Course Description
This course is designed to introduce students to the major theoretical approaches, concepts, and skills related to family counseling. A significant focus of this course will be on the practical counseling skills and techniques that have emerged from each theory. Additional focus will be on interviewing, assessment, and clinical practice issues central to a systemic approach to family counseling, especially with regard to the cultural context of clients’ experiences and worldview. Additionally, this course will challenge students to look closely at their own family of origin. Students will be expected to draw on their previous experiences, coursework, and knowledge to integrate and apply course material to a deeper understanding of the counseling process within a systemic framework.

Govern a family as you would cook a small fish - very gently.
Chinese Proverb

Course Objectives
The course will provide students with exposure to different types of family counseling models, through reading assignments, watching demonstration videos, lectures, and discussions. Students should be able to demonstrate understanding of the major family counseling theories, including their limitations, and apply family counseling theories, skills, and techniques within a clinical setting. Students will demonstrate the ability to:
1. Understand different types of family counseling models
2. Differentiate between the major theories of family counseling by their unique features, goals, techniques, and strategies
3. Learn family counseling and family education techniques and skills
4. Assess family interactions in readings, video demonstrations, role plays, and case examples
5. Explore one’s own family (of origin) experiences in order to gain understanding of deeper impact and influences that may affect roles and behavior as a counselor.

Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.
Leo Tolstoy (1828 - 1910), Anna Karenina
Instructional Strategies
The class will use lecture, small group discussion, experiential learning, role-plays, supervision, readings, live demonstrations, videos, and skill building exercises. Lectures and discussions will expand upon and critically evaluate assigned reading material. Students will be expected to actively participate in the critical discourse. Experiential aspects of the course will require that students discuss case vignettes utilizing theoretical frameworks under consideration and actively participate in role-play demonstrations as both a therapist and family member.

“If parents and children did not fight, then the children would never leave home. And then the world would end.”
The Icpress File, Len Deighton

Required Texts

A good marriage is one which allows for change and growth in the individuals and in the way they express their love.
Pearl Buck

Class Requirements
Class Discussion and Participation. Active participation in class and small group discussions is expected. This involvement is in order raise questions, identify issues, clarify issues, clarify thinking, develop competencies, and to grow in the understanding of self and others. Also, students are expected to complete all readings for each class period in which they are assigned.

The family is one of nature’s masterpieces.
George Santayana, The Life of Reason

Genogram Assignment and Paper (40% of Grade). Construct a three-generation genogram of your family in order to assess your family system and family culture. Your genogram is expected to be correct and professionally completed (please do not use a pencil for your genogram). Depending on your artistic skill, you can feel free to be creative in its’ construction and presentation, as long as you use the standardized formatting and symbols. Identify the patterns and significant themes (e.g., immigration, divorce, physical illnesses, mental disorders) in your own family of origin using your knowledge of the family concepts/models discussed in class, readings, and instructional videos. Interview family members when needed and appropriate, being sensitive and careful regarding family secrets that may trigger potential conflicts. Remember, this is a class assignment and it is not intended to create friction within your family. There are several resources you can consult online that provide templates and resources including the following options:
http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Genogram
http://www.genopro.com/genogram/rules/
http://wellsk.faculty.mjc.edu/genogramdetailed.pdf
Depending on your artistic or technical skills, you can use software, online templates, or markers and pens.

For the paper, you are to make sense of your family via the knowledge highlighted in the genogram. Students are expected to integrate personal/family history, and take a systemic and culturally sensitive approach to your analysis, incorporating the concepts and language that you are learning in class. As opposed to simply describing the genogram, you are expected to explore and analyze it by examining and discussing communication patterns and significant family themes, issues, and patterns. Then, discuss how these patterns (potentially) influence your behavior as a (1) counselor, (2) parent, and (3) partner. Further, discuss the ways your culture and family patterns may be a strength and/or barrier in working with families. Then identify specific ways you could work on the barriers to help improve your effectiveness as a future counselor. The primary intent is to consciously acknowledge feelings, attitudes, narratives, and family myths that may impact your role as a family counselor. In summary, this paper should address the following:

- A family history of at least three generations which will include a description of major crises/changes occurring in each generation (i.e., separations, divorces, traumas, abuses, deaths). This history is to be consistent with the family genogram that provides the visual overview of this paper.
- Note personality styles of significant family members who were most influential in your life, and who have affected your life journey.
- Note generational family characteristics that have remained evident in your personality/coping style.
- Describe social/emotional characteristics of marriages throughout the generations including parenting styles, marital dysfunctions, hierarchical patterns of organization.
- Describe boundaries, alliances, power relationships that have influenced both stability and crisis.
- Include an overview of overt/covert rules that operated within the family including those related to ethnicity/culture, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, if applicable. Describe how these rules were defined, communicated or enforced.

Your genogram discussion paper should be approximately 6-9 pages of text (not including title page and references) in length, must be referenced, and written in APA style. You also have to turn in your genogram with your paper. **DUE: March 3 by 3 PM via email: jkottler@fullerton.edu**

**Group Presentation (10% of grade). Due date varies, presentations begin March 17.**

With a partner, you are to choose a type of family and a theory and integrate research, theory, and practice. Possible types of family include an ethnically different (from your own) family, interracial family, single parent family, two-parent family, remarried family, LGBT family, adopted family, family with disabilities, immigrant family, etc. Conduct research using scholarly articles, books, and resources, as well as interviews with experts, on this type of family and explore your theory that may be used to work with them.
In your presentation (60-75 minutes) you will help your peers and instructor better understand this type of family by presenting relevant research (data; typical challenges; challenges if there is an addiction and/or serious mental illness; strengths; case vignettes; resources available in the area for future clients, etc.). In addition to the research presented, you will provide a conceptualization from your chosen theory and focus on discussing some key techniques and interventions you would use in working with this type of family to help them alleviate distress. Also, provide a handout so that: (1) your audience will be able to follow your presentation, and (2) it serves as a future reference/source; be sure to cite your sources.

You also have the option of presenting a role-play demonstration that illustrates some of the concepts and ideas you present. Please, please, pretty please, keep in mind that the only thing worse than an instructor who bores you with a tedious, predictable, dry presentation is when students do that to one another! Be creative, inventive, and plan a fun experience, as well as an educational one.

“My parents only had one argument in forty-five years. It lasted forty-three years.”

Cathy Ladman

Family Interview and Self-Reflective Paper (50% of Grade).

You will interview a family about their experiences. Before you meet with the family create a list of questions (only as a guide) that you will ask them so that you will be prepared (the questionnaire may target the points outlined below and also be based on the research you conducted). Examples might include asking them about what they see is their: 1) strengths and resources, 2) significant challenges and difficulties, 3) roles and responsibilities, 4) historical legacies and rituals and narratives, 5) cultural and contextual norms, 6) issues they’d like to work on and improve, 7) how they see counseling could possibly help them with these goals. Obviously, you will want to keep the interview flexible and free flowing, depending on how things evolve.

In your paper
(a) Provide a brief summary of the family
(b) Discuss what challenges/struggles you think this family has that other families probably do not have to deal with (if relevant, note challenges related to addictions and/or serious mental illness)
(c) Discuss how the family copes with these challenges/struggles, as well as their strengths (including hope for the future, empowerment, self-responsibility, and meaning in life for the whole family)
(d) Reflect on and discuss what challenges, due to your own personal beliefs, biases, and values, you think might affect the way you would work with this family if you were their counselor; also identify some specific ways you would work on these challenges
(e) Reflect on and discuss how this interview helped you understand this type of family and discuss what you learned from this interview that you did not know or understand before.
(f) Finally, include a synthesis at the end of your paper reflecting on what you learned during the course of the semester that you’ve already noticed impacts you personally and professionally.

You are not required to include citations/references in your paper, unless you use information that was gained from the literature (in which case you need to give credit to your sources). Be
sure to thank the family for their time, clarify that you are interviewing them as an interested
graduate student (and not a counselor); and do not use real names in your paper to protect the
family’s confidentiality.

Due: April 28, 3:00 PM via email. Length: 8-10 pages

If you don't believe in ghosts, you've never been to a family reunion.
Ashleigh Brilliant

Grading
The difference between a grade of B and A on a paper is really best summarized by the question:
Did you do what would be expected of a graduate student, or did you go significantly beyond the
call of duty? A grade of A is awarded for outstanding achievement in written and class
contributions, both in terms of quality and quantity of writing. A student who earns an A has
shown consistent initiative, originality, and comprehension. The grade of A is reserved for
students who clearly display superior work. The grade of B is awarded for written work that is of
good quality that meets the minimum requirements of the assignment. This is considered the
“standard” assessment of students who do what is expected The following criteria are used to
evaluate your work:

• How much time, work, and effort did you appear to put into your projects?
• How well did you organize your paper including setting the stage, synthesis, and
integration?
• How much detail and comprehensiveness is included?
• To what extent did you support your points with examples?
• Did you integrate readings and class materials to apply what you’ve learned? Did you add
additional support and resources from outside class materials?
• What is the depth of your analysis of your written presentation?
• What is the overall quality of your written presentation?
• How well constructed is the writing, prose, structure, style, and formatting of the paper?

Feelings of worth can flourish only in an atmosphere where individual differences are
appreciated, mistakes are tolerated, communication is open, and rules are flexible - the kind of
atmosphere that is found in a nurturing family.
Virginia Satir

Ending Note
Learning about family counseling and systems is exciting, confusing, and sometimes emotionally
painful. In this course we will take the time to review concepts and learn the basics that you will
need to work effectively with families. Also, recognizing the importance of self-awareness and
self-reflection in counselor’s development, along with the theories of family counseling, this
course asks you to take a careful look at your own family of origin. It is my hope to establish a
safe and supportive environment in which you can take the journey towards exploring your own
family. As the course progresses, feel free to schedule time to talk with me about the ways in
which the course can be more supportive to you. If you are experiencing difficulty with the
course material in terms of your family of origin, please speak with me.
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