FRAN 6100-I Clinical Issues in Couple & Family Therapy

Winter 2015

Course Instructor: Geri Van Engen e-mail: mgvanengen@yahoo.ca
Class Meetings: Wed. 8:30 am. – 11:20 pm. Telephone: (daytime) 905-536-2454
(evening) 519-265-7170

COURSE OUTLINE

Course Description

This course is one of a series of four semesters dedicated to examining a variety of issues commonly brought to therapy by couples, families, and individuals. The emphasis is on knowledge and competencies relevant for therapist-interns in a program highlighting post-modern perspectives.

The focus for this semester (FRAN 6100-I) is on specific clinical issues pertinent to therapy with families. Specifically the course will introduce students to selected knowledge in the areas of developmental markers for children and youth/adolescents, parenting and child management strategies, parent-child relationships, families with special needs children or youth/adolescents, and children and youth/adolescent experiences of family transitions (focus on separation, divorce, and remarriage). Building on a family systems framework and concepts of resilience, attachment, intersubjectivity, and family life-cycle, students will have the opportunity to reflect on specific knowledge relevant to working with families and their development as therapist-interns in a supportive learning environment. Contextual issues and consideration of privilege and marginalization are highlighted throughout the course.

This course requires intense participation in a range of academic, experiential, and reflective activities designed for integrating theory and practice, as well as furthering professional development as a CFT. Students will consider applications of this knowledge to therapy work with families, and will distinguish any potential application from clinical supervision. All clinical supervision of a student’s (therapist-intern’s) current work with clients at the Couple & Family Therapy Centre will be conducted in the context of FRAN 6090 – Practicum in CFT.

Course Objectives

1. Understand how “attachment” bonds may affect neurological development in infancy, childhood, and adolescence. (EG2/ESLO – 2 b, c.)

2. Consider how reaching developmental mile-stones, from infancy to adolescence, may require associated changes in parenting strategies. (EG2/ESLO – 2 b, c.)

3. Explore the implications of a “family-life cycle” and nodal transitions for child and adolescent development and parent-child relationships. (EG2/ESLO – 2 b, c.)
4. Consider various child / adolescent developmental differences (including ADD/ADHD, Asperger Syndrome, Autism, Tourette’s, FASD, ODD, Eating Disorders, and anxiety/worry) and family adaptations for a child living with these challenges. *(EG2/ESLO – 2 b, c.)*

5. Develop an understanding of how family transitions (particularly separation, divorce, and remarriage) may affect children and youth/adolescents. *(EG2/ESLO – 2 b, c.)*

6. Consider theoretical basis of clinical assessment and interventions pertinent to working with clients presenting with the concerns included in objectives 1 – 5 (above). *(EG1/ESLO – 1 a - c.)*

7. Refine understanding about how oppressive structures and ideologies related to intersecting dimensions of gender, race, class, age, culture, religion, sexual identity, ability, etc., may constrain individuals who seek therapy services, as well as those who practice as “helping” professionals. *(EG4/ESLO – 4 a – d.)*

8. Engage in self-reflective development as a therapist-intern regarding personal strengths and challenges that relate to working with families and children/adolescents, including considering how one’s personal history, values, and context influence professional practice. *(EG4/ESLO – 4 d, e.)*

### Educational Goals and Expected Learning Outcomes

#### EG-1 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

**Educational Goal:** Students will gain a broad understanding of the range of epistemological assumptions and core theoretical frameworks within the field of couple & family therapy, including an historical and critical analysis of significant theoretical issues and developments.

**ESLO 1 a.** Students will critically compare selected historical and leading-edge couple & family therapy approaches and analyze key implications for clinical practice.

**ESLO 1 b.** Students will demonstrate verbal and written ability to critique and to apply theoretical conceptualizations of selected post-modern/social constructionist couple & family therapy approaches to case-study and client situations.

**ESLO 1 c.** Students will articulate the theoretical basis and practice implications of their preferred approach to couple & family therapy, including an examination of the congruency with the underlying values and assumptions of the approach and their personal professional positioning.

**Incorporation and Assessment**

- Incorporated through course readings; class discussions.
- Assessed through Assignments 1 and 3.

#### EG-2 SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY AND CRITICAL EVALUATION

**Educational Goal:** Students will develop a professional identity encompassing an interdisciplinary sensibility, informed by relevant research

**ESLO 2 b.** Students will demonstrate an ability to write coherently about integrating theory, research, and practice skills related to their professional work.

**ESLO 2 c.** Students will have knowledge of current research developments in the couple & family therapy field, including empirically validated and evidence-based therapy approaches

**Incorporation and Assessment**

- Incorporated through course readings; class discussions.
- Assessed through Assignments 2 and 3.
### EG-4 SOCIAL CONTEXT AND POWER RELATIONS

**Educational Goal:** Students will integrate a sophisticated sensitivity to diversity into their professional identity as a couple and family therapist, privileging attention to social location/socio-cultural context and including an understanding of social justice issues and awareness of how direct and systemic marginalization, discrimination, and abuse may impact people’s everyday lives.

**ESLO 4 a.** Students will critically analyze how their social location, values and beliefs shape their professional identity.

- Incorporated through course readings; class discussions.
- Assessment: Assignments 1, 2 and 3.

**ESLO 4 b.** Students will develop abilities to critically and reflexively analyze power relations of a given situation and/or embedded in the construction of knowledge, including attention to one’s own participation in these processes.

- Incorporated through course readings; class discussions.
- Assessment: Assignments 1, 2 and 3.

**ESLO 4 c.** Students will demonstrate awareness of and sensitivity to multi-dimensional aspects of diversity in the everyday lives of clients, including an ability to explore and articulate with clients the pertinence of potential social location issues on their experience of current concerns for therapy.

- Incorporated through course readings; class discussions.
- Assessment: Assignments 1 and 3.

**ESLO 4 d.** Students will learn strategies to explore and address issues of diversity, marginalization, discrimination, and abuse in therapy with clients.

- Incorporated through course readings; class discussions.
- Assessment: Assignments 1, 2 and 3.

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<th>AAMFT Competency</th>
<th>Sub-Domain</th>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Demonstration of Knowledge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1</td>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Understand principles of human development; human sexuality; gender</td>
<td>Participation in class discussions; graded assignment 1 and 3</td>
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<td>development; psychopathology; psychopharmacology; couple processes; and</td>
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<td>family development and processes (e.g., family, relational, and system</td>
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<td>dynamics).</td>
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<td>2.1.2</td>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Understand the major behavioral health disorders, including the</td>
<td>Participation in class discussions</td>
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<td>epidemiology, etiology, phenomenology, effective treatments, course, and</td>
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<td>prognosis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.1.1</td>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Know the extant MFT literature, research, and evidence-based practice.</td>
<td>Participation in class discussions; graded assignment 1,2 and 3</td>
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<td>6.3.1</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Read current MFT and other professional literature.</td>
<td>Participation in class discussions; graded assignment 1,2 and 3</td>
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<td>6.3.3</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Critique professional research and assess the quality of research studies</td>
<td>Participation in class discussions; graded assignment 1,2 and 3</td>
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<td>6.4.1</td>
<td>Evaluative</td>
<td>Evaluate knowledge of current clinical literature and its application.</td>
<td>Participation in class discussions; graded assignment 1,2 and 3</td>
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**Course Organization, Process, and Requirements**

Organization of this clinical issues course is based on the assumption of shared responsibility for developing a cooperative and non-competitive learning environment where students can responsibly and constructively voice ideas and explore new possibilities for understanding their clinical work. Differences in perspectives and experiences can enrich learning opportunities, thus each person is asked to be responsible for listening with respect and curiosity to the differing views of others.

The instructor’s goal is to set the basic condition for the development of a constructive learning environment, including: (1) clarity with respect to power relations, (2) goodwill between class members, between the instructor and class members, and between class members and the instructor, (3) mutual respect, and (4) commitment to the intensive mutual learning process. Students are expected to participate fully in all of the following activities:

1. **Reading and Discussion of Assigned Articles / Chapters.** Students will prepare for each seminar by reading all the assigned (required) articles / chapters. Students will come to class prepared to discuss the relevance of the information gained from the reading to the development of their repertoire of clinical knowledge and clinical skills. Students will be prepared to discuss applications of the ideas in the readings to their clinical work. If a student is unable to participate in the seminar due to illness or for compassionate reasons, she/he is to inform the instructor immediately by e-mail or telephone. See below for guidelines on the evaluation for this requirement.

2. **In Class Required Reading Discussant.** See below for requirements; dates to be selected in first class meeting.

3. **In Class Project** See below for requirements; dates to be selected in first class meeting.

4. **Academic Project** See below for requirements and due date to be negotiated as a group during the first class.

5. **Evaluation.** This is a graded course. Each course requirement will be evaluated considering: (1) the comprehensiveness of the coverage of pertinent issues, (2) coherence of the analysis pertinent to the application to clinical work, (3) consideration of dimensions of social location, power, and privilege, (4) critical analytic focus, (5) clarity of presentation (oral and written), and (6) creativity or interesting nature of presentation. The final grade will be based on the following weights:

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<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading facilitation/discussant</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>In-service/Workshop</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Academic Paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
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6. **Participation:** Each student will evaluate the quality of her/his achievements in completing the readings, participation in class discussion, and attendance; at the last class meeting, each student will hand in a brief (one-page) summary of this self-evaluation.
7. Feedback. The instructor welcomes and expects students to provide constructive feedback on an on-going basis in order to optimize the learning potential of everyone. Formal evaluations for the course and the instructor are completed at the end of the semester.

8. Boundary Considerations. Discussions in this clinical issues course will often draw on the clinical experience of each student, both past and current work with clients. Any discussions involving current client situations will only be used to illustrate the potential applicability of the research and clinical conceptualizations of the readings and class activities. At no time will class discussions be considered clinical supervision. If a student in this course (FRAN 6100-I) finds class discussions relevant to current client work, and wants to modify her/his current clinical approach based on this discussion, she/he is to consult with the clinical supervisor first. All clinical supervision will take place in the context of practicum – FRAN 6090-I or IV.

Disclosure of Personal Information

Professional development in the CFT field is enhanced by the exploration of the personal and professional interface. Developing self-awareness is an important component of this course. It will be important for each intern to identify what is happening for her/him now, in the moment, as well as how past experiences influence your perspective on yourself and others. While you will be encouraged to explore your own responses and what they mean for you, you will not be expected to disclose personal information with the class, in large or small groups, or with the instructor or supervisors, that you do not feel comfortable sharing.

You will be asked to reflect, both in class and in written assignments, on what the process of self-examination is teaching you about how best to approach being in the therapist position with clients. The attention to “process” is different from a focus on the content of your personal information. If, at any time, you are unclear about this distinction, please talk with the instructor for clarification. Evaluation of your participation in this class, and of your class assignments, is not dependent on your disclosure of personal information.

Requirements for Assignments

Assignment 1
In Class Discussion of Required Reading -- As this course emphasizes participatory learning, each student will sign up to read one chapter, article, or other required reading and share the ideas from it with other students. Students will convey ideas from the article / chapter and facilitate discussions in class, with attention to critical consideration of the ideas and their application to clinical work.

Assignment 2
In Class Project – “In-Service / Workshop”. This project will support students in gaining practice presenting ideas collaboratively in team settings. Working in teams, from topics from the selected weekly topics, each team will prepare and provide a presentation on the topic chosen; present the germane ideas, and facilitate a discussion (applied focus). This will be a one-hour “workshop” or “in-service” format. The course instructor will provide some guidelines for preparing this “workshop” and will consult with each team in advance of their project presentation.
Assignment 3
Academic Project

This paper is to be an in-depth exploration considering therapy with families presenting with a problem issue or topic discussed in the course (select one) in reference to a child of either younger age, grade school / mid age, or youth / adolescence (select one). Compare and contrast two or three therapeutic modalities reflected in literature included in this course (using citations from required and any other additional readings) and their applicability to working with such families. In this part, which should be 10-12 pages double spaced, address the following questions and considerations:

- What are the theoretical implications of each approach for understanding and working with such families and children?
- Critical analysis of each approach, including its relationship to post-modern orientation
- How does each modality attend to issues of diversity?
- How does each conceptualize human development and family processes?
- Implications for clinical application with such families and children

Instructor feedback - the University of Guelph is committed to providing students with appropriate and timely feedback on their work. Instructors must provide meaningful and constructive feedback prior to the 40th class day. Class members are expected to inform the instructor if sign-up for assignments do not allow for feedback on at least one of these assignments prior to March 8, 2013. Alternative arrangements for instructor feedback prior to Mar. 8th will be made if this is the case.

Academic Misconduct - The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Graduate Calendar: http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/2012-2013/genreg/sec_d0e1634.shtml

Electronic recording of classes is expressly forbidden without prior consent of the instructor [or, where appropriate, student or guest presenter] and notice to all class participants. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for this course and may not be reproduced, or transmitted to others, without further written consent.

Accessibility - The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community’s shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact the Centre for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible.
Course Schedule and Required Readings

*Subject to revision*

Week 1  Jan. 7  Introduction – Orienting Frames

Week 2  Jan. 14  Resilience and Family Life Cycle


In Service – Geri VanEngen

Week 3               Jan. 21


Video – Hold on To Your Kids – Gabor Mate

Week 4    Jan. 28 Attachment, Intersubjectivity & Family Therapy


In service - Danielle Clement

Week 5   Feb 4 Collaborative Family Therapy and Play


In-service - Dina Bednar

Week 6  Feb 11 Children & Uncommon Developmental Pathways


In-service - Children and Youth with mental health diagnosis and family therapy:

**Week 7**   Feb 25   Working With Youth and Their Families #1


In-service - Angry kids, youth, families:

**Week 8**   March 4   Collaborative Therapy with Youth and Their Families #2


In-service- Cutting/Suicidal thinking

**Week 9**   March 11  High Risk Youth


In-service- Working with youth who have sexually offended: Daniela Lisi

**Week 10**   March 18   Times of Crisis/Trauma


In-service- Working with youth who have witnessed violence:
Week 11  March 25  High conflict Divorce
custody disputes: An initial investigation of the working together program. Journal of Marital and
Family Therapy. 38, 542-555.

Family Relations, 52, 352-362.

Eldar-Avidan, D., Haj-Yahia & Greenbaum, C. (2009). Divorce is part of my life….Resilience, survival, and
vulnerability: Young adult’s perception of the implications of parental divorce. Journal of Marital and
Family Therapy, 35, 30-46.

In-service- Kids caught in the middle of high conflict divorce

Week 12  April 1  Remarriage & Step-parenting
New York: Broadway.


literature. Family Relations, 58, 549-561

Review and Celebrate