

Course Syllabus & Outline

COUPLES AND COUPLES THERAPY

Portland State University
Department of Counselor Education
Fall Quarter, 2012

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Couples and Couples Therapy
Course # 578; 3 Credit

“But if in your fear, you would only seek Love’s peace and pleasure, then It is better for you to cover your nakedness and pass out of Love’s threshing floor into that seasonless world where you would laugh but not all of your laughter, and cry, but not all of your tears.”.....Kahlil Gibran

“A married couple playing cards together is just a fight that hasn’t started yet.”.....George Burns

“The course of true love never did run smoothly (for) love’s not love that alters when it alteration finds.”.....William Shakespeare

COURSE ORIENTATION:

The basic question this course asks and addresses is: What is the basic purpose and work of intimate partnering? Why does it exist at all, much less, in the form it has traditionally taken? We will look at four paradigms of intimate bondings and ask these questions of all of them. Concurrently, we will also ask the question of the four paradigms as to why and how divorce or break-up occurs?

The course is very compressed, trying as we are, to present mate selection and couples theory as well as focusing on intervention approaches. Due to the recent explosion of literature in this area of study, there is a lot of reading in the course. There will also be a lot of lecture material interspersed with discussion, demonstrations, practice experiential, and video examples. Aside from the big-picture of mate selection and the fundamental coupling process of intimacy-creation and enhancement , the course will also focus on special issues like addictions, Axis II partners, separations, divorce and divorce mediation, domestic violence, affairs, past or present secrets, dual-career marriages, the effect of children on marriage, maintaining confidentiality while working with couples, remarriage and blended families, mid-life/long term divorce and remarriage. etc. Focus on typically-seen gender issues regarding communication, values, sensuality/sexuality, and overall life orientation will be explored.

While using the term “marriage”, I use it as a verb, not a noun. Marriage is certainly a noun, a thing, a state of being, but I am referring to the “marrying” process endemic to all kinds and stages of intimate

pair-bondings including early-stage courtship/dating, co-habitation, short and long term intimate, committed, monogamous hetero and/or GLBTQ relationships whether set in a legal bond or not, and polyamoric relationships. Since most couples work includes hetero relationships (unless you create a niche for GLBTQ relationships in your practice), much focus will be upon that arrangement, yet time will be given to studying the basic nature and the differences in all intimate pairings.

While fundamentally systemic/transactiounal in nature, the course will draw heavily from a variety of other models and literatures as well, including CBT, Brief, Adlerian, Jungian, Object Relations, Control-Mastery, Existential-Humanistic, sociological, quantum/spiritual/transformational etc. The work of current major contributors in the field will also be emphasized. Theory and practice will be intertwined each week as a way of amalgamating the theory with the practice, essentially splitting each class session into these two important phases.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There is built-in flexibility here depending on your current experience with doing systems therapies. The preferred assignment is a Case-Conceptualization paper consisting of (1.) a couple analysis/assessment, and (2.) an intervention plan. If you are in Practicum or Internship and have worked with couples, this will not be foreign to you. But if you are not working with couples but want to familiarize yourself with this assessment planning process, you could use your own (past or present), or even a fictitious couple out of novels, movies, or case studies elsewhere presented. Using other couples you know of is very, very controversial and should be avoided under most circumstances. In any case, I want to see embedded in the paper evidence of reading, lecture material, class discussion evolved matters, and relevant outside sources. While the body of the paper would not be APA-formatted, I want to have you do an APA formed bibliography.

Short of a full case-conceptualization paper, a reading log would be acceptable. This log or paper would consist of the following: (1.) citations, (2.) a general overview of the gist of the contents of the books, chapters, or articles, (3.) your own personal and professional impressions and resolutions of the material, and (4.) hypothetical applications and interventions you'd consider using were you to be working with such issues. A fourth option would be a research paper on a relevant topic, again, giving evidence of the course material and including interventional suggestions and possible applications.

In all, 12 to 18 pages should suffice for any of these options. Due date for the papers would be Wednesday, 05 December, 2012, during our 11th and last class session. If you want to hand in your paper electronically, you may do so by attaching it to an e-mail. My address is: mihaloew.mft@gmail.com . Most formats work, but now and then, one may not. So, along with the e-mail and attachment, send me a separate e-mail memo telling me that you mailed it to me. I can then contact you to confirm reception or not. If you encounter any delays in submitting your paper on time, see me as soon as possible so we can work out ways to get it counted and graded by, or shortly after, the due date of 05 December.

Important details regarding the paper: (1.) **double space** your lines so I have room for commentary, (2.) **number your pages**, (3.) include on your cover page your **home mailing address**, your **phone number(s)**, and **your e-mail address(s)**, this to allow me easy access to you were a problem to arise. If you do not want this information visible to others, include it inside as a second cover page. It will remain confidential with me. Write me on e-mail or telephone me at 1-360-220-1002 if you want to reach me. I have no stipulated office hours but can be available before and after class were you to want to discuss some matter with me.

TK 20 Assignment: In addition to the paper assignment, we will use a class experiential called “The Paper Exercise” (in Bader and Pearson) to enter into the TK 20 venue. Once the TK 20 is learned, this assignment is a simple matter of writing a short paragraph on it rather than on paper. More on this in class tonight.

READING:

The required books are three in number. The first is In Quest Of The Mythical Mate by Bader and Pearson. Next is David Schnarch’s Passionate Marriage, a book we will also use in the Human Sexuality course coming up in the Winter Qtr. Lastly, there is Maggie Scarf’s Intimate Partners . All three books have a different feel and focus and all are equally important. There are so many other books in the field that are equally important and so if you are into another favorite book, let me know so I can determine if it fits the gist of this class. As we will also be discussing the work of John Gottman, Sue Johnson, Harville Hendricks, Ester Perel, Helen Fisher, and others, staying with the three required books noted here will hold you in good stead for a thorough introduction to this vital and exciting field of couples therapy. Nonetheless, obtaining and studying these extra current contributors can only enhance your overall knowledge in this field. There are two other excellent reference/resource books

Week I. Introduction and Orientation

- (1.) Course Syllabus and Outline
- (2.) The Four Paradigms of Pair-Bondings
- (3.) Overview of Bader and Pearson's "Mythical Mate" Model
- (4.) PFX (Practice Oriented Experiential)- The Paper Exercise (to then be written up for TK20)

Week II. The Work and Purpose of Marriage: Knowing The Ropes Before Tying The Knot

- (1.) The Stages of Relational Development; The Second Law of Thermodynamics Applied to Love
- (2.) The Two Marriages In Every Marriage (Bernard)
- (3.) Inner and Out Marriage: A Jungian Perspective (Kast; Harding; Jung)
- (4.) The Mystery of Love; Dependency As A Shape-Shifter
- (5.) PFX: How would you go about deciphering the "1st Disappointment" to then determine the basic dependency issues in the couple? (Individual and Dyadic mode)

Week III. The Work of Marriage Continued

- (1.) The Two Functional Forces in Relational Dynamics (Bowen; Schnarch)
- (2.) The Projection Principle; (Von Franz; Weiner)
- (3.) Traits of Healthy Relationships (Wallerstein/Blakeslee; Kragbrun; Goulston)
- (4.) PFX: How would you find and evaluate the effects of The Two Fundamental Forces? (Individual and Dyadic mode)

Week IV. The Nature of Intimate Conflict: the Rages of Relational Development

- (1.) The Marriage Funnel: Fighting About You Are Really Fighting About
- (2.) The Structure and Meaning of Presenting Problems
- (3.) The Coming Together of Core Issues in Coupling (Bennett-Goleman; Schutz; Loevinger))
- (4.) The Conflict Habituated Couple (Bader-Pearson; Cuber & Harroff))
- (5.) The Five Levels of Proximity in Intimate Relations; Axis II Partners; Projective Identification; Repetition Compulsion (Freud)
- (6.) PFX: How would you determine the Bader and Pearson stage of conflict in couples? (Individual and Triad mode)

Week V: Conflict and Intimacy; Conflict AS Intimacy

- (1.) A Conflict Process Model: A Radical, Paradoxical Approach (Brach; Chodron; Katie; Wellwood))
- (2.) Resentments, Forgiveness, Leveling With, Emotional Honesty, and Courage
- (3.) Clean and Dirty Fighting: Opening Your Heart or Covering Your Behind? (paul and Paul)
- (4.) PFX: How would you determine who is more able to open to their contribution in the fray? How would you broach this issue? (Individual, Dyadic, and Triadic mode)

Week VI. Finishing Old Business:

- (1.) The Work of John Gottman, Ellen Bader, Harville Hendrix, Sue Johnson, David Schnarch, and Helen Fisher
- (2.) Trauma and Control-Mastery Theory (Weiss; Zeitlin; Rappoport)
- (3.) The Shadow Personality in Coupling ; How Marriage Is *Supposed* To Cure All (Adler; Jung)
- (4.) PFX: How do you keep attention on both partners when addressing or listening to only one of them? How do you practice “multi-partiality” rather than non-partiality? (Dyadic and Triadic mode)

Week VII. Sensuality, Sexuality, and Sex in Intimate Relations

- (1.) A Broad Spectrum Definition of Sex
- (2.) Gender Issues in Intimacy: the Mars-Venus Thing (Gray;Tannen; Brizendine))
- (3.) Admiration and Attention in Couples Intimacy
- (4.) PFX: How do you personally account for the repetitive nature of gender perceptions and Behaviors in couples, hetero orGLBTQ? (Individual and class discussion mode)

Week VIII. Approaches To Intervention:

- (1.) Video Vignettes: “The Story of Us”
“Ladder 49”
“The Conflicted Couple” – Part One (Training Video)
- (2.) Discussion and Systemic Conceptualization
- (3.) PFX: Triadic Role-Play

Week IX. More Approaches To Intervention

- (1.) Faculty Demonstration of Couples Work
- (2.) Class Discussion
- (3.) PFX: Triadic Student Role-Plays

Week X. Special Issues in Couples’ Lives:

- (1.) Handling Separations and Divorcing
- (2.) Affairs
- (3.) Domestic Violence
- (4.) Addictions
- (5.) “The Conflicted Couple”- Video—Part Two
- (6.) PFX: What compensations are being used in the above examples? (What are the control-mastery strategies?) What are the positive intentionalities of each? How would you redirect the focus away from what and then toward what?

Week XI. The Conflicted Couple

- (1.) "The Conflicted Couple"- Video—Part Three
- (2.) Triadic Student Role-Plays

DEPARTMENT POLICY STATEMENT:

The counseling profession requires a high level of personal integrity, self-awareness, and personal maturity. Demonstrating professionalism in classroom behavior, as well as being present and engaged in classroom activities, is expected at all times as a graduate student in Counselor Education.

Students are expected to attend all class meetings; however, one absence is not considered excessive. Students whose beliefs, religious practices, or lifestyles may conflict with class attendance from time to time should discuss such issues with the course instructor at the beginning of the term. If possible, arrangements should be made to make up missed attendance-related assignments and experiences. It is up to the student and instructor to negotiate a satisfactory solution with respect to absences.





Students and faculty are expected to maintain an atmosphere in which controversial issues, germane to the subject matter, can be examined and discussed. In exercising this freedom of expression, faculty and students are expected to exercise appropriate restraint and show respect for the opinion of others.

The Counselor Education Department seeks to balance providing care and support, high expectations, and opportunities for participation in meaningful activities. All students are expected to participate in constructing a respectful learning environment in the classroom. Arrive to class on time, stay for the entire class, come back from breaks on time, turn off cell phones, etc. Be mindful of what might detract from the learning experience of students and faculty alike (e.g., talking to fellow students during lecture). ††

All students in the Department must demonstrate behavior that is consistent with the Ethical Standards put forth in 2005 by the American Counseling Association:

<http://www.counseling.org/resources/ethics.htm>

Failure to do so can result in termination from the program.

Vision - Preparing professionals to lead life-long learning and development within our diverse communities.			
			
Diversity and inclusiveness—Advocacy for fairness and respect Candidates work effectively with diverse populations (1.1) Candidates promote inclusive and therapeutic environments (1.2)	Research-based practices and professional standards—Professionalism Candidates critically analyze and implement research-based practices (2.1) Candidates demonstrate appropriate professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions (2.2)	Impact on learning and development—Commitment to learning Candidates ensure that all learners and clients succeed (3.1) Candidates use technology to enhance learning and development (3.2) Candidates influence policy and provide leadership for organizations (3.3)	Evidence-informed decision making—Reflection Candidates use evidence to address problems of practice and make informed educational and therapeutic decisions (4.1)