



**APCE 695**

**Contemporary Issues: Couples and Family Therapy**

**Lowry Campus**

**Spring 2022**

**Instructor:** Bonnie Nicholson, M.A, NCC  
**Office:** McKee 295 (Can schedule office hours through Teams/Zoom)  
**Email:** [bonnie.nicholson@unco.edu](mailto:bonnie.nicholson@unco.edu)

**Class Dates/Times:** Friday Feb 18<sup>th</sup> – 4:00pm – 10:00pm  
Saturday Feb 19<sup>th</sup> – 8:00am – 5:00pm  
Sunday Feb 20<sup>th</sup> – 8:00am – 4:00pm

Friday March 4<sup>th</sup> – 4:00pm – 10:00pm  
Saturday March 5<sup>th</sup> – 8:00am – 5:00pm  
Sunday March 6<sup>th</sup> – 8:00am – 4:00pm

**Office Hours:** Mondays 9:00am – 10:30am  
Wednesdays 12:30pm – 2:00pm

**PREREQUISITE:** APCE 665

**INSTRUCTOR SUPPORT:**

The instructor for this course will receive support and supervision from Dr's Helm and Murdock Bishop as the instructor is completing their terminal degree.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is a study of interventions utilized within the major approaches to couple and marital therapy. It covers current issues and research in family therapy.

**KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL OUTCOMES:** Upon successful completion of this course students will:

1. Roles and settings of marriage, couple, and family counselors (CACREP MCFC Standard: 5.F.2.a).

2. Aging and intergenerational influences and related family concerns (CACREP MCFC Standard: 5.F.2.f).
3. Impact of crisis and trauma on marriages, couples, and families (CACREP MCFC Standard: 5.F.2.g).
4. Impact of addiction on marriages, couples, and families (CACREP MCFC Standard: 5.F.2.h).
5. Impact of interpersonal violence on marriages, couples, and families (CACREP MCFC Standard: 5.F.2.i).
6. Impact of unemployment, under-employment, and changes in socioeconomic standing on marriages, couples, and families (CACREP MCFC Standard: 5.F.2.j).
7. Interactions of career, life, and gender roles on marriages, couples, and families (CACREP MCFC Standard: 5.F.2.k).
8. Professional organizations, preparation standards, and credentials relevant to the practice of marriage, couple, and family counseling (CACREP MCFC Standard: 5.F.2.n).

#### **COURSE CONTENT:**

This course was designed to meet the CACREP 2016 Standards for Marriage, Couples, and Family Counseling. The focus of this course is on major approaches, interventions, current issues, trends, and research in couples and family therapy. Other topics addressed in the course include the family life cycle, evidence-based interventions, and multicultural considerations for working with couples and families.

#### **COURSE FORMAT:**

In this course, students will be asked to develop 1.5-hour presentations based on Contemporary Issues in Marriage, Couples & Family Counseling/Therapy. The first weekend will consist of training provided by the professor and guest speakers. The second weekend will include presentations/discussions facilitated by the course students. Self-reflections for the material covered and different formats of learning will be required. The professor will provide mentoring electronically in between weekends on the topics to be presented.

#### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. To understand the major intervention strategies in couples and family therapy.
2. To understand related issues in couples and family therapy (i.e., ethical considerations, spouse abuse, divorce mediation, etc.)
3. Explore current literature and research to develop in-depth understanding of timely topics related to the practice of family and marital counseling.
4. Review the family life cycle (i.e., becoming a couple, becoming parents, transformation during adolescence).
5. Become familiar with evidence-based interventions in family therapy and Specific models.
6. Incorporate gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, multiculturalism to the above objectives.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

- **Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to practice academic honesty in every aspect of this course. Students who engage in academic misconduct are subject to grading consequences with regard to this course and/or university disciplinary procedures through the Dean of Students Office. More information about the academic misconduct process can be found in UNC's Student Code of Conduct (BEAR Code).
  - **UNC's Policies:** UNC's policies and recommendations for academic misconduct will be followed.
  - **Portable Electronic Devices:** Please extend courtesy to your instructor and fellow students by turning off your portable electronic devices such as: cell phones, pagers, and iPods. Although not an audio issue, text-messaging is a distraction to other students and prevents you from full participation in class. You should keep your portable electronic devices in your backpack or purse during class. Your personal electronic devices should not be on your desks. Additionally, any audio recording of class without the consent of the instructor and your classmates is an ethical violation. If you know that you may need to accept an emergency phone call during class or if you have children in childcare or school, please let the instructor know. If you need to take a phone call during class, please step out of the classroom while you complete your call. Additionally, students are encouraged to take handwritten notes and avoid the use of laptops in the classroom. This request will be further explained on the first day of the course. Thank you for your cooperation.
  - **Professional Conduct:** Students are expected to adhere to the appropriate code of ethics for their particular program. Any behavior deemed unethical will be grounds for dismissal from the program.
  - **Disability Resources:** It is the policy and practice of the University of Northern Colorado to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that present barriers to students' inclusion or to accurate assessments of students' achievements (e.g., time-limited exams, inaccessible web content, use of videos without captions), students should communicate about these aspects with their instructor(s) and contact Disability Resource Center (DRC) to request accommodations. Students can learn more here: [www.unco.edu/disability-resource-center](http://www.unco.edu/disability-resource-center).
- Office: (970) 351-2289, Michener Library L-80.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** The University of Northern Colorado (UNC) embraces the diversity of students, faculty, and staff. UNC honors the inherent dignity of each individual, and welcomes their unique perspectives, behaviors, and world views. People of all races, religions, national origins, sexual orientations, ethnicities, genders and gender identities, cognitive, physical, and behavioral abilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, regions, immigrant statuses, military or veteran statuses, sizes and/or shapes are strongly encouraged to share their rich array of perspectives and experiences. Course content and campus discussions will heighten your awareness of others'

individual and intersecting identities. For information or resources, contact the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, at 970-351-1944. If students want to report an incident related to identity-based discrimination/harassment, please visit [www.unco.edu/institutional-equity-compliance](http://www.unco.edu/institutional-equity-compliance).

- **Name in Use/Pronoun in Use/Name Change:** Some students may have changed their names to better reflect their gender identity or for other reasons. The process to request that the University change the name that appears on Canvas and on the course roster is available here: <https://www.unco.edu/registrar/name-change.aspx>
- **Title IX:** The University of Northern Colorado is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students that is free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Students who have experienced (or who know someone who has experienced) any of these incidents should know that they are not alone. UNC has staff members trained to support students to navigate campus life, to access health and counseling services, to provide academic and housing accommodations, to help with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware all UNC instructors and most staff members are required to report their awareness of sexual violence to the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC). This means that if students tell an instructor about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, the instructor must share that information with the Title IX Coordinator, Larry Loften. Larry or a trained staff member in OIEC will contact the reporting students to let them know about accommodations and support services at UNC as well as their options to pursue a process to hold accountable the person who caused the harm to them. Students who have experienced these situations are not required to speak with OIEC staff regarding the incident. Students' participation in OIEC processes are entirely voluntary.

If students do not want the Title IX Coordinator notified, instead of disclosing this information to the instructor, students can speak confidentially with the following people on campus and in the community. They can connect you with support services and help explore options now, or in the future.

**UNC's Assault Survivors Advocacy Program (ASAP): 24 Hr. Hotline 970-351-4040 or <http://www.unco.edu/asap>**

**UNC Counseling Center: 970-351-2496 or <http://www.unco.edu/counseling>**

**UNC Psychological Services: 970-351-1645 or [http://www.unco.edu/cebs/psych\\_clinic](http://www.unco.edu/cebs/psych_clinic)**

Students who are survivors, who are concerned about someone who is a survivor, or who would like to learn more about sexual misconduct or report an incident, can visit

[www.unco.edu/sexual-misconduct](http://www.unco.edu/sexual-misconduct). Students may also contact OIEC at 970-351-4899 or email [titleix@unco.edu](mailto:titleix@unco.edu).

- **COVID-19:** The COVID-19 pandemic is a complex, challenging, and fluid situation, which continues to evolve. UNC will follow applicable legal requirements and federal, state, and county public health recommendations and mandates in all decisions related to university operations. Students should review the Coronavirus website for the current academic term for the most up to date guidance. Students who fail to comply with UNC's public health requirements, such as the use of masks and social distancing, will be reminded of current policy; students who fail to correct their behavior will be asked to leave the classroom and may be referred to the Dean of Students office.

The safety and well-being of our Community of Bears requires each of us to be prepared to do our part to protect the health of our entire campus community, as well as our friends, families, and neighbors. It is important that all members of the university community work together to do all we can to keep our community safe.

### **GRADING SCALE:**

A 93% to 100%  
A- 90% to 92%  
B+ 87% to 89%  
B 83% to 86%  
B- 80% to 82%  
C+ 77% to 79%  
C 73% to 76%  
C- 70% to 72%  
D+ 67% to 69%  
D 63% to 66%  
D- 60% to 62%  
F Below 60%

### **COURSE POINTS BY ASSIGNMENT:**

Attendance & Participation	250 points
Presentation Outline	100 points
Successful Presentation	200 points
Final Research Paper	250 points
Reflection Papers (2)	200 points (100 points each)
<b>Total Points:</b>	<b>1000 Points</b>

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:**

### **1. Attendance & Participation**

Attendance is necessary and mandatory for this course. This is a short format class; any unexcused absence will result in the loss of one letter grade. Points will be deducted for showing up late for class.

Regular, active, meaningful, and consistent participation is always necessary for personal and peer learning. Unlike a more traditional lecture format, knowledge will be delivered through the presentations and in-depth discussions of the topics explored within this course. A lack of individual participation will affect your grade therefore I encourage all student to make the choice to actively participate.

- *Shared Accountability for Classroom Climate:* All members of the classroom are both a teacher and a learner. Everyone is expected to actively engage in the discussion to contribute to individual and collective learning. Participation assumes that each member of the course will be involved in active listening, dialogue, and engagement with course activities and readings. There is an expectation for respectful discussion and consideration of others' lived experiences.

### **2. Presentation Outline**

Each student will provide presentation materials to the instructor to be graded.

By Sunday February 27<sup>th</sup> (can be turned in earlier), each student will submit a draft outline for your presentation so that the instructor can give you feedback. This initial outline will be submitted on CANVAS. Once the student receives the feedback from the instructor, they can finalize the outline and prepare any additional presentation materials (PowerPoint, Prezi, Video, etc.). It is recommended that students wait to receive the feedback of the instructor before completing too much work on their presentation materials.

On the date of your presentation, each student will turn in a **HARD COPY** of a **1 to 2-page outline of your presentation, along with any other materials that will help the instructor follow along with your presentation, and an evaluation form.** The outline needs to summarize the major points of the readings and questions and/or issues for class discussion. Make sure to include the references of your readings in APA style.

### **3. Successful presentation**

During the second weekend, each student will lead a class presentation of their selected topic/s (see course content for topic ideas). A major goal of this class is to prepare students to learn to evaluate and use literature and research in practice; to prepare trainees to become consumers of literature and research in the practice of CFT. Therefore, implications for CFT are important to highlight in the presentation. During the first weekend, decisions on topics will be discussed. Be prepared to discuss options and commit to a topic. Each presentation will be at least an hour and a half (1.5 hours), and no longer than two hours.

Grading of the presentation will be based on the following:

- a) Readings included as a part of the presentation are contemporary, preferably within last 7 years although classic work can be different
- b) Readings included as a part of the presentation are from a systems perspective
- c) The presentation is clear, creative and time efficient
- d) The student displays engagement with the audience including making eye contact with audience, which means that reading of the material is to be avoided
- e) The presentation includes an experiential component to further engage peers in the course. The experiential component can include:
  - Short essay questions pertaining to the material to be distributed to class for discussion
  - Case studies on the topic and working in groups on the case
  - Including a video/ film to increase understanding of the presented topic
- f) A lecture and/or discussion that reviews & evaluates the selected literature chosen for your presentation.

#### **4. Final Research Paper on the Selected Topic**

Each student will submit a final research paper on their selected topic by of their final paper by Sunday March 20<sup>th</sup> (although it can be submitted earlier). The final research paper should be 10 -15 pages. The paper should follow the formatting of the APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition. style, the most current edition).

The research paper needs to include:

- An intro to the topic
- The importance of the topic for CFT
- The integration of at least 5 references
- Implications of the topic within clinical practice
- Personal reactions to the presented topic
- Conclusion/Closure statement.

The research paper needs to reflect an in-depth understanding of the topic and show an advanced level of integrating the literature. An APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition style title page and reference page must be included. Accurate spelling, syntax and grammar is expected. This is a formal paper, with the use of self-reflection / use of personal pronouns only included in the “Personal reactions to the presented topic” section of the paper.

Grading will be based on thoroughness, significance, accuracy, relatedness to course content, and adherence of paper requirements and style. Papers receiving an A will be exceptional and you will integrate any feedback provided by the instructor. Final research papers will be submitted to CANVAS for grading.

#### **5. Reflection Papers at the Completion of Each Weekend**

Each student will write a reflection paper at the end of each weekend. This reflection paper will be an informal paper with the use of personal pronouns. This is intended to be a brief reflection of the topics that had personal & professional relevance to your own professional

development. Please include a title page to ease the grading process. All reflection papers will be submitted on Canvas by the next Friday following each weekend.

**POTENTIAL PRESENTATION TOPICS (this list is intended to provide suggestions and is not a complete list of topics available):**

1. Contemporary approaches and family interventions for eating disorders, alcohol use, ADHD, grief and loss, mental illness, etc.
2. Gender Issues (Women/Men/Gender fluidity and the Family Life Cycle)
3. Abuse/Domestic Violence
4. Legal and Ethical Issues AAMFT and IAMFC
5. Children and Divorce
6. Families and Major Illnesses (i.e., Families and AIDS, Cancer, etc.)
7. Extramarital Affairs
8. Aging, Families in Later Life
9. LGBTIQ+ Couples/Families
10. Multicultural Issues (i.e., The Latino Family Life Cycle, Migration, Families Living in Poverty)
11. Divorce Mediation, The Divorce Cycle
12. Becoming an adult, becoming a couple, becoming parents, etc.
13. Therapy process and outcome research/Evidence based interventions
14. Premarital Counseling or recent findings in couples' therapy.
15. Licensing LMFT, and requirements
16. Any contemporary topic related to couples and family therapy, consider your goals

**RECOMMENDED READINGS:**

Four volumes American Association Marriage and Family Therapy, Vol.1 (2005) & 2 (2005) & 3 (2008) & 4 (2011). *Clinical Updates for Family Therapists: Research and Treatments Approaches for Issues Affecting Today's Families*. Alexandria, VA.: AAMFT.

Tien, N.G., **Softas-Nall, L.**, & Barritt, J. (2017). Intercultural/Multilingual couples: Implications for Counseling. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*. 25, (2), 156-163.

Bean, H., **Softas-Nall, L.**, Eberle, K., & Paul, J. (2016). Can we talk about stay-at-home moms? Empirical findings and implications for counseling. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*.

**Softas-Nall, L.**, Cardona, B., & Barritt, J. (2015). Challenges and diversity issues working with multilingual and bilingual couples and families: Implications for counseling. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*.

**Softas-Nall, L** & Hanna, F. (2013). Counseling & psychotherapy with difficult clients/family members: An interview with Fred Hanna. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*. 1, (21), 117-121.



Woodson, C., **Softas-Nall, L.** & Johnson, B. (2012). Family Chaos and Readiness to Change Problematic Alcohol Use. *Journal of Human Social Sciences*. 12, 2, 19- 28.

Bean, H., **Softas-Nall, L.** & Mahoney, M. (2011). Reflections on Mandated Reporting and Challenges in the Therapeutic Relationship: A Case Study with Systemic Implications. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*. 19, 3, 286-290.

Petrogiannis, K. & **Softas-Nall, L.** (2010). The Family of Origin Scale in Greece. *International Journal of Psychological Studies*. 2, 1, 3-11.

Cardona, B. & **Softas-Nall, L.** (2010). Family Therapy with Latino families: An interview with Patricia Arredondo. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*. 18(1), 73-77.

**Softas-Nall, B.**, Beadle, M. Newell, J. & Helm, H. (2008). Attitudes of family therapists on the disclosure of extramarital affairs. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*. 16, (4), 328-337.

Softas-Nall, B. & Sukhodolsky, D.H. (2006). Family in the United States: Social context, structure, and roles. In Georgas, J. et al. (Eds.), *Families Across Cultures*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. **Book received award by APA's Division in International Psychology.**

Williamson, J., **Softas-Nall, B.**, & Miller, J. (2003). Grandmothers raising grandchildren: An exploration of their experiences and emotions. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 11(1), 23-32.

**Softas-Nall, B.** and Baldo, T. (2000). Dialogues within a Greek family: Multicultural stories of a couple revisited. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 8(4), 396-398.

**Softas-Nall, B.**, Baldo, T. and Tiedemann, T. (1999). Gender based solution-focused genogram case: He and she across the generations. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 7(2), 177-180.

**Softas-Nall, B.** and Francis, P. (1998). A solution-focused approach to a family with a suicidal member. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 6(3), 227-230.

**Softas-Nall, B.** and Francis P. (1998). A solution-focused approach to suicide assessment and intervention with families. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 6(1), 64-66.

**Softas-Nall, B.**, Baldo, T., and Jackson, S. (1997). Facilitating the transition from individual sessions to systemic family sessions: Issues of supervision and training. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 5, 257-262.

## Presentation Evaluation Form:

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Presentation Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Elements of the Presentation:</b>	<b>Expectation for the Element of the Presentation:</b>	<b>Score:</b>
Contemporary Articles/ Readings	Articles included / presented are contemporary (within the last 7 years)	/ 15
Systemic Perspective	Articles included / presented are taken from a systemic perspective	/ 10
Presentation Clarity	Presentation is: Clear: Creative: Time Efficient: Total for this section:	/ 10 / 10 / 10 / 30
Student Presentation style	Student displays an engaging presentation style which includes eye contact with the audience	/ 35
Experiential component	Student includes an experiential component within the presentation that increases the engagement/participation of the audience	/ 75
Review & Evaluation of Literature	Student includes a lecture/ discussion that reviews & evaluates literature within the presentation	/ 35
	<b>Total Points:</b>	<b>/ 200</b>

**Instructor Comments:**