assessing Diverse Families**


**UNIT II: INTERVENTIONS BASED ON MAJOR SCHOOLS OF FAMILY THERAPY**
In addition to discussing the work phase with families, instructors can choose to introduce at least 4 schools of family therapy to students. The following are prominent ones used in the field.

A. Structural Approach to Family Treatment

B. Strategic/Systemic Approach to Family Work

C. Solution-focused Brief Therapy

D. Intergenerational Approaches in Family Therapy

E. Experiential Family Therapy & Spirituality In Families

F. Narrative Family Therapy

G. Cognitive Behavioral Family Therapy

Readings:

A. Structural Family Therapy


Minuchin, S. & Fishman, H. C. (1981). *Family therapy techniques*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts. Chpt. 5: Change; Chpt. 7: Enactment; Chpt. 8: Focus; Chpt. 9: Intensity; Chpt. 10: Restructuring; Chpt. 11: Boundaries; Chpt. 12: Unbalancing; Chpt.13: Complementarity.


B. **Strategic/Systemic Family Therapy**


C. **Solution-focused Brief Therapy**


**D. Intergenerational Approaches in Family Therapy**


Intergenerational relationships across cultures. *Families in Society*, 73, 323-338.


E. **Experiential Family Therapy & Spirituality In Families**


**Spirituality & Family**


F. **Narrative Family Therapy**


**G. Cognitive-Behavioral Family Therapy**


UNIT III: SELECTED ISSUES IN WORKING WITH FAMILIES

The instructor can choose at least 2 specific issues in working with families. The following are suggested topics:

A. Integration among various approaches of family therapy

B. Couples therapy

C. Involving children in family sessions

D. Divorced and remarried families

E. Impact of chronic illness in families

F. Interface issues as we work with families

Readings:

A. Integrating Various Intervention Model


B. Couples Therapy


C. **Involving Children in Family Sessions**


D. **Divorced and Remarried Families**


E. Impact of chronic illness in families


F. **Interface Issues as We Work with Families**


Guide for Grading Policy and Recommended Grade Equivalents

95-100   A
90-94    A-
87-89    B+
83-86    B
80-82    B-
76-79    C+
70-75    C
Below 70  F

Students With Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, visual, hearing, psychiatric, etc.) and who has registered with the Office of Disability Services at 718-817-0655 may be entitled to accommodations. Students should register with the Office of Disability Services at the beginning of the semester.
What is Plagiarism?

- Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty, which involves using someone else’s written work or even ideas without giving proper credit or presenting as one’s own, work that has been partially or wholly prepared by someone else. “Someone else” may be another student, a published author, a professor, a friend, or a business or on-line service that sells or distributes such papers or materials. These ideas and words can come from an Internet source, a newspaper article, an unpublished dissertation, a conference presentation, the popular press and scholarly journals as well as other sources.
- The nature of the “work” most commonly plagiarized is written work. However, it also can be ideas, concepts, organizational structure, data sets, electronic media, logos and other graphics.
- Plagiarism is considered a form of fraud or lying. One does not have to intentionally attempt to deceive the reader to be guilty of plagiarism. Plagiarism also can happen inadvertently by not knowing how and when to cite sources.
- Plagiarism prevents students from learning new material and skills. It cheats students of learning opportunities by not allowing them to be challenged and to grow intellectually.

Examples of plagiarism include:

- Copying someone else’s text verbatim, without using quotation marks and giving credit to the source. It is no defense to claim one has “forgotten” to do so.
- Paraphrasing someone else’s work without giving him or her credit.
- Rewriting borrowed material by simply dropping a word here and there, substituting a few words for others, or moving around words or sentences, without giving proper credit.
- With the advent of the Internet, plagiarism has taken two forms:
  - Buying a term paper and trying to pass it off as one’s own. [These are relatively easy to spot.]
  - Downloading or cutting and pasting text directly from on-line sources without giving proper credit.
- Copying a classmate’s work or using a former student’s paper. Even copying one sentence constitutes plagiarism.
- Making up a citation or making up data.

Can one plagiarize one’s self?

- Yes! Typically, self-plagiarism takes one of two forms.
  - Either the person submits work for a course that was written for a previous course, or she or he turns in the same paper (or sections of the paper) for two different courses simultaneously.
- Self-plagiarism is considered as serious as plagiarizing someone else’s work.

What are the penalties for plagiarism?

- Plagiarism is not only a serious academic offense, it is also considered to be a breach of professional ethics. Consequently, the penalties can be quite severe.
- The student who plagiarizes can receive a failing grade not only for the assignment, but also for the entire course. This is up to the discretion of the professor teaching the course.
- The matter may also referred to Dean Susan Egan at Lincoln Center. In Tarrytown, the matter may be referred to Dean Jane Edwards. The Deans determine what other actions to take,
including whether dismissal of the student from the program is warranted. Please refer to the GSSS Student Handbook for an explanation of the consequences of plagiarism.

Why do some students plagiarize if it can potentially cost them their careers?

- Most students who do plagiarize are not secure with either their knowledge of the material or their writing skills. They fear receiving a bad grade for the assignment. They consider themselves as good or excellent students. The thought of receiving a bad grade is emotionally threatening.
- Many students who plagiarize are overwhelmed and have not allotted enough time to research and write the paper.
- Some students who plagiarize do so to save time and effort.
- They do not realize that many professors have electronic search engines designed to detect plagiarism.

How can you maintain your academic integrity and avoid plagiarism?

- Plan your time wisely. Give yourself ample time to research and write your first draft of your paper.
- Know when to use quote marks, single quote marks, and when you may simply give the name of the author and the date of publication of the source. This means you have to know the difference between a paraphrase and a quotation. There is a distinct difference.
- Have someone who is familiar with academic writing read early drafts of your paper.
- Buy a copy of the American Psychological Association’s Publication Manual. This manual contains the standards that faculty at GSSS adhere to when writing and publishing papers.
- Attend APA writing workshops offered at GSSS.
- Use the writing clinic at GSSS.
- When in doubt as to whether or not you are citing a source properly, consult your course instructor.