Adler Graduate School

Richfield, MN

AGS Course 542

Systemic Dynamics of Couple Therapy

1. Course Designation and Identifier

1.1 Adler Graduate School
1.2 Course number 542
1.3 Family & Couple Counseling
1.4 Three (3) credits
1.5 Prerequisite:

2. Course Description

This course provides theoretical and practical foundations for the practice of couple therapy, including an Adlerian foundation. In this course, the students will explore the development of marital/couple therapy, foundations for assessment of couple problems, and the practical application of current evidence-based methods for assessing and treating couple problems. Readings, lectures, role-play, and sample assessing will be framed within a systemic context and grounded in the interactional dynamics in human relationships. Students will be exposed to a variety of intervention methodologies and begin the process of formulating an Adlerian informed integrated model of relational therapy.

3. Texts, Materials and Resources (required and optional)

3.1 Required materials:

1) Brock, G.W., & Barnard, C.P.
   *Procedures in Marriage and Family Therapy (4th ed).*
   ISBN-10: 0205488706

2) Gehart, D. & Tuttle, A.R.
   *Theory-based Treatment Planning for Marriage and Family Therapists: Integrating Theory and Practice (1st ed)*
   ISBN-10: 0534536166

3) Carlson, J. & Dinkmeyer, Sr., D.
   *Time for a Better Marriage: Training in Marriage Enrichment*
   ISBN-10: 1886230463
3.2 Recommended materials:
4) Miller, S. et al.
   *Collaborative Marriage Skills – Workbook (5th ed)*
   ISBN-10: 0917340361  
5) Sherman, R.
   *Handbook of Structured Techniques in Marriage and Family Therapy*  
   ISBN-10: 0876304242  

4. Competencies and Learning Outcomes

Students in this course learn about or are able to do:

4.1 Define and discuss the martial/couple life-cycle.

4.2 Articulate one evidence-based approach to couple therapy inclusive of descriptions and techniques associated with the approach.

4.3 Demonstrate an understanding of empirical foundations for treatment of couple problems.

4.4 Implement at least one formal and one informal assessment of a couple or family.

4.5 Demonstrate a practical understanding of the process of therapy, including the impact of the person of the therapist in couples therapy.

4.6 Articulate and discuss special issues of couple’s therapy such as sexual problems, infidelity, violence, substance abuse, extra-relational affairs, and divorce.

5. Course Outline

[Each course outline must contain 9 units= 1 per week night, 2 per wknd day]

5.1 Unit 1 Intro & The Couple as a Unique System Monday, 2/16/2015

1) Review and discuss the course syllabus and outcome expectations.
2) Develop an understanding of couples/families as a unique systems and the challenge that working with systems presents to the therapist.
3) Distinguish Vertical/Horizontal Stressors unique to couple/family relationships.
4) Discuss the importance/differences of “First Contact” and establishing a relationship with couples and families.

Reading: B & B – pg 1-15; 56-66

5.2 Unit 2 Theories, Life-cycle, and Common C/F Problems Saturday, 2/21/2015

1) Identify characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships.
2) Recognize life-cycle transitions that prompt relationship challenges
3) List Common Couple Challenges

Reading:

5.3 Unit 3 Assessing the Couple/Family Relationship Saturday, 2/21/2015

1) Appreciate Biases and Assumptions in C/F Assessment
2) Assessment from an Integrative Model
3) Pre-marital Assessment, Formal and Informal Assessment Tools

Reading:

5.4 Unit 4 Communication and Relationship Ed. Monday, 2/23/2015

1) Communication Models
2) Factors of Personality and Communication
3) Conflict Negotiation and Communication

Reading:

5.5 Unit 5 Intimacy & Decision-making (Sex & Power) Monday, 3/2/2015

1) Intimacy versus Sex
2) Gender, Sexuality, Social Norms, Sexual Dysfunction
3) Extra-relational affairs

Reading:

5.6 Unit 6 The Work of John Gottman Saturday, 3/7/2015

1) The Gottman Method
2) Sound Relationship House
3) Emotional Intelligence Training

Reading:

5.7 Unit 7 The Work of Sue Johnson Saturday, 3/7/2015

1) Emotional Focused Couple Therapy
2) Attachment and relationships

Reading:

5.8 Unit 8 Parenting and Parenting Education Monday, 3/9/2015

1) Active Parenting
2) Parenting with Love and Logic
3) STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting)

Reading:
5.9 Unit 9 Divorce, Co-Parenting, and Step-families Monday, 3/16/2015

1) The divorcing couple with and without children
2) Co-parenting with a previous partner or ex-spouse
3) Working with blended families

Reading:

Final Assignment

Family and Couple Counseling Manual (Submitted by Monday, 3/30/2015)

The students will work with a partner to co-create a manual for use in couple and family therapy. Details of this assignment, including grading rubric will be distributed by the instructor in class.

6. Special Project Time (SPT)

6.1 Special Project Time (SPT) allows students the opportunity to integrate course materials. SPT is meant 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.

6.2 An integrative, SPT experience can be based on an individual project or a group project. Once again, the individual or group completes an experiential or a research oriented exercise, followed by a short integrative writing assignment.

6.3 SPT experiences may be constructed in such a way that they pertain to students’ unique degree plans. For example, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist students, Licensed Professional Counselor students, and Licensed School Counselor students may construct a SPT experience unique to their chosen disciplines. This is done in consultation with the course instructor.

SPT Assignment

Effective use of bibliotherapy in Couple and Family Therapy (Submitted by Monday, 3/30/2015)

The special project for this class, instructions, and grading rubric will be distributed by the instructor the first night of class.

7. 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 1-4338-0561-8).
8. **Assessment/Evaluation Procedures**

8.1 **Assignment Overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment or Activity</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
<th>Course Outcome Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final – Family or Couple Counseling Manual</td>
<td>3/30/2015</td>
<td>50 points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Instructions and Evaluation Rubric Distributed in Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPT – Bibliotherapy in C/F Therapy</td>
<td>3/30/2015</td>
<td>50 points</td>
<td>Varied by topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Instructions and Evaluation Rubric Distributed in Class</td>
<td>3/30/2015 11:59 pm</td>
<td>50 points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2 **Grading:** [Based on total points for the class]

A 90-100 points
B 80-89 points
C 70-79 points
R Retake*
NC No Credit**

Grading rubrics will be distributed by instructor.
*Retake – The student needs more time or instruction to master the requirements of the class.
**No Credit – The student’s quality of work, participation, or attendance fall below the minimum expectations, including:
- Not attending class.
- Not properly notifying the registrar of a withdrawal.
- Not resolving a grade of incomplete within 45 days after the last class meeting (not the assigned due date) and an agreed upon extension has not been arranged by the student and instructor. The Incomplete turns to a NC and the course must be repeated at full price.

9. **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 or to deduct points or issue a lower grade based on missed class sessions.
Specific courses may have **additional attendance requirements** based on the structure of the course. Those specifics are listed here:

- One excused absense is understandable. Students who are absent for 2 class meetings will not be eligible for an “A”. The highest possible grade is “B”.
- Students who are absent for 3 class meetings, the highest possible grade is “C”
- Students with absences of more than 3 class meetings will receive an NC in alignment with AGS attendance policy.
- In partner/group work, the absenteeism grade only applies to the individual student, not their partner or group.

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

10. **Participation Disclaimer**

13.2 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.

13.3 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.

11. **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 will 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.

Here 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 Contact Information**

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