

**VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**  
**HDC 6410-01 MARRIAGE AND FAMILY COUNSELING**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This is an introductory course focusing on relationships, including, couples, families, and systems. Theories and specific strategies will be introduced that examine different aspects of these relational systems. This course provides analysis of the theory, research and interventions in the area of marriage and family interaction. Conceptualization of clinical dynamics will be accomplished through the examination of different models of family and marriage theory, along with integration of developmental theory, systems theory, and the interaction in the larger community and social systems. This course is both didactic and experiential. In addition, invited "guest lectures" have been scheduled on various topics in Marriage & Family Therapy to discuss "real world" application of theory and intervention.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK**

Gehart, D. (2017). *Mastering competencies in family therapy: A practical approach to theory and clinical case documentation* (3rd ed.). Belmont: CA: Cengage Learning.  
ISBN-13:9781-305-94327-9

Various articles and chapters will be assigned by the instructors through Brightspace.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES: The course will provide the student with:**

An introduction to the history and epistemology of family therapy (CACREP G.1.a., MCFC A.1.).

1. An introduction to the personal development, traits and capacities needed for professional family practice, including roles, functions, and professional organizations and training standards (CACREP G.1.b., G.1.f., G.5.b; MCFC A.3., A.4.)

2. An understanding of ethical, legal, and professional issues as they relate to specific family therapy presenting issues and intervention strategies. The role of mental health counselors and school counselors will also be addressed from a systemic perspective. (CACREP G.1.j; MCFC A.2, CMHC C.8)
3. An understanding of individual and family development and life-cycle dynamics (CACREP G.3.a; MCFC A.6, C.1).
4. An understanding of systems theories including a variety of family therapy theories and models (key points, goals of therapy, roles of the family counselor/ therapist, techniques, and culture/gender perspectives), including assessment techniques (CACREP G.5.d, G.5.e; MCFC A.5, D.2; G.2; CMHC D.5; SC M.4, M.5.)
5. An understanding of theories and models of individual, cultural, couple, family and community resilience (CACREP G.3.d; CMHC C.8.)
6. An understanding of current family therapy research and its application for working with families in a variety of practice settings, including evidence-based treatments for evaluating outcomes in marriage, couple, and family counseling. (CACREP G.8.e; MCFC E.3)
7. An understanding of the psychological elements and societal trends of family life including families in transition, non-traditional and alternative life style families, dual career families, blended families, family wellness, families and culture, and family violence examined from a systemic and ecosystemic perspective.(CACREP G.4.d, G.5.e, MCFC A.6., E.2, E.3)

<b>ASSIGNMENT #1</b>		
	<b>CLASS PARTICIPATION</b>	40 PTS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To meet your needs and make learning relevant to you as a student, participation in discussions and activities is vital.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Participation means sharing thoughts, questions, feelings, and experiences during class discussions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o It means being respectful, courteous and professional in your behavior to fellow students, instructors and guests.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It means being open and attentive to differing opinions and ideas.</li> </ul> <p><b>Computers in class are to be used for relevant coursework and note taking ONLY.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Surfing the Internet, email, or other extraneous behaviors not directly related to the class may be penalized. Mindfulness about how to responsibly engage in active learning while managing technology is a skill every Marriage &amp; Family clinician needs to possess.</li> </ul> <p><b>Class attendance:</b> Every class will contain important and relevant information for the practice of family counseling. ○ Attendance is critical and mandatory.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Please notify the instructor by email in advance if you are unable to attend any class sessions.</li> <li>○ Each student is responsible for all materials covered and announcements made during his/her absence.</li> <li>○ Please ask a classmate to collect materials for you.</li> </ul> <p><b>The criteria for attendance and participation points are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>30-40 points</b> Fully prepared, asks questions and makes comments. Actively works to help class succeed. Demonstrates respect for colleagues. Attends regularly (no unexcused absence).</li> <li>○ <b>20-30 points</b> Attentive, usually prepared, participates occasionally, and attends regularly (no more than 2 unexcused absences). Works to make class succeed and is respectful of colleagues.</li> <li>○ <b>10-20 points</b> Doesn't participate much but attends regularly (more than 1 unexcused absence).</li> <li>○ <b>5-10 points</b> Doesn't attend regularly. When attends, doesn't participate consistently, or is inappropriate, unsupportive, disruptive, or insensitive to others.</li> <li>○ <b>1-5 points</b> Doesn't attend, and/or when attends is disrespectful, disruptive, or unsupportive.</li> </ul>	
<b>ASSIGNMENT #2</b>		
	<b>COMPLETED "TAKE-AWAY" LOG in Brightspace</b>	<b>10 PTS</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The instructors have built in time for students to reflect on the experience and content of the Marriage and Family topics. At the end of each class day throughout the three weekends, students will be provided with a "take-away" question to reflect on critical insights gleaned from the class. Students are expected to reflect and document these insights on the log. This can be response to the readings, class discussion or activities and doesn't have to be more than a couple of paragraphs. The goal of this assignment if to promote thinking about how these topics impact you or the work you may do, what</li> </ul>	

<p>was helpful or even what you would change about them. After completing the "take-away" log during our check in time, students will be encouraged to debrief these "take-aways" in a group discussion. If a student is absent from class, "take-away" logs are still expected based on readings for that day of class. Further instructions will given during class with regard to the <b>process and expectations for contributions to your log.</b></p>	
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**ASSIGNMENT #3**

<b>GENOGRAM ASSIGNMENTS</b>	25 PTS
<p><b>PERSONAL GENOGRAM &amp; FAMILY ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY (10 points)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Each student will be provided a Genogram Assessment Workbook with instructions. Download or print the Genogram Assessment Workbook and complete the tasks and questions prior to class on <b>October 11<sup>th</sup></b>. You will be provided with further instructions on how to submit this assignment. You will not be asked to submit or share the entire workbook. However, the assignment will involve your providing a genogram sketch of your family and an assigned reflection on the activity. In addition, we will be discussing your observations and reactions to the process in class.</li> </ul>	10 PTS
<p><b>IN-CLASS GENOGRAM &amp; FAMILY ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY (15 points)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Each student is expected to participate in an in-class role-play family genogram assessment in which dyads will practice completing a family history assessment and use this assessment to inform conceptualization and treatment planning. Participants are expected to submit the genogram sketch and associated documentation defined for the activity, as well as participate in the class discussion following the activity. This activity is scheduled to take place on <b>October 12<sup>th</sup></b>.</li> </ul>	15 PTS

**ASSIGNMENT #4**

<b>MARRIAGE &amp; FAMILY MOVIE ANALYSIS</b>	25 PTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Students will work in pairs and choose one of the identified movies/shows provided to complete a family or couple analysis.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Groups will be expected to identify a broad theoretical approach (e.g. dynamic, structural, solution focused...) and apply this lens to the fictional family or couple system. Further instructions will be provided in class, however, the overall goal will be to use the fictional couple/family to observe and describe interpersonal interactions, styles and concepts playing out in family interactions based on class readings and discussion.</li> </ul>	

<input type="checkbox"/>	Students will be asked to incorporate evidence-based treatment planning interventions, referencing empirically based academic articles focused on your proposed perspective. Include citations for source material.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Students will be provided with guiding prompts for this assignment and these will be used to facilitate class discussion.  <input type="checkbox"/> A link for sign up will be provided on Friday, October 11 <sup>th</sup> and dyads will be asked to sign up for movie/show choice by end of <b>October 12th</b> .  <input type="checkbox"/> Assignments will be due the last day of class. A more detailed rubric related to expectations for this assignment will be provided and reviewed in class.		

**GRADING:**

Attendance & Participation	40% (40 points)
“Take-Away” Brightspace Log	10% (10 points)
Genogram Assignments	25% (30 points)
Marriage & Family Movie Analysis	25% (20 points)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100% (100 points)</b>

Grade	Percentage Earned	Points Earned
A	94-100	94-100
A-	91-93	91-93
B+	88-90	88-90
B	84-87	84-87
B-	81-83	81-83
C+	78-80	78-80
C	74-77	74-77
C-	71-73	71-73

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:**

**Attendance:** Due to the intensive weekend design of the class, attendance accounts for 50% of your grade. Since this course includes significant seminar and experiential components, attendance at each class meeting is mandatory. If you will miss more than one class, it is recommended that you take this course at another time. In the event there are circumstances that prohibit your attendance, we request that you submit these conflicts prior to the class. In cases of absence, any scheduled assignments are due to the professor at the beginning of class unless other arrangements have been made prior to that time. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check online and with fellow classmates regarding announcements made while

you were absent: this includes supplemental instructions related to assignments. You are responsible for any and all lecture materials presented in class that are not covered in your readings. Additionally, the instructors reserve the right to propose a corrective training plan for the student to replace absences based on the topics and training competencies missed during the training session.

***Participation:*** This portion of the grade covers regular and prompt attendance as well as the quality of student participation in classroom exercises and discussion. Your involvement through active listening and contributing to class discussion is where you will gain the most from this class and make this a more meaningful experience for yourself and your classmates. Additionally, this grade will also be determined by the student's professional conduct and attitude, which should reflect an understanding of professional ethics codes, such as those set forth by ACA and AAMFT.

***Professionalism:*** As a course in a professional training program, students are expected to consistently demonstrate professional behavior; this is counted toward your participation grade. This includes but is not limited to:

- Being on time to class and with assignments
- Respectful interactions with students and faculty
- Proactive engagement in learning process and assignments
- Organized and prepared
- Managing paperwork and technology effectively
- Managing personal crises effectively
- Managing personal information (own and others') appropriately

To receive the participation grade, adhere to "Professionalism" expectations listed above, participate actively and constructively in class (providing at least one content-based comment or question each week; avoid dominating class time or tangential topics), adhere to professional ethical codes of conduct, and in general contribute positively to class culture.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

Academic honesty and integrity are essential to the well being and proper functioning of an academic community. Any time students attempt to gain access to information pertaining to their normal of course of study through dishonest means (i.e., cheating, fabrication and falsification, multiple submissions, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials, complicity in academic dishonesty), they not only show little concern for their personal sense of integrity, but they infringe on the rights of all other members of the academic community. The following policies will cover acts of dishonesty: On the first occurrence, the minimum penalty will be a zero on the paper, text, project, or examination. The maximum penalty will be failure in the course. The instructor will confer with the accused student and inform him/her as to what specific penalty, within these limits, he/she intends to impose. Generally, the first occurrence of academic dishonesty is handled by the instructor of the course, but may be referred to the

Vanderbilt Honor Council. Definitions, examples, and policies covering acts of dishonesty appear in the HDC Graduate Student Handbook.

### **ADA STATEMENT**

Vanderbilt University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities that may affect your ability to complete course assignments or otherwise satisfy course requirements. If you may require accommodations, please contact the Office of Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability Services at Baker Building, Suite 108 (615) 322-4705 (V/TDD) to discuss and determine any accommodations. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation in Vanderbilt University classes and have not contacted them, please do so as soon as possible. You are also encouraged to see your instructor(s) privately in regards to this matter, ideally no later than the second week of the semester, so that we can ensure that your needs are met appropriately and in a timely manner.

### **DIVERSITY STATEMENT**

As we all grow and develop as people and professionals, we constantly strive to improve ourselves in numerous areas of our lives. We value the diversity of our learning community and consider peoples' varied identities and differences as strengths and resources upon which to build community and facilitate human development. HDC students and faculty welcome your informal and formal suggestions for improvement of our classroom, program and university climate and culture, as well as course materials and content.

### **PERSONAL REACTIONS STATEMENT**

At times this semester, we will be discussing topics that may be disturbing and even traumatizing to some students. If you ever feel the need to step outside during one of these discussions, either for a short time or for the rest of the class session, you may always do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to this material, either with the class or with me, I would welcome such a conversation as an appropriate part of your professional development. Learning to manage personal reactions to potentially disturbing material that our clients discuss is an important part of preparing to be a counselor.