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## **COUN 5590: Couple Counseling**

Syllabus and Flexible Schedule

Fall 2013

### **I. Goals of the course:**

Each student will become knowledgeable about various theories and interventions of couple counseling. Students will develop their ability to recognize and identify different levels of relationship phenomena that occur around and between partners in a relationship (e.g., systemic implications, communication styles, sexuality, subconscious beliefs and projections, and underlying affects; extra-relationship factors such as diversity factors, spirituality, etc.), and how these present in couples sessions. Students will examine their own familial, dating and love relationship dynamics and how these may impact their own functioning as couples counselors.

### **II. Learning objectives:**

Students will demonstrate an ability to:

1. Conceptualize and articulate a couple's relationship patterns from several theoretical perspectives (CACREP II. K. 3. a.; 5. c., d.)
2. Discriminate multiple levels of interpersonal phenomena occurring between partners (CACREP II. K. 3. a., b., c.; 5. c., d.)
3. Demonstrate structured couples interview and counseling interventions and techniques (CACREP II. K. 5. a., b., c., d.; 7. b., f., g., h.)
4. Identify characteristics of spousal abuse issues and justify appropriate interventions (CACREP II. K. 3. a., b., c.; 5. c., d.)
5. Demonstrate knowledge of current thinking on sexual dysfunctions and treatment interventions (CACREP II. K. 3. a., c.; 5. c., d.)
6. Identify and interpret multicultural, ethical, and legal issues in couple counseling (CACREP II. K. 1. h.; 2. c., )

### **III. Methods of instruction:**

This hybrid course will emphasize reading, discussion, and experiential learning as its principal strategies. Students will participate in using and practicing counseling theories and techniques in carefully-designed role-playing situations. The course will also use videos of couples interactions; students will discuss and analyze the couples dynamics as shown on the videos. The course will utilize a self-directed seminar, rather than lecture, approach to presentation of course content.

### **IV. Required texts and/or readings:**

- Gurman, A. S. (Ed.). (2008). *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (4th ed.). New York: Guilford.
- Gottman, J.M., & Silver, N. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work*. New York: Three Rivers.
- Assigned readings, and powerpoints on Blackboard website.

### **Other learning resources:**

UNT Dallas Library:

phone: (972) 780-3625;

web: <http://www.unt.edu/unt-dallas/library.htm>

UNT Dallas Bookstore:

phone: (972) 780-3652;  
e-mail: 1012mgr@fhcg.follett.com

**Required readings and materials are available through password-protected Blackboard. View this site weekly for supplemental materials, additional handouts, required readings, and all class lessons/powerpoints. You are responsible for all content assigned on this website.**

Blackboard Learn: *If you have trouble logging in, cannot submit an assignment or quiz, or encounter some other problem in Blackboard, your primary step should be to contact the ITSS Help Desk rather than this professor. The ITSS Help Desk offers phone, email and walk-in support:*

Phone: 972-780-3626

Email: <http://web3.unt.edu/helpdesk/service>

Walk-in: Founders Hall Rm. 127

CITC Help Desk website: <http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm>.

Student Resources information: <http://webct.unt.edu> including how and where to download the current correct version of Java (1.5.0\_07).

## **V. Performance evaluation and procedures:**

### **Attendance, Preparation and Participation**

Because the course is a hybrid design, students are expected to have thoroughly read and prepared for every class period, and to participate *actively* in class activities. This means that your quality of learning is chiefly based on your online participation and use of materials, which support class interactions. On class weeks, students are required to commit 1.5 to 2 hours to independent study outside of class time; on non-meeting weeks, students are required to commit 3 to 4 hours of independent study time. Students' commitment and amount of time is automatically tracked by Blackboard software, and by my subjective appraisal of the quality of your work.

Level of class participation is qualitatively determined by my subjective appraisal of your class interaction and attentiveness. If for any reason you do not believe that you can participate in simulated role-play activities at this time, either as counselor or in the couple dyads, you probably should not be currently enrolled in the class. Please let me know if for any reason you need referrals for individual or couples counselors.

To be successful in this course, students must be able to retain and apply information in a practical manner; it is essential that students come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Attendance is required and graduate-level class participation is expected. Absences in **excess of one excused absence** and/or **chronic tardiness** will affect your final grade in the course. When possible, any absences should be discussed with the instructor in advance; and while it is certainly understandable that tardiness is occasionally unavoidable, chronic tardiness will result in the loss of 5% deduction from their total points per incident if they (a) miss more than one class meeting for other than a *documented* emergency reason (death in family, hospitalization, major or severe illness); (b) are tardy more than 10 minutes or leave class early more than twice a semester; or (c) consistently interact in a non-professional or disruptive manner with peers or this professor. Additional missed classes or chronic tardiness will result in another 5% deduction.

Appropriate class behavior and participation consistent with that of graduate students is expected. **Students are therefore expected to refrain from all inappropriate behavior including but not limited to: text-messaging, passing notes, sleeping, surfing the internet, emailing, and working on other material during class time.** To that end, please turn off your cellphones during class and close laptops during experiential exercises, videos, and/or during any other class activity during

which your attention is expected. Inappropriate behavior or low participation will result in one-on-one conferences, a remedial action plan, faculty review, and a low-effectiveness report in your permanent student file.

### **Exploration Paper**

The purpose of this paper is to explore and integrate aspects of your personal history in relationships (both in family of origin and past/current love relationships), and your strengths/vulnerabilities as a future couples counselor. Papers should follow basic APA guidelines and be a **minimum** of 12 pages in length, maximum 20 pages. The paper is intended to be primarily subjective in nature, but if you need references, you may use the course text or other sources in addition to the text if you wish (you must then include a correct APA-style reference page). Specific content areas required on the paper are on Blackboard.

### **Online Activities**

Because class activities are divided between in-class and online participation, each week *prior to the class meeting* you are expected to:

1. Complete the assigned reading
2. View the video associated with that class topic (on Blackboard)
3. Complete the activity or quiz accompanying the video and reading (on Blackboard).

These items are intended to be preparation for the week's in-class activity, and the deadline is the beginning of the class period. Online activities that are not completed prior to the beginning of class will not be accepted. Appendix A of this document details the grading rubric for online activities.

### **Couples Dyads "Presentation"**

Every student is required to participate in at least 2 separate roles during in-class activities: as a member of a couple and as a counselor. For the role-play, each student will partner with a classmate in an assigned relationship concern and play a role for another student, who plays the role of counselor. Students are expected to take this activity seriously and prepare as necessary.

You and your partner will decide which character you will play in an assigned couples scenario, and how you'd like the "session" to go with your counselor. All types of behavior or speech are allowed in the role-plays, except those which may lead to actual emotional or physical harm of your classmates. Speech and dress should be appropriate for your character when it is your turn; for example, how would this person speak? What kinds of things might this person say or be concerned with? How might this person dress?. This means thinking about, Is he/she coming from work? Child-care? Would he/she want to make a certain impression on the counselor by appearing professional and serious? Casual and "I don't really care that much about this?" "I'm tough and you won't get through to me?" "I'm vulnerable and please help me?" "I'm depressed and my clothes reflect my mood?" Make sure that your "performance" is consistent with the written description of your couple. See Appendix B of this document.

I will help you perform. **You will not be graded on your performance per se.** Participation **will** be graded on your professionalism towards this assignment (as a client and as therapist) and by your active participation during the class, whether you are a "client", a "counselor" or an observer. Make sure you have a conversation about your role-play with your partner preceding your performance – sometime during the week of the performance.

When you play the part of the counselor, you will be assisted by me and by a classmate who also serves as a "lifeline". You will attempt to demonstrate or experiment with different therapeutic interventions for couples, and receive feedback and/or ideas from the class. You may "pause" the session role-play at any time to ask questions or elicit feedback; you may also "rewind" different portions of the session and attempt a different intervention.

### **Oral History Interview (OHI)**

Each student will “submit” the contact information for a couple who agrees to volunteer to be interviewed for the OHI. The couple you select should be someone you know who has been happily “married” in a religious or secular conjoinment ceremony/wedding for a minimum of 2 years (happily committed or co-habiting couples unfortunately do not qualify for this assignment, as the Gottman research underlying this structured interview assignment refers to formally committed couples specifically). I will exchange couples amongst the students so that each student interviews a couple unknown to him or her, in order to provide an authentic experience that is not impaired by dual relationships. *You will **not** be interviewing the couple you donate* under any circumstances. Students will obtain informed consent forms from each individual being interviewed, and conduct a 2-hour filmed OHI-format interview on Gottman’s documented aspects of what makes a union “work”. For the project, students will then develop a written in-depth analysis of the couple’s relationship and his or her own performance as the interviewer (specific instructions are provided on Blackboard, and will be discussed at length in class).

### **Midterm Exam**

This 50-question exam will be in multiple choice, true-false format. The exam covers theories and course content from the first half of the semester; questions will be drawn primarily from the text, CNP materials on Bb, and class discussion (in descending order of importance).

### **Final Exam**

50-point comprehensive exam, multiple-choice exam including one short essay answer question, based on assigned readings and class content from the second half of the semester.

### **Grading Criteria**

- 20% online work and class participation
- 20% Exploration paper
- 20% OHI Interview
- 20% Midterm Exam
- 20% Final Exam

### **Final Grading**

- A, A- (Excellent) will be given for outstanding achievement in written and class contributions. A student who earns an A or A- has shown consistent initiative, originality and comprehension. The student will have demonstrated an ability to use constructs accurately and with depth of understanding.
- B+, B (Good Enough!) will be given for work which is of good quality, as expected of graduate students, but which is either not outstanding in the above characteristics or contains some errors in comprehension. A “B+” grade is given when the writing is clear and well-organized, there are a significant number of insights, but the overall depth of the papers does not rise to the level of “outstanding.” “B” and “B+” students are expected to consistently contribute to class discussions.
- B- (Really sincere effort) will be given when there is a noticeable lack of depth, the writing is generally acceptable but occasionally confusing, and there are some genuinely good insights as well as some errors in comprehending and applying the theories)
- C (Insufficient work) will be given for work which is minimally acceptable or insufficient quality for graduate students. A grade of “C” or lower requires course repetition at the graduate level.

I (Incomplete work) for some justifiable reason, acceptable to the instructor and University policy (death in family, hospitalization, major or severe personal illness), the student has been unable to complete the full requirements of the course. At the time a grade of I is given, a minimum of 30% of classwork must have been completed at a passing level; the instructor must stipulate in writing to the student and to the University registrar the requirements and completion date that are to be met and the grade that will be given if the requirements are not met by the completion date. The maximum period of time allowed to clear the Incomplete grade normally is 12 months. If the Incomplete grade is not cleared by the date set by the instructor or by the end of the 12-month Policies and Procedures 25 deadline, the grade of I will be changed to the grade provided by the instructor at the time the Incomplete grade was assigned or to a grade of F if no alternate grade was provided. The grade of I is **not** given in lieu of a grade of F or W, or other grade, each of which is prescribed for other specific circumstances.

If the student's work is incomplete, poor quality and/or not acceptable, a grade of F will be given. The grade of I does not authorize a student to attend the course during a later term. Graduation candidates must clear all Incomplete grades prior to the deadline in the Official University Calendar, which may allow less time than 12 months. Failure to do so can result in removal from the degree candidacy list and/or conversion of the grade of I to the grade indicated by the instructor at the time the grade of I was given.

**Flexible Schedule  
Fall 2013**

Bb = Blackboard reading(s); CHCT = Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy; G&S = Gottman & Silver

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic(s)</b>	<b>Video:</b>	<b>Readings:</b>	<b>Assignments:</b>
Aug. 29	Introduction; hybrid class orientation		Benson et al. (2012)	
Sept. 5 <i>online</i>	Empirical research- Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy	Richard Stuart	CHCT 1& 3; Cahill (2005)	
Sept. 12	Attachment theory	<i>When the Bough Breaks</i>	Levine (2005); Pistole (1999); Waters (2004)	<b>Exploration paper due</b>
Sept. 19 <i>online</i>	Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy	Susan Johnson	CHCT 4; Doherty (2002)	<b>Review Bb OHI packet</b>
Sept. 26	Imago Therapy	Harville Hendrix <i>Getting the Love You Want</i>	Allman (2005); Bb Imago readings	<b>Discuss OHI</b>
Oct. 3 <i>online</i>	Internal Family Systems Therapy	Richard Schwartz	Schwartz (2001); Schwartz & Rose (2002)	<b>Submit OHI couples</b>
Oct. 10	<b>Midterm Exam</b>			
Oct. 17 <i>online</i>	Ethical and Legal Issues in Couples Counseling		CHCT 24, 25, & 26; AAMFT CoE; ACA Ethical Standards; Sperry (2007)	
Oct. 24	Transgenerational Marital Therapy	James Framo	CHCT 7	
Oct. 31 <i>online</i>	Solution-Focused Therapy	Insoo Kim Berg <i>Irreconcilable Differences</i>	CHCT 9; Davis et al. (2012)	
Nov. 7	Gottman's Empirically Based Approach	John Gottman <i>The Love Lab</i>	CHCT 5; G&S pp. 1-46; Butler (2006); Harris (n.d.)	Bring Gottman book to class
Nov. 14 <i>online</i>	Gottman (cont.)	<i>Gottman outtakes</i>	G&S pp. 47-127; AtKisson (1994); Fishbane (2007); Shapiro et al. (2000)	
Nov. 21	Relationship violence	Susan Heitler <i>The Angry Couple</i>	CHCT 16; G&S pp. 129-155; Bender & Roberts (2007); Brody (1998)	<b>OHI Interviews due</b>
Nov. 28	<i>No class- holiday</i>			
Dec. 5 <i>online</i>	Effects of sexual dysfunction		CHCT 21; G&S pp. 187-266	
Dec. 12	<b>Final Exam</b>		<b>Course evaluations</b>	

*Please note: Course syllabus schedule and requirements subject to change at the discretion of instructor or as mandated by class needs.*

## IMPORTANT POLICIES

### **Blackboard:**

We will be using Blackboard as a course management tool this semester. Students may access the course using their EUID and password via <http://Blackboard.unt.edu>. Once within Blackboard, you will be able to view announcements, download and print copies of class materials, access course readings, and check your grades. The instructor may also post audio files of lectures for those who are absent or who would like to review class sessions. We may use the assessment function to submit homework exercises.

### **Eagle Mail:**

All UNT students should activate and regularly check their Eagle Mail (e-mail) account. Eagle Mail is used for official communication from the University to students. Many important announcements for the University and College are sent to students via Eagle Mail. For information about Eagle Mail, including how to activate an account and how to have Eagle Mail forwarded to another e-mail address, visit <https://eaglemail.unt.edu>. This is the main electronic contact for all course-related information and/or material.

### **Disability Accommodations:**

The University of North Texas College of Education does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the recruitment and admission of students, the recruitment and employment of faculty and staff, or the operation of any of its programs and activities, as specified by federal laws and regulations. Copies of the College of Education ADA Compliance Document are available in the Dean's Office, Matthews Hall 214.

The department Disability Accommodation Policy is printed in the Master's and Doctoral Student Handbooks and is available at <http://www.coe.unt.edu/CDHE/CNSLORED.htm> or from the counseling program office in Room 155, Stovall Hall. The designated disability liaison for the counseling program is Dr. Jan Holden, Room 155, Stovall Hall.

The student has the responsibility of informing the course instructor of any disabling condition that will require modification to avoid discrimination. Students with disabilities should approach each instructor within the first two weeks of class to make an appointment to discuss disability accommodation and then must follow the meeting with an e-mail or hard-copy message to the instructor summarizing the accommodations that will be made. The instructor will reply with affirmation or modification and place a copy of the communication in the student's file.

### **Bad Weather Policy:**

On those days that present severe weather and driving conditions, a decision may be made to close the campus. In case of inclement weather, call UNT Dallas Campuses main voicemail number (972) 780-3600 or search postings on the campus website [www.unt.edu/dallas](http://www.unt.edu/dallas). Students are encouraged to update their Eagle Alert contact information, so they will receive this information automatically.

### **Academic Misconduct:**

Cheating and plagiarism are types of academic misconduct. The term 'plagiarism' includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement. Plagiarism also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials. A faculty member can assign specific penalties. Penalties can include reducing or changing a grade or issuing a failing grade for an assignment/test or for the entire course and/or expulsion from the academic program and the university. A student penalized for academic misconduct has the right of appeal (University of North Texas Graduate Catalog, 2002, p. 94).

The term “cheating” includes, but is not limited to, (1) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests or examinations; (2) dependence upon the aid of sources specifically prohibited by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems or carrying out other assignments; (3) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; (4) dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); (5) any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage.

Plagiarism is plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional. To avoid plagiarism, follow guidelines in the current edition of the *APA Publication Manual*. APA-style writing is always required for every submitted document or assignment, unless specified otherwise by this instructor.

Plagiarism of any sort will not be tolerated and will result in a minimum of a failing grade on the assignment; plagiarism may jeopardize your standing in the program. UNT counseling program students should be prepared to submit papers and other written work electronically so that the instructor can use anti-plagiarism software to validate the originality of the student’s work. Students also have access to these plagiarism-prevention tools and are strongly encouraged to utilize these resources.

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Pan, M. L. (2003). *Preparing literature reviews*. Los Angeles: Pyrczak.

**Great books for human beings (and those who are also counselors):**

- Axline, V. M. (1964). *Dibs in search of self*. New York: Ballantine.
- Benjamin, C. L. (1985). *Mother knows best: The natural way to train your dog*. New York: Hungry Minds.
- Bloomfield, H. H., & McWilliams, P. (1995). *How to heal depression*. New York: Prelude.
- De Becker, G. (1997). *The gift of fear: And other survival signals that protect us from violence*. New York: Dell.
- Domar, A., & Dreher, H. (2000). *Self-nurture: Caring for yourself as effectively as you care for everyone else*. New York: Penguin.
- Faber, A., & Mazlish, E. (1980). *How to talk so kids will listen, and listen so kids will talk*. New York: Avon.
- Fulghum, R. (1989). *It was on fire when I lay down on it*. New York: Ballantine.
- Fulghum, R. (1998). *All I really need to know I learned in kindergarten: Uncommon thoughts on common things*. New York: Ballantine.
- Gladwell, M. (2005). *Blink: The power of thinking without thinking*. New York: Little, Brown, and Company.
- Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work*. New York: Three Rivers.
- Helmstetter, S. (1982). *What to say when you talk to your self*. New York: Pocket.
- Hodges, S. (2011). *The graduate practicum and internship manual: A resource for graduate counseling students*. New York: Springer.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. New York: Hyperion.
- Kottler, J. A., & Hazler, R. J. (1997). *What you never learned in graduate school: A survival guide for therapists*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Kottler, J. A. (2003). *On being a therapist*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



- Kottler, J. A., & Carlson, J. (2003). *Bad therapy: Master therapists share their worst failures*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Ramsey, D. (2003). *The total money makeover: A proven plan for financial fitness*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- McWilliams, P., Bloomfield, H. H., & Colgrove, M. (1993). *How to survive the loss of a love*. New York: Prelude.
- McWilliams, P. (). *Life 101: Everything we wished we had learned about life in school- but didn't*. New York: Prelude.
- Millan, C. (2006). *Cesar's way: The natural, everyday guide to understanding and correcting common dog problems*. New York: Harmony.
- Mitchell, S. (1991). *The gospel according to Jesus: A new translation and guide to his essential teachings for believers and unbelievers*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Nelsen, J. (1996). *Positive discipline: The classic guide to helping children develop self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and problem-solving skills*. New York: Ballantine.
- Richardson, C. (2005). *The unmistakable touch of grace*. New York: Free Press.
- Robbins, T. (1991). *Awaken the giant within: How to take immediate control of your mental, emotional, physical, and financial destiny!* New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rogers, A. G. (1995). *A shining affliction: A story of harm and healing in psychotherapy*. New York: Penguin.
- Salmonsohn, K., & Zinzell, D. (2001). *How to be happy, damnit! A cynic's guide to spiritual happiness*. Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts.
- Seligman, M. (1998). *Learned optimism: How to change your mind and your life*. New York: Pocket.
- Shem, S. (1997). *Mount misery*. New York: Ivy.
- Walker, B. (1991). *The crazy dog guide to lifetime happiness*. Dell.
- Wurtzel, E. (1995). *Prozac nation: Young and depressed in America*. New York: Penguin.
- Yalom, I. D. (2002). *The gift of therapy: An open letter to a new generation of therapists and their patients*. New York: HarperCollins.

**APPENDIX A.**  
**Online participation rubric**

	<b>Excellent performance</b>	<b>Good performance</b>	<b>Fair performance</b>	<b>Poor performance</b>	<b>Does not meet standard</b>
	4	3	2	1	0
Quality and critical analysis in posts	Student responses were thoughtful, original, or demonstrated excellent comprehension; uses relevant terminology; no more than 10% of posting is quotation, with proper citations where necessary	Postings display an understanding of the concepts and correct use of terminology, with proper citation where necessary.	Postings repeat or summarize an understanding of basic information, but do not consider alternative ideas or connect ideas, no citations or use of outside sources	Postings are minimal and show little depth or evidence that materials were completed or understood; postings are brief or are personal opinions, without supporting evidence	Student did not post a sufficient response, or an original response
Quantity of posts	Student posts frequently, and contributed multiple responses above the requirement	Student posts frequently, and contributed several responses above the requirement	Student posts occasionally and met the minimum required number of interactions	Student posted, but did not meet the minimum required number of interactions	Student did not post any response
Interaction with classmates	Student responds consistently throughout the discussion period; extends discussion by including new ideas, resources, or personal experiences; demonstrates a rich, meaningful contribution to others' posts	Student responds consistently throughout the discussion period; contributes well to ongoing conversation; makes affirmative remarks to others' posts	Student responses were correct and relevant to others' remarks; contributes but may not enrich discussion; responses are made within the last 2 days of the discussion period	Student responses were shallow or superficial (e.g., agrees or disagrees); does not extend discussion; responses are made in the last day of the discussion period	Student did not post any response; responses are irrelevant
Professional communication	Student responses are free of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors, and facilitate ease of communication	Student responses contain are mostly free of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors, and generally facilitate ease of communication	Student responses contain some spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors that can distract the reader	Student responses contain frequent spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors that can distract the reader	Student responses contain numerous spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors; style does not facilitate effective communication
Online etiquette	Student responses show respect and sensitivity to peers' gender, racial/ethnic background, sexual orientation and religious beliefs	Student responses show respect and interest in the views of others	Student responses show interest in the views of others but occasionally lack sensitivity	Student responses show lack of sensitivity for the views and experiences of others	Student responses show disrespect for the views and experiences of others

