COURSE SYLLABUS

CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK: FAMILIES
19:910:519

Instructor:
Phone/Text:
Email:
Office Hours:

CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION

Advanced practice with family systems, with an emphasis on systems-analytical perspective that includes environing systems as well as internal dynamics of the family system. Differential use of the major theoretical approaches in family therapy. Emphasis on a social work framework and on such traditional family social work techniques as advocacy, brokerage, and provision of concrete services.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course provides in-depth level, theory and advanced clinical practice for social work with the diverse family configurations (including single, reconstituted, gay/lesbian families) that social workers encounter in agency-based practice. The course will include lecture, discussion, role-playing, written case materials, and videotaped clinical interviews.

PLACE OF COURSE IN THE PROGRAM

This course is an elective offered as part of the Clinical Social Work concentration curriculum and is ideal for students who wish to deepen their knowledge and expand their skills in working with families. Satisfactory completion of the Professional Foundation is a prerequisite and it is recommended that students be placed in a field setting that has opportunity for work with families.

PROGRAM LEVEL LEARNING GOALS AND THE COUNCIL OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION’S SOCIAL WORK COMPETENCIES

The MSW Program at Rutgers is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). CSWE’s accreditation standards can be reviewed at www.cswe.org.

In keeping with CSWE standards, the Rutgers School of Social Work has integrated the CSWE competencies within its curriculum. These competences serve as program level Learning Goals for the MSW Program and include the following. Upon completion of their MSW education students will be able to: demonstrate ethical and professional behavior; engage in
diversity and difference in practice; advance human rights and social, economic and environmental justice; engage in practice informed research and research informed practice; engage with individuals, families, groups organizations and communities; intervene with individual, families, groups organizations and communities; and evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.

This course will assist students in developing the following competencies:

**Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice**
Clinical social work practitioners are knowledgeable about many forms of diversity and difference (e.g., culture, age, health/mental health functioning, educational attainment, sexual orientation/gender identity socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity etc.) and how these components influence the therapeutic relationship and clients’ presenting concerns. Clinical social workers understand how various dimensions of diversity affect explanations of health/mental health and well-being, as well as help-seeking behaviors. Practitioners in clinical social work value cultural strengths and recognize the importance of tailoring their engagement strategies, assessment tools, and interventions to meet the diverse needs of their clients. Practitioners in clinical social work monitor their biases, reflect on their own cultural beliefs, and use and apply knowledge of diverse populations and complex health/mental health delivery systems to enhance client well-being. Clinical social workers recognize the need to conceptualize cases using an intersectional perspective and to identify their clients’ strengths and resiliencies, while learning to critically evaluate their own family history, privileges, and characteristics. In presenting case material, clinical social work practitioners integrate anti-oppressive stances and attend to clients’ experiences of oppression and marginalization while also working to avoid undue pressure or use of power over clients.

**Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**
Clinical social work practitioners recognize the importance of the engagement process and understand the importance of differential use of self in initial encounters. Practitioners in clinical social work rely on the ecological perspective to inform the therapeutic relationship; are aware of how interpersonal dynamics and cultural factors shape the therapeutic relationship; and use relational techniques to develop a therapeutic relationship. Clinical social workers recognize how engagement with couples, families and groups may differ from individual approaches, and they develop differential engagement skills accordingly. Clinical social workers value collaboration and thus recognize the importance of clients’ input in the development of their treatment goals. Clinical social workers use the engagement process to help clients convey their thoughts and concerns within the therapeutic relationship as well as to other providers/stakeholders.

**Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**
Clinical social workers understand the importance of the assessment process and recognize that it is ongoing and that it directly informs their interventions. Clinical social workers value holistic assessment and therefore use the bio-psycho-social-spiritual assessment process as well as analysis of clients’ strengths and resiliencies, their coping skills, and their adaptation to traumatic and stressful life events in a full assessment. Practitioners of clinical social work understand how their personal experiences may impact the assessment process. Clinical social workers recognize the power of intergenerational family patterns on individuals and explain these to clients while avoiding deterministic approaches to identifying such patterns. When applicable, clinical social workers rely on the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* to enhance their assessment, to conduct differential diagnosis, and to communicate with other healthcare providers about clients’ presenting problems and symptomatology. Clinical social workers elicit
client feedback about their experience of the assessment process, reflect upon varied meanings of the assessment, and share these assessment outcomes with clients.

**Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Clinical social workers select effective modalities for intervention based on the extant research as well as the client’s cultural background. Clinical social work practitioners integrate their knowledge of various individual, family, and group psychotherapeutic modalities, as well as crisis intervention techniques and community-wide referrals, to intervene effectively; demonstrate flexibility by tailoring interventions to suit the needs of multiple client populations; and understand the effects of the social environment on client well-being. Clinical social workers therefore recognize the need to intervene on mezzo and macro levels. Practitioners in clinical social work critically select, apply, and evaluate best practices and evidence-informed interventions; they value collaboration with the client and other professionals to coordinate treatment plans. Clinical social workers maintain knowledge of the communities they serve in order to ensure that clients are connected with relevant services and resources in an effective manner, while eliciting client feedback about how the interventions are impacting the client.

**COURSE LEARNING GOALS**

Course level learning goals primarily relate to the aforementioned competencies/program level learning goals as the course addresses policy analysis skills and competencies as well as addresses human rights and social, economic and environmental justice through the study of the evolution of the US welfare state and the emergence of the social work profession.

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. To acquire an understanding of a variety of theoretical approaches to family therapy and be able to assess their applicability to a range of families including those that are single parent, minorities of color, and gay and lesbian.

2. To develop the ability to differentially use one’s professional self to intervene with families using an anti-oppressive stance while drawing on current supported theories of practice and research.

3. To be able to complete an intergenerational family assessment through the use of a genogram and understand the use of the family of origin as a resource for change.

4. To be able to identify the structural patterns in the family, have a culturally sensitive ability to assess dysfunctional patterns and knowledge of appropriate intervention methods to alter family structure.

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK MISSION STATEMENT AND SCHOOL WIDE LEARNING GOALS**

The mission of the School of Social Work is to develop and disseminate knowledge through social work research, education, and training that promotes social and economic justice and strengths individual, family, and community well-being, in this diverse and increasingly global environment of New Jersey and beyond.

Upon graduation all students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior;
2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice; and  
3. Engage, Assess, and Intervene With Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

**REQUIRED TEXT**


In addition, several book chapters and articles will be assigned for required reading and will be available electronically.

Other required readings can be accessed through the RU Libraries electronic reserve system at [https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/](https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/). In the QuickSearch box on the Libraries homepage, type the Course NAME or the Course Number (Social Welfare Policy and Service 1 19:910:504) and select Course Reserves in the autofill drop down).

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & REQUIREMENTS**

*Student Expectations:*
1. **Read all required and specifically assigned readings.**
2. Attend all classes, and participate in class discussions and exercises. **Students with more than two absences will drop a letter grade for each absence (3=B).**
3. Demonstrate, in class sessions and in the assignments, that they have read the readings, can relate readings and class material to their field experiences, and have sought out empirical evidence for the validity of various theories and the effectiveness of various intervention approaches.
4. Adhere to the University’s Policy on Academic Integrity as well as the NASW Code of Ethics.

*Use of electronic devices*
All cell phones, tablets, and laptops must be silenced and stored out-of-sight before class begins. **Use of cell phones and laptops is prohibited in the classroom. Texting during class is NOT allowed.** Notetaking on a laptop needs advance approval from the instructor. Failure to comply with these rules (along with any rude behavior) will result in point deductions in grade for class participation and you may be asked to leave class at the instructor’s discretion.

*Assignment Requirements*
Written assignments are due at the beginning of class (before the instructor begins the session). Late papers/assignments/exams will be accepted only in very unusual and compelling circumstances and only if cleared with the instructor in advance. Late papers/assignments not arranged in advance may receive a grade of zero. A late assignment will lose (2 points for 10 point assignments per day, 10 points for 50 point assignments per day) each day it is late.

Students who do not complete required assignments (including exams) will be given a failing grade on those assignments unless the instructor agrees to late receipt of the work because of serious illness or other compelling reasons, and a definite plan for completion of missing work is agreed upon in advance by the instructor and the student. Absence on
the due date for an assignment or scheduled presentation will result in a 0 grade. No opportunities for make-ups or extensions will be given unless the student provides documentation of extenuating circumstances.

Written assignments must be typed using Times New Roman in 12-point font. You must also number pages, double space, use one-inch margins, use formal English, and use the American Psychological Association (6th Ed.) style of documentation and citation.

Papers should be carefully proofread before submission for problems in grammar, syntax, spelling, formatting, typographical errors, or other problems which impede clarity of communication. Problems in these areas will result in substantial deductions from your paper’s grade.

Plagiarism, cheating, sabotage or any other violation of academic or professional standards for ethical behavior will not be tolerated, and will result in failure for the assignment and course. All assignments for this class must reflect social work values and ethics including awareness of issues of diversity and economic and social injustice.

**Assignment Integrity Statement**
Plagiarism, cheating, lying, sabotage or any other violation of academic or professional standards for ethical behavior will not be tolerated, and will result in failure for the assignment and course. Plagiarism includes lack or inaccuracy of citation. See Academic Integrity section below.

ALL assignments should include the following:
*On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment. Signed by ________.* (Inserted typed name is acceptable for electronic papers).

**Course Assignments:**

A. **Brief Discussion Papers (10 pts. ea.)** 30%
B. **Family-of-Origin Genogram** 10%
C. **Final Paper** 50%
D. **Class Participation and Attendance** 10%

**A. Brief Discussion Papers (3 papers, 10% each)**
Students will do 3, reaction/discussion papers 2-3 pages in length (not including bibliography) answering specific questions related to the readings. They will use these papers to prepare for class discussions and will submit them for grades at the beginning of the class they are due. Papers must have proper citations and references in APA style. Include page numbers. Abstracts and running heads are not necessary.

**B. Genogram Assignment** (10 points)
Students will construct a 4-generation genogram of their own families and will also write a 5-7 page analysis of their own family system. Because of the personal nature of this assignment, the instructor will keep the information in strictest confidence. Credit will be deducted if genogram is incomplete (e.g. not 4 generations) or if narrative is missing required components.
The Genogram:
Include the generations of your current family, your parents, your grandparents and your
great grandparents’ generation (four generations).

- Show patterns, strengths, and vulnerabilities that appear among members of at
  least two generations of your family. Some areas you may find include physical
  illnesses, mental illnesses, substance abuse, level of education, type of
  occupations, religious observance, notable achievements, major losses, a
  commitment to social causes, etc.
- In addition, see if you can identify triangles, coalitions, and cutoffs.
- Feel free to ask your relatives for assistance but proceed with care, as this work
  may generate anxiety in your family system.

Paper Describing and Analyzing Family Trends:
Using two different readings or theories from the course to frame your analysis:
- Discuss the dynamics and trends that are exhibited in the genogram.
- Discuss two strengths in your family/family history that will potentially enhance
  your abilities as a social worker.
- Describe two intergenerational vulnerabilities (including those resulting from
  cutoffs and triangles) that you might have inherited from your family that could
  (if you are not careful) impede your work with clients.

C. Final Paper.
Choose a client family you are working with or have worked with in the past. You are
being asked to assess and treat (or think about treating) the family using two family
treatment approaches, at least one of which has been covered in class (Structural,
Bowenian, Solution-Focused, Narrative, CBFT). This paper should be 10-12 pages in
length.

1) Assess this family using two perspectives. How well does each of these models
fit (or do not fit) the client family system you have chosen? What research or
theoretical literature (5 sources which are not assigned for class for a minimum of
7 total) do you have to support the use of one or both of your chosen models with
this family? Describe the agency setting. Be sure to include the presenting
problem, description of the family and how issues of race/ethnicity, class, gender
and sexual orientation relate to the family’s problems and strengths.

2) Develop and describe a treatment plan. What explicit, measurable, observable
goals do you have for this family and/or its members? How do the goals relate to
the models of treatment you have chosen? (Be sure to include environmental
goals.)

3) Describe your interventions. Include relevant environmental interventions such as
case management, advocacy and referral.
4) Evaluation: If this is a family you have treated, were your interventions successful? How do you know? Why or why not? Do you think another model of treatment would have worked better? Describe.

Final Paper Grading :

Rubrics (total 50 points):

Follows instructions-10 points
Demonstration of knowledge and understanding of the two family treatment approaches
(Total of 30 points as below)
Approach A and related treatment and evaluation plan-15 points
Approach B and related treatment and evaluation plan-15 points
Grammar, syntax, proper APA citation and formatting-10 points

D. Class Discussion/Participation

As this class will be seminar style, each of you will be called upon to give your impressions of the readings and to engage in class discussions. Please note that if you are called upon and it becomes clear that you have not done the reading assignment, you will lose points on class participation. If this happens three times, your final grade will be reduced one letter grade.

Attendance is required. Points will be deducted from a student’s class participation score for each absence and late arrival. Absence, early departure, or lateness to class is acceptable only for compelling reasons, such as illness. Attend all classes, and participate in class discussions and exercises. Students with more than two absences will drop a letter grade for each absence (3=B).

All assignments for this class must reflect social work values and ethics including awareness of issues of diversity and economic and social injustice.

GRADING

Brief Discussion Papers (10 pts. ea.) 30%
Family-of-Origin Genogram 10%
Final Paper 50%
Class participation and Attendance 10%

Grading and assessment criteria:

A 92-100
B+ 87-91
B 82-86
C+ 77-81
C 70-76

- 7 -
Courses to be rounded up at .5

COURSE EVALUATION

Rutgers University issues a survey that evaluates both the course and the instructor. Toward the end of the semester, students complete this survey and all answers are confidential and anonymous. The instructor may also choose to conduct a mid-point evaluation and/or add qualitative questions to the final evaluation.

COURSE OUTLINE

UNIT I Weeks 1 and 2
INTRODUCTION TO FAMILY-CENTERED CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AND GETTING STARTED

Definition of family and description of family configurations and types, including ethnicity, composition, and sexual orientation, and how these differences impact the family life cycle and development.

History, ethics and values, underlying assumptions.

Family Life Cycle.

Empirical Support for the family approach.

Class 1

Introduction
General Skills for Working with Diverse Families

Required Reading:

Nichols
Chapter 2: Basic Techniques of Family Therapy (pp. 27-49)


Class 2
Evidence Basis for the Family Approach

Required Reading:

Nichols. (Textbook)
Chapter 14: Lebensohn-Chialvo, F. Research on Family Intervention. (276-289).


UNIT 2-Weeks 3-6  THE STRUCTURAL APPROACH

Class 3, 4 & 5

Structural Family Therapy

Required Reading


Nichols, M.
Chapter 6: Structural Family Therapy (pp. 111-130).


Recommended Reading


Class 6

Practicing Enactments

UNIT 3: Weeks 7-9

THE EXTENDED FAMILY SYSTEMS (BOWENIAN) APPROACH

Class 7

Bowen Family Systems Theory

Required Readings

Nichols Chapter 4: Bowen Family Systems Therapy (69-88)

(Chapter 22, “Toward the differentiation of self in one’s family of origin.” pp. 529-547).


—Brief Discussion 2: Briefly answer the following questions:

1) What are the theoretical underpinnings of Bowenian family therapy?
2) How is it different and similar from structural family therapy?
3) Why is it important for therapists to develop and work on their own genograms?

Due Date to be determined

Class 8

The Genogram
Required Reading


Recommended Reading


Class 9

Genogram and GenogramPaper
Due OCTOBER 31 by 3:00 PM

Required Reading


UNIT 4: Weeks 10-11 THE SOLUTION-FOCUSED APPROACH

Class 10

Solution-Focused Theory

Required Reading

Nichols
Chapter 11: Solution Focused Therapy (pp. 219-238).


Chapter 5, Useful Tools: How and What to Use. (pp. 245-267)
Discussion Paper 3: Briefly answer the following questions.

1) What are the theoretical underpinnings of solution-focused therapy (S-FT) ?
2) How does it contrast/compare with structural (SFT) and Bowenian family therapy?

Due Nov. 14 by 3:00 PM

Class 11

**Required Reading**


Chapter 6, Investigation as Intervention and Prevention (142-186).

Chapter 7: Case Closure: How Good is Good Enough? (187-203).

Class 12

**Other Family Therapy Theories**

**Required Reading:**

Nichols, M.

Chapter 9: Cognitive Behavioral Family Therapy (167-188).

Chapter 12: Narrative Therapy (pp. 239-256).

**Recommended Readings**


**Class 13**

**Contextual Issues**

**Required Reading**

Nichols  


**Recommended Reading**


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**Class 14 & 15**

**FINAL PAPER DUE December 12 by 3:00 PM**

**Contextual Issues**

**Required Reading**


LaSala, M. C. (2010). *Coming out, coming home: Helping families adjust to a gay or..."

Other recommended readings:


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**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All work submitted in a graduate course must be your own.

It is unethical and a violation of the University’s Academic Integrity Policy to present the ideas or words of another without clearly and fully identifying the source. Inadequate citations will be construed as an attempt to misrepresent the cited material as your own. Use the APA citation style which is described in the Publication manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition.

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be properly cited in the text or footnote. Acknowledgement is required when material from another source is stored in print, electronic, or other medium and is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one’s own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: “to paraphrase Plato’s comment…” and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any
preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc., need not be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one’s general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue. Any question about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member.

Plagiarism as described in the University’s Academic Integrity Policy is as follows: “Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor in a course. Some common examples of plagiarism are:

- Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution.
- Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one’s own words another person’s written words or ideas as if they were one’s own.
- Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement.
- Incorporating into one’s work graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other nontextual material from other sources without proper attribution”.

Plagiarism along with any and all other violations of academic integrity by graduate and professional students will normally be penalized more severely than violations by undergraduate students. Since all violations of academic integrity by a graduate or professional student are potentially separable under the Academic Integrity Policy, faculty members should not adjudicate alleged academic integrity violations by graduate and professional students, but should refer such allegations to the appropriate Academic Integrity Facilitator (AIF) or to the Office of Student Conduct. The AIF that you should contact is Laura Curran, at lacurran@ssw.rutgers.edu. The student shall be notified in writing, by email or hand delivery, of the alleged violation and of the fact that the matter has been referred to the AIF for adjudication. This notification shall be done within 10 days of identifying the alleged violation. Once the student has been notified of the allegation, the student may not drop the course or withdraw from the school until the adjudication process is complete. A TZ or incomplete grade shall be assigned until the case is resolved. For more information regarding the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures, see: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers.

The instructor requests that you include the following statement on all assignments, signed.

On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment. With signature (typed name is acceptable when submitted digitally)

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION
Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines).

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’ disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS.

**OFFICE ON VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND VICTIM ASSISTANCE**

Our school is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students’ academic success and we encourage students who have experienced some form of sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need.

Confidential support and academic advocacy are available through the Rutgers Office on Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance, **732.932.1181**, [http://vpva.rutgers.edu](http://vpva.rutgers.edu). Services are free and confidential and available 24 hours/day, 7 days a week.

**ACTIVE SHOOTER RESOURCES**

Over the years, there has been an increase in the number of active shootings on campus. It is important that you know what to do in cases there is an active shooter on campus. Please go to this site to retrieve information that will reduce your personal risk in case of an active shooting on campus- [http://rupd.rutgers.edu/shooter.php](http://rupd.rutgers.edu/shooter.php)