



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Clemmer College of Education

Department of Counseling and Human Services

COUN 5420
Theories & Practice: Couples and Family
Fall 2021

Syllabus

Contact Information

Instructor: James Robert Bitter

Email: Bitterj@etsu.edu

Phone: (423) 915-6399

Office: Warf-Pickel Hall, Room 304

Instructor Availability

11:00 AM – 5:00 PM or by appointment

Meetings and Location

Classroom: 311 with a live streaming option

Class Meeting Schedule: Tuesdays, 8:00 AM – 10:50 AM

Course Information

Credit Hours

3

Course Description and Purpose

An introduction to the basic philosophical and psychological assumptions, rationales, techniques, and methods of implementation underlying major theoretical approaches to couples and family counseling and therapy.

Course Goals

The course will provide students with:

- An introduction to family therapy theory and techniques with a focus on Adlerian family therapy and Adlerian parent education; Multigenerational Family Therapy; Satir's Human

Validation Process model; Structural- Strategic Family Therapy; and Social Constructionism and Feminist Family Therapy.

- The opportunity to gain insight into their behaviors and feelings as family therapists as well as the impact they have on families through simulations.
- Awareness of family processes and dynamics involved in developing and conducting family sessions.
- An examination of ethical issues in relation to families.

Learning Objectives:

<i>Human Growth and Development</i>	<i>CACREP Standard</i>	<i>Curriculum/Evaluation Outcomes</i>
1. theories of individual and family development across the lifespan	2.F.3.a	Classes 1 & 14/4 tests
2. theories of normal and abnormal personality development	2.F.3.c	Classes 1-14/4 tests
3. systemic and environmental factors that affect human development, functioning, and behavior	2.F.3.f	Class 1-14/4 tests
4. ethical and culturally relevant strategies for promoting resilience and optimum development and wellness across the lifespan	2.F.3.i	Classes 1-14/Assignment 2
<i>Counseling and Helping Relationships</i>	<i>CACREP Standard</i>	<i>Curriculum/Evaluation Outcomes</i>
1. theories and models of counseling	2.F.5.a	Classes 1-14/4 tests
2. a systems approach to conceptualizing clients	2.F.5.b	Classes 1-14/Assignment 2
3. processes for aiding students in developing a personal model of counseling	2.F.5.n	Classes 1-3/Assignment 2
<i>Clinical Mental Health Counseling</i>	<i>CACREP Standard</i>	<i>Curriculum/Evaluation Outcomes</i>
1. theories and models related to clinical mental health counseling	CMHC C.1.b	Classes 1-14/4 tests
2. cultural factors relevant to clinical mental health counseling	CMHC C.2.j	Classes 4 & 12/Assignment 2
3. techniques and interventions for prevention and treatment of a broad range of mental health issues	CMHC C.3.b	Classes 1-14/Assignment 2 & 4 tests
4. strategies to advocate for persons with mental health issues	CMHC C.3.e	Classes 1-14/4 tests

<i>School Counseling</i>	<i>CACREP Standard</i>	<i>Curriculum/Evaluation Outcomes</i>
1. models of school-based collaboration and consultation	SC G.1.d	Classes 10-11/Final Test
2. school counselor roles in consultation with families, P-12 and postsecondary school personnel, and community agencies	SC G.2.b	Classes 10-11/Final Test

Major Topics

The history, philosophy, and trends in marriage, couple, and family counseling; the roles of couples and family counselors; joining; family assessment; family life cycle; family leadership and family atmosphere; internal family systems; family structure; sequences; normal family processes; couples and family licensure in Tennessee and surrounding states; ethical practices; and family issues related to developmental models, gender issues, cultural/ethnic issues, and gay/lesbian issues.

Course Requirements

Textbooks and Readings

Texts & Required Reading (all students):

Bitter, J. R. (2021). *Theory and practice of couples and family counseling* (3rd ed.). American Counseling Association.

Supplemental Texts (pick a book for Assignment #2):

Clerge, N. (2017). *The anatomy of cheating: A novel*. San Francisco, CA: Clerge Books.

Diamant, A. (1997). *The red tent*. New York, NY: Picador.

Eve, N. (2001). *The family orchard*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Franzen, J. (2010). *Freedom: A novel*. New York, NY: Picador

Groff, L. (2015). *Fates and furies*. New York, NY: Penguin-Harper.

Oates, J. C. (1997). *We were the Mulvaney's*. New York, NY: Plume.

Technical Requirements

All papers written in APA style.

Course Policies and Expectations

Classroom and Communication Policies

Email Communication

Please communicate with me at Bitterj@etsu.edu. The ETSU email policy requires all faculty communication with students regarding ETSU business be conducted via the official ETSU email account.

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to fully participate in course activities and experience. All students are expected to come to every class and are required to do a critical reading of class assignments and be prepared to discuss the readings in class. Students may miss only one class without excuse or instructor permission. All other misses will affect the student's grade.

Assignments and Submission Guidelines

Grades will be assigned based on the following assignments:

- **Assignment #1:** Complete reading assignments as indicated in the course schedule and take unit tests. There will be four unit tests, and each test will be worth up to **ten points** (with an aggregate of up to **40 points**). Tests will be multiple choice and short answer in construction.

See the schedule for the dates of the tests and what will be covered on the test.

- **Assignment #2:** Read one of the novels listed in supplemental reading. They are all great works of fiction, and they can all be ordered relatively cheaply online. When you have finished the book, pick one of the couples or family counseling theories in the book and apply it to the couple/family in the book as if they were taking part in a counseling session. You are allowed to use more than one theoretical approach, but then you have to state how they work together. A guide for creating the paper will be provided on D2L. **This assignment should be written in APA style in Microsoft Word and submitted electronically through the D2L dropbox for Assignment #3 (see instructor for directions).** Assignment #2 is worth up to **60 points**.

The written part of Assignment #2 may be submitted to the dropbox at any time but is due no later than 5:00 PM on Nov 30th.

Testing Policy

The tests will be taken in and proctored in class as designated in the course schedule.

Late and Missing Submission Policy

Late papers will be given less than full credit for the assignment.

Grading Policy

Assignment #1: up to 40 points possible.
Assignment #2: up to 60 points possible.
Total Possible Points: 100 points.

Grades will be distributed based on the following scale:

A = 94 - 100
A- = 90 - 93
B+ = 87 - 89
B = 84 - 86
B- = 80 - 83
C+ = 77 - 79
C = 74 - 76

Less than 74 points is failing.

Course Schedule

Class #1
Aug 24 Introduction to each other and to systemic thinking
Discussion of class process: What do students hope to get from the class?
Monads, Dyads, & Triads: An Introduction
Presentation and consideration of course syllabus
Introduction to D2L
Thinking about couples & families: A systems perspective
Ordinary People.
For next week, read Bitter (2021), Chapter 1.

Class #2
Aug 31 Mindfulness, meditation, and being present
Introduction to congruence, empathy, active listening, & reflection of feelings
Discussion of Bitter (2021), Chapter 1.
What's your story? Why did you decide to be a counselor?
Just looking at the brief descriptions of the models in Chapter 1, what model(s) seem to fit for you at first glance?
Self-esteem and communication stances
For next week, read Bitter (2021), Chapter 2 & 3.

Class #3:
Sept 7 Temperature Reading
Discussion of Bitter (2021), Chapters 2 & 3.

Reviewing the Masters: <http://www.Jamesrobertbitter.com>
Hanging Hats: A method for being present
Wheels of influence and family timelines explained
Personal characteristics and getting started
For next week, read Bitter (2021), Introduction to the Quest Family and chapter 5; also, create a wheel of influence for yourself as well as a family timeline.

Class #4:
Sept 14

Guided meditation, self-esteem, & grounding self for presence
Wheels of Influence and Family Timelines shared
Discussion of Bitter (2021), Quest Family & Chapter 5.
Introduction to Attachment theory: Creating a holding space.
Transference and countertransference
For next week, read Bitter (2021), Chapter 6.

Class #5:
Sept 21

Guided meditation, self-esteem, and grounding self for presence
Discussion of Bitter (2021), Chapter 6.
Family constellation and family atmosphere
Teleology: Purposeful behavior in couples and families
Mistaken Goals: An interactional perspective
Assessment of a Typical Day
Bitter video
A model for school counselors: Adlerian model: Step-by-step
For next week, read Bitter (2021), Chapter 7.

Class #6:
Sept 28

Checking in and catching up: Temperature Reading.
Discussion of Bitter (2021), Chapter 7.
Introduction to genograms: How to construct them
McGoldrick video.
For next week, create a three-generation genogram with you as the starting point.

Class #7:
Oct 05

Guided meditation, self-esteem, and grounding self for presence
Differentiation of Self
Emotional reactivity: Pushing one's buttons
Reviewing personal genograms for strengths, orientations, & issues.
Family Life Cycle
Ethnicity and Family Therapy

Conducting an initial genogram interview.
For next week, read Bitter (2021), Chapter 8.

Test #1 on Object Relations, Adlerian, & Multigenerational is the week after fall break.

Oct 12

Fall Break: Wow, two whole days! Enjoy the beach!

Class #8

Test #1 is administered in class.

Oct 19

Discussion of Bitter (2021), Chapter 8.

McLendon video.

Changing Family Rules.

The Process of Change.

Presence: Making Contact

Sculpting: Entering the family through the body

For next week, read Bitter (2021), Chapters 9 & 10.

Class #9

Checking in and catching up: Temperature Reading.

Oct 26

Discussion of Bitter (2021), Chapters 9 & 10.

Introduction to structural-strategic approaches

Systems and subsystems: Working with boundaries

Family mapping: From enmeshment to disengagement

Joining, Assessment, Enactments

Reframing

Directives and Paradoxes

For next week, read Bitter (2021), Chapters 11 & 12.

Test #2 on the Human Validation, Structural & Strategic models is next week.

Class #10

Test #2 is administered in class.

Nov 02

Discussion of Bitter (2021), Chapters 11 & 12.

The de-centered, "not-knowing" position: Curiosity & Questions

Solution-Focused/Solution-Oriented Therapy

The Miracle Question

Exception Questions

Scaling Questions

Questions of Difference

Coping Questions and Compliments

Narrative Therapy: Maps of Narrative Practice

Naming the Problem

Deconstruction & Externalization

Metaphorical Stances
Alternative Stories & Re-authoring
Outside Witnesses, Letters, and Document
For next week, read: Bitter (2021), Chapter 13.

Class #11:
Nov 09

Guided meditation, self-esteem, and grounding self for presence
Discussion of Bitter (2021), Chapter 13.
Feminism: A her-storical perspective
Gender Issues in Couples and Family Counseling
Honoring the Experiences, Perceptions, and Voice of Women
 Depression as the absence of voice
The Personal is Political
Egalitarian Relationships: From Informed Consent to Diagnosis to Termination
Social Transformation and Advocacy
Robertson video
Therapeutic Interventions
 Consciousness Raising
 Gender Role and Power Analyses
 Self Disclosure
 Reframing and Relabeling
For next week, read: Bitter (2021), Chapter 14.
Test #3 on Postmodern/Social Construction approaches and Feminist Therapy is next week.

Class #12:
Nov 16

Test #3 is administered in class.
Discussion of Bitter (2021), Chapter 14.
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy with families and couples
Classical and Operant Conditioning
Cognitive Distortions
Questionnaires, Interviews, and Change Charts
Problem solving, challenging irrational beliefs & cognitive restructuring
Contracts, Behavior-Change Agreements, and Homework
For next week, read: Bitter (2021), Chapter 15.

Class #13:
Nov 23

Guided meditation, self-esteem, and grounding self for presence
Discussion of Bitter (2021), Chapter 15.
The Science of Couples Counseling
 The Sound Relationship House
 Conflict Resolution

The Four Horsemen
Assessment and Biofeedback
Conflict management & Dreams within conflict
Love maps and Stress-reducing conversations
The art of compromise interventions
For next week, read: Bitter (2021), Chapters 16 & 17.
Assignment #2 is due no later than 5:00 PM on Nov. 30.

Class #14:
Nov 30

Guided meditation, self-esteem, and grounding self for presence
Discussion of Bitter (2021), Chapters 16 & 17.
Attachment Theory in Couples Counseling
Emotionally Focused Therapy with Couples: Sue Johnson
Emotional Connection and safe places: Revisiting the holding space
Mirroring Present Process
Engaging and Choreographing Engaged Encounters
Integrating and Validating
Imago Therapy: Mirroring, Validating, Summarizing & Empathy
The Couples Dialogue
The Behavior Change Request Dialogue
The Healing Dialogue

Assignment #2 is due no later than 5:00 PM today.
Test #4 on CBT and Couples Counseling Approaches is next week.

Class #15:
Dec 07

Test #4 is administered in class.
The Final Temperature: How was this class for you? What will you take with you?

Student Services and Technical Resources

Student Services

The [ETSU Services webpage](#) includes a comprehensive list of services available to all ETSU students.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of ETSU to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal law, state law and the University's commitment to equal educational access. Any student with a disability who needs accommodations, for example arrangement for examinations or seating placement, should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. Faculty accommodation forms are provided to students through Disability Services in the D.P. Culp Center, Room 326, telephone 423-439-8346.

[Visit the Disability Services webpage for more information.](#)

Technical Resources

Help Desk

The Information Technology Services (ITS) Help Desk is the best resource for most technical problems. Find answers to common questions on the [Help Desk website](#), call, email, or stop in to see them on the first floor of the Sherrod Library. Phone: 423-439-4648 Email: itshelp@etsu.edu

Desire2Learn (D2L) Online Help

Many answers to D2L related questions can be found on the [D2L Help Student Home](#). If you are still having trouble finding what you need, contact the Help Desk.

Microsoft Office Software

Microsoft Office productivity applications, including Word, PowerPoint, Excel, OneNote, and more, are available free for students through the University's Office 365 campus agreement. For instructions on how to obtain the software, see the [Office 365 page of the ITS Help Desk website](#).

Turnitin Plagiarism Detection

Turnitin is a plagiarism detection service available to students and faculty at ETSU. This tool compares student written work against a comprehensive database of other work as well as various internet sources. Faculty may employ this service for some or all written assignments, in order to help students learn to cite sources accurately and to ensure academic integrity. Learn more on the [Turnitin home page](#).

ETSU Technical Resources

Many other technical resources can be found on the [Online Help webpage](#).

University Information

Syllabus Attachment

The [ETSU syllabus attachment](#) includes important material such as permits and overrides, advisement, hours, dates and other ETSU information.

ETSU Catalogs

[Current Undergraduate Catalog](#)

[Current Graduate Catalog](#)