

Department of Educational Psychology

Syllabus: EPS 621: Marital Couple & Family Counseling MASTER

Instructor Information

Instructor:
Office:
Contact:
Office Hrs:

General Course Information

Course Format: In Person
Days/Times:
Credit Hours: 3

Course Prerequisites: EPS 601, EPS 615 recommended.

Course Description

This course introduces the major theories in marital and family counseling, including developmental phases of the family. This course is a fundamental introduction to various approaches to intervention with couples and families. The following are among the topics to be covered:

1. Evidence-based approaches to counseling couples, with a primary emphasis on The Gottman Method, and an introductory emphasis to Emotion-Focused Couple Counseling.
2. Developing a family systems perspective for a wide-range of clinical contexts.
3. Knowledge of family life cycles
4. Evidence-based approaches to counseling families, including assessment strategies, family conceptualization, Family Therapy goal-setting and treatment planning, and family therapy interventions for common problems
5. Legal and ethical concerns in family therapy
6. Relationship violence
7. Separation/divorce counseling
8. Blended families.

Student Learning Expectations / Outcome for this Course

1. Students will learn how to utilize a systems approach in conceptualizing clients (CACREP 2-5b)
2. Students will learn how to conceptualize and assess “the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual’s views of others” (CACREP 2016, 2-2d) (This standard will primarily be addressed in EPS 690)
3. Students will learn how to conceptualize and assess “theories of individual and family development across the lifespan (CACREP 2016, 2-3a)
4. Students will learn how to gain “a systems approach to conceptualizing clients” (CACREP, 2-5b)

Note: *While it is the intention of this syllabus to capture necessary aspects of this course, I reserve the right to amend and/or add necessary information as we progress through the semester.*

5. Students will learn the Gottman Level 1 Couple Counseling Method as the primary evidence-based approach to counseling couples (using the Gottman Method Level 1 Binder and training videos)
6. Students will learn to complete initial assessments with couples using the Gottman Method and several other relationship assessment tools, as well as basic Level 1 Gottman interventions
7. Students will learn how to apply a family systems perspective for a wide-range of clinical contexts.
8. Students will gain knowledge of family life cycle
9. Students will gain knowledge of evidence-based approaches to counseling families, including assessment strategies, family conceptualization, family Therapy goal-setting and treatment planning, and family therapy interventions for common problems
10. Students will learn about legal and ethical concerns in family therapy
11. Students will learn about the basics of relationship violence and how to handle these situations clinically
12. Students will gain knowledge of, and approaches to separation/divorce counseling
13. Students will gain knowledge of, and approaches to blended families.

Textbook and Required Materials

1. Required Texts:
 - i. Gottman, J. & Gottman, J. (2018). *Gottman Level One electronic binder and Video series*. Seattle, WA: The Gottman Institute.
 - ii. Gehart, D. R. (2018). *Mastering competencies in family therapy: A practical approach to theories and clinical case documentation*. Belmont, Calif: Brooks/Cole Pub., 3rd, ed.. ISBN: 1305943279.
2. Reading list:
 - i. Dimidjian, S., Martell, C. R., & Christensen, A. (2015). Integrative behavioral couple therapy. In A. S. Gurman & N. S. Jacobson (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (p. 251–277). The Guilford Press.
 - ii. Kao, G. S. (2018). It hurts to move (on): A family's experience with chronic pain, grief, and healing. *Families, Systems, & Health, 36*(2), 252–254. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fsh0000351>
 - iii. Johnson, S. M. (2015). Emotionally focused couple therapy. In A. S. Gurman, J. L. Lebow, & D. K. Snyder (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (p. 97–128). The Guilford Press.
 - iv. Peltz, J. S., Rogge, R. D., & O'Connor, T. G. (2019). Adolescent sleep quality mediates family chaos and adolescent mental health: A daily diary-based study. *Journal of Family Psychology, 33*(3), 259–269. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000491>
 - v. Ronan, K. R., Davies, G., Wikman, R., Canoy, D., Jarrett, M., & Evans, C. (2016). Family-centered, feedback-informed therapy for conduct disorder: Findings from an empirical case study. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice, 5*(3), 137–156. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cfp0000059>
 - vi. Sotero, L., Moura-Ramos, M., Escudero, V., & Relvas, A. P. (2018). When the family is opposed to coming to therapy: A study on outcomes and therapeutic alliance with involuntary and voluntary clients. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice, 7*(1), 47–61. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cfp0000099>

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

1. Participation:
 - a. In-class participation: Students are expected to attend and participate actively in all class meetings. The theoretical portion of this course will be provided through the text, associated lecture, examination and instructional aids such as online videos and readings. You will be expected to actively role-play both in class and outside of class on a regular basis in order to experientially engage in counseling couples and families. Participation also requires obtaining Gottman Level One Clinician training Certification – you must turn in the certification form at the end of Week 8, and will receive it from the Gottman Institute shortly thereafter. Participation will also involve discussions and role-plays related to family

- therapy. Gottman videos are to be watched privately and solo, or, with classmate(s) from this class.
- b. Outside participation: students will work in pairs or triads during most weeks in order to process new learning, and complete projects and homework. These meetings will take place via zoom. Participation points are based on Attendance; In-Class Contributions (including responding appropriately when called upon), Thoughtful listening and active engagement, Engagement in Experiential Exercises and in class Zoom Polling, etc.
 - c. Participation Scoring: Maximum of 5 points per week. See Appendix A for more details.
2. Couple Relational Assessment (ideally, completed in pairs when possible):
- a. Students are expected to locate a couple on whom they can complete a thorough relational assessment. Instructor can help with that. The participating couple should ideally have no relationship to the NAU COE or EPS Department. We will work in triads (or pairs), where possible. Triads should share responsibilities such as preparing for the interviews, communicating with the couple about informed consent and logistics of interviewing, completing “homework”, and receiving the participation gifts: John Gottman's Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work and one additional gift of Gottman cards (details to be provided in BBL)
 - b. Couple should be involved in a committed, long-term relationship (though they do not necessarily need to be legally married), and will be interviewed and assessed over 2-3 meetings. The total time spent with each couple is usually around 2-3 hours.
 - c. Only couples that are NOT in crisis may participate
 - d. Students will have couple complete an informed consent packet, a structured clinical interview, and a battery of couple assessment tools – including some from the Gottman approach. Additional details provided in BBL and in class.
 - i. When you share information with classmates and instructor via class discussion and your paper, please respect each couple’s anonymity and confidentiality by using pseudonyms and changing any identifying information that might be easy for the instructor or classmates to identify.
 - ii. All participating couples must complete the informed Consent document for this assignment. Couples will understand that this assignment is only for student practice in interviewing couples and applying basic assessment processes, and is NOT designed for counseling interventions of any kind. Couples will also not be receiving assessment results since their participation involves student practice. All couples will be provided with a list of local couple counseling resources.
 - e. This project culminates in:
 - i. a classroom presentation by each group of students (in small groups, depending on class size)
 - ii. Relational Assessment Paper
 1. Format for the paper will be provided in class and in BBL early on in the course.
3. Assessments: Quizzes & Final Exam
- a. Gottman Quizzes
 - i. Format: Quizzes covering Gottman materials are on Days 2-8.
 1. The Gottman quizzes for Days 2-7 are to be worked on within your small group during a time you collectively agree upon. Your group will turn in ONE quiz in BBL and earn ONE grade, so it’s important to work together.

2. The Gottman Certification Quiz requires an 80% pass rate (due Day 8), and is to be completed individually within the online Gottman website. The Cert. Quiz relies on mastery learning, and thus, can be taken multiple times.
3. Final Exam: The Final Exam will be comprised primarily of key elements from the Gehart Family Therapy text and non-Gottman elements from the Couple Counseling portion of the course. A study guide will be provided during the 2nd half of the course, at least 2 weeks before the Exam is due. The format of the exam will depend on whether the class is meeting in person or not by the last class meeting, and will be discussed during the second half of the course.
4. Homework: Homework assignments will be provided in BBL on a weekly basis – see details in weekly folders within BBL and course schedule for due dates. Assignments must be turned in completely and on-time for full-credit consideration. Content for assignments will come from the texts, handouts, videos and online materials, etc. Homework involves working solo on the readings, videos, etc. and then weekly meetings with your small groups throughout the Couple Counseling portion of the course. Small groupwork will continue with a different group for the Family portion of the course. Remember, homework details are posted in BBL each week.

Grading System

The final grade for the course will be based on the following scale:

Grading Item	Point Value	Total
• Participation Points: 5 (5 pts x 15 class meetings) <i>Participation points will begin during class #2 and continue through the semester</i>	75	
• Homework 10 (10 pts x 14 HW weeks) <i>HW pts begin during the week leading up to class meeting #2 and continue through the semester</i>	140	
• Couple Ass'mt. Project 100 points (one project)	100	
• Gottman Quizzes 10 points (10 pts x 6 quizzes)	60	
• Gottman Cert. Quiz 25 points (25 pts x 1 cert. quiz; 80%+)	25	
• Final Exam 100 points (100 pts x 1 exam)	100	
• TOTAL	500	

NOTE: See schedule posted in BBL for due dates for each assignment

Grading Scale:

- 450-500=A; 400-449=B; 350-399=C; 300-349=D; <300

Schedule: provided in separate attachment.

COVID-19 REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

Additional information about the University's response to COVID-19 is available from the **Jacks are Back!** web page located at <https://nau.edu/jacks-are-back>.

SYLLABUS POLICY STATEMENTS ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

NAU expects every student to firmly adhere to a strong ethical code of academic integrity in all their scholarly pursuits. The primary attributes of academic integrity are honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and responsibility. As a student, you are expected to submit original work while giving proper credit to other people's ideas or contributions. Acting with academic integrity means completing your assignments independently while truthfully acknowledging all sources of information, or collaboration with others when appropriate. When you submit your work, you are implicitly declaring that the work is your own. Academic integrity is expected not only during formal coursework, but in all your relationships or interactions that are connected to the educational enterprise. All forms of academic deceit such as plagiarism, cheating, collusion, falsification or fabrication of results or records, permitting your work to be submitted by another, or inappropriately recycling your own work from one class to another, constitute academic misconduct that may result in serious disciplinary consequences. All students and faculty members are responsible for reporting suspected instances of academic misconduct. All students are encouraged to complete NAU's online academic integrity workshop available in the E-Learning Center and should review the full *Academic Integrity* policy available at <https://policy.nau.edu/policy/policy.aspx?num=100601>.

COURSE TIME COMMITMENT

Pursuant to Arizona Board of Regents guidance (ABOR Policy 2-224, *Academic Credit*), each unit of credit requires a minimum of 45 hours of work by students, including but not limited to, class time, preparation, homework, and studying. For example, for a 3-credit course a student should expect to work at least 8.5 hours each week in a 16-week session and a minimum of 33 hours per week for a 3-credit course in a 4-week session.

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Membership in NAU's academic community entails a special obligation to maintain class environments that are conducive to learning, whether instruction is taking place in the classroom, a laboratory or clinical setting, during course-related fieldwork, or online. Students have the obligation to engage in the educational process in a manner that does not interfere with normal class activities or violate the rights of others. Instructors have the authority and responsibility to address disruptive behavior that interferes with student learning, which can include the involuntary withdrawal of a student from a course with a grade of "W". For additional information, see NAU's *Disruptive Behavior in an Instructional Setting* policy at <https://nau.edu/university-policy-library/disruptive-behavior>.

NONDISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-HARASSMENT

NAU prohibits discrimination and harassment based on sex, gender, gender identity, race, color, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or veteran status. Due to potentially unethical consequences, certain consensual amorous or sexual relationships between faculty and students are also prohibited as set forth in the *Consensual Romantic and Sexual Relationships* policy. The Equity and Access Office (EAO) responds to complaints regarding discrimination and harassment that fall under NAU's *Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment* policy. EAO also assists with religious accommodations. For

additional information about nondiscrimination or anti-harassment or to file a complaint, contact EAO located in Old Main (building 10), Room 113, PO Box 4083, Flagstaff, AZ 86011, or by phone at 928-523-3312 (TTY: 928-523-1006), fax at 928-523-9977, email at equityandaccess@nau.edu, or visit the EAO website at <https://nau.edu/equity-and-access>.

TITLE IX

Title IX is the primary federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex or gender in educational programs or activities. Sex discrimination for this purpose includes sexual harassment, sexual assault or relationship violence, and stalking (including cyber-stalking). Title IX requires that universities appoint a "Title IX Coordinator" to monitor the institution's compliance with this important civil rights law. NAU's Title IX Coordinator is Elyce C. Morris. The Title IX Coordinator is available to meet with any student to discuss any Title IX issue or concern. You may contact the Title IX Coordinator by phone at 928-523-3515, by fax at 928-523-0640, or by email at elyce.morris@nau.edu. In furtherance of its Title IX obligations, NAU will promptly investigate and equitably resolve all reports of sex or gender-based discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct and will eliminate any hostile environment as defined by law. Additional important information about Title IX and related student resources, including how to request immediate help or confidential support following an act of sexual violence, is available at <https://in.nau.edu/title-ix>.

ACCESSIBILITY

Professional disability specialists are available at Disability Resources to facilitate a range of academic support services and accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability, you can request assistance by contacting Disability Resources at 928-523-8773 (voice), 928-523-6906 (TTY), 928-523-8747 (fax), or dr@nau.edu (e-mail). Once eligibility has been determined, students register with Disability Resources every semester to activate their approved accommodations. Although a student may request an accommodation at any time, it is best to initiate the application process at least four weeks before a student wishes to receive an accommodation. Students may begin the accommodation process by submitting a self-identification form online at <https://nau.edu/disability-resources/student-eligibility-process> or by contacting Disability Resources. The Director of Disability Resources, Jamie Axelrod, serves as NAU's Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator and Section 504 Compliance Officer. He can be reached at jamie.axelrod@nau.edu.

RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

Students who engage in research at NAU must receive appropriate Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training. This instruction is designed to help ensure proper awareness and application of well-established professional norms and ethical principles related to the performance of all scientific research activities. More information regarding RCR training is available at <https://nau.edu/research/compliance/research-integrity>.

MISCONDUCT IN RESEARCH

As noted, NAU expects every student to firmly adhere to a strong code of academic integrity in all their scholarly pursuits. This includes avoiding fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism when conducting research or reporting research results. Engaging in research misconduct may result in serious disciplinary consequences. Students must also report any suspected or actual instances of research misconduct of which they become aware. Allegations of research misconduct should be reported to your instructor or the University's Research Integrity Officer, Dr. David Faguy, who can be reached at david.faguy@nau.edu or 928-523-6117. More information about misconduct in research is available at <https://nau.edu/university-policy-library/misconduct-in-research>.

SENSITIVE COURSE MATERIALS

University education aims to expand student understanding and awareness. Thus, it necessarily involves engagement with a wide range of information, ideas, and creative representations. In their college studies, students can expect to encounter and to critically appraise materials that may differ from and perhaps challenge familiar understandings, ideas, and beliefs. Students are encouraged to discuss these matters with faculty.

Last revised August 1, 2021

EPS 621 Course Policies

1. Absence from more than two class periods may result in the student being ineligible for a final grade higher than a "B" for the course.
2. Assignments turned in after their respective deadlines WILL be accepted so long as there is a legitimate family/medical excuse provided. Otherwise, late assignments will not be graded. Discuss deadline concerns with instructor as soon as possible.
3. The course will begin in synchronous online, but may shift in accordance with health care policy updates. There may be some asynchronous online meetings.
4. Syllabus is subject to change if clarifications are needed.

APPENDIX A: EPS 621 PARTICIPATION POINT RUBRIC

- 5pts = Exemplary- Comments always insightful & constructive; uses appropriate terminology. Comments balanced between general impressions, opinions & specific, thoughtful criticisms or contributions. Student listens attentively when others present materials, perspectives, as indicated by comments that build on others' remarks, i.e., student hears what others say & contributes to the dialogue.
- 4 pts = Proficient- Comments mostly insightful & constructive; mostly uses appropriate terminology. Occasionally comments are too general or not relevant to the discussion. Student is mostly attentive when others present ideas, materials, as indicated by comments that reflect & build on others' remarks. Occasionally needs encouragement or reminder to focus comment.
- 2-3 pts = Developing- Comments are sometimes constructive, with occasional signs of insight. Student does not use appropriate terminology; comments not always relevant to the discussion.
- pts = Never/Rare- Student does not initiate contribution & needs instructor to solicit input. Does not listen to others; regularly talks while others speak or does not pay attention while others speak; detracts from discussion.