



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
SAN ANTONIO

College of Education & Human Development

Department of Counseling, Health & Kinesiology

EDCG 5314 Theoretical Foundations of Marriage, Couples and Family Counseling
Spring 2026

Instructor: Ray Wooten Ph.D., LPC-S, RSMT, RYT-500

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Office Hours: Wednesday and Thursday 4:00-5:15

Please schedule your appointment to ensure that time is open.

Class Time/Location: Thursday 7:00-9:15

Classroom Hall 209

Required Text:

Nichols, M.P., & Davis, S.D. (12th Ed.). (2021). *Family therapy: Concepts & methods*. New York: Pearson.

Recommended Reading: Appendix A Chapter-by-chapter recommendations in the Nichols & Davis text.

Catalog Description:

The purpose of this course is to provide students with an introduction to counseling theories with an emphasis on systems theory. The course will provide knowledge of theories that may be utilized for working with clients who present as individuals, couples, or families.

Course Rationale: This course is designed to give the student an introduction to systems theory, as well as exploration in theories of couples and family counseling. The student will learn the history regarding the evolution of marriage and family counseling. Students will learn theories, processes and techniques that are central to working with clients in marriage and family counseling. There will be emphasis

on systemic theories and how they may be utilized when working with individuals, families, and couples.

Class Time: Lectures, group discussion, small group activities, video, possible guest speakers, role play, self-awareness

This course is a *graduate* seminar in which your preparation and interest is the dominant feature. I expect everyone to participate in class discussion and (of course) to have read the material thoroughly to discuss it intelligently. It's imperative that you have an *informed* opinion not only based on your personal experience but *likewise* informed from the reading and relevant literature.

Learning Objectives of the Course:

1. Gain an understanding of adopting a family relationship framework.
2. Develop an understanding of the family life cycle
3. Gain an understanding of the clinical theories of marriage and family therapy derived from systems theory.
4. Understand how to use these theories in family assessment and clinical interviews.
5. Develop an understanding of the gender, culture, and ethnicity factors in family functioning
6. Enhance knowledge of evidence-based best practices.
7. Recognize strengths, limitations, and contraindications of specific therapy models.
8. Develop the ability to refine the client-therapist alliance as a vehicle for client change.
9. Articulate associated ethical and legal concerns relating to a particular clinical intervention
10. Identify congruent theoretical orientation(s) and clinical procedures to specific problems and populations.
11. Identify the appropriateness of procedures from a cultural and diversity context in contemporary society.

Students will also demonstrate:

- A command of communication skills which permit discussions which are clear and precise. Furthermore, discussions will be conducted with respect for all viewpoints indicative of CACREP, ACA ethics and the counseling profession

- Evidence of class preparation which permits active participation during class discussions
- Research skills which enable preparation for class sessions and assignments
- Completion of all assignments and tests required on time.

CACREP Standards:

Section 2: Professional Counseling Identity/Counseling Curriculum

5. Counseling and Helping Relationships

- b. A systems approach to conceptualizing clients

Section 5: Entry-Level Specialty Areas

F. Marriage, Couple and Family Counseling

1. Foundations

- a. History and development of clinical mental health counseling
- b. Theories and models of family systems and dynamics
- c. Theories and models of marriage, couple, and family counseling

2. Contextual Dimensions

- a. Roles and settings of marriage, couple, and family counselors
- n. Professional organizations, preparation standards, and credentials relevant to the practice of marriage, couple, and family counseling

TEA School Counseling Standards: N/A

Special Policies:

Graduate Class Policies

A student has the right to expect competent, well-organized instruction for the full number of clock hours allotted for a course; to sufficient written assignments, graded fairly and with reasonable promptness to show the student's academic standing in the course at least before midsemester; to have ample opportunity to confer with the instructor at published office hours and to review graded written work; to freedom from ridicule, discrimination, harassment or accusations in the presence of other students or faculty members; and to an avenue for appealing to higher academic authority in case of alleged unfairness by an instructor.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

As members of the University community, all enrolled students assume full responsibility for adhering to the university's values and goals. Students are held responsible for staying abreast of their rights as students and for being cognizant on what is deemed proper conduct as outlined in the Student Handbook. The Student Handbook is available through the Student Rights and Responsibilities webpage:

<http://www.tamusa.edu/uploadFile/folders/fcestrad/Pdf/Pdf635767864704349879-10.100.150.124.pdf>

Cheating and Plagiarism

Students are expected to do their own course work. Simple cases of first offense cheating or plagiarism by an individual student may be handled by the instructor after consultation with the department chair. For more serious cases, such as those involving repeated offenses, conspiracy with other students or the theft and selling of examination questions, a report should be made by the instructor via the department chair and college dean to the provost and vice president for Academic Affairs for disciplinary action. Expulsion from the University is a normal penalty for such offenses.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity, and students who engage in plagiarism are subject to disciplinary action. The type of disciplinary action will depend on the severity of the plagiarism but may ultimately lead to the student's expulsion from the program and/or revocation of a student's degree, if the student has already graduated. Please review the Student Handbook for a complete description of the process.

Class Attendance

A vital part of every student's education is regular attendance of class meetings. Any absences tend to lower the quality of a student's work in a course, and frequent or persistent absences may preclude a passing grade or cause a student to be dropped from one or more courses upon the request of a faculty member to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Class attendance is strongly encouraged. With only fifteen classes every absence matters. **After the second absence your grade will be dropped one letter grade per absence.** Participation is tracked and evaluated. While in class have your phones silenced and stowed so as not be a distraction. This will create an environment for better communication and actively engage with others. Computers will likewise be stowed unless for notetaking.

Academic Misconduct: Students are expected to practice academic honesty in every aspect of this course. Be sure you are familiar with the Student Handbook section on academic misconduct. Forms of academic dishonesty include: cheating, tampering with grades or taking part in conspiracy to distribute any part of a scheduled test, use of invented or falsified research, or plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined as unacknowledged quotation and/or paraphrase of someone else's words, ideas, or data as one's own work submitted for credit. Plagiarism can also be the failure to identify information or essays from the Internet and submitting them as one's own work. If academic misconduct is discovered it will be dealt with in the severest manner allowed by the university.

Nonacademic misconduct: The University respects the rights of instructors to teach and students to learn. Maintenance of these rights requires campus conditions

that do not impede their exercise. Campus behavior that interferes with either (1) the instructor's ability to conduct the class, (2) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program, or (3) campus behavior that interferes with the rights of others will not be tolerated. An individual engaging in disruptive behavior may be subject to disciplinary action. Such incidents will be adjudicated by the Dean of Students under nonacademic procedures.

Disability Statement: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disability. If you believe you have a disability that may require accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. DSS is located at the Main Campus on the 2nd floor of the Central Academic Building in room 210 and at the Brooks City-Base Campus in room 149. The phone number for DSS is (210) 784-1335 and email is dsupport@tamusa.tamus.edu

Message for pregnant and parenting students:

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX"), 20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq., protects students in all of the academic, educational, extracurricular, athletic, and other programs or activities of universities. This includes prohibiting discrimination against pregnant and parenting students. A student who is pregnant or parenting is entitled to special services. Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to implementing all provisions of Title IX. For availing of special services available to students whose curricular and co-curricular work is impacted by pregnancy and parenting related issues contact Dr. Jo Anna Benavidez-Franke, Associate Vice President for Student Engagement and Success.

Sexual Misconduct: Sexual harassment of students and employees at Texas A&M University is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Any member of the university community violating this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

Incompletes "I": The spirit of the "Incomplete" is to give a student an opportunity to complete a course after the end of the semester. An Incomplete will only be considered under specific circumstances:

1. 70% of the class has been completed and student is passing with a "B" or better
2. The circumstance for which the "I" is requested is supported with documentation and initiated by the student

3. Student has been attending class on a regular basis

Incompletes are not to be used to remedy excessive missed classes. The unforeseen circumstances precipitating the request for an “I” should occur near the end of the semester. Students who are experiencing difficulties at the beginning or midway through the course should contact their professor immediately to discuss options. When a professor agrees to grant an “I”, a contract between the student and professor that outlines a specific timeline for completion of the course will be generated. Topics such as highest possible grade will also be outlined. If contract is not fulfilled, the professor will submit a change of grade form with earned letter grade. All “I”s will automatically revert to an “F” after one year.

Dropping a Course: Each student is responsible for knowing the drop dates for any given semester. Professors are not responsible, under any circumstances, for “dropping” a student from a course. Please be aware that if you do not formally drop a course and failed to fulfill the academic requirements, the professor will submit the earned grade.

Grading: A = Excellent (exceeding the standard)

- Student achieves 90 or better average on assignments.
- Student **actively participates** in class discussions in a consistent and ongoing fashion.
- minimal absence

B = Good (meeting the standard)

- Student achieves 80-89 average on assignments.
- Student participates weekly in discussions

C = Not meeting the standard

- Student achieves 70-79 average on assignments

Family Counseling Paper

CACREP CORE OR SPECIALTY AREA: Marriage & Family Counseling

The Professional Self-Investigation Paper (MFC Paper) is used to determine the level of student knowledge and skills related to the following CACREP Standards:

- 5.a. theories and models of counseling
- 5.b. a systems approach to conceptualizing clients
- 5.j. evidence-based counseling strategies and techniques for prevention and intervention
- 5.n. processes for aiding students in developing a personal model of counseling.

Annotated Bibliography

- 1) The student will identify and research a subject (approved by professor) pertaining to MFC.
- 2) The student will discuss how the topic reflects their developing model of counseling and/or focus in MFC
- 3) The student will discuss how the subject addresses the needs of the individual, couple and family

GRADING RUBRIC: Annotated Bibliography

Criteria	Ratings			Total
	5 points	3 point	1 points	
MFT subject/topic Identified and Explained INTRO, 1 page	Subject/topic are identified and fully explained	identified but not fully explained	Paper is not focused on subject matter identified.	
Counseling/MFC Journal & References APA style references	Includes 12 + references from peer reviewed counseling journals	Includes 8 references from peer reviewed counseling journals	Fewer than 8 references are from peer reviewed counseling journals	
Subject relevance regarding the approved focus: e.g., family dynamics, mechanisms of change, therapeutic process, special topics	Addresses 90% of the topic: Focused	Addresses 60-89% focused	Less than 60%	
Narrative at end of annotations: 1-2 pg. Subject discussed as part of Developing knowledge of MFT counseling and relevance	Content is appropriate and supports the student's query and development	Coverage of topic needs improvement	Content doesn't adequately address the student's development	
Quality of Writing	Student utilizes appropriate quality of writing including APA format and length	Student demonstrates minimal quality in writing style including APA format and length	Student fails to demonstrate minimal quality in writing style including APA format and length	

Grading criteria for the Annotated Bibliography include:

- 1) Intro: Short narrative of your topic and its importance to you (several paragraphs)
- 2) Annotations: Subject matter relating to MCF theories, process, mechanisms of change or special topics (clear w/professor)
- 3) Length: depends on number of annotations (each annotation: a. APA reference, b. summary of article, c. your take away)
- 4) References peer reviewed journal articles
- 5) Paper format (APA 7th Ed.)
- 6) Paper format: Title, Intro page, Annotated bib (includes: citation, article summarization, & your personal comments about the article and its implications for counseling, 1-2 page each), lastly, Final summarization

EVALUATION PROCESS:

The professor will complete the following rubric to assess MCFC Theories Paper. Points correspond to the rating scale.

Points	Overall Rating		Description
18-20	Mastery		high level of performance; meet all criteria
17-13	Proficient		high level of performance; meet 90%+ criteria
12-10	Developing		Developing level of performance; meet 80% criteria
9-0	Not Meet graduate standard		

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR SCORE: _____

Students who score 9 or below on a key performance indicator assignment will meet with the instructor to discuss remediation

CACREP Standards	ASSIGNMENTS	DUE DATE	Grade points
Section 5 1a,b,c,d,e,f Section 5 2a,b,c,e,g,j,k,m,n,o, Section 5 3b,c,d	4 quizzes	(<i>Tentative</i>) See below	70pts
	Annotated Bibliography	11/6	20pts
	PARTICIPATION		10pts.

Assignments:

Semester Quizzes: 70 pts: four quizzes will be given during the semester. These are short answer, multiple choice, T/F, etc. that gives you some feedback on how you are reading and integrating the work. Text chapters, additional readings and videos are information that will be part of the quizzes. The quizzes may be administered in class or on Bb.

Annotated Bibliography: 20pts
(Described above)

Participation: 10 pts

TENTATIVE schedule

8/28		Introduction to class, expectations, and overview;		
9/4	Section 5 1a,b,c,d,e,f Section 5 2a,b,c,e,g,j,k,m,n,o, Section 5 3b,c,d	Read Intro and Chapter One & Chapter Two	Ken Hardy video	
9/11	Section 5 1a,b,c,d,e,f Section 5 2a,b,c,e,g,j,k,m,n,o, Section 5 3b,c,d	Chapter Three	Genogram Video McGoldrich	
9/18	Section 5 1a,b,c,d,e,f Section 5 1a,b,c,d,e,f Section 5 2a,b,c,e,g,j,k,m,n,o, Section 5 3b,c,d	<div>Read/prepare/describe: Chapter Four: Bowen family systems therapy ** Creation of genogram** (describing in</div>	Video Bill Guerin	

		cybernetic and intergenerational language and diagrams) rough draft		
9/25		QUIZ ONE		
10/2	Section 5 1a,b,c,d,e,f _____	Strategic Ch 5 _____	Coyne	
10/9 —	Section 5 2a,b,c,e,g,j,k,m,n,o	Structural Ch 6	Aponte video	
10/16	1a,b,c,d,e,f Section 5	Experiential	McClendon	
10/23	QUIZ	Quiz 2		
10/30		Psychoanalytic	Scharf	
11/6	2a,b,c,e,g,j,k,m,n,o, Section 5 3b,c,d	CBT	Stuart	11/6 Annotated Bib DUE
11/13		QUIZ 3		
11/20	Section 5 1a,b,c,d,e,f Section 5	Solution Focused	Bill O'Hanlon	
11/27	2a,b,c,e,g,j,k,m,n,o	Narrative	Madigan	
12/4		Integrate Quiz 4		

VIDEOS: all on Psychotherapy.net (all in TAMUSA library); Be sure that you are signed into the library when you click on the tabs below or cut and paste.

Ken Hardy: Integrative

<https://www-psychotherapy-net.tamusa.idm.oclc.org/stream/tamusa/video?vid=176>

Monica McGoldrich

<https://www-psychotherapy-net.tamusa.idm.oclc.org/stream/tamusa/video?vid=219>

Philip Guerin: BOWEN

<https://www-psychotherapy-net.tamusa.idm.oclc.org/stream/tamusa/video?vid=267>

Harry Aponte: Structural

<https://www-psychotherapy-net.tamusa.idm.oclc.org/stream/tamusa/video?vid=129>

James Coyne: Strategic

<https://www-psychotherapy-net.tamusa.idm.oclc.org/stream/tamusa/video?vid=266>

Jean McClendon: Experiential

<https://www-psychotherapy-net.tamusa.idm.oclc.org/stream/tamusa/video?vid=162>

Dave & Jill Scharff: Psychoanalytic

<https://www-psychotherapy-net.tamusa.idm.oclc.org/stream/tamusa/video?vid=168>

Richard Stuart : Behavioral Family Therapy

<https://www-psychotherapy-net.tamusa.idm.oclc.org/stream/tamusa/video?vid=126>

Bill O'Hanlon: SFT

<https://www-psychotherapy-net.tamusa.idm.oclc.org/stream/tamusa/video?vid=166>

Stephen Madigan: Narrative Family Therapy

<https://www-psychotherapy-net.tamusa.idm.oclc.org/stream/tamusa/video?vid=177>

IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Academic Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are federal anti-discrimination statutes that provide comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Title II of the ADAAA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that students with disabilities be guaranteed equal access to the learning environment through the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodation o?redness: JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will

have the option to receive a text message, email and/or phone call with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>.

More information about Emergency Preparedness and the Emergency Response Guide can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/upd/index.html>.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance: According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Jaguar Writing Center: The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. The Writing Center is currently holding all appointments digitally. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the student services tab. Students wanting to work in realtime with a tutor can schedule an "Online Appointment." Students wishing to receive asynchronous, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an "eTutoring" appointment. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at www.tamusa.edu/Writing-Center. The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing writingcenter@usa.edu.

Meeting Basic Needs: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students (DOS@tamusa.edu) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to provide any resources they may possess.

Military Affairs: Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to communicate, in advance if possible, and special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployment, drill requirements, disability accommodations). You are also encouraged to visit the Patriots' Casa in-person room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

Religious Observances: Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

Respect for Diversity: We understand that our students represent diverse backgrounds and perspectives. When we are equity-minded, we are aware of differences and inequalities and are willing to discuss them so we can act to resolve them. The University is committed to building cultural competencies, or the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that enable individuals and organizations to acknowledge cultural differences and incorporate these differences in working with people from diverse cultures. Respecting

and accepting people different than you is vital to your success in the class, on campus, and as a future professional in the global community. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- Share their unique experiences, values, and beliefs.
- Be open to the views of others.
- Honor the uniqueness of their colleagues.
- Value each other's opinions and communicate respectfully.
- Keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature.
- Use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in this course and across the A&M-San Antonio community.

The Six-Drop Rule: Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Statement of Harassment and Discrimination: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality, diversity, pluralism and the uniqueness of the individual within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees should be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the appropriate offices within their respective units.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex- or genderbased discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the university. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and other healthcare providers are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331, Modular C.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities:

The purpose of the following statement is to enumerate the essential provisions for the student freedom and responsibility to learn at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. All students are required to follow all policies and regulations as set forth by The Texas A&M University System. This includes the [A&M-San Antonio Student Code of Conduct](#).

Students' Rights A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no university rule or procedure that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.

1. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the university, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, genetic information or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
2. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
3. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty and the administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct, on our website, University Catalog and students must comply with them and the laws of the land.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire university community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide an environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notification.
6. We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Use of Generative AI in Association with Course Assignments

There is a variety of AI programs available to assist in completing assignments, yet AI programs are not a replacement for human creativity, originality, and critical thinking. Writing is a craft that you must develop during your course of studies as a means to organize and communicate your positions and impressions of subject material. Students must obtain permission from the instructor before using AI composition software like (e.g. ChatGPT) for any assignments in this course. Using these tools without instructor permission puts your academic integrity at risk. Additionally, assignments submitted through the course Turnitin platform in BlackBoard will include AI detection as a part of the standard plagiarism screening.