I. COURSE PURPOSE
This course is designed to introduce students to the theory, philosophy, and methods of working with clients, using the couple as the primary client. The role of the clinician and strategies of intervention will be emphasized. During this course; students review the fundamentals of assessment and intervention with couples and how this differs from social work with individuals, groups, and families.

The course will be geared to the advanced (second year MSW) curriculum. Upon completion of the course the student should have the ability to practice social work with couples at a beginning professional level. This will include the ability to assess the couple relationship, which goes beyond the assessment of the individual. The student will also be able to work with the interactive dynamic of the relationship, which goes beyond working with the two individuals who comprise the couple. Object relations theory and attachment theory will underlie the conceptualization of the couple relationship. Several theories, including emotionally focused theory strengths perspective, cognitive, and behavioral theories will be used in planning intervention with the couple.

The course will be taught in lecture/seminar format, and will include case presentations and role-playing.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES
1. To understand the structure, function and social work intervention with couples.
2. To understand the interactive processes inherent in the coupled relationship.
3. To understand when couple intervention is appropriate along with or in place of individual or family intervention.

4 To demonstrate how couple assessment and intervention methods apply in the context of race, gender, ethnicity and same sex couples.

5. To acquire a sophisticated level of awareness of ways in which the worker’s self (e.g., his/her life stance values, qualities and a personal family history) are a part of his/her present work as a social work practitioner with couples.

6. To assess one’s own bias regarding clients who are different from oneself, with respect to race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, etc.

7. To build upon skills obtained in the foundation year in gathering information about a client and in organizing the information into a couple’s assessment, and intervention plan.

8. To acquire an advanced level of specific skills in working with couples.

9. To refine skills in observing conscious and unconscious processes in clients and in using the affective self in the therapeutic process.

10. To acquire an advanced level of skill in preparing and presenting case material in a way that will be useful and accessible to fellow professionals.

11. To recognize fully and appreciate social, ethnic and cultural factors which attribute to dysfunction.

12. Through choices of assignments, integrate the knowledge of couples assessment and treatment process with differing theory bases and various field of practice concentrations.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Text


Highly Recommended


**Recommended Text**


**Class Participation**

Students are expected to attend all classes, participate meaningfully in class discussion and call upon their fieldwork experiences for class contributions. If you cannot attend class, please notify professor. CUA requires no more than two missed classes for a passing grade.

**Course Assignments**

Assignment 1: Choose a specific theory base for working with couples. Select a theory from one of the required or highly recommended books. Prepare a model paper/project of this theory. Include main conceptual framework, ways of assessing a couple and intervention strategies. The project may be in format of talking points, a power point presentation, a spreadsheet with details following, or any format you choose. The intent is to summarize the theory. The paper/project should include a minimum of five references beyond those in the syllabus. This paper/project and the research for it will help prepare you to speak in class from the chosen theory base. The model papers/projects will be made available to the whole class. Clarity of content is more important than length.
Due Date: Class 6

Assignment 2: Continuing with your chosen theory base, choose one of the following

1. Apply your chosen theory base to a specific population and write a scholarly paper. To choose this option, consult NCSSS guidelines for a scholarly paper.

2. Apply your chosen theory base to a specific population and write a paper of the strengths and weaknesses of this theory in its application to a specific population. You may draw from clinical experience, articles, or other texts. Must include at least 5 references beyond those in syllabus. Maximum length 8 pages.

3. From your chosen theory base prepare a psychosocial assessment of a couple you have seen in practice. Beyond the psychosocial assessment use appropriate references which support your assessment and intervention plan. Maximum length 8 pages.

4. From your chosen theory base prepare a psychosocial assessment of a couple in a movie or novel. Beyond the psychosocial assessment use appropriate references which support your assessment and intervention plan. Maximum length 8 pages.

Due Date: Class 12

Grading Policy:

Grades for this course will be based on the University grading system as described in the catalogue. The total grade will be comprised of the following:

Assignment 1. 40%
Assignment 2. 40%
Class participation 20%

The class participation includes being able to speak and ask questions from the perspective of your chosen theory base. While some learn from listening and others from speaking, we will try to create an atmosphere where each person can feel comfortable speaking. You are not expected to be experts in your theory base, but rather informed learners. Class participation will be graded on quality rather than quantity.

Course and Instructor Evaluation
NCSSS requires online evaluation of this course and the instructor. Instructions for the online evaluation will be distributed. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to requests.

Class expectations

Please refer to NCSSS Announcements, or MSW Program Handbook for Academic Requirements, including scholastic and behavioral requirements. It is expected that students will demonstrate communications skills consistent with the NCSSS graduate education standards. All written work should reflect the original thinking of the writer, site references where material is quoted or adapted from existing sources, adhere to APA format, and should be carefully proofread by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Class 1 TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: Clinical social work with couples: overview and history

Recommended Readings

Donovan, Chapters 1 & 2
Long & Young, Chapter 1
Scharff & Scharff, Chapter 1, 17

Class 2 TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: Theory and models of couples therapy including psychoeducation

Required Readings


Gurman, Chapter 1,2,6

Recommended Readings
Clulow, Chapters 1, & 2

Gurman  Choose theory bases which interest you


Class 3 TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: Clinical assessment of a couple

Required Readings

Gurman , Chapter 3

Long and Young, Chapters 5,6

Recommended Readings


Donovan, Chapters 1, 3

Epstein & Baucom, Chapters 7,8


Johnson, Chapter 4


**Class 4 TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: The initial interview and intervention plan**

**Required Readings**

Gurman, Chapters 23, 26

**Recommended Readings**

Long & Young, Chapters 6, 8

**Class 5: TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy or Cognitive, Behavioral Therapy**

Readings to be announced

**Class 6: TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: Couples intervention from a multiracial, multicultural and spiritual perspective**

**Required Readings**

Gurman, Chapter 25

**Recommended Readings**

Bobes & Bobes, Chapters 4, 5, 6


Weeks, Chapter 12

Class 7 TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: The effects of trauma and other factors on the couple.

Required Readings

Gurman, Chapter 16.


Recommended Readings


Clulow, Chapter 8


Class 8  TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: Doing couples work – outside speaker

Class 9  TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: Specific Interventions for Specific Problems.

Required Readings
Gurman, Chapter 20

Long & Young, Chapter 13

Recommended Readings

Gurman, Chapters 18,19,22


Scharff & Scharff, Chapters 24,25.

Class 10  TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: Transference, Countertransference And Projective Identification

Required Readings

Scharff & Scharff, Chapters 22,23, 32

Recommended Readings.


Weeks, Chapters 7,10
Class 11 TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: Working with the issue of affairs

Required Readings
Gurman, Chapter 14

Long & Young, Chapter 12

Recommended Readings


Class 12 TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: Working with options to divorce

Required Readings


Gurman & Jacobson, Chapter 15

Long & Young, Chapter 11

Recommended Readings


Class 13 TOPIC FOR THE WEEK: Working through process and endings of couples therapy

**Required Readings**


Long & Young, Chapters 9,10.

**Recommended Readings**

Donovan, Chapters 6,7


