How to get in touch with me: Since I am part time faculty, it can be a significant challenge to catch me at times. The best times are before and after class. I have a mailbox in the social work office at Showalter (at least for the time being). My other work place is Group Health and their number is 327-9757 where you can leave a message.

By far the best way is to use email (an old person medium) and my address is: recote74@msn.com

Course Description

This course builds on the practice of narrative therapy as presented in Family Theory and Advanced Family Therapy Techniques classes. The course prepares the student to step in to using narrative ideas and techniques more fully. Narrative informed work has been used world wide in traditional therapy settings and also in such diverse social settings as private schools, protective services, police departments and many other settings. The practice of narrative work will be presented through videotapes, possibly live interviews, lecture and discussion, readings, exercises and other assignments.

Course Rationale

Narrative therapy is grounded in poststructural concepts and forms a position of entry to presenting problems that is distinctly different from more traditional approaches. This point of entry aligns oneself politically and ethically more in line with social work values and practices than is commonly possible with other approaches. This point of entry could be described as non-pathological, strength based, collaborative and culturally sensitive.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, the student will:

1. Be conversant with the major formulations of practice associated with narrative work.
2. Be able to understand more completely what is meant by the statement: “The problem is the problem; people are not the problem”.
3. Understand and use externalizing language.
4. Understand and use the concept of reauthoring to help people more greatly step into preferred accounts of their lives.
5. Explore the nature of their own story of their career, what it is based on and what it stands for. To more clearly articulate their own intents and purposes and
pursuing social work and to “re-member” the significant people in their lives that stand with those purposes.
6. To explore the politics of therapy and therapy practices as introduced through their practicum and previous work experiences.
7. Understand reflecting teams as a “definitional ceremony” and have opportunity to participate in one.
8. Develop the use of letters in a variety of settings to form a more permanent retelling of preferred accounts.

Learning Activities and Assignments

Great latitude is encouraged in ways of approaching these assignments. I would much prefer that the activity be relevant to your interests, curiosity, hopes and direction. If you would like to do something completely different than what is laid out here, feel free to approach me on such ideas. Busy work for the purpose of screening grades is a waste of your and my time.

Assignments

Involvement in class

This is primarily a practice class. Where some classes, it could be argued, the academic material can be just as appropriately mastered outside the classroom…this class will be more hands on and experiential. Thus involvement in the class carries particular importance and the grading system will reflect that.

Accountability and participation will be assessed by the instructor using the following guidelines:

1. Willingness to be responsible for own learning and engage in the learning process.
2. Joining in class discussions.
3. Willingness to ask questions when you don’t understand, willing to discuss what might be experienced as a mistake or an accomplishment.
4. Reading the assignments
5. Giving thoughtful feedback to others during practice sessions.
6. Bringing illustrative case examples to the classroom discussion.
7. Attending the class
8. Considering the viewpoints of others with respect
9. Taking risks
10. Volunteering

Total points: 30

Letters: the use of therapeutic letters
This is a presentation of three different types of letters used in professional settings with a short introduction concerning the type of letter along with your stated intentions and strategies.

To prepare for the assignment you will need to read carefully the chapter “The plot thickens” from Freedman and Combs.

The use of letters has a strong history in the development of narrative therapy. I would like you to compose three letters to people whom you are working with in your practicum or whom you have worked with in the past. It is entirely your decision if you want to share these letters with the people you are writing about, but I would suggest that you ask their permission to use their story for such a task (even though you can clearly change their names or identifying characteristics) and perhaps if they might be interested in what you produce. Any commentary from the receiver of the letter is certainly welcome by me and would be considered more relevant than any reflection I might have.

30 points
Due February 3rd

Orals as a definitional ceremony

This is a written (and for many class) presentation of your preferred account of becoming a social worker.

This is an exercise in reauthoring the orals ceremony. As a ritual located at the end of your studies at Eastern and described as the final hurdle before you are given the MSW degree, the orals represents a particular strategic position in your personal story of your career.

It is a reflection of Michael White that the process of becoming a professional is a dismembering experience as you are moved from previous knowledges and descriptions of identity and conferred new ones. In this exercise I would like to offer perhaps a counter to these dis-membrering practices and embrace the ritual of orals as a definitional ceremony where you preferred accounts of your intentions and purposes in becoming a social worker can be brought forth.

This process will be explained further in class. Everyone should write a paper telling the preferred account of the story of their career: highlighting the intention and purposes of such a career and the history behind those intentions and purposes. Some reflection of who stands with these intentions and perhaps played some significant role in bringing them forth should be included. Hopefully some people in addition to the written exercise will chose to present this in class where a reflecting team might be able to enrich this account and offer to us all the chance to enter into this definitional ceremony.

20 points
Last third of the quarter
**Required Texts**


**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.


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


Card O. *Xenocide* Mass Market Paperback, Tor Books


**Don Juan Demarco** (1994) video


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Foucault, M. (1965) **The History of Madness**, Pantheon Books

Foucault, M. (1972) **The Archelogy of Knowledge**, Harper


Griffin & Griffin (1994) **The Body Speaks: Therapeutic dialogues for mind-body problems** NY Basic Books


Hoffman, L. (1998) **Setting aside the model in family therapy, Journal of Marital and Family Therapy**, 24 (2) 145-156

Hoffman, Lynn (2001) **Family Therapy: an Intimate History**, WW Norton

Jenkins, A. (1990) **Invitations to Responsibility: The therapeutic engagement of men who are violent and abuse.** Adelaide Australia Dulwich Centre Publications

O’Hanlon, B (1994) **The Third Wave** Family Therapy Networker, 18(6) 18-26, 28-29

**Shawshank Redemption** (1994) video

Waldegrave, C. (1990) **Just Therapy** Dulwich Centre Newsletter, 1, 5-46


Wylie, MS (1994) *Panning for Gold*. Family Therapy Networker 18(6)