

CNS6709: Couples, Marital, and Family Dynamics Syllabus

Instructor/Personal Pronouns	Quarter
Instructor Email	Class Days and Times
Instructor Phone	Course Location
Office Location	Office Hours
Technical Support: 866-848-5515	

COURSE DESCRIPTION A broad theoretical and practical foundation for counseling couples and families is emphasized. It provides a survey of current approaches in family, couples and marital counseling with an emphasis on various systemic models of family functioning and therapeutic intervention. This course provides an analysis of the importance of family, social and community systems in the treatment of mental and emotional disorders.

PREREQUISITES None

COREQUISITES None

CREDIT HOURS 4

COURSE MATERIALS

Technological Requirements

Each student in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program must have access to a reliable computer, internet connection and the required computer software and hardware. Cell phones and tablets are not acceptable computer or laptop replacements.

Requirements include:

- Computer with Windows 7 or higher or Mac OSX 10.7 or higher
- Microsoft Office 365 (available to all South University students)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader
- Browsers
 - For Windows users, Internet Explorer (latest 2 releases), Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome
 - For Mac users, Apple Safari (2 latest releases), Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome
- Virtual classes require access to a camera and microphone.

Required Textbooks

Gehart, D. (2024). *Mastering competencies in family therapy: A practical approach to theories and clinical case documentation*. Cengage.

Required Articles

Suggested/Supplemental Readings

Required Materials

GRADING SCALE

A = 90 – 100

B = 80 – 89

C = 70 – 79

D = 60 – 69

F = 69 or below

SAMPLE

PROGRAM OVERVIEW/MISSION

The South University Master of Arts degree program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling is intended to meet the local and regional need for qualified counselors. The Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling is designed to provide advanced and broad training for South University graduate students regarding theories, principles, and dynamic applications in the field. Students develop the skills necessary to engage in effective assessment and treatment practices, achieve competence for ethical, legal, and professional issues, and understand the significance and utility of research to the field. Faculty members are dedicated to maintaining high teaching standards, developing intellectual curiosity, advancing critical thinking, and engaging in service to the University, community, and profession.

Please Note: Successful completion of the MA CMHC program meets the requirements for licensure application in the state where the program is offered. Students considering relocation to another state are encouraged to review the licensure requirements for that state(s) in order to compare required coursework. Completion of the program does not guarantee licensure or certification.

Students enrolled in the Savannah virtual program are aligned to the licensure standards in Georgia.

PROGRAM STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (PSLO)s

PSLO 1	Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice: Demonstrate knowledge and application of all aspects of professional functioning, to include ethical standards, legal implications, advocacy and social justice, counselor roles, and professional credentialing.
PSLO 2	Social and Cultural Diversity: Demonstrate the ability to apply multicultural research and core theory to issues and relationships in the context of culturally competent counseling.
PSLO 3	Human Growth and Development Through the Lifespan: Apply research and core theory to the needs of diverse individuals across the lifespan, to include atypical personality and neurological development, addictive disorders, family and social relationships, and crisis response.
PSLO4	Lifestyle and Career Development: Demonstrate implementation of research and core theory related to the processes of decision-making in career development and planning in the context of the psychology of work.

PSLO5	Counseling and the Helping Relationship: Demonstrate knowledge and skill application of the major theories of change, consultation practices, diagnostic impressions, and evidence-based interventions to a diverse clientele for the delivery of effective and ethical treatment.
PSLO6	Group Dynamics and Group Work: Apply culturally appropriate group skills, techniques, and theory-based interventions in the context of group counseling dynamics while exploring effective facilitation styles.
PSLO7	Assessment and Appraisal: Analyze historical and current testing and assessment methods for implementing ethical and accurate appraisal of diverse clients by individual or group methods.
PSLO8	Research and Program Evaluation: Apply needs assessment, program evaluation, and research methods to ethical and effective practice and to add to the body of literature in the counseling profession.

**COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES ALIGNMENT TO
PROGRAM STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

CLO1	Demonstrate a basic knowledge of Family Systems theory and its application to counseling.	PSLO – 5
CLO2	Discuss the history of marriage, couples, and family counseling, including prominent figures and approaches in addition to family development and transitions across the life-span.	PSLO – 2, 3, 5
CLO3	Analyze theoretical/therapeutic approaches to marriage and family counseling.	PSLO – 5
CLO4	Develop an understanding of the role your family has played in your own development as a person, and explore some of the ways this may impact your work as a counselor.	PSLO – 2, 3, 5
CLO5	Analyze common marriage and family techniques from different models.	PSLO – 5
CLO6	Demonstrate through role play and practice, the basic techniques in couples and family counseling.	PSLO – 5
CLO7	Demonstrate an understanding of the cultural context of families and strategies for working with diverse populations and ethnic groups.	PSLO – 2, 3, 5

CLO8	Demonstrate an understanding for ethical and legal considerations in working with couples, marriages, and families.	PSLO – 1, 3, 5
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CACREP STANDARDS/ASSIGNMENTS

CAREP STANDARD	PSLO	CHAPTER/ READING	ASSIGNMENT
SECTION 2.F: COUNSELING CURRICULUM			
<u>3) HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT</u>			
a. theories of individual and family development across the lifespan	1	Ch. 5-16	Readings, Reading Reflections, PowerPoint Presentation, Family Genogram Paper, Final Exam
f. systemic and environmental factors that affect human development, functioning, and behavior	2	Ch. 2, 4	Readings, Reading Reflections, PowerPoint Presentation, Family Genogram Paper, Final Exam
<u>5) COUNSELING AND HELPING RELATIONSHIPS</u>			
b. a systems approach to conceptualizing clients	1	Ch. 1-4	Readings, Reading Reflections, PowerPoint Presentation, Family Genogram Paper, Final Exam

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In order to graduate from the Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling program, a student must:

1. Evidence a cumulative GPA of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) or greater for all academic work required for the degree.
2. Successfully pass the Comprehensive Examination.
3. Successfully remediate or repeat all courses in which a grade lower than a "C" was earned.
4. Successfully meet all conditions of a remediation plan(s) as provided by the Progress & Promotions Policy during periods of probation or suspension.

Note: Students with a CGPA that falls below 3.0 in any given quarter will need to earn a CGPA of 3.0 or higher in the next quarter to avoid receiving an automatic dismissal notification from the registrar. Students receiving a dismissal notification can appeal for reinstatement in the program. Please see the South University Academic Catalog for appeal processes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND SCHEDULE

Week	Topic(s)	Required Readings	Activities & Assessments	CACREP Standard
1	Syllabus Introductions		Identify 1) group research topic; 2) individual presentation topic	
2	Family Systems Theory, Research, and Treatment Planning	Gehart: Ch. 1-4	Each student should have 3 unique articles read and posted for group research topic	
3	Structural and Strategic Family Therapy	Gehart: Ch. 5-7	Reflection #1 due IRB training certificate due	
4	Human Growth Model and Experiential Family Therapy	Gehart: Ch. 8 & 9	Reflection #2 due	
5	EFT	EFT articles by Dr. Sue Johnson (Brightspace)		
6	Bowen Family Systems Therapy and Psychoanalytic Family Therapy	Gehart: Ch. 10 Genogram articles (Brightspace)	Reflection #3 due	
7	CBT and Mindfulness-Based Couple and Family Therapies	Gehart: Ch. 11	Reflection #4 due	

8	Solution Focused and Narrative Family Therapy	Gehart: 12-13	Reflection #5 due	
9	Collaborative therapy and reflecting teams EFT & Functional Family Therapy Evidence-Based group treatments	Gehart: Ch. 14-16 Dr. John Gottman & Dr. Susan Johnson article (Brightspace)	Genogram paper due	
10	Individual PowerPoint Presentations			
11	FINAL EXAM KPI		Identify 1) group research topic; 2) individual presentation topic	

**Note: Changes in the course schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor to accommodate time and material constraints.*

ASSIGNMENT WEIGHT

Assignment	Points	Weight %	Due Date
PowerPoint Presentation		20%	
Family Genogram Analysis		20%	
Group Research Project		20%	
IRB Training		10%	
Reading Reflections		10%	
Comprehensive Final Examination		20%	
TOTAL		100%	

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Note: Topics/Assignments may be subject to change as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

READING REFLECTIONS (based on assigned readings x5):

Postings will contain your reactions to the reading and reflection questions provided by the instructor. Each post should contain: (1) 1-2 paragraphs containing your reactions to the reading (questions, arguments, and wonderments), (2) 1-2 paragraphs (or more) containing your response to the question(s) about your family of origin, and (3) 2-3 questions you have from the readings.

FAMILY GENOGRAM ANALYSIS (paper + genogram)

Genograms can be valuable tools in three key ways:

- They can be employed as a method for understanding the families you are attempting to help. Drawing a three-generation map of a family can reveal many issues and dynamics that simply thinking about might not bring to light.
- They can be used as therapeutic interventions when you work collaboratively with an individual to assist his or her understanding of the influences of family dynamics on current interaction patterns.
- They can be used by you as an attempt to get clearer on the forces that shaped your attitudes and your countertransference reactions to the families you are attempting to help.

Instructions: **Each student will submit a personal, three generation family genogram and analytical response paper.** Students will construct their genogram by gathering family history, interviewing family members, and through personal reflection (see Appendix A and McGoldrick reading posted on Brightspace). Each student will draw their genogram accurately and clearly, depicting key relational and historical information about their family. The genogram can be drawn by hand or on a computer. A copy of the genogram will be submitted with the final paper (uploaded separately into Brightspace as a Word document, pdf, or picture file).

Each student will submit an 8–12-page paper to accompany the genogram (follow APA style). The first section of the paper (5-8 typed pages) will cover: family structure, life cycle fit, pattern repetition across the generations (patterns of functioning for both sides of the family, patterns of relationships such as close, conflicted or enmeshed and patterns of structure), life events and family functioning, relationship/attachment patterns and triangles, family balance and imbalance, and therapeutic concerns. The balance of the paper (3-4 pages) will be written as a reflection on your family and your personal response to creating the genogram. In this section, you should explore how your experiences within your family of origin may impact you as a clinician and what steps you plan to take in order to address possible countertransference.

GROUP RESEARCH PROJECT

As a group, we will identify a salient topic in family or couples counseling and will create a research study that can examine the topic in more detail. The class will work together to write a literature review, identify a methodology, create a survey, submit the proposal to the South University IRB, and analyze any data collected during the Winter quarter.

To conduct human subject research at South University, you must complete the ACRP Training on Ethical Practice in Research with Human Subjects and pass all in-module quizzes and the final test. The training will take approximately 3 hours and does not need to be completed in one sitting. The training can be found at inside.southuniversity.edu (drop down menu) Institutional Review Board Federal Regulations (tab) box with link on right hand side of page. This training must be completed on a campus computer and the completion certificate can be saved and uploaded in Brightspace.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION (in-class, PowerPoint + handout)

Students will work individually or in pairs to conduct research into a specific issue affecting couples and families and then will coordinate a presentation and host a discussion in class (25-30 minutes) regarding your issue. During the presentation you must involve the class in a meaningful way; this can be done through a variety of methods including (but not limited to): case studies, asking thought provoking questions and using responses as a way to further the discussion, writing or art exercises, etc... You will create a one-page handout outlining the issues contained in your presentation and listing credible peer-reviewed and online sources (minimum of 3 sources). Your handout should be given to each class member and also uploaded into Brightspace. You should upload your presentation into Brightspace, provide the instructor with a hard copy of your slides and a reference page following APA guidelines (minimum of 10 credible sources). The following are a list of some appropriate topics, but you may also choose something not on this list with approval by the instructor:

- Child neglect and abuse
- Families and divorce
- Infidelity
- LGBT+ partnerships and parenting
- Family violence
- Families and addiction
- Blended families
- Co-habitation and/or pre-nuptial agreements
- Sexual abuse

Single parent families
Families and poverty
Families and legal troubles
Unwanted pregnancy and abortion
Culture and families
Out of order death
Sexual issues in couples
Feminism and Family Therapy
Children who are differently abled or neurodivergent (physical, emotional, and/or learning)
Fertility issues
Voluntary childlessness
Adult sibling relationships
Topics must be approved by Instructor to avoid duplicates.

FINAL EXAM KPI: Students will complete a 2-hour comprehensive final examination. While the structure of the exam is the professor's discretion, it will consist of a minimum of 50 multiple choice questions. The exam will be taken via Brightspace.

ATTENDANCE

ATTENDANCE POLICY

University Attendance Policy

Note: Students receiving military education benefits should also see the VA Attendance Policy below.

South University maintains a course attendance policy to support the academic achievement of its students. Students are expected to attend all scheduled class, laboratory, and examination periods each week. Students, whether present or absent from class, are responsible for knowing all that is announced, discussed, and/or lectured upon in class or laboratory, as well as for mastering all assigned reading. In addition, students are responsible for submitting on time all assignments and examinations as required in the class.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled activities that are part of the class, including those activities scheduled during class time and those scheduled outside of class time. An individual campus-based or online clinical programs may have specific policies

(which in some cases may be more stringent than the general attendance requirements) as to the effect of attendance on class meetings, course assignments, off-campus activities, internships/externships, clinical and practicum activities, and other program requirements.

If the student misses 14 consecutive calendar days in a course, the student will be withdrawn from the course, unless the student provides official communication (communication directly from the student (letter or email) and the student provides supporting documentation for review) regarding extenuating circumstances (as outlined below) prior to violating the 14 consecutive days. The student must also provide the date the student will return into the current course. If the student fails to return on the scheduled return date the student will be withdrawn from the institution.

Note: Attendance policies for courses involving experiential learning, such as clinical fieldwork, rotations, practicum/internship and externship, are published in the programmatic handbooks (AA, CMHC, PA, Pharm, and PTA programs) and course syllabi.

Veterans Affairs Attendance Policy

Students who receive Veteran Affairs (VA) educational benefits must understand VA benefits, including tuition and fees, the monthly housing allowance, book stipend, and Yellow Ribbon benefits are based in whole or in part on the number of credit hours certified. The school is required to monitor and report enrollment status to the VA. Adjustments in enrollment will likely affect payment of VA benefits. The school will report enrollment as follows:

- VA Students who officially withdraw, the actual last date of attendance (LDA) must be determined and reported for each course to the VA.
- VA students who are administratively withdrawn or stops attending without officially withdrawing, the actual last date of attendance (LDA) must be determined and reported for each course to the VA.
- VA students who complete a course and receive a “NCF” grade, the school will determine and report the actual last date of attendance for each course to the VA.

It is **strongly recommended** you attend every class session as true learning only occurs when one is actively engaged in learning within the classroom setting. Please see the university attendance policy in the Academic Catalog for more information.

TARDINESS

Please arrive ***on time***. Being late is disruptive and distracting to both your instructor and peers.

VIRTUAL/ONLINE NETIQUETTE

If a student is required to engage in a virtual session it must be private and free of distractions. Considerations should include the use of headphones, being alone in your meeting space, deidentifying client information, protecting written material from being read by others outside the class, and not discussing cases outside of class with colleagues, family members, friends, and classmates.

With the growth of telemental health services, students should be mindful of the importance of professional dress and demeanor during virtual instruction. All learning experiences must be treated "as if" you are in a live classroom or seated across from a future client. Therefore, if you would not wear it, eat it, or do it during a session, please refrain from doing so during your online class.

Finally, any interactions with colleagues online either via virtual meetings or written correspondence (e.g., emails, discussions) should be composed in a manner that is both professional and respectful. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this requirement, please discuss with the instructor during office hours.

Full Audio-Visual Functionality: It is the student's responsibility to have functioning audio and visual for the entirety of the class. You should check with IT Helpdesk support prior if necessary.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

South University defines academic integrity as the complete, accurate, specific, and truthful representation of authorship, origin of ideas, mastery of material, and data, including access to and authorized use of resources. Students must maintain academic integrity in all activities, including observing and reporting academic integrity violations committed by others.

VIOLATIONS OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

- Cheating. Receiving unauthorized assistance on tests/examinations or other academic work. *Contract Cheating* is a form of cheating in which students get another to complete their coursework (paid or unpaid). Cheating also includes *collusion* in which students participate in unauthorized conspiring with another for work offered as credit.
- Plagiarism. The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as your own work or ideas. *Self-plagiarism* is a form of plagiarism in which students submit an identical or very similar work without receiving permission from the current faculty member prior to submission.
- Fabrication. Inventing or falsifying information or data.
- Sabotage. The willful attempt to hinder another student's work.
- Academic Misconduct. Includes the alteration of grades, involvement in the acquisition or distribution of un-administered tests, or failure to report integrity violations committed by others.

For emphasis, students are required to complete their assignments on their own unless involved in a team/group project with fellow students. This includes written papers, take home exams, and projects associated with the completion of required coursework. Students needing assistance with completing assignments, written work, or other areas associated with the completion of coursework should contact the instructor or the Academic Success Center.

All written work must be original; use minimal direct quotes; be sourced from credible sources including academic peer-reviewed journals; and must follow APA 7 guidelines.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE POLICY

In this course, any element of a class assignment must be original and fully prepared by the student. The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (ex: chat GPT) for any part of your work will be treated as plagiarism and an honor code violation. At any time, the instructor reserves the right to request evidence that student work is authentic and original. They may do this in one or more of the following ways: requesting submission of first drafts of your work or drafts containing Track Changes showing the edits you made to your assignment as you completed it; an oral interview; and/or an additional written response. The format(s) of inquiry is up to the instructor's discretion and the professor will determine the method and timeline for the assessment of original work.

Instructors may require students to submit assignments via Brightspace using Turnitin. Assignments submitted outside of the instructor's submission policy will result in a zero. If you are struggling to upload the assignment, you can receive assistance from the campus Academic Success Coordinator or the instructor.

If you have questions about this policy, please contact the instructor.

ELECTRONIC RECORDINGS

Because class discussions and experiential activities often involve disclosure of a personal nature and because discussions often involve client cases, recording of classes (audio or video) is prohibited unless approved by South University Disability Services as a reasonable accommodation for students utilizing disability services. Taking pictures of exams or quizzes is also prohibited.

Students should refer to the South University Academic Integrity Policy in the Academic Catalog for all information regarding the Integrity Policy, Classification of Violations and Possible Penalties.


STUDENT SERVICES

DISABILITY SERVICES

South University Disability Services ensures students with disabilities equal access to the College's educational programs, opportunities and activities. Qualified students requesting reasonable and appropriate accommodations receive services to eliminate physical, programmatic and attitudinal barriers that may arise with disabilities.

Students who seek reasonable accommodations should notify the Dean of Student Affairs at their campus location. Students will be asked to submit medical documentation of the need for accommodation to the campus Dean of Student Affairs. Classroom accommodations are not retroactive, but are effective only upon the student sharing approved accommodations with the instructor. Therefore, students are encouraged to request accommodations as early as during the Admissions process to allow for time to gather necessary documentation. If you have further questions, contact the **Dean of Student Affairs, insert name, email and phone number at the ^^^^^^^^ campus.**

*Complaints will be handled in accordance with the school's Internal Grievance Procedure for Complaints of Discrimination and Harassment included in this section of the Academic Catalog.



CMHC DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE STATEMENT

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program at South University attests to the common belief that diversity, equity, and inclusion are the essential foundation for cultivating a safe and productive learning environment. Instructors are expected to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout all areas of student engagement. This includes, but is not limited to:

- a. representation of diversity in lived experience across course design;
- b. implementation of multicultural competencies throughout learning goals and objectives;
- c. modeling a practice of cultural humility;
- d. supporting student efforts toward empowerment and advocacy;
- e. facilitating open and respectful student discourse;
- f. building counselor efficacy from a strengths-based approach;
- g. and, preparing students to identify and navigate cultural differences and systemic barriers in the field;
- h. increase awareness of contemporary social justice issues;
- i. and develop skills for engaging in social justice and advocacy.

To ensure fidelity, students are highly encouraged to provide feedback regarding how they perceive these initiatives are being maintained within their course of study through end of course evaluations. As a result, it is the hope of the CMHC program that students may find the freedom to conceptualize their professional identities from a clinical lens that is both authentic to their own experiences, as well as, inclusive of the lives of others.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Students of South University have access to our student assistance program, Be Well at South University, for counseling needs 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. You can access the service by calling **833-434-1217** or via application, **Telehealth**, or **in-person** counseling sessions with a local provider. These are available to you regardless of location, and no insurance is necessary.

The Wellness Hub includes articles and videos on mental health and wellness topics, including mental and emotional health, fitness and nutrition, academic performance, stress management, healthy relationships, and more. To access the Wellness Hub, go to bewellatsouth.com or download the CampusWell app at campuswell.com/get-the-app; the program is easy and confidential.

Be Well at South University Program licensed counselors are available to assist you with balancing school with work and other responsibilities, short-term counseling services, life, and career coaching, medical advocacy, and personal concierge services. Please contact the Dean of Student Affairs with any questions about this service.

WRITING SUPPORT

Students may utilize Tutor.com to help with writing support by submitting papers for review ahead of submitting them in class. It is important to plan ahead if you utilize this service as it may take up to 24 hours turnaround time.

<https://leo.tutor.com/Student/Index>

LIBRARY SERVICES

South University provides library facilities for its students at each of the main campus locations. Virtual support services are provided for all campuses, including branches. The libraries are easily accessible and house print collections consisting of general and reference books, periodicals, and other non-print media to support students in their studies. Campus library facilities offer students group and quiet study spaces. Campus libraries post their operating hours.

Electronic resources are available to all students, faculty, and staff through the Library's web site. Digital resources include e-books, journals, and video content. Electronic resources are available 24 hours a day/365 day a year. Virtual support services include email, text, and chat services. Chat hours are posted on the Library home page.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EDUCATION POLICY

South University, **campus** does not discriminate or harass on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, genetic marker, or any other characteristic protected by state, local or federal law, in our programs and activities. South University provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities. South University will not retaliate against persons bringing forward allegations of harassment or discrimination. The campus Dean of Student Affairs has been designated to handle inquiries and coordinate the campus' compliance efforts regarding the Non-Discrimination policy.

Appendix A

Questions to Use in a Genogram Interview

(source: Michele Thomas (1992) *An Introduction to Marital and Family Therapy*.
Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall)

1. Can you tell me the names and ages of the family members for at least three generations on both sides of the family who are presently living?
2. When were these individuals born, married, separated, or divorced? Give specific dates including day and year, if possible.
3. Who passed away in the family? Of what? When were they born, married, separated, or divorced?
4. What jobs did family members hold?
5. What were the educational levels of family members?
6. What were the ethnic/cultural and religious backgrounds of family members? How have these traditions been passed on in the family?
7. Where did family members live? In what city and state? When and where did they move? For what reason?
8. How did people get along in the family? Who was close to whom? Did anyone not speak to another family member? What happened in these cases?
9. Which family members were very successful at what they did?
10. Which family members used alcohol or drugs, were arrested, had mental problems, committed suicide or had other serious problems?
11. What illnesses are found in the family? How did family members cope with them?
12. Can you tell me any special life events that happened – positive, neutral and negative?