I. COURSE DOMAIN AND BOUNDARIES

This course will focus on a variety of intervention approaches for working with couples. Beginning with an awareness of the ways in which society influences gender roles, identity, and communication patterns, the course will examine how this affects pairing behavior and relationship expectations. Phases of couple relationships will be explored. Same sex couples will be discussed, and the similarities and differences of issues and intervention techniques appropriate for use with same sex and opposite sex couples will be studied. Family of origin issues will also be explored as it relates to the students and their effectiveness as a couples therapist as well as the manner in which family of origin influences each part of a couple system.

The role of the therapist will be discussed. A variety of therapeutic interventions will be focused upon using videotapes of marital therapists renowned in this field including, but not limited to, systems theory, behavioral theory, cognitive theory, and attachment focused therapy. Demonstrations and role-plays will be a part of the learning experience so that students will be able to enhance their intervention skills and their ability to use themselves effectively as agents of change. Research findings about most effective ways of intervening with a variety of couples will be explored and critiqued as well as where the research shows strong support, where the gaps exist, and how the community deals with this given the little research that is truly done in this area.

The course will also explore issues relating to diversity, poverty, oppression and the provision of therapeutic services in such a manner as to serve the various populations such as racially or religiously mixed couples, those with ethnic differences and gay and lesbian couples. Finally, issues of personal and Social Work ethics, religious beliefs and societal pressure will be discussed as they relate to the therapist as well as the clients.
II. MSW COMPETENCIES ADDRESSED IN THIS COURSE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior</td>
<td>C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage diversity and difference in practice.</td>
<td>C2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in Practice-informed research and research-informed practice.</td>
<td>C4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities</td>
<td>C6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities</td>
<td>C7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities</td>
<td>C8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities</td>
<td>C9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. BROWN SCHOOL ACADEMIC POLICIES

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity in the completion of tests, oral presentations and written assignments (including statistical syntax) is expected. Violations of academic integrity (e.g., plagiarism) are very serious offenses. Violations will result in notification to the Assistant Dean for the appropriate (MSW or MPH) program and may result in referral to the Academic and Professional Integrity Committee, which could lead to dismissal from the program. Please review and adhere to the entire set of Academic Integrity guidelines in the student handbook on Inside Brown:

Student Handbook 2017-2018

Accommodations: If you have a learning disability, sensory, or physical disability or other impairment, and you may need special assistance in lectures, reading, written assignments, and/or exam taking, please contact the Brown School Director of Student Affairs who can provide coordination of accommodations at Washington University and the Brown School. The Disability Resource Center, a University-wide resource, provides diagnostic and academic accommodations support and referrals.

English Language Proficiency: If your English language proficiency is such that you may need special assistance in lectures, reading, written assignments, and/or exam taking, please communicate these needs to your instructor who may refer you to the English Language Program (ELP), a University-wide resource which provides classes and academic English language support designed to increase non-native English speaking students' English language proficiency and to facilitate their academic success at Washington University. You may also find the Academic Assistance resources available through the Office for International Students and Scholars to be helpful.

Professional Use of Electronic Devices in the Classroom: Computers or other electronic devices, including “smart pens” (devices with an embedded computer and digital audio recorder which records the classroom lecture/discussion and links that recording to the notes taken by the student), may be used by students at the discretion of the faculty member to support the learning activities in the classroom. These include such activities as taking notes and accessing course readings under discussion. If a student wishes to use a smart-pen or other electronic device to audio record lectures or class discussions, they must notify the instructor in advance of doing so. Permission to use recording devices will be at the discretion of the instructor, unless this is an accommodation approved by Disability Resources.
Nonacademic use of laptops and other devices is distracting and seriously disrupts the learning process for everyone. Neither computers nor other electronic devices are to be used in the classroom during class for non-academic reasons. This use includes emailing, texting, social networking, and use of the Internet. The use of cellphones during class time is prohibited, and they should be set on silent before class begins. In the case of an emergency, please step out of the room to take the call. The instructor has the right to hold students accountable for meeting these expectations, and failure to do so may result in a loss of participation points, a loss of the privilege of computer use in the classroom, or being asked to leave the classroom.

Religious Holidays: The Brown School recognizes the individual student’s choice in observing religious holidays that occur during periods when classes are scheduled. Students are encouraged to arrange with their instructors to make up work missed as a result of religious observance, and instructors are asked to make every reasonable effort to accommodate such requests.

IV. WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC SUPPORT POLICIES

Accommodations based upon sexual assault: The University is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. Depending on the specific nature of the allegation, such measures may include but are not limited to: implementation of a no-contact order, course/classroom assignment changes, and other academic support services and accommodations. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to Kim Webb (kim_webb@wustl.edu), Director of the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center. Ms. Webb is a confidential resource; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student so long as it does not impair the ability to provide such measures.

If a student comes to me to discuss or disclose an instance of sexual assault, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking, or if I otherwise observe or become aware of such an allegation, I will keep the information as private as I can, but as a faculty member of Washington University, I am required to immediately report it to my Department Chair or Dean or directly to Ms. Jessica Kennedy, the University’s Title IX Director. If you would like to speak with directly Ms. Kennedy directly, she can be reached at (314) 935-3118, jw kennedy@wustl.edu, or by visiting the Title IX office in Umrah Hall. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards or by contacting WUPD at (314) 935-5555 or your local law enforcement agency. See: Title IX

You can also speak confidentially and learn more about available resources at the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center by calling (314) 935-8761 or visiting the 4th floor of Seigle Hall. See: RSVP Center

Bias Reporting: The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University’s Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team. See: brss.wustl.edu

Mental Health: Mental Health Services’ professional staff members work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect the academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety and depression. See shs.wustl.edu/MentalHealth
Additional Issues or Concerns: If you feel that you need additional supports in order to be successful in your time at Brown, beyond the afore mentioned accommodations, please contact Essie Rochman, Director of Student Affairs at erochman@wustl.edu. She can assist you in navigating a myriad of concerns. Her office is in Brown Hall, room 320.

V. READINGS

Required Texts:


Articles:


Optional and Related Readings and Useful References for Assignments/Research

Ahrons, Constance (1994). The Good Divorce
Cozolino, Louis (2016). Why Therapy Works
Donovan, J (1999). Short Term Couple Therapy
Dougherty, W (2001). Take Back Your Marriage
Fishbane, Mona deKoven (2013). Loving with the Brain in Mind.
Gottman, John (1999). The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work
Gottman, John (1999). The Marriage Clinic
Gottman, Julie Schwartz (2004). The Marriage Clinic Casebook
Gottman, John and Gottman, Julie Schwarz (2015) 10 Principles for Doing Effective Couples Therapy
Hendrix, Harville (2008). Getting The Love You Want
Irving, Debby (2014). Waking Up White
Jacobson, Neil and Christensen, Andrew (1996). Acceptance and Change in Couple Therapy
Johnson, Susan (2002). Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy with Trauma Survivors.
Lerner, Harriet (2001). The Dance of Connection
Pittman, Frank. ( ). Private Lies: Infidelity and Betrayal of Intimacy
Papp, Peggy (2000). Couples on the Fault Line
Rolland, John (1994). Families, Illness and Disability
Springs, Janis. (1996). After the Affair
Tatkin, Stan (2011). Wired for Love
Tannen, Deborah (2001). I Only Say This Because I Love You.
Tannen, Deborah ( ). You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation
Wallerstein, Judith (1990). Second Chances
Wile, Daniel (1993). After the Fight

VI. ORGANIZATION OF COURSE

The course format includes lecture, class discussion, relevant case presentations and exercises. Each week a student will lead a class discussion of the assigned material in order to deepen our understanding of the readings. We will see videos of some of the master therapists interviewing couples in order to learn and understand their work.

VII. ROLE OF FACULTY AND STUDENTS

Students are expected to attend all classes and to come to class prepared (having read the assigned material). Class participation is important in order to benefit (attendance and participation are part of the grading criteria). Assignments must be turned in on time.

Students responsibilities include: brief pre-assigned oral presentation of the class readings the purpose of which is to generate class discussion, one critical review paper to be handed in at mid-term centered on the three main therapeutic modalities studied during the course, a comprehensive literature review on a topic of your choosing pertaining to couples counseling to be handed in at mid-term and a final paper based on the previous literature review. The written materials are expected to be adequately edited and clearly written.

NOTE: If you have a learning disability, sensory or physical disability, or other impairment, or if English is your second language and you may need special assistance in lecture, readings assignments, written assignments, please contact the instructor. If you are not able to comply with these requirements, you are expected to advise the instructor of your plans to fulfill the requirements. This means advising the instructor in writing if you are unable to attend class, complete assignments on time, etc.
VIII. COMPETENCY ALIGNMENT TO ASSIGNMENTS AND COURSE ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graded Assignments</th>
<th>Competency/Competencies</th>
<th>Dimension/Dimensions Measured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Review Paper: Critical Thinking Understanding of Theory</td>
<td>C3, C4</td>
<td>Knowledge, Cognitive and Affective Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review Paper</td>
<td>C6, C8</td>
<td>Skills, Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Rotating Student Presentation</td>
<td>C1, C2</td>
<td>Skills, Values, Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project: Couples Therapy Research Paper</td>
<td>C1, C4, C6, C7, C8, C9</td>
<td>Skills, Knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Activities

| Watch/Analyze Therapist/Couples Clinical Videotaped Interviews | C7                      | Values, Cognitive Processes, Affective Processes, Skills |
| Weekly Case Discussions with Intervention and Problem Solving | C1, C2, C7, C8, C9     | Values, Cognitive Processes, Affective Processes, Knowledge |

IX. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING CRITERIA

Grading is on a points system. Total possible points for the course: 100

A = 94 and above
A- = 90-93
B+ = 87-89
B = 84-86
B- = 80-83
C+ = 76-79
C = 73-75
C- = 70-72

Distribution of Points:

1. Attendance = 15 points (1 point each class)
2. Class participation = 15 points (to be determined as a combination of participation in weekly discussions and when leading the readings summary/discussion).
3. Critical Review Paper (Due March 5, 2018/ Week #7) = 15 points
4. Literature Review Paper = 25 points
3. Couple Therapy Research Paper End of Semester = 30 points  
(Due April 30, 2018/Week #14)

Please note:  All assignments and reaction papers must be handed in ON TIME. Any class not attended will result in two points lost (one for attendance and another for participation).

IF MORE THAN THREE CLASSES ARE MISSED DURING THE SEMESTER YOUR GRADE WILL BE DROPPED BY ONE LETTER. FOR EXAMPLE AN “A” LETTER GRADE WILL BECOME A “B” AND SO FORTH.

Assignment criteria and expectations:

1. Attendance is required. Class points for attendance factor into your final grade. You can only earn as many points as classes attended.

2. Class participation. It is important in this class to interact in the discussion and/or experiential portion of each class. Each student will be assigned a brief oral presentation which will provide for the class a summary and critique (pro or con) of the assigned weekly readings. The purpose of this exercise is to facilitate discussion and to highlight the key points of the readings for the rest of the class.

Class participation points can only equal the number of classes that you have attended (if you don’t attend then how can you participate)?

3. Critical Review Paper (3-5 pages). Due March 5, 2018 Utilizing the criteria outlined in the article by Benson et al. students will compare and contrast the three therapeutic modalities covered in class and provide an opinion on their efficacy based on the criteria for evidence based practice within the field of couples therapy. You are not required to look for additional source material outside of what is provided in class, but you may do so at your discretion. The main points of each therapy system can be presented in paragraph or spread-sheet form, but the student's opinion must be comprehensive and clearly expressed in paragraph form.

4. Mid-semester Literature Review Paper. Due March 19, 2018. Pick any topic related to couples therapy that is of interest for you and your career path. Possible topics include intervention techniques, specific populations (i.e. gay or lesbian couples), working with a diagnostic issue in couples therapy (i.e. alcoholism or domestic violence) or issues of divorce and/or remarriage. Complete a comprehensive literature review with a minimum of eight references. The above examples are merely examples. Pick what interests you.

5. Couple Therapy Research Paper. Due April 20, 2018. Based on your previously completed Literature Review paper, you will complete a comprehensive theory based paper on the topic of your choice. This paper will be 8-10 pages and will include your thesis statement, supporting evidence, conclusion, personal opinion and application to practice.

X. COURSE OUTLINE
Sessions 1 thru 4 will focus on getting started with couples therapy. We will look at the foundation and overview of the theory, clinical tasks, communications, the therapist’s role, and core issues. We will discuss how to move from content to process in our sessions. We will talk about techniques and interventions.

**Session 1—January 22, 2018**

Class Overview  
Course Outline and Course Requirements  
Assign Readings Summary

**Defining love.** We need to know how to define love and who are the couples that we are talking about throughout the course? What do we pay attention to when we are talking with a couple….the content and/or the process of the communication? This is our beginning.

**Readings**  
Chapter 1. Into the Frey: Theoretical Foundation and Overview  
Chapter 2. The Basics: Clinical Goals and Tasks  
Chapter 3. Beginnings: Presentations, Assessments, and Goals  
Chapter 4. Beginnings in Action

**Session 2—January 29, 2018**

**Role of the couples therapist and their limitations.** A couples therapist is entering a relationship, this needs to be clearly defined and its limitations clearly outlined for both the couple’s sake and the therapist. How does a couples therapist role differ from that of a therapist working with an individual or a family?

**Readings**  
Chapter 5. Clearing the Clutter: Improving Communication Skills  
Chapter 6. Drilling Down: Core Issues  
Chapter 7. Termination  
**From:** Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy, Gurman  
Chapter 26. Couples Therapy and Interpersonal Neurobiology by Mona DeKoven Fishbane

**Presentation of readings from week 1 and 2.**

**Session 3—February 5, 2018**

**The “thorny issues” of couple therapy include money, sex and kids.** These topics may be the presenting problem or show up as the work unfolds. We are helping couples navigate how to address these difficult topics and to decide outcomes. This is a time to balance the original vision of being a
couple with new realities. We have to remain balanced with the couple and collaborative while helping them make the best decisions going forward.

**Readings**


Chapter 8. Of Money, Sex and Children: Handling the Power Issues  
Chapter 10. Re-creating the Vision  
Chapter 14, One Helping Two, Two Helping One: Working with Individuals in Relationships  
Chapter 15. Life in the Details: The Nuts and Bolts of Couple Therapy

SESSIONS 4-7 will address the current theory, research and intervention approaches of John Gottman (and his wife Julie Schwartz Gottman), Susan Johnson, and Harville Hendrix (and his wife Helen Lakelly Hunt). We will explore how these theories differ and how they overlap. These are the postmodern system thinkers in the field. We will also talk about other master clinicians/theorists and their theories throughout the course.

**Session 4—February 12, 2018**

Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), the work of Susan Johnson. Susan Johnson’s work has been researched and the effectiveness has been repeatedly demonstrated. The therapist is a “process consultant who supports partners in restructuring and expanding their emotional responses to each other.”

**Readings**

*From:* Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy, Gurman  
Ch 4. Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy by Susan M. Johnson

Video of Susan Johnson’s Work

**Session 5—February 19, 2018**

Imago Therapy. Harville Hendirx and Helen LaKelly Hunt have created Imago Therapy which integrates family of origin work with couples work. Theory and exercises are designed to educate partners about each others history along with present day needs. The work is designed to create safety in the relationship which leads to letting go of some of what is familiar in order to venture into new territory with ones partner.

**Readings:**


Chapter 3. Your Imago  
Chapter 9. Increasing Your Knowledge of Yourself and Your Partner
The “love lab” and research of John Gottman. Gottman claims that he can predict marital success or divorce within the first few minutes of meeting a couple. We will explore some of his key concepts from his research which are directly applicable in couples work. This is a very practical and structured approach.

Readings
From: Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy, Gurman
Ch 5. Gottman Method Couple Therapy by John M Gottman and Julie S Gottman

Optional Readings: Gottman, John. (1994). Why Marriages Succeed or Fail. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 7 on What Makes Marriage Work; Marriages Styles; The Four Horsemen; Your Marriage: The Diagnosis and Four Keys to Improving Your Marriage

Video of John Gottman’s Work

Critical review of the three previously learned theories.

Readings

Critical Review Paper Due

Sessions 8-15 will address specific populations (same sex couples, multicultural couples, trauma survivors) and we will address core issues (separation/divorce and remarriage, gender differences, substance abuse, family violence, affairs, illness, etc.).

Working with trauma survivors. Susan Johnson expands on our roles as therapists and helps us to help couples “fight the dragon”. Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy shows us that couples interventions can help promote resilience and health in each of the partners, which in turn helps healing and promote closer connections…even when resolving childhood traumas (such as childhood sexual abuse). The relationship with a person’s life partner can be the most powerful corrective experience according to Johnson. The basis for her approach is attachment theory.

Readings
From: Johnson, Susan (2002). Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy with Trauma Survivors
Ch 2. Trauma and its Aftermath
Ch 3. Attachment and Trauma
From: Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy, Gurman
Ch 20. Couple Therapy and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder by Monson and Fredman

Video of Susan Johnson’s Work  
LIT REVIEW PAPER DUE

Session 9—March 29, 2018

**Alcoholism and Addiction.** There is a vicious cycle of substance use affecting a couple’s relationship and the relationship affecting the use of substances. We need to know if we have the skills to treat these complicated couples, or if we should refer to other experts in the field who have more in depth training with addiction. This issue may make a team approach and we must be prepared.

**Readings**  
From: Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy, Gurman  
Ch 21. Couple Therapy and Alcohol Problems, by McCrady and Epstein

**Domestic Violence.** This is a problem that moves from generation to generation. We must consider SAFETY first when determining a course of treatment. Should we treat the couple separately or together? We must know how to evaluate and distinguish between the different categories of couple violence (physical, sexual, verbal, emotional) and must always keep SAFETY PLANNING at the forefront of our interventions. Know our local resources and use a team approach whenever needed.

**Readings**  
From: Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy, Gurman  
Ch 14. Couple Therapy for Partner Aggression by Epstein, Werlinich, LaTaillade

Session 10—April 2, 2018

**Sex.** Therapists need to know how to have “the talk” with clients and explore the issues of sexual function and dysfunction with couples. We have to determine if we are comfortable and skilled enough to handle issues of sex or if we should find a specialist and/or physician to be part of the “team”.

**Readings**  
From: Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy, Gurman  
Ch 24. Couples Therapy and Sexual Problems by Weeks and Gambescia

From: Gottman, Julie Schwartz (2004). The Marriage Clinic Casebook. WW Norton & Company  
Ch 7 Sexual Dysfunction


**Gender Matters.** Gender informs the experience of two people in an intimate relationship and is an organized construct.
Readings
From: Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy, Gurman/Jacobson (3rd edition)
Ch 20. Working with Gender in Couple Therapy by Rampage

Session 11—April 9, 2018

A multicultural perspective is a worldview, informs where we place ourselves in the world. With couples we know that there is a commitment between two individuals as well as the merging of race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, etc. There are many challenges to be faced.

Readings
From: Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy, Gurman
Ch 19. Couple Therapy and Intercultural Relationships by Killian

Same Sex Couples. We do not need an entirely new theory of therapy to work with homosexual couples because regardless of sexual orientation couples present with challenges that are similar. We do however need to understand the special challenges that exist within this population.

Readings
From: Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy, Gurman
Ch. 18. Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Issues in Couple Therapy by Green and Mitchell

Session 12—April 16, 2018

Affairs. Who has affairs and does it hurt a relationship irreparably? Or can a relationship truly be repaired and/or stronger with an intervention (after an affair has taken place)? We must pay attention to the type of affair….sexual, emotional and the location/length of the affair as some of the clues.

Readings
From: Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy, Gurman
Ch 15. Couple Therapy and the Treatment of Affairs, Gordon, Khaddouma, Baucom and Snyder


Ch 4. Extramarital Affairs: The Pearl in the Oyster

Session 13—April 23, 2018
Separation/Divorce/Remarriage. The United States is still the world leader in numbers of divorce. When couples come into our office there is most likely an imbalance in the relationship. One person may be thinking about ending the relationship and the other is hoping to make it stronger and to continue on.

Readings
From: Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy, Gurman
Ch 16. Separation and Divorce Issues in Couple Therapy by Lebow
Ch 17. Therapy with Couples in Stepfamilies by Papernow

Session 14—April 30, 2018

Mental Illness and Physical Illness. An example of managing illness in the couple (we must think about physical and mental illnesses and how they are handled). The diagnoses of depression, bipolar, and anxiety are continuing to grow and we know that depressed individuals report dissatisfaction and conflict in their relationships.

Readings
From: Clinical Handbook of Couples Therapy, Gurman
Ch 22. Couple Therapy and Depression by Whisman and Beach
Ch 25. Couple Therapy and Medical Issues by Ruddy and McDaniel

From: Johnson, Susan (2004). Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy with Trauma Survivors.
Ch 7. Defeating an Anxiety Disorder and Marital Distress
Ch 8. The Trauma of Physical Illness

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE

Session 15—May 7, 2018

Putting it all together. Time to ask any questions, talk further about couples issues, bring in questions. There are so many topics and issues that couples face that we are continuing to address. These readings deal with some modern day dilemmas.

Readings
From: Couples on the Fault Line, Papp
Ch 2. The Three-Career Family
Ch 3. Couples and Technology
Ch 4. Clocks, Calendars, and Couples