Adler Graduate School

Richfield, MN

AGS Course 541

Family Systems: Theoretical Foundations, Theories, and Practical Applications

1. Course Designation and Identifier
   1.1 Adler Graduate School
   1.2 Course number 541
   1.3 Family Systems: Theoretical Foundations, Theories, and Practical Applications
   1.4 Three (3) credits
   1.5 Prerequisite: None

2. Course Description
   This course introduces students to early systemic/relational theories that shaped the field of marriage and family therapy. Students will examine the development of prominent theories into models of family therapy. Specifically, the therapeutic techniques from a General Systems/relational perspective in conjunction with Adlerian Individual Psychology will be explored. Finally, the course will challenge students to ascertain their theoretical orientation.

3. Texts, Materials and Resources (required and optional)
   3.1 Required materials:
DO NOT PURCHASE – HANDOUTS will be provided in class

3.2 Suggested materials:


   ISBN-10: 0205768938

4. MFT MA Student Learning Outcomes

4.1 Domain: Theoretical Knowledge Outcome:

1. Know and understand foundational systems theories, concepts, principles, and techniques
2. Apply foundations systems theories, concepts, and principles in the practice of marriage and family therapy

Competency:

1. Recognize contextual origins of client issues
2. Gather and review relevant, appropriate, and adequate information for the purpose of diagnosis and intervention/treatment planning

4.2 Domain: Clinical Knowledge Outcome:

1. Know and understand techniques and skills for practicing marriage and family therapy
2. Apply psychotherapy techniques and skills to assists clients in understanding individual or relational issues
3. Apply psychotherapy techniques and skills to find interventions and solutions

Competency:

1. Identify the client (individual, couple, family, extra-familial)
2. Organize, design, and facilitate therapy
3. Assists clients to discover solutions; identify resources (internal and external to the client)
4. Build rapport and healthy therapeutic alliance with the client
4.3 **Domain: Individual Development and Family**

**Relations Outcome:**

1. Know and understand individual development and family lifespan development theories
2. Know and understand multicultural factors that influence individual development, interpersonal dynamics, and other systems (e.g., couples, parent-child, families, etc.)

**Competency:**

1. Integrate principles of human development (e.g., human sexuality, gender development, family development and processes) with assessment, diagnosis, and treatment in the practice of marriage and family therapy
2. Identify critical diversity factors (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion/spirituality) that are relevant to assessment, diagnosis, interventions, and treatment

4.4 **Domain: Professional Identity and Ethics**

**Outcome:**

1. Know and understand federal, state, and local laws applicable to the practice of marriage and family therapy
2. Know and understand professional ethical codes and standards that apply to the practice of marriage and family therapy
3. Know and understand professional identity development and maintenance

**Competency:**

1. Recognize ethical dilemmas, ethical/legal issues in the practice of marriage and family therapy
2. Ability to engage in the decision making process
3. Engage in best practices applicable to clinical practice, professional identity maintenance and growth

4.5 **Domain: Research Outcome:**

1. Know current MFT literature, research, and evidence-based practice
2. Know and understand quantitative and qualitative research methodologies
3. Know and understand program evaluation methods

**Competencies:**

1. Analyze and translate research findings
2. Apply research findings to improve the practice of marriage and family therapy
3. Contribute to the development of new knowledge and clinical interventions
4.6 **Domain: Interpersonal Effectiveness**

**Outcome:**

1. Know and understand personal development factors that impact professional identity and practice

**Competency:**

1. Demonstrate professional demeanor, effective communication, relational skills (e.g., attentive listening, respect for others), appropriate boundary setting
2. Awareness of self in relation to others
3. Ability for self-reflection/self-evaluation; ability to receive critical feedback
4. On-going pursuit of professional development through continuing education activities

5. **Course Student Learning Outcomes** (SLOs—what students should know and be able to do)

5.1 *What to KNOW to successfully progress through* Family Systems: Theoretical Foundations, Theories, and Practical Applications

5.11 **Students should have an overall picture of the historical development of relational/systemic perspective**

5.111 Foundations of marital, couple, and family therapy

5.112 Models of marital, couple, and family therapy

5.1121 Early models of MFT

5.1122 Contemporary models of MFT

5.11221 Evidenced-based practice

5.11222 Biopsychosocial perspective

5.113 Contemporary conceptual foundations

5.1141 Family studies and science

5.1142 Marital studies and science

5.12 **Students should know the body of theoretical knowledge in MFT** (*from AMFTRB* – http://www.amftrb.org/exam.cfm#domains)

5.121 General Systems Theory

5.122 Expressive, experiential, and play therapies
5.123 Empirically-base approaches to couples and family therapy
5.124 Individually-based theory and therapy models (including but not limited to Adlerian, person-centered, Gestalt, RET, and cognitive-behavior)

5.13 Students should know available resources to help them fulfill the course requirements

5.131 Writing resource: lab, tutors, basic instruction
5.132 Library resources: on campus library, virtual library, on-line psych resources for research and writing
5.133 Technology resources
5.134 Advising resources: Academic Advising, Course Instructor

5.2 What to be ABLE TO DO to successfully progress through standard foundational curriculum

5.21 Students should be able to commit to the required course of study

5.211 Work within the General Systems and Adlerian perspectives
5.212 Attend and complete all course sessions
5.213 Participate in weekly on-ground course sessions
5.214 Adhere to course guidelines as articulated in this syllabus and the instructor
5.215 Complete all course requirements
5.216 Meet all course requirement benchmarks

5.22 Students should be able to access and utilize resources

5.221 Produce required written course assignments, i.e., case reports/presentations according to APA Publication Manual (6th edition) and AAMFT Code of Ethics
5.223 Utilize guidance of course instructor(s)
5.223 Navigate through library resources to inform and support course requirements (e.g., research papers, group projects, case presentations, etc.)
5.224 Operate and use technology equipment (personal computers/computers provided at AGS library) to present required assignments
5.23 Students should be able to complete requirements for each course

5.231 Demonstrate knowledge, understanding, and comprehension of course content
   5.2311 Class participation
   5.2312 Class discussion
   5.2313 Class exercises/activities (e.g. group work)
   5.2314 Oral and/or written presentations
   5.2315 Assessments: quizzes and/or examinations

5.232 Discuss completed reading assignments

5.233 Present oral and/or written material (e.g., presentations)

5.234 Written critiques

5.235 Complete/fulfill assessment measures (exams/quizzes, direct observation, videotape, or audiotape)

5.239 Fulfill all course requirements to reach grade benchmark (letter grade, points, credit/no credit, or retake)

5.24 Students should be able to demonstrate personal and professional characteristics

5.241 Demonstrate self-reflecting skills

5.242 Able to integrate feedback from instructors and peers

5.243 Demonstrate emotional maturity (e.g., in interaction with faculty and peers empathic, sets appropriate boundaries, etc.)

5.244 Collaborate with peers; participates in group activities

5.245 Able to demonstrate awareness and sensitive to relevant diversity issues

5.246 Recognize relevant ethical considerations/frameworks

5.247 Operate from an ethical and moral framework

5.248 Demonstrate ability for decision making process

5.249 Integrate personal and professional values, ethics, codes, and standards

5.250 Attend classes; meet assignment due dates; respect time of class, instructors, and peers; take responsibility for missed classes or tardiness (i.e., communicate with instructors via phone or email in a timely fashion—except for emergencies (death/accidents)—prior to class time)

5.251 Able to focus and respect class time by refraining from use of personal technology (phones, ipads, etc.) except for the purpose of electronic note taking
6. **Course Objectives Mapped to Student Learning Outcomes**

*(Conceptual, perceptual, executive, evaluation, professional)*

**Students will:**

6.1 Understand systems theories and concepts foundational to the practice of marriage and family therapy *(SLO 5.11, 5.1121).*

6.2 Understand early and contemporary models of individual, couple, family, and group psychotherapy *(SLO 5.11, 5.112)*

6.3 Recognize relevant systemic theories, concepts, or perspectives that could inform client issues and choice of treatment models *(SLO 5.12)*

6.4 Determine systemic/relational models appropriate for individual-, couples-, family-, or group- specific needs/issues (taking into account contextual and systemic dynamics, e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, spirituality, religion larger systems, social context) *(SLO 5.211)*

6.5 Understand principles of family development and processes *(SLO 5.11)*

6.6 Systemically integrate theories into observations of client behaviors and relationship patterns *(SLO 5.11, 5.12, 5.245)*

6.7 Develop hypotheses regarding observed client behaviors and relationship patterns *(SLO 5.211, 5.23, 5.231, 5.245, 5.248)*

6.8 Elucidate client issues from perspective of foundational theories, concepts, or principles *(SLO 5.11, 5.12, 5.231, 5.245, 5.248)*

6.9 Recognize strengths, limitations, and contraindications of specific therapy models (e.g., including—but not limited to--risk of harm, assumptions, cultural deficits, etc.) *(SLO 5.245, 5.246, 5.248, 5.249)*

6.10 Evaluate interventions as to alignment with model of therapy and relevant theories, concepts, or principles of change *(SLO 5.245, 5.246, 5.248, 5.249)*

7. **Course Outline**

7.1 Course Units

**Unit 1: Introduction – Overview –Historical Underpinnings**  **July 7, 2015**

1) Read: Goldenberg & Goldenberg (GG) Ch 1-2

2) Read: Sherman & Dinkmeyer (SD) Ch 1, Appendix (p. 299-302)

6.1 Understand systems theories and concepts foundational to the practice of marriage and family therapy *(SLO 5.11, 5.1121).*
Unit 2: The Intersection of Systemic Thought & Treatment Models July 11, 2015

1) Read: GG Ch 3-4, Appendix B
2) Read: SD Ch 2 & 4

6.2 Understand early and contemporary models of individual, couple, family, and group psychotherapy (SLO 5.11, 5.112)


1) Read: GG Ch 5-6, Appendix A
2) Read: SD Ch 3

6.3 Recognize relevant systemic theories, concepts, or perspectives that could inform client issues and choice of treatment models (SLO 5.12)

Unit 4: Theories, Models, and Client Contextual Factors July 14, 2015

1) Read: GG 7-8
2) Read: SD 3

6.4 Determine systemic/relational models appropriate for individual-, couples-, family-, or group-specific needs/issues (taking into account contextual and systemic dynamics, e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, spirituality, religion larger systems, social context) (SLO 5.211)

Unit 5: Theories, Models, and Family Development and Processes July 21, 2015

1) Read: GG Ch 9-10
2) Read: SD Ch 5

6.5 Understand principles of family development and processes (SLO 5.11)

Unit 6: Integrating Theories and The Self of the Therapist July 28, 2015

1) Handouts provided

6.10 Evaluate interventions as to alignment with model of therapy and relevant theories, concepts, or principles of change (SLO 5.245, 5.246, 5.248, 5.249)
Unit 7: Theories and Behavioral/Relational Patterns

1) Read: GG Ch 11-12
2) Read: SD Ch 11

6.6 Systemically integrate theories into observations of client behaviors and relationship patterns (SLO 5.11, 5.12, 5.245)

Unit 8: Theories and Building Hypotheses re Client Issues August 1, 2015

1) Read: GG Ch 13, 16, & 17
2) Read: SD None

6.7 Develop hypotheses regarding observed client behaviors and relationship patterns (SLO 5.211, 5.23, 5.231, 5.245, 5.248)

6.8 Elucidate client issues from perspective of foundational theories, concepts, or principles (SLO 5.11, 5.12, 5.231, 5.245, 5.248)

Unit 9: Assessing Therapy Models and Interventions August 4, 2015

1) Read: GG Ch 14, 15, & 18
2) Read: SD None

6.9 Recognize strengths, limitations, and contraindications of specific therapy models (e.g., including—but not limited to—risk of harm, assumptions, cultural deficits, etc.) (SLO 5.245, 5.246, 5.248, 5.249)

7.2 SPT Assignment

Developing A Systems Perspective (Submit by Tues., August 18, 2015)

The purpose of the special project time is to assist the student in identifying a preferred theoretical orientation. In turn, the identified theoretical orientation is to serve as a foundation for developing the student’s own theory of change informed by the theoretical perspectives covered in the course. The student should be able to demonstrate the application of an integrated theory of change when working with
individuals, couples, and families in counseling and therapy. Specifics of this project, a tracking log, and a grading rubric will be distributed the first night of class.

7.3 **Special Project Time (SPT) – General Information**

7.31 Special Project Time (SPT) allows students the opportunity to integrate course materials. SPT is designed to be a self-contained experience requiring 30 hours to complete. SPT generally focuses on either (a) an experiential exercise paired with a short integrative writing component or (b) a research exercise and a short integrative writing component.

7.32 An integrative, SPT experience may be based on an individual project or a group project. As stated above, the individual or group completes an experiential or a research oriented exercise, followed by a short integrative writing assignment.

7.33 SPT experiences may be constructed in such a way that they pertain to students’ unique degree plans. For example, a Marriage and Family Therapist student, Professional Counselor student, or School Counselor student may create an SPT experience aligned with the student’s chosen disciplines. If a student chooses to create a discipline-specific SPT, consultation with the course instructor is required.

8. **Writing Guidelines including APA Format**

All written assignments in courses at the Adler Graduate School, including those submitted in online courses, must be in APA format unless specifically noted by the course instructor (*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition), 2009, American Psychological Association. ISBN 14338-0561-8).
9. **Assessment/Evaluation Procedures**

9.1 **Assignment Overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment or Activity</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly “Quiz” (5 @ 5 points each)</td>
<td>In Class</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory Sheets (5 @ 5 points each)</td>
<td>Due before class</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPT Project and Log</td>
<td>8/18/2015</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>8/11/2015-ONLINE</td>
<td>100</td>
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9.11 **Final Exam**

You will take an online final exam based on the readings from the Goldenberg and Goldenberg text. It will consist of 100 multiple choice questions that are taken from the Goldenberg and Goldenberg test bank. You are given 4 hours to complete the exam. Since the Moodle format will not stay “open” that long, the exam is set up into two 2-hour segments (part 1 and part 2) each containing 50 items. You can take both segments back-to-back or at different times during the time the exam is open.

The exam window will be open from <insert date and time> to <insert date and time>.

Once you close out of either part 1 or part 2 of the exam, you cannot go back and change any answers or work on them further. Even though it is an open book test, you will need to be very familiar with the material in order to do well. It is unlikely that you will have time to search for answers. Just as licensing exams are “curved” using the Mean score of the group, this exam will also be scored using the mean. In most cases this is a help to students.

You will be given a moodle log in and password, and will have an opportunity to log in and try a ‘sample’ exam question in an effort to be sure each student has access to the exam during the open window.
9.21 Grading: *Note: All coursework must be submitted for a grade to be considered.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>225-250</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>200-224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>175-199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Retake- Needs more time or instruction to master the requirements of the class</td>
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<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Quality of work or participation falls below minimum expectations, including:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Not attending class</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Not properly notifying registrar of a withdrawal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Missing class periods in excess of the number allowed by AGS’s course attendance policy (see section 9 below)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Not resolving a grade of incomplete within 45 days after the last class meeting (not the assignment due date) and an agreed upon extension has not been arranged by the student and instructor. The Incomplete turns to No Credit (NC) and the course must be repeated at full price.</td>
</tr>
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10. **Attendance Policy**

Since courses are structured according to an intensive five-week format, regular and punctual attendance is of prime importance. Students are **expected to attend all class meetings**. When a student is unable to attend class, it is a courtesy to notify the course instructor in advance using the e-mail or phone information provided at the end of this syllabus.

Most courses are divided into **nine units**. **One unit is equal to** one evening class session, ½ of a weekend day session, one unit/ posting in an online class or, roughly, 3 ¼ hours of class time. If a student **misses** more than 2 class units, the decision whether to allow a grade or issue a retake is left to the discretion of the instructor. Students who miss four class sessions are automatically not eligible to receive a grade for the class and are expected to retake the class.

In **online classes**, the student fulfills the class session or unit by complying with posting and other submission deadlines

It is the instructor’s prerogative to allow or not allow make up work, t deduct points, or issue a lower grade based on missed class sessions.
• Weekly Quiz may be made up for a missed session for half credit (2 possible points).
• Students will be required to get notes or other information from a classmate.

Specific courses may have **additional attendance requirements** based on the structure of the course. Those specifics are listed here:

- Two (2) missed course sessions will result in a grade no higher than a “B”

**Questions or appeals** about the implementation of the attendance policy may be directed to the Academic Vice President.

11. **Participation Disclaimer**

11.1 Active participation in class discussions/exercises/demonstrations is encouraged. As with other AGS courses, in this course, individual students must determine for themselves the level of disclosure/intimacy that is appropriate for them.

11.2 Whenever confidential information/material is used in any AGS course, students and faculty members are expected to observe AGS policy concerning the handling of confidential information/material. Full descriptions of these policies are available.

12. **Academic Integrity Policy**

Honesty and trust among students and between students and faculty are essential for a strong, functioning academic community. Consequently, students are expected to do their own work on all academic assignments, tests, projects, and research/term papers. Academic dishonesty, whether cheating, plagiarism, or some other form of dishonest conduct may result in failure for the work involved. Academic dishonesty could also result in failure for the course and, in the event of a second incident of academic dishonesty, suspension from the Adler Graduate School. The following are examples of academic dishonesty:

- Cheating - Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit.

- Fabrication - Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise
- Facilitating academic dishonesty - Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of academic integrity
- Plagiarism - The deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas or words or statements of another person as one’s own without acknowledgment

13. **Nondiscrimination Clause**

The Adler Graduate School is an equal opportunity educator and employer. The Adler Graduate School does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, or physical disability in the employment of faculty or staff, the admission or treatment of students, or in the operation of its educational programs and activities. The institution is committed to providing equal education and employment opportunities in accordance with all applicable State and federal laws.

14. **Learning Accommodations (including students with disabilities)**

If a student in this course has a documented learning disability, tell the instructor during the first week of class. The instructor needs to know on the front end so that he or she can work with you. The Adler Graduate School is committed to helping all students be successful, as best as can be reasonably accommodated. Documenting a learning disability occurs at the student’s expense. When documented appropriately, the Adler Graduate School makes all reasonable accommodations.

15. **Instructor Bio and Contact Information**

**Tracee Robinson Foote, MA., MA.**  Cell Phone: 612-501-1447
Adjunct Faculty  Email: tracee.robinsonfoote@alfredadler.edu
Adler Graduate School

Tracee Robinson Foote holds a BA in Adolescent Psychology from Metro State University and a double MA from University of St. Thomas in Curriculum and Instruction and Psychological Counseling. Tracee has taught elementary education in the Minneapolis Public Schools for 16 years and has provided mental health counseling services to youth in the evening working at various mental health facilities in the community. Currently, Tracee has completed her Doctorate in Marriage and Family Therapy (DMFT) program at Argosy University. Tracee has worked part time at the Kente Circle as a Mental Health Practitioner, providing family therapy to Anoka and Dakota families. Tracee’s Applied Clinic Project is complete; entitled, “School-based Mental Health Clinics from the therapist’s point of view.”
Suzanne Zook-Johnston, MA  
Adjunct Faculty  
Adler Graduate School

Suzanne Zook-Johnston holds a BS in Marketing from St. Cloud State University and an MA from The Adler Graduate School in Toronto, Ontario. In Toronto, Suzanne managed and inspired sales teams of 20 plus individuals for non-profit organizations such as the Toronto Symphony, and at the same time obtained higher level of education at the Adler school in order to deepen her understanding of how people work. After graduating from Adler, Suzanne chose a career in counseling, and worked in an agency, a church, and a private practice for 10 years where she counseled a diversified population of individuals, couples and families. Currently, Suzanne is a 5th year doctoral student at Argosy University-Twin Cities in the Doctorate of Marriage and Family Therapy (DMFT) program, and works as a mental health practitioner at the Center for Human Resources (CHR) in Northfield. Suzanne brings a passion to her work while she deepens her understanding of “what it means to be relational;” working diligently to complete an applied clinical research project measuring the efficacy of Terry Real’s couple treatment modality (Relational Life Therapy).