I. COURSE PURPOSE

This course introduces students to assessment and treatment of clients through a family systems perspective with an emphasis on family resilience and supporting motivation for growth and change. The course introduces students to some of the major traditional perspectives in family assessment and treatment through the works of Bowen, Minuchin, and Haley. The exploration of the work of these family therapy pioneers will reveal the essential paradigm shifts involved in moving from an individual perspective to viewing the family as the unit of treatment. This class will explore the evolution of family therapy and the development of the post-modern approaches to include solution-focused and narrative family therapy models. Students will become familiar with practice theories and models consistent with a social constructionist paradigm and the strengths and ecological perspectives. They will learn to work with families to mobilize internal strengths and organize external resources to meet their own needs and solve their own problems. Through lecture, experiential exercises and work with case material, students will learn to apply theoretical concepts to promote change in thinking and interactional patterns as well as to mobilize environmental support.

II. COMPETENCIES AND PRACTICE BEHAVIORS

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) requires that students meet 10 core competencies, which are operationalized as practice behaviors. Each course is designed to cover one or more of the ten core competencies and each course is also designed to cover some, but not all of the practice behaviors within a competency. Upon completion of this course, students will able to demonstrate the following practice behaviors within the noted competencies:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Practice Behaviors</th>
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| **Competency #1 Professional Identity:** Identify as a clinical social worker & conduct self accordingly. | #1. Social workers demonstrate professional use of self across all practice settings.  
#2. Develop, manage, and maintain therapeutic relationships with clients within the person-in-environment and strengths perspectives. |
| **Competency #2 Ethical Practice:** Apply social work ethical principles to guide clinical practice. | #1. Social workers recognize and manage personal biases in practice settings.  
#2. Social workers recognize and negotiate the complexities that can arise when organizational policies/procedures interact with competing professional standards for ethical social work practice.  
#3. Social workers apply ethical principles through the use of an ethical decision making model that helps in the resolution of an ethical dilemma. |
| **Competency #3 Critical Thinking:** Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. | #1. Social workers engage in reflective practice.  
#2. Social workers evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple theoretical perspectives and differentially apply them to client situations. |
| **Competency #4: Diversity in Practice:** Engage diversity and demonstrate awareness of the complexities regarding identity differences and how they play out in clinical practice. | #1. Social workers use their self-awareness to understand the influence of their personal biases and values in working with others.  
#2. Social workers practice within the context of difference in shaping the life experiences of clients, themselves, and the working alliance. |
<p>| <strong>Competency #6 Research Based Practice:</strong> Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research | #1. Social workers critically evaluate and utilize theoretical models and empirical research methods for the purpose of informing and evaluating social work practice and programs. |
| <strong>Competency #7 Human Behavior:</strong> Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment. | #1. Social workers differentially apply theories of human behavior that address the bio-psycho-social-spiritual nature of clients and the social environment to guide social work practice. |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Competency #10 Engage, Assess, Intervene, Evaluate: Engage, assess, and intervene with individuals, families, and groups.</th>
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| **Engagement:**  
Social workers:  
#1. Use empathy, active listening, and other clinical skills to establish rapport in order to set treatment goals with clients.  
#2. Develop culturally responsive therapeutic relationships.  
#3. Attend to the interpersonal dynamics and contextual factors that both strengthen and potentially threaten the therapeutic alliance. |
| **Assessment:**  
Social workers:  
#1. Use multi-dimensional assessment tools that include bio-psycho-social-spiritual data to assess client’s strengths, capacities, and readiness for change.  
#2. Use differential diagnostic processes. |
| **Intervention:**  
Social workers:  
#1. Develop, with clients, an intervention plan that incorporates client strengths, capacities, and protective factors.  
#2. Use culturally appropriate clinical techniques for a range of presenting concerns identified in the assessment.  
#3. Adapt appropriate intervention strategies based on continuous clinical assessment. |
| **Evaluation:**  
Social Workers:  
#1. Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions and program implementation and outcomes.  
#2. Revise intervention and program implementation plans based on ongoing process and outcome evaluation. |
III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts:


B. Recommended Texts:


C. Course Assignments

1. Attendance and Class Presence/Participation
Students are expected to complete all assigned readings, arrive to class on time, and be fully prepared to actively participate in all class exercises and discussions. All clinical content in discussions must be kept confidential, in keeping with the Student Confidentiality Agreement.

Missing more than two class sessions will result in a significantly reduced grade. The only exceptions are student illness (with doctor’s note), illness of immediate family member, accident/hospitalization, or death of immediate family member. Arriving to class late or leaving early (30 minutes or more) will be considered an absence. Class participation requires the student to have reviewed the readings in advance, and be fully present and engaged in the material for the entire class meeting. When in class, all pagers, cell phones, and other electronic devices should be turned off or set to silent operation. Computers or tablets should be used in class to further learning only, and not for other purposes.

Students may be called upon to facilitate class discussions, role-plays and other activities as part of their participation grade. There may be other videos and short assignments required throughout the course.

2. Application of Theory Writing Exercise (Class #7)

This assignment will consist of an in-class writing exercise. Students will develop answers to short essay questions based the film: “The Squid and The Whale.” The film will be viewed outside of class. This exercise will require students to actively apply family systems theoretical constructs to the family in the film. Students should be prepared to develop a treatment plan and intervention for the family in the film based on the models studied in class. The exercise will consist of 10 short essay questions and will be open book / open note.

3. Family Clinical Interview (Due Class #11)

Students will compose a portion of a clinical interview in the style of a process recording based on a case provided by the instructor. Students will develop a therapist / family dialogue based on the provided case material in order to demonstrate engagement and intervention with a given family system. In the context of the session narrative, students will identify and label 6 different clinical intervention techniques. Students will describe each technique and give a rationale for its use in the context of their interview. Students will provide analysis regarding why this particular technique may be appropriate and effective.
This is a take-home assignment and students can use any notes or materials from the class.

4. **Student Choice: Family Theory Application Paper or Family Therapy Video Role Play (Due Class #14)**

**Option #1: Scholarly Paper:** Students will develop and write a 12-page scholarly paper analyzing the family system from *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri. Students will present a description of the presenting problem(s). Who are the family members who present for treatment and what is their storyline? Students will identify a family theory or model to apply to work with this family. The family will be assessed using at least three concepts from the chosen theory or model. Students will name and define each concept and explain how it will be applied to this family. Assessment will include, wherever it is applicable, a discussion of values and ethics, social and cultural diversity, parenting issues, boundaries, hierarchy, power, marital issues, social and economic justice and the quality of social work services. Finally, students will apply at least three techniques from their chosen theory or model of practice. Techniques will be defined and actively applied to the family system.

- Students may choose another novel to use for this assignment upon approval of the instructor.

**Option #2: Family Therapy Video Role Play:** This assignment is designed to give students practice in engaging in various family therapy modalities, and to learn to apply modalities to actual practice situations.

Students choosing this assignment will be divided into groups of 4-5. Each group will be assigned a particular family and a case study vignette. Each student is responsible for leading a 10-15 minute family session in which he/she demonstrates mastery of one of the therapy approaches discussed in the class. Students are responsible for deciding which approaches each individual worker in the role play will take. The others are responsible for acting as members of the family.

The ‘sessions’ should be run as if the assessment had already been completed so that the family and worker are now entering the implementation and use of the actual intervention(s).

Each social worker is to provide a three paragraph written summary of the intervention: Goals of the therapy session, theory you were referencing, what techniques you were utilizing and why this theory was chosen.

**D. Grading Policy**

Grades will be based on the CUA Grading Policy as described in the Graduate Announcements. Full credit will not be given for assignments that are submitted late. No credit will be given for assignments submitted after they have been reviewed in class. The assignments described above will be the basis for the final grade. Grades will be based on the extent to which students achieved course
objectives as demonstrated by the quality of course assignments and class participation. The following weighting of course assignments will apply:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
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<td>Assignment 2</td>
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<td>Assignment 3</td>
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Grading System

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<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numeric Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95 – 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 94</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 – 86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 82</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>70 - 79</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 - 69</td>
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E. Preparation, Attendance & Participation

Students are required to attend classes and are expected to participate meaningfully in class discussion/exercises and online forums as required. The class participation grade will be determined by the instructor’s perception of the student’s preparation for and contributions to class discussion/activities. Different students will make different kinds of contributions. Some will have an easy time with spontaneous interactions while others will be more comfortable making planned statements about key ideas from the readings or other sources. Both types of contributions are valued.

F. Course and Instructor Evaluation

NCSSS requires electronic evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, the evaluation form may be accessed at http://evaluations.cua.edu/evaluations using your CUA username and password. Additionally, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to requests.

IV. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements, or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements (http://ncsss.cua.edu/courses/index.cfm), including scholastic and behavioral requirements.

NCSSS is committed to creating an open and inclusive learning environment where all members - including students, faculty, administrators, and staff – strive to listen to and learn from one another. We recognize that in a multicultural society, it is inevitable that issues or tensions relative to diversity and different life
experiences will arise. It is how we handle these events that matters. Therefore, when such issues occur – inside or outside of the classroom - we agree to engage in respectful and productive discussion with one another until learning is enhanced and understanding is deepened by all involved.

A. Scholastic Expectations
All written work should reflect the original thinking of the writer, cite references where material is quoted or adapted from existing sources, adhere to APA format, and should be carefully proof read by the student before submission to the instructor for grading. A helpful resource is provided below to assist with your professional writing.

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

B. Behavioral Requirements:
Students are expected to maintain accepted standards of professional conduct and personal integrity in the classroom. Students should:
• Attend all classes and contribute constructively to the classroom culture
• Recognize and avoid behavior that jeopardizes the learning/teaching environment of other students or the instructor
• Demonstrate competence in planning academic activities and in following through on those plans
• Reasonably respond to and respect others’ reactions to one’s comments or actions in the classroom
• Use an appropriate level of class time and instructor’s time and attention in and out of class
• Behave in a manner that is consistent with the ethical principles of the social work profession.

C. Academic Honesty
Joining the community of scholars at CUA entails accepting the standards, living by those standards, and upholding them. Please refer to University Policy (http://graduatestudies.cua.edu/currentstudents/academintgrt.cfm) and appropriate Program Handbooks.

D. Confidentiality
Each student is expected to adhere to the Confidentiality Agreement that is signed at the beginning of every semester. This agreement covers “practice materials” in classes, supervisory sessions, case conferences, seminars, and other educational settings within the NCSSS BSW or MSW programs are for professional learning purposes only and are subject to strict professional standards of confidentiality. These same standards of confidentiality also extend to various forms of written communication and peer consultation.

Adherence to these standards means all students refrain from communicating beyond the classroom setting about practice material that is presented in class. Students will also refrain from using social media outlets (blogs, twitter,
Facebook, etc.) or email to discuss practice settings, program responsibilities and projects with individuals who are not in teaching or supervision roles directly related to the situation.

E. Accommodations
Students with physical, learning, psychological or other disabilities wishing to request accommodations must identify with the Disability Support Services (DSS) and submit documentation of a disability. If you have documented such a disability to DSS that requires accommodations or an academic adjustment, you must present that documentation to your instructors and arrange a meeting with as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.

V. CLASS SCHEDULE

Topics and Readings

Class 1  Course Introduction: Evolution of Family Therapy and Understanding Systems Thinking

History and Evolution of Family-Centered Practice
Changing Contexts and Definitions of Family
Discussion of Settings; Social Work Roles in Family Engagement
Creating Opportunity for Family Interventions
Differences Between Family and Individual Interventions
Systems Theory: Feedback, Circular Causality, Homeostasis

Required Reading:


Recommended Readings:


Class 2  
**Engaging with the Family as the Unit of Treatment**

- Informed Consent and Confidentiality Issues
- Joining and Accommodation with the Family
- Rapport Building Vs. Information Gathering
- Contracting for Change with the Family
- When Family Therapy is Contra-indicated
- Family Boundaries and Engagement
- Initial Interventions – Changing Emotional Climate and Building Hope for Change

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


contrasting cases. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 45*(1), 75-87.


Class 3: **Family Assessment**

Overview of Family Assessment
Assessing Family Dynamics
Assessing Strengths / Resilience
Identification of Stressors / Maladaptive Patterns
Family Developmental Perspective / Life Cycle Issues
Ecomap / Genogram / Ecological Assessment Use in Practice
Organizational Issues in Assessment and Theory Application

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


Class 4: **Multigenerational / Bowenian Family Therapy (Assessment)**

Bowenian Family Therapy History and Development
Multigenerational Transmission Process
Relationship Triangles
Differentiation of Self
Emotional Cutoff
Sibling Position
Nuclear Family Emotional Process

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Class 5:** Multigenerational / Bowenian Family Therapy (Treatment)

Application of Bowenian Concepts to Case Material
Interventions – Decreasing Emotional Reactivity
Family Projection Process
Use of Genogram in Clinical Interventions
Process of De-Triangulation
Increasing Differentiation within a Family System
Critiques of the Bowenian Therapy Lens through Feminist, Cultural, and Relational Perspectives

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Class 6:** **Structural Family Therapy (Assessment)**

Psychosomatic Families
Rigid vs. Enmeshed Boundaries
Family Subsystems
Family Hierarchy: Alignment, Power, and Coalitions
Relationship Complementarity

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Class 7:** **Structural Family Therapy (Treatment)**

Application of Structural Concepts to Case Material
Intervention in Structural Family Therapy
The Re-Structuring of a Family System
Enactments as a Therapeutic Tool
Therapist Engagement and Reframing
Directive Therapist Vs. Active Therapist
Reinforcing Positive Structural Elements
Critiques of Structural Methods

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Class 8:** Strategic Family Therapy (Assessment and Treatment)

The Meaning of Symptoms
MRI Approach
Positive and Negative Feedback Loops
Report and Command Communication
Paradoxical Interventions
First and Second Order Change
Assignments, Directives and Tasks
The Milan Model

**Required Reading:**


Recommended Reading:


Class 9: Solution-Focused Family Therapy (Assessment)

The Family’s Theory of Change
Circles of Care Ecomaps
Questioning to Guide Solution-Focused Assessment
Scaling
The Miracle Question
Post-Modern Collaborative Approaches

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Class 10: Solution-Focused Family Therapy (Treatment)

Application of Solution-Focused Concept to Case Material
Questions as Intervention
Brief Therapeutic Interventions
Cognitive Envisioning and Behavioral Activation
Relationship Questioning
What’s Better?
Structure of a Solution-Focused Session

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Class 11: Solution-Focused Family Therapy (Application w/ Mandated Clients)

Motivation and the Concept of Resistance through a Solution-Focused Lens
Parallels of Motivational Interviewing and Solution-Focused Work
Stages of Change in a Family System
Techniques for Working with Mandated Clients
Trauma through a Strengths-Based Lens
Organizational Issues Impacting Use of Solution-Focused Approach

Required Reading:


**Recommended Reading:**


**Class 12:**  
**Narrative Family Therapy (Assessment)**

Co-Authoring Experience  
Supporting the Family in Telling Their Story  
Process of Externalization  
Viewing the Problem as a “Being” (belief, practice, feeling, attitude)  
Deconstruction and Plot Thickening  
Framing the New Narrative

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Class 13:**  
**Narrative Family Therapy (Treatment)**

Application of Narrative Concepts to Case Material  
Use of Narrative Questioning Techniques: Circular Questioning
Opening Space and Preference Questions
Story Develop and Meaning Questions
Plotting the Family Story in the Landscape of Consciousness
Plotting the Family Story in the Landscape of Action
Process of Co-Construction with Families

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Class 14: Working with Parenting / Child Issues: Focus on Attachment**

Increasing Positive Attachment
Working with Parents on Validation and Attunement
Issues Related to Attachment Disturbance
Filial Therapy
Supporting Parents with Positive Behavioral Interventions

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**

