Social Work Practice with Couples and Changing Family Structures  
SOWK 8280 | 3 credit hours

Fall Semester 2022  
Class Meetings: Mondays | 4 P.M. – 6 P.M. | 206 CPACS

Instructor:  
Professor C.J. Washington (Dr. Washington, She | Her)

Office:  
206 CPACS

Office Phone:  
402.554.2792

Email:  
washingtoncj@unomaha.edu

NOTE: Students should contact the instructor via email rather than by phone. Email messages will be responded to within 24 hours, excluding weekends, holidays, and breaks.

Office Hours:  
In-Person: Tuesdays | 1 P.M. – 3 P.M. or by appointment.  
Online: Wednesdays | 6:30 P.M. – 8 P.M. or by appointment

Course Information

Description  
This is an advanced practice course designed to prepare students to provide therapy for couples and families at all life stages who are experiencing problems in intimacy, marital, divorce, or remarriage adjustment.

Rationale/Overview  
This course presents several models of couple therapy for working with distressed couples. It also includes critical issues involved in troubled intimate relationships, the impact of dissolution or divorce on adults and children, and therapeutic models for helping families adapt to changing family structures.
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

As a result of this course, students will be able to…

1. Describe the dynamics and developmental stages of adult intimate relationships across the lifespan and current bio-psychosocial and social policy influences on the stability of relationships and marriage.

2. Identify major research on couple/marital relationships and divorce/re-bonding/remarriage processes.

3. Contrast theoretical explanations of satisfied versus distressed couple relationships.

4. Identify major and empirically supported explanatory and intervention models applicable to couple, marital, divorce, and re-bonding/remarriage/blended family problems.

5. Explain the processes/stages of relationship dissolution and divorce and their impact on adults, children, and extended families.


7. Analyze the impact of race, ethnicity, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic, class, and religion/spirituality on the dynamics of couple distress, divorce, and re-bonding/remarriage/blended family problems.

8. Demonstrate skill in the assessment of couple, marital, divorce, and re-bonding/remarriage processes and problems.

9. Demonstrate skill in selecting, integrating, and implementing interventions appropriate to the unique client situation and problem.

10. Discuss ethical and legal complexities associated with interventions for problems in couple/marital, divorced, and re-bonding/remarriage/blended family systems.

11. Explain the relevance of DSM-5 diagnoses in assessment and treatment planning for problems involving couple/marital relationships, dissolution/divorce, and re-bonding/remarriage/blended family units.

Prerequisites of the Course

SOWK 8220

Required Text / Supplemental Materials

Required Text:


Recommended Text:
Course Structure / Format

Video lectures, discussions, weekly assignments, audio-visual aids, and guest speakers will be used to present course materials.

Tentative Course Schedule

NOTE: This syllabus is written as an expectation of class topics, learning activities, and expected learning outcomes. However, I reserve the right to make changes in this schedule that may result in enhanced or more effective learning for students. These modifications will not substantially change the intent or objectives of this course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session/Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 1</td>
<td>The theory and practice of couple therapy</td>
<td>CHCT: Chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to Class</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Syllabus/class schedule</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 2</td>
<td>Theories of intimate relationships and couple therapy-Gottman model</td>
<td>CHCT: Chapter 5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Discuss case assessment</td>
<td>Reflection #1 Due to Canvas by 5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 3</td>
<td>Video on CBCT (Constructive Conflict and Fighting Fair)</td>
<td>CHCT: Chapter 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cognitive behavioral couple therapy (CHCT): Assessment and Interventions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 4</td>
<td>Integrative behavior couple therapy (IBCT): assessment and interventions</td>
<td>CHCT: Chapter 3</td>
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<td>Reflection #2 Due to Canvas by 5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 5</td>
<td>Emotionally focused couple therapy (EFCT)</td>
<td>CHCT: Chapter 4</td>
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<td>Session 6</td>
<td>Bowen family systems couple coaching</td>
<td>CHCT: Chapter 9</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Solution focused couple therapy</td>
<td>CHCT: Chapter 11</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reflection #3 Due to Canvas by 5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 7</td>
<td>Couple therapy and physical aggression</td>
<td>CHCT: Chapter 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 8</td>
<td>No Class—enjoy your day off!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 9</td>
<td>Couple therapy and the treatment of affairs</td>
<td>CHCT: Chapter 15</td>
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<td>Reflection #4 Due to Canvas by 5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 10</td>
<td>Separation, uncoupling, divorce: therapy process</td>
<td>CHCT: Chapter 16</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reflection #5 Due to Canvas by 5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 11</td>
<td>Therapy with couples in stepfamilies</td>
<td>CHCT: Chapter 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 12</td>
<td>Changing family systems and structures: Adults and children</td>
<td>The Post-Divorce Family Case Assessment Paper due to Canvas by 5:30pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Value, policy, and research on divorce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 13</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Exam will be open on Canvas starting 08/08 and is due by 08/13 at 11:59pm</td>
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</table>
Assessments (Activities, Assignments, and Exams)

Reflections (5)  
40 points each / 200 points (total) 
There will be five reflection papers throughout the course of the semester. These reflections will be completed utilizing the book, *The seven principles for making marriage work*. These reflections will be at least 2 pages in length (double spaced and 1-inch margins). A thoughtful and detailed reflection is required for full credit. A cover and reference page is not required.

Exams (1)  
150 points (total) 
There will be one exam at the end of the semester covering the lectures and readings assigned in class. This exam will consist of short answer, fill in the blank, true/false, matching, and multiple choice. This exam will be offered over the course of a few days and does not have to be taken in one sitting. This is an open-book-and-note exam, but should be taken individually.

Make-up exams will only be given at my discretion. It is the student's responsibility to contact me before the exam is given or, in case of an emergency, as soon as possible to arrange a make-up exam. Make-up exams must be completed within 1 week of the original test date.

Missing an exam without an excused absence will result in a grade of zero (0) points.

Clinical Case Assessment (1)  
300 points (total) 
The purpose of this assignment is to practice conceptualizing couples in a broad and comprehensive context. In the research portion of the assignment, students will explore and write about a topic that presents as a challenge while working with couples (affairs, mental health, divorce, substance use, blended families, etc). A formal case assessment outline will be discussed in class and will be available to reference on Canvas. A practice case will be provided. The paper should be 10-12 pages in length (not including cover or reference page). You must have 5 sources 2010-present. You may use two of the class books as resources. At least two of the sources have to be peer-reviewed journal articles. This must be completed in APA format and be graduate-level work.

Attendance and Class Participation  
100 points (total) 
Attendance and participation are mandatory and factored into your final grade. There are 15 class meetings during the semester, excluding finals week. Points are awarded based upon attendance (1 point per meeting) and participation/interaction (4 points per meeting). Advanced notification of a necessary absence in the event of an emergency is expected. As there is no way to duplicate class activities and discussion, it is essential you attend every class.

Grading Procedures

Final Grades will be determined based upon the following:

- Reflections (40 points each x 5) 200 pts
- Exam (150 points each x 1) 150 pts
Late Assignment Policy

Turning your work in on time requires good time management skills. These skills are especially important when working with clients whose well-being are dependent on you completing your job tasks. Therefore, turning in assignments on time is important as it helps you to develop skills of prioritizing what needs to be done. For this class, I will accept late work until the last day of class, but your assignment grade will be reduced by 20%.

Scores and feedback for all assessments can be accessed at any time using the Grades section in Canvas.

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Quality Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98 - 100%</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94 - 97.9%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 - 93.9%</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88 - 90.9%</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84 - 87.9%</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 - 83.9%</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78 - 80.9%</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74 - 77.9%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 - 73.9%</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68 - 70.9%</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64 - 67.9%</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 - 63.9%</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>0.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Below 60.9%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Writing Guidelines

Always make sure your writing is free of grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors. Papers should adhere to the most recent citation style outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA).
Plagiarism Statement

In this course, you will submit written work in which you make use of information and ideas found in print or online sources. Whenever you use material from another writer, it is important that you quote or paraphrase appropriately and cite the source.

Never let it appear that ideas and information gleaned from other sources are your own. The UNO Academic Integrity policy defines plagiarism as “presenting the work of another as one’s own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source) and submitting academic work in whole or in part as one’s own when such work has been prepared by another person or copied from another person.”

Failure to cite sources appropriately is plagiarism, a serious academic offense. Plagiarized work will not be accepted. Consequences for plagiarism are up to the discretion of the instructor; they may range, for example, from rewriting all or part of a paper to a grade of F for the course. Students who plagiarize more than once are subject to disciplinary action, which may include expulsion from the university.

Students SHOULD NOT GUESS when it comes to using or citing another writer’s work. Students should contact the instructor or a consultant at the UNO Writing Center with questions. Students should take a printout of the original source as well as the paper that is being written to the consultation.

Academic Integrity Policy

The maintenance of academic honesty and integrity is a vital concern of the University community. Any student found responsible for violating the policy on Academic Integrity shall be subject to both academic and disciplinary sanctions. Violations of the policy on Academic Integrity include, but are not limited to, the following: cheating, fabrication and falsification, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials and/or equipment, complicity in academic dishonesty, falsifying grade reports, and/or misrepresentation to avoid academic work. More information about these areas and the procedures addressing academic integrity is available from the Office of Academic and Student Affairs.

Student Handbook

GASSW students are invited to read the student handbook which includes information on helpful people and resources at the GASSW and UNO, professional behavior for social workers, competency-based education, academic standards, academic behaviors and grades, review of student performance, and reinstatement and reapplication procedures.

Netiquette

Netiquette is a set of rules for acceptable online behavior. The following bullet points cover some basics to communicating online in this course:

- Be respectful of others’ views and opinions when responding to the introductory blog during Session 1. Be sensitive to cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as different political and religious beliefs.
- Don’t use all capital letters when composing your journal responses as this is considered “shouting”.

Last Updated: March 2022
• Use academic tone when composing your responses in your journals unless instructed otherwise. This style of writing requires the use of correct grammar and spelling.

• Be careful when using acronyms in your assignments. If you use an acronym spell out its meaning first, then put the acronym in parentheses afterward.

Technology Requirements

Students will be expected to have access to a computer frequently, as all writing assignments used will be typed out and not handwritten. The software you use to write your assignments is irrelevant, as long as you follow my writing guidelines outlined later in my syllabus. I recommend to have access to a computer weekly. If you do not own a computer, there are computers accessible to you on the UNO campus. Consult the Web pages of Information Technology Services (https://www.unomaha.edu/information-technology-services/labs-and-classrooms/labs-and-kiosks.php) and the Criss Library (https://www.unomaha.edu/criss-library/library-services/computers-and-equipment.php) for more information on equipment availability.

Technical Support

Technical support for common university systems, including Canvas and email, is available from Information Services Technical Support located in 104 Eppley Administration Building. The help desk may also be contacted via email to unohelpdesk@unomaha.edu or via phone at 402-554-4357.

Accessibility Accommodations

It is my goal that this class be an accessible and welcoming experience for all students. Reasonable accommodations are provided for students who are registered with Accessibility Services Center (ASC) and make their requests sufficiently in advance. For more information, contact ASC (Location: 104 H&K, Phone: 402.554.2872, Email: unoaccessibility@unomaha.edu)

Classroom Expectations

Students are expected to arrive on time to class meetings. I expect students to come to class well prepared, meaning readings and other assignments have been completed before class time. Students are expected to be respectful of their classmates and the instructor. Distracting and/or disrespectful behaviors will not be tolerated.

Criss Library

UNO’s Criss Library offers a wide variety of resources that support student learning. Subject specialist librarians have in-depth knowledge of researching within specific disciplines and can give you guidance specifically for your area of study. Students are encouraged to explore customized resources featured on their Web site: https://www.unomaha.edu/criss-library/research-and-instruction/subject-librarians.php
Cell Phones, Mobile Devices, Laptops

Students are welcome to use cell phones, mobile devices, and/or laptops in class provided they are used for academic purposes such as note taking, accessing course materials, or researching course concepts and their use does not disrupt fellow classmates. Please silence devices if at all possible. If you should receive a phone call or text, please step outside to respond. DO NOT take pictures or video during class.

Emergency Preparedness

The University of Nebraska at Omaha is prepared for a wide range of emergencies. Students should familiarize themselves with procedures and assistance available at https://www.unomaha.edu/emergency/index.php.

If travel to campus is not feasible due to a declared emergency, a combination of Canvas, teleconferencing, and other technologies will be used to facilitate academic continuity. I will notify students of procedures through Canvas course site announcements and email as appropriate.

Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement or threatening weather, students should use his/her best judgment regarding travel to and from campus. If you cannot get to class because of adverse weather conditions, contact me as soon as possible. Similarly, if I am unable to reach our class location, I will notify you of any cancellation or change as soon as possible (by approximately 1 hour before class starts and by posting an announcement to our course site in Canvas). If you cannot get to class because of weather conditions, I will make allowances relative to attendance policies as well as any scheduled tests, quizzes, or other assessments.

Preferred Name and Preferred Gender Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Writing Center

The UNO Writing Center offers free one-on-one consultations with trained consultants to all students, faculty, and staff. Their goal is to help writers improve their writing skills and confidence in all types of writing, in all subject areas, and at all stages of the writing process. For more information about their hours and locations or to schedule an appointment, go to unomaha.edu/writingcenter or visit them at their main location in Arts and Sciences Hall, Room 150.

Reporting Sexual Misconduct and Related Resources at UNO

Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 states that “No person in the United States, shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” The University of
Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) seeks to provide an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have been the victim of harassment, misconduct, or assault, we encourage you to report this. If you report sexual assault, sexual misconduct or sexual harassment to a UNO faculty or staff member, by law they must notify UNO’s Title IX Coordinator about the basic facts of the incident. Students wishing to have a confidential conversation with a designated campus representative may contact UNO Counseling Services (402-554-2409) or UNO Ombuds Services. For more information about campus resources at UNO, please go to the UNO Student Safety Website at: http://www.unomaha.edu/student-life/student-safety/index.php

Speech Center

The UNO Speech Center provides free consulting and coaching services to all UNO students, faculty, and staff in preparing oral presentations. The Speech Center Consulting Room can help you with presentation preparation, outlining, effective delivery techniques, along with any other presentational needs. Speech consulting will help at any stage in the speech-making process, whether you are just starting to develop topic ideas or nearly finished with preparing a presentation.

For more information about their services or to schedule an appointment, go to www.unomaha.edu/speechcenter or visit them in Arts and Sciences Hall, Room 185.

Student Safety

A variety of resources are available to support student safety and security. If you have experienced or are experiencing a difficult personal situation, consult the resources available from the Division of Student Affairs at http://www.unomaha.edu/student-life/student-safety/index.php.

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Competencies

The student learning outcomes for this course are built upon the following nine social work core competencies set forth by the CSWE’s 2015 Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) which is required for all accredited social work programs.

1. Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior.
2. Engage diversity and difference in practice.
3. Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.
4. Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice.
5. Engage in policy practice.
6. Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
7. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
8. Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.
9. Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
References

Journals
The American Journal of Family Therapy.
Contemporary Family Therapy.
Journal of Family Psychotherapy.
Journal of Family Social Work
Journal of Family Therapy.
Journal of Family Violence.
Journal of Marital and Family Therapy.
Journal of Marriage and Family.

Websites