Course Description

This course will build on the content presented in course 540 (i.e. Theory and Practice of Interpersonal Practice). 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.
**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.

**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.

**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.
WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

FIRST PAPER DUE: OCTOBER 15, 2003

FINAL PAPER DUE: DECEMBER 3, 2003

GRADING POLICY: EACH PAPER WILL ACCOUNT FOR 45% OF GRADE AND
CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE WILL ACCOUNT FOR 10%.
ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED! If you anticipate being absent or have to miss a class,
please leave a message on my voice mail informing me of your absence.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS: (available at Ulrich’s)

1. Nichols, M. And Schwartz, R., Family Therapy—Concepts and Methods, Fifth


OPTIONAL BOOK—ON RESERVE

McGoldrick, Gerson, and Shellenberger, Genograms—assessment and

OPTIONAL AND SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS:

1. Family Therapy Journals (e.g. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry; The
   Family Therapy Networker; Family Process; Journal of Marital and
   Family Therapy; In the Family, etc.

Articles and Books on Reserve—literature will be referred to in lectures and additional
readings will be made available to students interested in special issues.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY—ON RESERVE

1. Walsh and McGoldrick, *Living Beyond Loss*
2. Mirkin, *Women in context*
3. Wachtel, *Treating troubled children and their families*
4. Shapiro, *Grief as a family process*
5. McGoldrick, *Ethnicity as a family process (volumes I and II)*
6. Boyd-Franklin, *Black families in therapy*
7. Walters, Carter, Papp, Silverstein *The invisible web*
8. Man Keug, *Family therapy with ethnic minorities*
9. Papp, *The process of change*
10. Minuchin and Fishman, *Family therapy techniques*
11. Hoffman, *Foundations of family therapy*
12. Minuchin, Colapinto, and Minuchin, *Working with families of the poor*
14. Okun, *Understanding Diverse Families—What Practitioners Need to Know*
15. Laird and Green, *Lesbians and gays in couples and families*
17. McGoldrick and Anderson, *Women in families*

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

The course will be dedicated to enhancing awareness/appreciation for diverse family structures with special emphasis on gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race and class. The student will be exposed to the most important theoretical models about family dynamics and the major models of family treatment will be explicated. Issues of oppression and poverty will be ongoing issues for discussion and the predominant goal will be for the student to develop culturally-sensitive assessment skills as well as the ability to tailor treatment plans to individual client/family systems needs. The student will be cognizant of theoretical models as they are relevant to specific diagnoses/problems (e.g. substance abuse, mental illness, chronic medical illness) and students will be expected to make differential applications of treatment interventions based on a bio/psycho/social evaluation. Overarching themes of grief and loss will be discussed as they relate to most clinical presentations.

CLASS FORMAT

Each class will have a didactic component and many classes will include videotapes of clinical interviews illustrating the specific models and reflective techniques of the models. Some classes will integrate experiential exercises designed to help students practice these techniques with each other. Guest lecturers who are expert clinicians will be invited to illustrate modern practice in various settings.
SEPTEMBER 3

I. Overview of the course
II. Overview of the field of family practice
III. Overview of the different models of family therapy
IV. Discussion of indications/contraindications for family therapy
V. Discussion of systems theory as it relates to social work practice

Readings for this class and the next class:

1. McGoldrick and Gerson, Genogram book (this book should be read for the next few weeks in preparation for first paper).
2. Nichols and Schwartz, Part I.

SEPTEMBER 10

I. A review of systems theory
II. Use of genograms
III. Conceptual models (i.e. life-cycle, developmental perspectives)
IV. Specialized interviewing techniques
V. Ethnicity, race, gender, culture, class, sexual orientation in assessment and treatment
VI. The basics of family assessment

Readings for September 17th and 24th classes.

1. Nichols and Schwartz, Chapters 5, 8, 9
2. McGoldrick, Revisioning Family Therapy, Part I.
2. Article on reserve: Kerr, “Chronic Anxiety and Defining a Self”

SEPTEMBER 17 and 24

I. Transgenerational models of family therapy—object relations, Bowenian, Family-of-origin, Experiential
II. Themes of loss and grief from a multi-generational perspective

Readings for October 1st and 8th classes:

1. McGoldrick, Parts II, III, and IV
OCTOBER 1 AND 8

I. Clinician's use of self and self-awareness in clinical practice
II. Gender, ethnicity, and culture in helping families with bereavement, adjustment to illness, and life-cycle transitions
III. Gender and culture sensitivity in practice

Readings for October 15th Class:

1. Nichols and Schwartz, Chapters 7 and 10
2. McGoldrick, Part V

OCTOBER 15—PAPER DUE

I. Structural family therapy and working with families affected by poverty and immigration—A review of theory and specialized treatment approaches (i.e. family preservation models, in-home treatments, ecological perspectives).

Readings for October 29th class

1. Nichols and Schwartz, Chapters 6 and 12

OCTOBER 22—no class

OCTOBER 29

1. Brief therapy models—strategic, problem-focused, solution-oriented—an overview of theories and techniques
2. Relevance to managed care settings

Readings for November 5th and November 12th classes:

1. Nichols and Schwartz, Chapters 11, 13 and 14.

NOVEMBER 5 AND NOVEMBER 12

1. Systemic and Narrative models—Milan group, use of teams—an integrative approach to treatment

Readings for November 19th class

1. Nichols and Schwartz, Chapters 15, and 16.
NOVEMBER 19

1. A review of major models in the field and their differential and sequential application to practice—a synthesis of class material for final paper

2. Gays and Lesbians in couples and families

Readings for November 26th class:

1. Couples Therapy readings on reserve in folder in library

2. McGoldrick: Part VI.
**NOVEMBER 26**

1. Couples therapy—an overview of the field—theory, models, techniques, research data

Readings for December 3

1. Gurman and Kniskern, *Handbook of Family Therapy, Vol. II* (on reserve), Chapters 16 and 17

**DECEMBER 3—FINAL PAPER DUE**

1. Divorce—epidemiology, statistics, economic/social consequences—implications of divorce on children, physical and mental health

2. Stepfamilies—treatment approaches

3. Mediation and prevention strategies

Readings for December 10th

1. Readings from John Rolland on reserve

**DECEMBER 10th**

1. Chronic illness and the Family Life Cycle

2. Mental Illness and Stigma

3. Psychoeducation and support groups

4. Ethical/Legal issues in the field of Family Therapy
PAPER ASSIGNMENTS

OCTOBER 15—FAMILY OF ORIGIN PAPER

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 textbook 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 or plastic overlay sheets to illustrate alliances, coalitions, cut-offs, and triangles. The genogram must be portable, small and carefully drawn.

Write a ten-page paper (maximum). This paper should identify and critique major three-generational themes and patterns. Triangles, coalitions, alliances, and cut-offs should be explicited and analyzed. Gender, ethnic, class influences must be addressed and referenced. You must incorporate a theoritical discussion of these cultural themes based on knowledge gained from your readings. You may want to speculate about your role (or your client’s) role in the family system and sibling order must be discussed. Bowenian theory should be described and incorporated (with footnotes) into your analysis and give three examples of how Murray Bowen might have intervened with this family.

DECEMBER 3, 2003 —FINAL PAPER

This ten-page paper should focus on a current family or couple with whom you are working 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.