

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

Course Number:	SW 393R15	Instructor:	Susan Harnden, LCSW
Unique Number:	62015	E-mail:	harnden@mail.utexas.edu
Semester:	Fall 2011	Phone:	471-9105 or 784-4445
Class Time:	Monday 8:30-11:30	Adjunct Office:	3.104A
Classroom:	2.112	Office Hours:	By appointment

Couples Counseling

Course Description:

This course is designed as a seminar for students in the clinical concentration and will cover intervention approaches used in couples therapy. It will be taught from a systems perspective and will include an overview of models and methods drawn from evidence based research. The primary focus of this course will be to blend theory and application. This course will require the student to participate in both theory based and experiential learning and will incorporate simulations and case presentations to elucidate the approaches discussed.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate the ability to compare and contrast theory-based interventions which incorporate intrapsychic and interpersonal theory including an understanding of emotions, physiology and communication.
2. Demonstrate the ability to explore and resolve social work values and ethical dilemmas in selecting and implementing interventions for couples.
3. Understand the importance of awareness of self as a parallel process to the application of interventions with couples.
4. Identify the implications of race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, substance abuse and domestic violence on assessment and intervention with couples.
5. Understand and integrate theory using empirical, evidence-based best practice research.
6. Demonstrate the ability to review the elements of a treatment approach assess the effectiveness and elicit clinical input that heightens awareness and examines interventions in light of cultural perspective and desired outcome.

Teaching Methods:

This course will include a variety of teaching methodologies designed to achieve the beginning mastery of theoretically-grounded advanced practice skill competencies with couples. Learning activities will include reading, writing, discussion, lectures, videos, simulations and experiential exercises.

Students will video-tape simulations as a tool for learning assessment and intervention skills. Students will present a case and solicit feedback from other students in order to identify strategies to improve their effectiveness in intervening with couples. Students will also be encouraged to develop insights into “the use of self” through observations and self reflection. Simulations will be monitored to facilitate the assessment of skill competencies.

Required Texts:

Gurman, A.S.(Ed.) 2008 *Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy*. New York; The Guilford Press.

Gottman, J. S. (2004). *The Marriage Clinic Casebook*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Recommended Texts:

Atkinson, B., (2005) *Emotional Intelligence in Couples Therapy; Advances from Neurobiology and the Science of Intimate Relationship* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Gottman, J., (1999). *The Marriage Clinic*. New York: WW. Norton & Company, Inc.

Jacobson, N., Gottman, J (1998). *When Men Batter Women, New Insights into Ending Abusive Relationships* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Johnson, S.M. (2004). *The Practice of Emotionally Focused Marital Therapy: Creating Connection*. New York: Bruner / Routledge. - Second Edition of 1996 book.

P. Peluso (Ed.), *Infidelity: A Practitioner's Guide to Working With Couples in Crisis*, New York: Routledge.

S.M. Johnson, Brent Bradley, J Furrow, A Lee, G Palmer, D Tilley & S Woolley (2005) *Becoming an Emotionally Focused Couples Therapist : A Work Book*. N.Y. Brunner Routledge.

Course Requirements:

The following course requirements will be completed during the semester, points are assigned for each course requirement. The final grade will be based on the total points accrued by the end of the semester. Description of the assignments and the grading criteria are posted on the assignment link of Blackboard. Points listed on assignment descriptions are maximum points given for excellence in detail, relevance and thoroughness. Please turn in papers electronically through Blackboard. Consult with the Blackboard help line prior to your first assignment due date if you are unfamiliar with this technology.

1. Journal

Students are expected to write a weekly journal. A grade will be given based on completion of minimal weekly entries of no less than a half a page single spaced. Content may include personal thoughts, opinions, agreements, or disagreements you have with the readings, class interactions or simulations. The journals will be kept confidential. This assignment is designed to provide an outlet for personal reactions to class material.

15 points maximum

2. History and Assessment

Students will be divided into pairs and will create history and background for a “simulation couple” they will play this semester. To prepare for the simulations students will construct an assessment package.

The narrative will include:

- A description of the presenting problem,
- The strengths and challenges of the relationship,
- Summary of Gottman’s Seven Questions as they relate to your couple (Gottman Chapter 4)
- One or two issues over which the couple is gridlocked (Atkinson, Chapter 5, Gottman Chapter 4)
- A relationship history using the Oral History Interview (Gottman, 398-99), *Adapt questions to fit your couple, for example, if they are not married change questions referring to marriage; i.e. change “how is your marriage different than when you first got married?” to “how is your relationship different than when you first got together?”*
- The Meta-Emotion Interview (Gottman, 402).
- A brief family history

The interviews may be written like a process recording however that is not a requirement. One copy should be turned in to the professor electronically and one paper copy made for the co-therapists.

60 points maximum

3. Simulation - In-Class

Two class periods will be devoted to couples therapy simulations. At the end of both simulations a short paper (approximately 1 – 1.5 pages) will be turned in. This paper will include discussion and answers to the questions posted on Blackboard. Blackboard questions should be reviewed and may be partially answered prior to class. 15 minutes will be allowed at the end of class to complete answers.

40 points maximum (20 points for each simulation paper)

4. Couple Therapy Simulation and Analysis - taped

Simulations - Students will alternate playing a couple and co-therapist with another dyad. Students will need to schedule a room in the LRC to tape simulations. **(The LRC rooms must be scheduled early in the semester to avoid schedule conflicts.)** Each session will be at least 30 minutes in duration. The students will tape two sessions as co-therapists and two sessions as a couple during the semester. The co-therapists will use a variety of theories in their approach including, but not necessarily limited to, the ones discussed in class and covered by the readings. To receive full credit for the taped interventions a copy of the video of the simulation and an analysis must be turned in.

Analysis – After each session view and critique the video using the critique guide provided on Blackboard in the assignments section. Dyads may work on this assignment together but each student should turn in an analysis. Each student's work will be graded separately. Each analysis will have different requirements; review the guides before taping your simulations.

80 points maximum, (40 points for each simulation)

5. Diversity Review and Discussion

Dyads will identify a social identity, community or population they would like to explore in regards to views of, and approaches to, relationships. Individuals normally identify with a variety of populations and yet for this assignment we will be putting a primary focus on only one aspect of an identity. Students will have an opportunity to discuss their insights. Students may choose to incorporate what they have learned into their role play but are not required to.

This assignment has three parts

- 1) Gather information from; online sources, journal articles, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, educational slides or personal interviews, as a mechanism for highlighting considerations for the therapeutic alliance and effective interventions. Identify strengths, needs, values, biases, stereotypes, traditions and attitudes that may be considered in working with couples who identify as such. This should result in a two to three page summary of the findings. **The goal of this assignment is to raise awareness and encourage thoughtful discussion and cannot be comprehensive. It is in no way is meant to imply homogeneity within a population and in fact may actually provide examples of a vast array of differing perspectives.** *(25 points)*

- 2) Identify couple or family therapy approaches whose effectiveness have been **examined** as it applies to this population. It will be difficult to find articles with empirical evidence. Students are not required to find “evidence based” approaches and in some cases may not be able to find an approach but rather “considerations”. Include evidence based approaches if found if not include approaches or “considerations” for treatment. Use scholarly methods such as academic databases, to conduct the search and locate 3 articles for this assignment. Prepare an annotated bibliography of the articles and post it to Blackboard as a reference for other students in the class. In addition provide a one page paper summarizing the approaches taken to locate the articles, to what degree the approaches found were evaluated and a critical discussion of the usefulness of each of the articles. *(30 points)*
- 3) Dyads will participate in a class discussion of their findings. If the dyad chooses to incorporate characteristics or views of this population into their role play they should process observations and insights during this class discussion *(5 points)*

Grading criteria is posted on Blackboard.

60 points total maximum

6. Case Consult

Each dyad will schedule a time for a case consult which will be delivered after the completion of their second simulation. The presentation should include:

- * background summary,
- * presenting problem,
- * treatment approach and interventions,
- * treatment challenge – a question about treating this couple that could improve your effectiveness as a therapist.

At the end of the presentation the dyad will ask questions that illicit input regarding the treatment challenge or dilemma and request for input from the rest of the class. The dyad will facilitate a discussion.

The entire presentation should take approximately 20 minutes.

Grading criteria have been posted to Blackboard in the assignments section.

30 points maximum

7. Class Discussions and Participation

Discussions in class will be used as a tool to increase your understanding, application and critical analysis of the text. Ongoing professional growth and development is reliant on an **active** pursuit of information by the clinician. Therefore, students will be expected to come to class regularly and on-time, prepared with questions and comments about the content and application of the text in order to maximize mastery of the material. In order to get participation points you will need to *actively* participate in class, **if you know that this is a challenge for you please contact me to discuss.**

15 points maximum

Grading Scale

A total of 300 points may be earned for the above assignments. Grades will be assigned as follows.

300 – 281 = A

280 – 269 = A-

268 – 260 = B+

259 – 251 = B

250 – 239 = B-

238 – 230 = C+

229 – 221 = C

220 – 209 = C-

208 – 200 = D+

199 – 191 = D

190 – 179 = D-

178 and below = F

Graduate students must earn a minimum grade of C in the course for credit; also, graduate students must maintain an overall B average.

Assignment due date

September 12	Assessments
September 19	In Class Simulation
October 3	First Simulation Video Analysis
October 17-24	Diversity Review and Discussion
October 31	Case Consults
November 7	Case Consults
November 14	Case Consults
November 21	Second Video Analysis
November 28	In Class Simulation

Course Schedule

<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Text/Readings</i>
08/29/11	Introductions and Class and Syllabus Overview	Gottman Chapter 4
	Assessment	Atkinson Chapter 5 – Blackboard
9/12/11	Gottman Overview	Gurman, Chapter 5
	Gottman Video	Schwartz Gottman Chapter 1
	Assessments due	
	Sign up for diversity review	
9/19/11	Attachment Overview	Johnson and Whiffen Chapter 1, 2 and 6 – Blackboard
		Gurman Chapter 4
	In class assessment simulation	
09/26/11	Emotion Focused Therapy for Couples and PET-C Overview	Atkinson Chapter 2 and 4 Blackboard
	1st Johnson Video	
	Sign up for case consult	

	date and intervention	
10/03/11	EFT and Gottman Technique	Gurman Chapter 6 & 8
		Schwartz Gottman Chapter 2
	First video/analysis and journal due	
10/10/11	Gottman and EFT Techniques	Schwartz Gottman chapter 6
		Gurman chapter 24-25
	Gottman DVD	
10/17/11		
	Diversity Issues	Johnson and Whiffen Chapter 15 (e-reserves)
		Sullivan and Cottone Culturally Based Couple Therapy and Intercultural Relationships: A Review of the Literature-Blackboard
	Diversity Discussions	
	Diversity Paper due	
10/24/11	Evidence Based Interventions	Gurman chapter 2-3
	Diversity Discussions continue	

10/31/11	Case Consults	Schwartz Gottman Chapter 7-8
		Gurman Chapter 9-10
11/07/11	Case Consults	Schwartz Gottman Chapters 10
		Atkinson Chapter 6
		Gurman Chapter 21
11/14/11	Case Consults	Gurman Chapter 13
		Schwartz Gottman Chapter 3-5
11/21/11	Special Considerations: Substance Abuse, Infidelity, Domestic Violence, SES, Previous Trauma	Jacobson and Gottman Chapter 2 - Blackboard
		Gurman chapter 14 & 18
		Peluso Chapter 5 - Blackboard
	Second video/critique due	
11/28/11	Termination Issues	Gurman 15
	Journal due	Schwartz Gottman Chapter 14
	Final simulations – in class	

Class Policies

1. It is important for social work practitioners to be punctual in both attendance and in meeting deadlines. Class attendance, participation and timely completion of homework are expected and will be reflected in your grade. Students are expected to attend the entire class. Students will be allowed one (1) unexcused absence (freebie). The professor should be notified before class by email if a student needs to leave class early. Students are also expected to complete assigned readings prior to each class, and should be well prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning assignments. In extenuating circumstances of absence, students are to notify the instructor by email. Students are responsible for any material missed due to absences.
2. The professor expects students to act like professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism.
3. Students who fail to attend class and actively participate in the discussions will receive a lower final course grade as reflected in the class participation portion of their grade. Students who actively participate throughout the semester and are one or two points below the cut-off for a letter grade may receive the higher grade at the end of the semester. Late assignments will not be accepted without penalty except in the case of extreme emergencies and then only with permission from the instructor. Students are expected to turn in all required assignments on the agreed upon due date at the beginning of class. Students will lose 2 points for each day that an assignment is late. If the due date is a problem, then the student must see the instructor and negotiate another due date at least 24 hours PRIOR to the regularly scheduled date.
4. Students will be divided into small groups to accomplish assignments during the semester. This is an important part of the learning experience. If conflict, inequities, or unexpected events affect a student's ability to work with another student they will be encouraged to use these occurrences to master communication and teamwork skills. Students are welcome to discuss their concerns with the instructor, the instructor will help you explore ways to communicate, problem solve and resolve conflict and will encourage the student to address problems directly with their cohort and explore how the problems might augment professional development.
5. Social work practitioners are assertive and function as team members. Therefore, feedback about the course is welcome and the course will be viewed as a joint effort between students and the instructor. Students are encouraged to provide feedback by appointment if they desire.
6. It may be appropriate for students to talk about personal information during class as it relates to learning about a particular topic. Students are expected to adhere to all professional standards of confidentiality during the semester.

7. The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) is the style manual to be used for all assignments. Incorrect APA style will result a deduction of points on assignments.
8. At times, the instructor may ask students for a copy of their papers to use as a sample paper for students in future classes. If asked, students have the right to decline without fear of reprisal. They will be asked to sign a form indicating that they have freely given the instructor permission to use their paper as a sample.
9. Blackboard, Electronic Reserves and Eudora will be used for exchanging e-mail, engaging in class discussions and chats and for exchanging files. Also, the instructor may send e-mail to members of the class (as a group) about assignments or to answer questions. If a web site is used, your name will appear on an electric class roster. If e-mail is sent to you and other class members, your name and e-mail address will be known by other class member.
10. As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to the policies and practice related to agency and/or community safety. Student should also notify instructors regarding any safety concerns.

General University Policy

The University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>).

Documented Disability Statement

Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

Religious Holidays

By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence. For further information, the student may refer to the following link (<http://www.utexas.edu/cee/uex/resources/models.html>).

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor’s instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you’re given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.