

**COUPLES THERAPY**  
**CPSY 560**  
**Lewis and Clark College**  
**Spring, 2011**

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*"Love takes off masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within."*  
James Baldwin

**Catalogue Description:** Systems theory therapies and practices relative to assessment, research, and treatment of couples. Explores cognitive, affective, interactional, and systemic theories of human behavior and change as related to couples.

*"Marriage is our last, best chance to grow up."*  
Joseph Barth

**Course Description:** This course will focus on the treatment of problems typically encountered by couples. While several different theories of couples therapy will be reviewed, we will concentrate on emotionally focused couple therapy, the sole evidence based approach to couples work. This is a practice class and a significant portion of each class session will be devoted to the practice of couples counseling skills. There will be a great deal of reading for this class, and students will need to come to class prepared to discuss the readings for each week.

*"The concerts you enjoy together  
Neighbors you annoy together  
Children you destroy together  
That make marriage a joy"*  
Stephen Sondheim

**Course Objectives:**

1. Learn to apply family systems theory to working with couples, including an overview of major and evidence-based models for couples therapy. Critique how systems theory and couples models address or fail to address issues of power, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religion, and nation of origin.
2. Consider in-depth at least one model designed particularly for working with couples (e.g. emotionally-focused therapy, pragmatic experiential therapy).
3. Learn about couple relationships and marriage patterns across local, national, and international contexts including diverse couple and marital forms (e.g. LGBT couples, remarried couples, co-habitant couples; Muslim, Hindu & Christian marriages).
4. Consider power dynamics within couples that are supported by larger societal systems of privilege and oppression based on gender, race, class, abilities, nation of origin, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, language, and immigration status.

5. Explore own assumptions about couple life and marriage, as well as biases for working with diverse couples and marital forms.
6. Practice de-escalating high conflict couples, screening for domestic violence, structuring therapy with couples, and directing couple interaction/communication.
7. Understand the role of couple's research in therapy.

*"We marry to find safe harbor in a roiling, roaring sea. We marry to avoid gray loneliness in a small room with only a hot plate and a thin cat. We divorce to find ourselves, and free ourselves of self-defeating templates of childhood misery. The chasm that separates us from a partner terrifies us; the prospect of intimacy does too."*

Amy Bloom

### **Related Authorizations**

Successful completion of this course is necessary for fulfillment of degree requirements for the Marriage and Family Therapy specialty in the Counseling Psychology Department. This course is also necessary for gaining access to licensure as a marriage and family therapist.

*"Love is an exploding cigar we willingly smoke."*

Lynda Barry

### **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory. Each student will be allowed one excused absence. Any absence beyond one will result in a half letter reduction in the final grade.

*"For one human being to love another; that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is preparation."*

Rainer Maria Rilke

### **Instructional Methods**

This class will combine lecture, skills practice, role plays, demonstrations, guest speakers, video presentations, and will rely heavily on class discussions.

*"Marriage is the only adventure open to the cowardly."*

Voltaire

*"Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage"*

Anais Nin

*"Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength; loving someone deeply gives you courage."*

Lao-Tzu

### **Required Texts**

Gottman, J. (2000). *The seven principles for making marriage work*. New York, Three Rivers Press.

Greenberg, L., & Goldman, R. (2008). *Emotion-focused couples therapy*. Washington DC, American Psychological Association.

Lewis, T., Amini, F., & Lannon, R. (2000). A general theory of love. New York: Vintage.

Real, T. (2002). How can I get through to you? New York, Simon and Schuster.

Additional required readings will be available on Moodle.

Recommended:

Bloom, A (ed) (1999). Here lies my heart. Boston: Beacon.

Yglesias, R. (2009). A happy marriage. Scribner: New York.

*“When all is said and done it is, of course, always about sex. What else could it be about?”*  
David Mamet

### **Evaluation**

Students will be evaluated on the following class requirements:

1. Active participation in class discussion - 20 points
  2. Show and tell – 10 points
  3. Reading journals – 30 points
  4. Attachment reflection paper or project- 40 points
- Total possible - 100 points

Grading scale: 93-100 = A  
90-92 = A-  
87-89 = B+  
83-86 = B  
80-82 = B-  
77-79 = C+  
73-76 = C

*“The value of marriage is not that adults produce children but that children produce adults.”*  
Peter De Vries

**Assignment One: Show and Tell.** During the term, each student will need to share with the class at least one discovery that provides insight into the workings of couples. This can be a book (fiction or non-fiction), a song, a movie, a TV show, a journal or magazine article, a cartoon or anything else that strikes you as capturing some truth about couples. We will start each class with show and tell and you may choose to share your discovery at any point in the term. When presenting your discovery you will discuss its relevance to the class and its significance to you. If too many people want to share on any given week we may have to postpone someone to the following week.

*“I first learned the concepts of non-violence in my marriage”.*  
-Mahatma Gandhi

**Assignment Two: Reading Journals:** Throughout the term you will turn in 6 one to two page reading journals. These papers should reflect your reactions to one of the books, chapters or articles we have read for that week. There will be a total of 6 reading journals due during the term. Each is worth 5 points.

*'Tis not love's going hurts my days,  
But that it went in little ways.  
-- Edna St. Vincent Millay*

**Assignment Three: Attachment reflection:** This paper is an opportunity for you to reflect on your own “attachment story” through the lens of attachment theory. You are expected to reflect on how your attachment style, how it influences your relationship, particularly intimate ones, and how your attachment style will affect your practice of therapy. The paper is to be a maximum of 8 pages, double-spaced, and referenced using APA style. **DUE NO LATER THAN APRIL 13.** (40%)

Consider the following questions and relate them to your current attachment style.

Do not simply answer these questions but use them to stimulate your reflection.

1. How does your experience in your family of origin, both past and current, affect your attachment style?
2. What does your adult relationship history suggest about your attachment style?
3. What behaviors do you currently exhibit that illustrate your attachment style?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your attachment style? How has your attachment schema helped you or tripped you up?
5. How does your attachment style affect your conceptualization of the therapeutic relationship?
6. How does it contribute to potential areas of reactivity?
7. What schemas or working models do you carry pertaining to attachment?
8. How does your attachment schema shape your view of what is a healthy couple relationship.
9. How do you plan to address any problem areas you perceive?

**Alternative Assignment:** Instead of writing the paper, you may produce a work of art that explores the same themes. The work should reflect at least the same amount of work that would go into the paper. If you choose this alternative, you will need to present your work to the class.

*A lady of forty-seven who had been married twenty-seven years and has six children knows what love really is and once described it for me like this: 'Love is what you've been through with somebody.'  
-- James Thurber*

## Class Schedule

There will be no chapter assignments for the Real, Lewis, or Gottman books. You may read them at your own pace as long as they are completed by the deadlines indicated below.

- January 11: Introduction, course overview.
- January 18: Greenberg, Chapter 1  
Hazan, C., Campa, M. & Gur-Yaish, N., *What is adult attachment.*
- January 25: Greenberg, Chapter 2  
Schachner, D., Shaver, P. & Mikulincer, M., *Adult attachment theory, psychodynamics and couple relationships.*  
Shaver, P. & Mikulincer, M., *A behavioral systems approach to romantic love relationships: Attachment, caregiving and sex.*
- February 1: Greenberg, Chapter 3  
Cherlin, A., *The deinstitutionalization of American marriage.*  
Hazan, C., *The essential nature of couple relationships.*  
Morrow, *Different words, different worlds.*
- February 8: **Finish Reading Lewis**  
Greenberg, Chapter 4  
Johnson, R., *Of human love*  
Richo, D. *Why I love you but don't really see you.*
- February 15: Greenberg, Chapter 5  
Fisher, H., *The drive to love: The neural mechanisms for mate selection*  
Atkinson, B., *Affective neuroscience and the emotional revolution.*
- February 22: Greenberg, Chapter 6  
Doherty, W., *Bad couples therapy.*  
Sternberg, R., *A duplex theory of love.*
- March 1: Greenberg, Chapter 7  
Gardner, B., Butler, M. & Seedall, R., *En-gendering the couple-deity relationship: Clinical implications of power and process.*
- March 8: Greenberg, Chapter 8  
Levy, K., Kelly, K. & Jack, E., *Sex differences in jealousy.*  
Finzi, S., *Cosi fan tutte.*  
Gottlieb, D., *My cheatin' heart.*  
Brown, E., *Getting the message.*

- March 15:     **Finish Reading Real**  
Greenberg, Chapter 9  
Ventura, M., *A dance for your life in the marriage zone.*
- March 22:     **Spring Break – no class**  
Greenberg, Chapter 10
- March 29:     Greenberg, Chapter 11  
Markowitz, *Understanding the differences.*  
Green, Robert-Jay, *Gay and lesbian couples in therapy: A social justice perspective.*
- April 5:       Greenberg, Chapter 12  
Diamond, L., *How do I love thee?*  
Josephson, G., *Using an attachment-based intervention with same-sex couples.*
- April 13:     **Finish Reading Gottman**  
Greenberg, Chapters 13  
**Attachment Reflection Due**
- April 20:     Greenberg, Chapter 14

*Love consists in this, that two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other.*  
-- Rainer Maria Rilke