1. Course Description:

This course will build on the content presented in course SW 521 (i.e. Interpersonal Practice with Individuals, Families, and Small Groups). This course will present a theoretical analysis of family functioning and integrate this analysis with social work practice. Broad definitions of "family" will be used, including extended families, unmarried couples, single parent families, gay or lesbian couples, adult siblings, "fictive kin," and other inclusive definitions. Along with theories and knowledge of family structure and process, guidelines and tools for engaging, assessing, and intervening with families will be introduced. The most recent social science theories and evidence will be employed in guiding family assessment and intervention. This course will cover all stages of the helping process with families (i.e. engagement, assessment, planning, evaluation, intervention, and termination). During these stages, client-worker differences will be taken into account including differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other factors. Various theoretical approaches will be presented in order to help students understand family structure, communication patterns, and behavioral and coping repertoires. The family will also be studied as part of larger social systems, as having its own life cycles, and as influencing multiple generations. An overview will be given of current models of practice.

2. Course Content:

Content on the engagement phase will emphasize methods for overcoming barriers to helpseeking that are both internal and external to the family. Students will learn how to identify client-worker differences and how to find common ground with clients. In particular, students will learn methods for engaging the most reluctant family members. Assessment content will draw from the major theories of family functioning and life span development, as well as meta-theories that address social forces (e.g. sexism and racism). A sampling of reliable assessment
measures will be introduced and applied. Goal setting and planning will flow from the assessment of the family, the goals of the family and its individual members, empirical evidence for different approaches, and ethical considerations. A variety of intervention and prevention models will be presented, along with the specific methods and procedures of each model. Included will be work with nontraditional families, couples counseling, and divorce and separation counseling. The role of social work in the primary prevention of family problems will be emphasized (e.g. family life education programs). Methods for the evaluation of intervention and prevention efforts will be covered, including the use of self-report and observational measures.

3. Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate a conceptual framework that takes into account individual and family needs, problems and experiences within the family, and resources and opportunities of the social environment. Within such a framework, students will be able to:
   a) identify the normative experiences, risks, and needed tasks as families move through each developmental stage.
   b) discuss these challenges, risks, and tasks as they apply to women, the poor, families of color, and gay and lesbian families.
   c) describe the resources, strengths, and effective family processes across diverse populations including those based on ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, and class.
2. Apply family assessment frameworks that are ecological and family-centered and take into account the influence of oppressive social forces. Such assessments will account for the presence and impact of family violence, the presence and impact of substance abuse, and the impact that the students’ own value system has on their assessment formulations.
3. Establish a professional relationship with family members in order to engage in assessment, goal setting, and planning. The capacity to establish relationships with families will include an appreciation of cultural diversity and the unique strengths of nontraditional families.
4. Identify various models of prevention and intervention and explain the applicability of each model to the challenges faced by families. From an array of family-centered models of practice, students will select prevention and treatment interventions that can be applied to families and their larger social context.
5. Select appropriate outcome measures that are reliable and determined by agreed upon goals in order to evaluate the effects of family-centered interventions.

4. Course Design:

The content of this course will be delivered using a combination of cognitive, affective and experiential methods. Specifically, the design will include lectures, assigned theoretical and practice reading, and discussion (cognitive); exposure to the actual experiences of families in general and to those of particular families, through such media as case materials, videotapes, and
client personal descriptions (affective); and role-playing as worker and as family member (experiential).

5. Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** will be addressed by considering the unique characteristics of families of various ethnic and racial groups and by tailoring engagement, assessment, goal setting, planning, and intervention to these characteristics. Assessment procedures will focus on strengths rather than deficits in family functioning.

- **Social Justice and Social Change** will be addressed through a multi-systems perspective in which students will view the family as a system within, and affected by, a larger social structure. Family assessment will consider the impact of poverty and discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other factors in causing or maintaining families' problems. Traditional solutions to family problems will be analyzed for their potential to maintain oppression. Empowerment models of practice will be stressed, including the involvement of natural helping networks and teaching advocacy skills to families.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation** will be addressed by identifying the family functions and processes, which are useful for the successful development of its members. Prevention programs will be described that are designed to help the general population and at-risk families to avert problems before they develop (e.g. marital enhancement, parent education, premarital counseling, parent-school linkages, etc.).

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research** will be addressed by discussing the relationship of theoretical and empirical knowledge to family practice, by describing the theoretical frameworks within which practice methods may be carried out, and by identifying and critiquing the techniques and outcomes of evaluation which have been used with each practice method.

6. Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:

Ethical dilemmas unique to family work will be presented, such as balancing individual and family goals, contracts regarding confidentiality and record-keeping, and addressing oppressive family structures. Presentation of value conflicts that exist toward families in society will be used to raise the students' awareness of personal and professional values.

7. Source Materials:

**A. Books & Articles**


**B. Journals**
*Families in Society*
*Family Process*
*Family Therapy Networker*
*Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*
*Journal of Family Psychology*

**Attendance and Participation**

It is my desire that your experience in this course will be beneficial to you in your future practice as a social worker. Therefore, I will make every effort to facilitate your success in the learning process by 1) providing didactic and experiential encounters that have been found useful in social work practice with families; 2) providing a supportive learning environment; and 3) being clear regarding expectations of you in the course. Please call to my attention any questions or lack of clarity regarding any of the assignments.

Because this is a skills-development course, prompt attendance at, and participation in all class sessions is essential. SW 623 is the only course offered in the School for preparation for advanced social work practice with families. Since the knowledge derived from this class is based in large part on experiential activities such as role-playing, it is expected that you will attend all class sessions and that you will participate in the required class activities (described below).

**General Grade Information**

10% of the grade is based on class participation.

The first paper is worth 20% of your grade. Each of the 2 remaining papers is worth 35% of the grade. Papers are expected to be handed in on their due dates and papers must meet all academic standards for ethical documentation. Papers will be marked down 5% for every day late.

A = 94-100 points; A- = 90-93 points; B = 84-89 points; B- = 80-83 points; C = 74-79 points; C- = 70-73 points; D = 64-69; D- = 60-63; F = 59 and below.

**Required Reading**


3. Coursepack (Available from Excel, -on S. University just up from Ulrich’s)

**Course Philosophy and Format**

Within the past decade, the field of family intervention has moved from a modernist era, where the focus was on the family as a group with problems that had something done to it by an expert problem-solving practitioner, to a post-modern era where the focus was on the family as its own expert. In these collaborative models of intervention, the role of the practitioner is to facilitate the family’s rediscovery of its own expertness. These models are especially appropriate for families that are socially, politically, and economically disenfranchised since they are received as collaborators in the practice arena. While this is a substantial shift in paradigms from theoretical models of the 1980’s and before, these newer models did not arise independently. Instead, they evolved on the shoulders of models that came before. I consider it important, therefore, that students not only become familiar with the knowledge, values, and skills of these newer models, but that they familiarize themselves also with the earlier models on which the more collaborative methods were built. Finally, I believe families do not exist in a vacuum but within cultural, economic, political, and social systems that influence family functioning and well being and the functioning and well being of family members. It is therefore important that students learn how these systems influence families and the implications for practice outcomes and for policy.

The format of this course is established according to the above philosophy. We will begin the course with a brief discussion of the progression of the field in this regard (including the contribution of the social work profession to family theory and practice), move to a discussion of the conceptual shift to family relationships (rather than on individual functioning), and consider how families and the individuals in them develop differentially in view of their cultural, economic, political and social contexts. Each week, you will be assigned one or more chapters in the texts or a required supplementary reading on a topic or model relevant to family intervention. Most chapters will include detailed case material.

**Roleplays/Assignment I**

Each class member will be responsible for either playing the role of “Family Member” or the role of “Therapist” in one of 5 role-plays (of family therapy sessions) throughout the semester. Each class member will also be responsible for a paper that will incorporate both exercises done in preparation for the role-play and a “reflection” on the experience after it is over. Each role-play will be done in the Clinical Suite (in the School of Social Work) and will consist of a 45 minute session during which 2 co-therapists will meet with the family utilizing a specific model of Family Therapy. The co-Therapists will get feedback from the class mid-way through the...
session, and then continue with the session making use of the input from the class. Here is a tentative role-play schedule:

June 9 - Structural Family therapy
June 23 – Strategic Family Therapy
June 30 – Narrative Therapy
July 7 – Solution-Focused Therapy
July 14 – Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

In preparation for the weekly role plays, small groups of 4 participants or 2 participants will be formed in the second class session. Each small group of 4 should form itself into a role play family. Each two-some will be co-therapists utilizing a specific Family therapy model.

For the groups of 4: Be creative in forming the family. There are a number of possible family forms. Diversity in family forms is strongly encouraged. Each role-play family should develop a scenario that will be acted out in the family role-play situation. In developing role-play scenarios, please pay attention to the statements in this syllabus regarding Course Content and Objectives, and the Relationship of the Course to the curricular themes having to do with multiculturalism, diversity, and social justice. Role play someone of your own gender and use your own name, although your “age” will need to reflect that of the person whose role you are playing.

In preparation for these role-plays, “family members” and “therapists” are responsible for some preparatory work that will then serve as the first part of Assignment I. The preparatory work is as follows:

**Family Members** will be responsible for the following:

a. a genogram (worked on by the family group) detailing 3 generations of family history – with attention to culture and ethnicity. A chapter on genograms is in the readings for next week.
b. 2 structural family maps which: 1) detail a time when your family is stressed; and 2) a time when your family is not stressed. I will speak about “family maps” next week.
c. a 1 page summary of the “presenting problem” from your perspective. Include your understanding of the history of the problem and of the part each family member plays in the problem. If you are a “child” in the family, pretend you have explained your perspective to a loving adult, who translates it for you into this 1-page summary.

**Therapists** will be responsible for the following:

a. a 1 page summary detailing the key points of the particular model of Family Therapy that you will be utilizing. Please bring an outline of this summary to the class on **May 19** when we will have in-class time to prepare for the role-plays.
b. a 1 page reflection on how this model of Family Therapy either incorporates culture, class, ethnicity, and gender or does not. If not, please reflect on what YOU could do to bring these issues alive in the session.
Therapists may reference both texts (McGoldrick and Lawson/Prevatt) when preparing this summary and reflection.

Therapist and Family Members (after the actual role-play) should create a 2 page reflection paper detailing your PERSONAL responses to the process of either being a family member or therapist in the context of a family therapy session. Please be specific (short description) about actual experiences in the process of either developing or enacting the session and then reflect on these experiences in light of the themes of this class. For example:

Experience: as the mother in the family, you felt uncomfortable and angry when confronted by the therapist about the way you were parenting

Reflection: you might reflect on the theme of “role of the therapist,” on the idea of “working collaboratively” in light of this experience of discomfort.

Grading for Assignment I
(20 % of the total Course Grade)
(Due 1 week after roleplay is over)

Assignment is due 1 week after your role-play is enacted
Preparatory Work – 50% of grade (the genogram, structural family map, summary of key points of the Model, reflection on culture, etc.)
Reflection Paper – 50% of grade (the paper which follows the actual enactment)

Family Members (Grading for Preparatory Work)

30% - does genogram include clear cultural material
30% - do family maps make clear the ties between the family structure and the presenting problem
40% - does presenting problem summary incorporate all of the family members’ perspectives and the history of the presenting problem

Therapists (Grading for Preparatory Work)

50% - does summary adequately lay out key points of the model
50% - does the “cultural reflection” reflect both an understanding of the model’s relationship to culture and does it generate creative ideal about how to incorporate cultural sensitivity

Family Members and Therapists (Grading for Final Reflection Paper)

30% - are there specific “process” experiences incorporated into the paper?
60% - are these experiences specifically related to course concepts
10% - grammatically correct, clear and organized
Assignmet II  
(Family of Origin Paper)  
Due: June 9

Draw a genogram on your own family or the family of a client with whom you are working. The genogram should focus on at least three generations (including yours, your parents and their parents, your children, if applicable and even more if you have the information). Use McGoldrick’s chapter (in the Coursepack) on Genograms as your guide for the mechanics of drawing the genogram. You will most likely need to contact family members of your own family or your client’s to obtain the necessary data. Include significant dates, illnesses, occupations, striking character traits (i.e. gentle, moody, intelligent) and other significant patterns (i.e. occupations, religions, prevalence of divorces, religious affiliations, illnesses, substance abuse problems) on genogram. You may want to use different colored pencils to illustrate alliances, coalitions, cut-offs, and triangles. The genogram must be on an 81/2 by 11 sheet and carefully drawn.

Write a 7-9 page paper. This paper should identify and articulate major three-generational themes and patterns. Triangles, coalitions, alliances, and cut-offs should be explicated and analyzed. Gender, ethnic, class influences should be addressed. You should also incorporate a theoretical discussion of these cultural themes based on knowledge gained from your readings. When discussing theory, please reference accordingly. You may want to speculate about your role (or your client’s) role in the family system and please discuss sibling order, if applicable. Bowenian theory should be incorporated into your analysis and give three examples of how you imagine Murray Bowen might have intervened with this family.

Grading  
20% - is genogram readable, and does it describe 3 generations of Family history clearly?  
30% - does paper demonstrate an understanding of Bowenian theory?  
30% - does paper incorporate a discussion of culture that is grounded in the Readings?  
10% - grammatically correct, well-organized?

Assignment 3 - FINAL PAPER  Due July 14

This ten-page paper should focus on a current family or couple with whom you are working (or have worked) in your practicum. You should describe your agency context, the presenting problem of your client system, the significant demographics, your treatment plan and what you have done thus far with the case (i.e. what interventions, derived from which models, you have used and have informed your practice). This section should be written succinctly and probably be no longer than two pages. The next section of the paper involves your giving a thorough, but succinct, review of Structural Family Therapy, Systemic or Narrative Family Therapy, and Strategic Family Therapy. You should devote about two pages to each model incorporating many readings and references. Finally, you should give three interventions from each model for your case. For instance, how would Minuchin treat your case? These interventions must truly reflect the unique aspects of each model and reflect a thoughtful understanding of your case. Your discussion of your case must incorporate a perspective highlighting cultural, gender, class themes.
Grading:
30% - does paper clearly describe the family and the agency setting?
30% - does paper provide a succinct and comprehensible summary of 3 models?
30% - does paper provide 3 family interventions that truly follow from the models being discussed?

Course Outline

“RP” means that a roleplay will be done on that day.

1. May 5  
Overview of Course and Field of Family Practice

Video: Structural Family Therapy With Harry Aponte

2. May 12  
Basics of Family Assessment

Readings: (for Classes on May 5 and 12)

McGoldrick: Introduction, Chapter 2

Lawson & Prevatt (1999): Chapter 14: Current Issues and Trends in Family Therapy

Coursepack:

Madsen (1999). Introduction and Chapter 1: Working with multi-stressed families: From technique to attitude

This chapter is meant to help you in the development of your own genogram for Assignment 2, the “Family of Origin” paper. It is extremely helpful, but does not need to be read (in full) for class on May 12.

3. May 19  
Gender, Cultural and Ethnic Sensitivity in Practice

Readings:
McGoldrick: Parts III, IV, Chapter 24

Visit from Sandra L. Samons, DCS, who works with Transgendered Community/families, and from a panel of LGBT students/staff discussing family issues.
We will also have 1 hour of in-class time to prepare for the roleplays. If you are a therapist, please come with an outline of your “key points” to this class.

May 26  Memorial Day – No class

4. June 2  Trangenerational Models of Family Therapy: Bowenian, Family of Origin


McGoldrick: Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6

Coursepack: Kerr, “Chronic Anxiety and Defining a Self,” The Atlantic Monthly

5. June 9  RP  Structural Family Therapy

Readings: Lawson & Prevatt (1999): Chapter 5: Structural Family Therapy

ASSIGNMENT II DUE

6. June 16  Structural Family Therapy and Working with Impoverished and Immigrant Families

Readings: McGoldrick: Part VI, Chapter 15 (Chapter 15 assigned for May 19, but written by Fernando Colon, who will be joining us. Please have another look!)

Video: Family Therapy Workshop With Salvador Minuchin

Dr. Fernando Colon will come into discuss the importance of “culture” in working with families

7. June 23  RP  Strategic and Systemic Family Interventions

Readings: Lawson & Prevatt (1999):
Chapter 9: Strategic Therapy;
Chapter 8: Milan Systemic Therapy
Chapter 6: Brief Therapy Approach of the Palo Alto Group
McGoldrick: Chapters 25

Video: *Strategic Family Therapy with James Coyne*

8. June 30  RP  *The Social Constructionist Models: Narrative Methods*

Readings:

- Lawson & Prevatt (1999):
  - Chapter 12: Narrative Therapy: The Work of Michael White
  - Chapter 11: A Postmodern Collaborative Approach to Therapy

Coursepack: *The Family Therapy Networker*

- O’Hanlon, “The Third Wave” pp. 19-26, 28-29
- Epston, “Extending the Conversation”, pp. 31-37, 62-63
- Nylund & Thomas, “The Economics of Narrative”, pp. 38-39
- Wylie, Policing our Lives”, pp. 48-49.
- Treadway, “Miniature Roses”, pp. 50-56, 64.

Video: “Narrative Therapy” with Steve Madigan

9. July 7  RP  *Couples Therapy and Solution-Focused Therapy*

Readings:

- Lawson & Prevatt (1999):
  - Chapter 4: Pragmatic Couples Therapy: An Informed Pluralistic Approach
- Lawson & Prevatt (1999):
  - Chapter 1: Contextual Therapy
  - Chapter 10: Solution-Focused Therapy

McGoldrick: Chapters 20, 22, 23

Coursepack:

- Laura Brown, “Therapy with Same Sex Couples: An Introduction

10. July 14  RP  *Cognitive-Behavioral Models of Family Intervention*

Readings:

- Lawson & Prevatt 1999) Chapter 3: Integrative Couples Therapy
Coursepack:

ASSIGNMENT III DUE

11. July 21  RP  *Experiential Family Therapy*

Reading:  
**Lawson & Prevatt:**
Chapter 7: The Humanistic Approach of Virginia Satir:

**McGoldrick:** Chapter 31

Video: “Of Rocks and Flowers” with Virginia Satir