



MCFT 563 TREATMENT ISSUES IN FAMILY THERAPY
Advances in Socio-Emotional Relationship Therapy
SPRING 2026

Time & Day: Tuesday 9:00-12:45 (January 13,20, 27, & Feb 3)
Place: York 121
Instructor: Carmen Knudson-Martin, PhD
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CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Applications of family systems approach to treatment of families in crisis and transition. A portion of this course emphasizes clinical case conceptualization and treatment planning.

This course explores what happens as societal context, power, and emotion converge in therapy. Students will learn how to apply Socio-Emotional Relationship Therapy (SERT), an approach that centers relational justice as an important component of ethical, socioculturally attuned practice and challenges cultural discourses that privilege individuality at the expense of relationships. Participants will learn key clinical strategies for each of the three phases of the SERT clinical sequence, with an emphasis on mapping the socio-contextual nature of emotion, working with the connections between power and sociocultural vulnerability, and implications for clinical decision-making. Resources for clients will be included.

Prerequisite: None

Credit: 1 semester unit (15 contact hours)

MCFT STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course promotes the following student learning outcomes:

- SLO 1.3 Students apply systems/relational theories to clinical case conceptualization and treatment planning.
- SLO 2.1 Students self-reflect on the implications of own and others' social location in clinical practice.
- SLO 2.2 Students' clinical practice demonstrates attention to social justice and cultural democracy.
- SLO 4.3 Students demonstrate integration of family therapy theory, equity, and social location issues in clinical practice.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, students are expected to:

1. Develop knowledge or skills that expand ability to apply a systems approach to treatment of a particular clinical issue.
2. Apply course content to case conceptualization, treatment planning, and intervention. In this section, these include:
 - a. Recognize how inequities in larger systems create destructive power imbalances in relationships (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, spirituality, religion, larger systems, social context)
 - b. Recognize the confluence of emotion, societal context, and interaction in the moment by moment of therapy.
 - c. Learn a research-based clinical model for relational therapy that promotes relational justice and mutual support.
 - d. Begin to develop clinical competencies in socio-emotional relationship therapy.

TEXT/READINGS

Required Texts

Knudson-Martin, C. (2024) A step-by-step guide to socio-emotional relationship therapy: A socially responsible approach to clinical practice. Routledge.

Knudson-Martin, C. (2025). The socio-emotional workbook for couples: Closing the gap between the relationship you want and the relationship you have. Routledge.

Suggested Journal Articles (Access through Watzek library)

Arici-Sahin, F. & Knudson-Martin, C. (2023) Socio-Emotional Relationship Therapy in Turkey: Navigating equity and sociocultural change. *International Journal of Systemic Therapy*

ChenFeng, J., Kim, L., Knudson-Martin, C., & Wu, Y. (2016). Application of socio-emotional relationship therapy with couples of Asian heritage: Addressing issues of culture, gender, and power. *Family Process*, 56, 558-573

Jenks, A., Adams, G., Young, B., & Seedall, R. (2024). Addressing power in couples therapy: Integrating socio-emotional relationship therapy and emotionally focused therapy. *Family process*, 63(1), 48-63.

Knudson-Martin, C., Kim, L., Gibbs, E., & Harmon, R. (2021). Sociocultural attunement to vulnerability in couple therapy: Fulcrum for changing power processes. *Family Process*, 60, 1152-1169.

Komter, A. (1989). Hidden power in marriage. *Gender and Society*, 3, 187-216.

Loscocco, K., & Walzer, S. (2013). Gender and the culture of heterosexual marriage in the United States. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 5, 1-14.

Morrison, T., Ferris-Wayne, M, Harrison, T., Palmgren, E., & Knudson-Martin, C. (2022). Learning to embody a social justice perspective in couple and family therapy: A grounded theory analysis of MFTs in training. *Journal of Contemporary Family Therapy*, 44, 408-421.

Smoliak, O., Al-Ali, K., LeCouteur, A., Tseliou, E., Rice, C., LaMarre, A., ... & Henshaw, S. (2023). The third shift: Addressing emotion work in couple therapy. *Family process*, 62(3), 1006-1023.

Smoliak, O., Rice, C., LaMarre, A., Tseliou, E., LeCouteur, A., & Davies, A. (2022). Gendering of care and care inequalities in couple therapy. *Family process*, 61(4), 1386-1402.

Smoliak, O., Rice, C., Rudder, D., Tseliou, E., LaMarre, A., LeCouteur, A., ... & Henshaw, S. (2024). Emotion regulation as affective neoliberal governmentality. *Family Process*. Advance on-line publication.

COURSE OBJECTIVES, STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES, AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Course Objective	MCFT Student Learning Outcomes	AAMFT Core Competencies & AMFTRB task statements	Evaluated by
1. Develop knowledge or skills that expand ability to apply a systems approach to treatment of a particular clinical issue.	SLO 1.3	CC 1.1.1 CC 1.1.2 CC 2.2.3 CC 4.1.1 CC 4.5.3 TS 01.01 TS 01.02	Journal reflections Participation in course discussion and activities as evaluated on participation rubric
2a. Recognize how inequities in larger systems create destructive power imbalances in relationships (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, spirituality, religion, larger systems, social context)	SLO 1.3	SLO 1.1 SLO 1.2	Journal reflections Participation in course discussion and activities as evaluated on participation rubric
2b. Recognize the confluence of emotion, societal context, and interaction in the moment by moment of therapy.	SLO 1.2 SLO 2.2	CC 1.2.1 CC 2.2.3 CC 4.5.3 TS01.04 TS 02.06 TS 02.11	Journal reflections include contextual self-of-the-therapist awareness and case conceptualization.
2c. Learn a research-based clinical model for relational therapy that	SLO 3.2	CC 4.1.1 CC 4.1.2	Journal reflections include application of

promotes relational justice and mutual support.		CC 4.3.2 TS 01.04 TS 03.11	the SERT model to third order ethics in clinical role
2d. Begin to develop clinical competencies in socio-emotional relationship therapy.	SLO 1.1 SLO 2.2	CC 1.2.1 CC 2.2.3 CC 4.5.3 TS01.04 TS 02.06 TS 02.11	Journal reflections include case application

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

A note about writing: All written submissions for this course should be typed, in 12-point size, Times New Roman font, and double-spaced. The ability to express yourself and think critically through writing is important to your professional development. Please proof read your writing and be coherent with your writing style.

1. **Participation** (30 points)

This course emphasizes shared engagement with the assigned readings and clinical competencies. Toward this end, you are expected to:

- Attend and participate in **all** class meetings. In the event of illness or other emergency, please email the instructor in advance of class. Missed classes will be made up by expanded written reflections on the required readings for the day.
- Come to class prepared (having read the assignments for the day).
- Give attention to the instructor and/or other students when they are speaking or making a presentation. No electronic devices may be used, except to access readings or make notes.
- Engage in group discussions, case analyses, and other class activities.
- Deal with other students and/or the instructor in a respectful fashion.

Your participation in class activities will be evaluated according to the following rubric

CLASS PARTICIPATION COMPETENCIES	Possible points	Points demonstrated
Prompt and dependable presence in the class.	10	
Prepares for class by immersing self in course readings and reflecting on their application to practice.	10	
Engages in course activities with a spirit of openness, curiosity, and respect.	10	
TOTAL	30	

2) Reflective Journal (70 points). Due Feb. 10

Throughout the course students are to create a journal that focuses on your personal responses to the following:

1. Your evolving contextual self-of-the-therapist awareness. Include reflections on how the specific readings and course activities have inspired new socio-emotional awareness and their relevance for how you engage in socially just practice.
2. Applications of the SERT clinical model to your cases and/or cases discussed in class or in the readings. Emphasize your clinical role and application of third order ethics in your treatment planning and clinical interventions.

The journal should represent your active integration of course concepts across assigned readings and course activities. It should be completed weekly. Reflections are your conversation with yourself and do not need to be in the form of a paper; however, please use complete sentences and good grammar. They should be typed (single-spaced) and include approximately 2-4 pages per week.

Your journal will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

REFELCTIONS ON YOUR DEVELOPMENT OF SERT COMPETENCIES	Possible points	Points demonstrated
Your reflections on specific readings and course activities illustrate development of new contextual self-of-the-therapist awareness.	15	
Your reflections on your evolving socio-emotional awareness consider what this means as you seek to embody to socially just clinical practice.	15	
Your reflections include applications of the SERT clinical model to your cases and/or cases discussed in class or in the readings.	15	
Your reflections emphasize implications for your clinical role and application of third order ethics in treatment planning and clinical interventions.	15	
Your reflections demonstrate integration of learning across readings and course activities. (not simply notes on each chapter or day)	10	
TOTAL	70	

CPSY DEPARTMENTAL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Class attendance is expected and required. Any missed class time will be made up by completing extra assignments designed by the instructor. Missing more than ten percent of class time may result in failure to complete the class. This would be 4.5 hours of a 45 hour class (3 credits), 3.0 hours for a 30 hour class (2 credits) or 1.5 hours for a 15 hour class (1 credit.) In case of extreme hardship and also at the discretion of the instructor, a grade of incomplete may be given for an assignment or the entire course. In such cases, the work to be submitted in order to remove the incomplete must be documented appropriately and stated deadlines met. Students are expected to be on time to class and tardiness may be seen as an absence that requires make-up work.

DISABILITY SERVICES STATEMENT

If you have a disability that may impact your academic performance, you may request accommodations by meeting with the Office of Student Accessibility staff and submitting documentation on the Office of Student Accessibility website. Email access@lclark.edu with any additional questions or concerns.

LINKS TO LEWIS & CLARK GRADUATE SCHOOL ESSENTIAL POLICIES

This course adheres to the general policies outlined in the catalog and student handbook of the Lewis & Clark Graduate School of Education and Counseling. This includes full adherence to the following policies:

- Nondiscrimination: go.lclark.edu/gsec-nondiscrimination;
- Standards for professional student conduct and academic integrity: go.lclark.edu/gsec-conduct;
- Sexual misconduct: go.lclark.edu/titleIX.

DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Each student should decide for him/herself what information to disclose. Students are advised to be prudent when making self-disclosures. The program cannot guarantee confidentiality of student disclosures given the group environment, although personal comments should be considered private and confidential – and remain only in the classroom – unless an exception to confidentiality applies.

CELL PHONES

Cell phones must be silenced and text messaging is not allowed during class time. If there is an emergency you may exit the class to use your cell.

EVALUATION & GRADING

Participation	30 pts
Journal	70
Total	100 pts

94-100 = A	90-93.5 = A-	88-89.5 = B+
83-87.5 = B	80-82.5 = B-	78-79 = C+
73-77.5 = C	70-72 = C-	

According to Graduate School policy, grades lower than B- may not apply to graduation. Students earning a C+ or lower will need to repeat the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

9am-12:45pm	Topics	Readings
Class 1 Jan 13	Linking power, emotion, & societal discourse in couple and family therapy Third order ethics & your clinical role	SERT Guide—Chap 1-3, 6 Workbook—Chap 1, 2, & 4 Suggested: Smoliak et al (2023). Discusses how emotion work structures and reproduces power SERT Guide Chap 13 (summarizes the action research that evolved SERT)
Class 2 Jan 20	Tracking power & the Circle of Care Contextual self-of-the-therapist	SERT Guide—Chap 4,5, 7, Workbook—Chap 3, 5 Suggested: Morrison et al (2022). This is research done by LC students on how they learned to embody social justice in practice. SERT Guide—chap 12
Class 3 Jan 27	Treatment Planning Phase I—Position toward relationality	SERT Guide—Chap 8 & 9 Workbook—Chap 6-8 Suggested: Arici-Sahin & Knudson-Martin (2023) a case application in Turkey
Class 4 Feb 3	Co-creating the Future Phase II—Interrupt the Flow of Power Phase III—Practice mutuality	SERT Guide—Chap 10 & 11 Workbook—Chap 9 & 10