I. COURSE PURPOSE

The course introduces students to some of the major perspectives in family assessment and treatment through the works of Satir, Minuchin, Haley, and Bowen. The family is viewed as a transactional system within other social systems. Just as the family presents tasks and affective experience to its members, other social systems also influence family members’ systemic dynamics. The “interior” of the family is the crucible in which ego identity and developmental issues are acted out. These can be examined through structure, communication, re-telling of each other’s stories, and the exchanges of meanings and feelings. 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. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Three general and interconnected objectives govern the course: understanding the family as an interactive system; diagnosing the family based on strong theoretical information, and treating the family based on their transaction process, with particular consideration of individual ego functioning.

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
1. To understand the family’s environment, cultural values, boundaries, degree of attachment, and external stresses.

2. To understand the consequences of family structural and communication processes that affect both individual and family functioning as described by Satir, Minuchin Haley, and Bowen.

3. To understand assessment and intervention methods that flow from a major theoretical frame of reference.

4. To assess couple and family dynamics and intervene accordingly.

5. To understand when family therapy is the appropriate mode of treatment.

6. To select appropriate intervention techniques for a family from a variety of possible alternatives.

7. To recognize the emotional meaning "beneath" the content.

8. To develop or enhance sensitivity to cultural ideas about therapy with respect for religious and ethnic beliefs in a family's organization.

9. To conceptualize families as being both challenged and supported by a social environment.

10. To examine the values, ethical issues and dilemmas that arise in working with diverse family constellations and circumstances.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts


   Boston MA: Allyn & Bacon. (Designated as Nichols in the class schedule.)

B. Recommended Texts


C. Course Assignments

Assignment 1: Midterm
There will be an in-class exam in which students will answer four essay questions based on the film, “The Squid and The Whale”. The film will be viewed outside of class, and students will come to the exam prepared to develop a treatment plan and intervention for the family in the film based on the models studied in class.

Assignment 2: Final Paper
This will be a scholarly paper based on the book, “The Namesake,” by Jhumpa Lahiri. Class members are to choose a group of characters from the novel and interventions from one of the models studied in class. The paper will involve an assessment of the presenting problem(s), a description of three concepts from a theory or model of your choice and their application to this family’s situation, and a description of three techniques from this theory or model with an explanation of how they would be applied in working with this family. This will be a twelve-page, case analysis and will follow the NCSSS guidelines for a scholarly paper. It is to be written in APA style and will include references from the work of one of the four theorists we have studied as well as from the readings on attachment, parenting, marital issues, and ethnicity.

Assignment 3: DUE: Semester Long
Class discussion, role-plays and active participation in blackboard discussions throughout the entire semester.

C. Grading Policy
An attachment to this syllabus presents the guidelines as to how the paper will be graded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</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. 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. Unexcused absences will lower the attendance and participation grade. More than three unexcused absences will result in a grade of F.

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](http://evaluations.cua.edu/evaluations) using your CUA username and password. Additional, 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

A. Scholastic Expectations

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements, including scholastic and behavioral requirements. 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.

B. 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 and appropriate Program Handbooks.

C. 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, please arrange a meeting with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.
## Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
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| 1     | **Syllabus Distribution & Introduction: “All the Puzzle Pieces: Why Do Family Therapy?”**  
An overview of Bowen Family Systems Theory and an introduction to the concept of genograms |
|       | **Required Reading** |
|       | Nichols, Chapters 1 & 2 |
|       | **Recommended Reading** |
| 2     | **Bowen Family Systems Theory**  
A further review of Bowen Theory and treatment methods. |
|       | **Required Reading** |
|       | Nichols, Chapter 5 |
|       | **Recommended Reading** |
3 Structural Family Therapy: The Minuchin School
An introduction to the work of Salvador Minuchin

Required Reading

Nichols, Chapter 7


Recommended Reading


4 Structural Family Therapy: The Minuchin School
Continued examination of structural family therapy methods and an introduction to the assessment process

Required Reading

Nichols, Chapter 3 pages 57-72.

Recommended Reading


5 Presentation of the work of Virginia Satir
An introduction to the general concepts of Satir’s family work.

Required Reading

Nichols, Chapter 8, pages 198-213.

**Recommended Reading**


**6 The Work of Virginia Satir: Family Constellations**

Continued overview of the work of Virginia Satir and an introduction to the interview process

**Required Reading**


**Recommended Reading**


**7 Strategic Family Therapy: The Work of Jay Haley**

An introduction to Jay Haley’s Strategic Family Therapy as well as how to anticipate and facilitate the process of termination

**Required Reading**

Nichols, Chapter 6

**8 Strategic Family Therapy: The Work of Jay Haley**

A continuation of Strategic Family Therapy methods

**Required Reading**

Recommended Reading


9 Mid-Term Exam
An in-class exam based on the movie *The Squid and the Whale*.

10 Ethnicity
A look at how family therapy has developed a multicultural view over the last 25 years.

Required Reading


Nichols, Chapter 11

11 Attachment & Empathy
How attachment and empathy resulting from interfamily interactions impact on relationships both inside and outside the family constellation.

Required Reading


Nichols, Chapter 4, pp. 97-99.


12 Working with Couples
An exploration of attachment and adult love.

Required Readings:


**Recommended Reading:**


13

**Parenting**

How our own attachment styles influence how we parent.

**Required Readings:**


14

**Final Papers Due & Review of Class Content**

Scholarly papers based on the Jhumpg Lahiri’s book *The Namesake* will be turned in, followed by a retrospective of the topics addressed during the semester.
Assignments for SSS 821

Your paper will be a scholarly paper about the family from *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri and should be twelve pages. It will be graded as follows:

36 - 40 = A  
   Especially thoughtful, well-written, professional quality

32 - 35 = B  
   Acceptable quality for a Master’s level class

28 - 31 = C  
   Barely acceptable for this class

24 - 27 = D  
   Below average for a Master’s level class

Below 24 = F  
   Not acceptable

---Present a description of the presenting problem(s). Who are the family members who present for treatment and what is their storyline?

---Identify the family theory or model you would use with this family. Assess this family using at least three (3) concepts from your chosen theory or model. Name and define each concept and explain how it will be applied to this family.

---Include in your assessment, 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.

---Apply at least three (3) techniques from your chosen theory or model of practice. Define them and explain how they would be applied to this family.

Family Therapy References

**BOOKS**


ARTICLES


Satir


Lum, W. The Use of Self Of the Therapist, Contemporary Family Therapy 24(1) March 2002,181 – 197.

