THEORIES OF FAMILY THERAPY

SWKG/570  
3 Credits  
Fall 2007  
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: An introduction to contemporary theories, perspectives, procedures and techniques of family therapy. The course is intended for the graduate student or practicing professional with a background in social work, psychology or another helping discipline but without extensive theoretical or practice background in family therapy.

COURSE RATIONALE: Current trends in social work and counseling have emphasized the developing importance of family therapy to the growth, adjustment and problem solving capacity of individuals. In addition, the family has been identified as a major mediating structure between individuals and large social systems. This course will set the necessary theoretical foundation for professionals required to deal with families either through direct or indirect interventions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
1. Describe the historical development of family therapy
2. Analyze and synthesize the major theories and models of family therapy
3. Assess a given family's internal dynamics within socialcultural, racial and systemic context.
4. Formulate appropriate treatment plans grounded in theory.
5. Appreciate the policy implications of family therapy practice
6. Apply some family therapy techniques

CONTENT AREAS:
1. Family theory
2. Family as a holon (systemic context)
3. Family as a transmitter and symbolic expression of culture, values and race
4. Gender and sexual preference considerations in understanding families and family therapy.
5. Historical development of family therapy
6. Family therapy theories
7. Family therapy techniques
8. Communication patterns in families

MY RATIONALE:

Family therapy has been where the radicals and innovators of the direct practice field reside. Even when they were well known and highly identified as social workers (like
Michael White, Harry Aponte and Virginia Satir) it was still the family therapy arena that spawned and nurtured their work.

Just as psychoanalysis was adopted largely by the discipline of psychiatry and behavioral therapy by the discipline of psychology, family therapy identifies itself with social work through a mutual attention to systems. It provides to the clinical social worker the theoretical frame much as psychoanalysis does to psychiatry. Even more so is the movement to post structural approaches and with it the move to "strength based approaches" so commonly embraced at this school. Even though it is "embraced", few students know what these ideas are based on and the history of these ideas. This class is intended to fix that gap.

The work of family therapy does reach beyond the clinical focus through a richer understanding of systems and family communications. As such, I would argue that family therapy should stand at the center of social work education.

PLAGIARISM

It is with a heavy heart that I have to discuss this at all. However recent events in this and other classes make it necessary. We all come from diverse backgrounds and our paths to this point in time in graduate school have come from many paths. Standards concerning plagiarism easily might have been different.

Plagiarism means passing off others ideas as your own. If you copy what someone else wrote then you have to be very clear who wrote this and where the original source is. Quotes, in general, should be relatively brief and used to augment your ideas.

If you are caught plagiarizing in a paper, EWU Social Work Department has agreed there are three possible responses. One is giving a zero on the paper. Second is flunking the class and three is the possibility of suspension from the school. As you can see by those actions in academic circles, plagiarism is a very serious offense.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Paper/Diagram of your genogram of your personal family of origin. Also a genogram of a preferred trait

30 points
Due night of Oct 23th

2. Paper on a particular family therapy school. Identifying it within the "three waves” with a summary of some of its central thoughts. Usually it is between 8 - 12 pages.

40 points
Due night of Nov 27th
3. Exams. There will be a final exam at the end of the quarter.

Assignment #1 Genograms

I would like you to draw as complete a genogram on your family of origin as possible (three generations, at least). McGoldrick book is a critical reference on this. Make sure you include dates, relationships, and localities along with relational information like fusion, cutoffs and conflictual relationships; identified client and who is in the family. Include a short narrative to fill out the story.

Make a second genogram following the trail of some preferred trait, perhaps one that has become highlighted for you in the pursuit of being a social worker. Traits commonly done are compassion, courage, caring, etc. This genogram will be smaller likely than the first one and even perhaps include critical relationships not on the original one. If say, compassion was passed along in a will, the genogram should show where this inheritance went and to whom. Again a short narrative is helpful.

Assignment #2 Particular school of thought

I would like you to look further into a school of thought that you are interested in. Some that have been done in the past include Structural, Strategic, Bowen Family of Origin, Contextual (Nagy), Solution Focused (DeShazer), Narrative (White), Collaborative (Goolishian/Anderson), Milan, and Satir. You could do some other theorist but I would like you to clear that with me first; if however you pick one of those listed then no pre-approval is necessary.

I would like a description of the basic theoretical tenants of the approach, an example of how they conceptualize change happens, list some of the basic techniques and a discussion of the politics of the particular approach.

Assignment 3#. Exams

I have not historically given exams in my classes and I do not believe it is a common practice in our department. However the focus of this class is theory; to learn some of the common theories of family therapy so we might be able to in later classes apply that theory to the people we work with. The test will be on the Nichols and Hoffman book. I feel I need to know that you have done such readings and grasped the overall ideas presented. It would seem that an exam would be one of the ways to assure that goal.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


CLASS SCHEDULE

Oct 2nd  Introduction, Three Waves of Psychotherapy, Appreciations of Family Therapy

Oct. 9th  Beginning Giants, Bateson, MRI, Virginia Satir
         Tape: Carl Whitaker

Oct 16th FOO with focus on Bowen
          Tape: Donald Williamson

Oct 23rd Structural Family Therapy
          Tape: Saul Minuchen
          Genograms due

Oct 30th Milan Group
          Tape: Boscolo

Nov 6th  Three Pillars revisited, Post Structural Theory
          Tape: Lynn Hoffman

Nov 13th Narrative
          Tape: David Epstein

Nov 20th  Class cancelled—Thanksgiving

Nov 27th  Solution Focus Therapy
          Tape: Steve DeShazer about Wittenstein
          Paper Due

Dec 4th  Collaborative Therapy
          Tape: Harlene Anderson
          Take Home Final Exam

Dec 11th  Take Home Exam due

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This list is not intended to be extensive, but rather personal--these are materials that the instructor has read and felt was personally useful. I would like if you come across
material during the class that you find helpful, that you give me a bibliography note and it will be included in the next class's bibliography along with being shared with the present class. That way over time this section will grow through the lens of the people taking the class and their personal views of the worthiness of certain materials.


Aponte, Harry (1996) *Bread and Spirit: Therapy with the New Poor: Diversity of Race, Culture and Values*. WW Norton


Bateson, G. (1972) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Ballantine Books


Lankton, S. (1986) *Enchantment and Intervention in Family Therapy: Training in Ericksonian Approaches* Brunner/Mazel


Walters, Marianne, et.al (1992) *The Invisible Web: Gender Patterns in Family Therapy*, Guilford Press


