

MFTH 6800
Orientation to MFT Practice and Ethics
Marriage and Family Therapy Program
Valdosta State University
Wednesdays, 11:00 - 1:45 p.m., MFT Classroom 140
Fall 2013

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“The major problems of the world are a result of the difference between how nature works and the way people think.”

— *Gregory Bateson*

The metaphor of music more aptly describes the nature of reality than the metaphor of machine.
— *Berendt*

We human beings exist as such in the explanations of our existence as living systems. The laws of nature are abstractions of the regularities of our operation as living systems that we distinguish as we explain our experiences with the coherences of our experiences. We human beings do not exist in nature, nature arises with us and we ourselves arise with it as we explain the way in which we are as we operate as observers.

— *Humberto Maturana*

The solution, like all solutions to apparent contradictions, lies in moving away from the opposition and changing the nature of the question, to embrace a larger context.

— *The Tree of Knowledge*

When you change the way you see things, the things you see change. — *Unknown*

"The intrinsic senselessness (not related to our biological existence) of the imagined possibility of having access to an ultimate externality is not a failure or limitation; it is our condition of existence. So anything that we may claim or propose to have the nature of a transcendental reality is necessarily an explanatory proposition that uses an invented transcendental notion intended to be used as a universal truth valid for all human beings. In the absence of any possibility of referring to a universal truth, all that we can say is that we human beings are the fundament that generates all the worlds that we live. We are not like gods who can create whatever they may wish, but we live what we live whether it is science, philosophy, art, cooking, religion, quantum physics or simple daily living occurring in the realization of our living as biological-cultural beings. Nowadays, quantum physics appears for many as if it constituted the most fundamental approach to the transcendental reality. But what do we find in quantum

physics? We find no more or less than a domain of operational relational coherences in the realization of our living that is different from classical physics. In quantum physics we talk about probabilities, but in doing that we implicitly accept as a fundament for what we do a background of structural coherences that we cannot evoke in another way, and without which to talk in terms of probabilities would be totally senseless and would not constitute a domain of possible computations. In other words, in the absence of such unknowable domain of regular processes in our living, we could not propose probabilities for the occurrence of the observable processes of quantum physics.

Maturana, H. (2012). On the significance of quantum mechanics in the context of external reality. *Constructivist Foundations*, 7(1), 163.

We human living beings explain our living with the coherences of our living . . ."

— *Humberto Maturana*

Course Description

Bateson (1979) tells us that "without context, words and action have no meaning at all" (p. 15). The relationship between words, questions, answers, and meanings form an infinite hierarchy of contexts. This constitutes human interaction. Since the day you were old enough to think, you have had a relationship with the questions and answers, concepts and ideas presented to you by your schoolteachers. However, you have most likely not been asked to examine the pattern that connects these ideas, including *your* relationship to these ideas. Instead, it was expected that you would learn ideas and facts as though such learning takes place objectively.

This class explores something about the relational nature of knowing, which is the warp and woof, the essential underpinnings of marriage and family therapy practice. The way we will begin this exploration is by examining the nature of our relationship to our own knowing. We will start with a basic understanding of epistemology—how we know what we know—and how epistemology shapes ontology—what we know. As we move through the semester, we'll look from a relational perspective at notions such as ethics, responsibility, objectivity and subjectivity, category and member, circular and lineal causality, metaphor (most especially Bateson's use of the metaphor of mind as a lens through which to look at cybernetic systems) language as metaphor, ecology as metaphor, and communication theory. From our exploration of these, and other ideas, we can begin to view the world—particularly the world inside the therapy room—as relationally organized.

This course introduces you to the foundational epistemology that underpins systemically informed family therapy. We will be taking an in-depth look at theories that use metaphors of system, pattern, and interaction to make sense of human behavior, communication, and relationships. In addition, you will become familiar with some of the history and current developments of the field as well as the values and ethics associated with a systemic orientation. By the end of this course, you will have a working understanding of a systemic epistemology and how it applies in therapeutic conversations. You will be able to articulate the particulars as they

apply to the difference between the world of substance and the world of information. Some of these particulars include the following concepts and distinctions:

form/substance	systemic ethics	power
information/energy	Mind/mind	metaphor
paradox	complementary relations	health/pathology
reification	tautology	information systems
epistemology	ontology	observer-in-the-observed
logical levels	Heisenberg principle	hate/desire

MFT Program Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's)

The Student Learning Outcomes for the MFT program are as follows:

SLO1. Practice from a culturally sensitive lens.

SLO2. Practice from a systemic lens.

SLO3. Be prepared to obtain entry-level employment in mental health agencies.

SLO4. Claim the professional identity of Marriage and Family Therapist

Syllabi-Specific Learning Objectives Linked to SLO

We will be taking an in-depth look at theories that use metaphors of system, pattern, and interaction to make sense of human behavior, communication, and relationships, so by the end of this course, you will have met the following learning objectives specific to this course. This means that the student will be able to do the following:

- Understand the foundational epistemology that underpins systemically informed family therapy. (SLO 1, 2, 3, & 4)
- Have working familiarity with the values and ethics associated with a systemic orientation. (SLO 1, 2, 3, & 4)
- Have a working understanding of a systemic epistemology.(SLO 2, 3, & 4)
- Gain a general understanding of the concepts and distinctions listed in the grid above and articulate the difference between the world of substance and the world of information and how this difference applies to the practice of therapy. (SLO 1, 2, 3, & 4)

Course Assignments Linked to SLO's

Attendance & Participation	SLO3. Be prepared to obtain entry-level employment in mental health agencies. SLO4. Claim the professional identity of Marriage and Family Therapist
Paper	SLO1. Practice from a culturally sensitive lens. SLO2. Practice from a systemic lens.
Exams (3)	SLO1. Practice from a culturally sensitive lens. SLO2. Practice from a systemic lens. SLO4. Claim the professional identity of Marriage and Family Therapist

Use of Grading Rubrics

A grading rubric will be used to assess all major assignments. When a rubric is not included in your syllabus or on the web-based learning portal for this class, the *MFT Program Academic Assignment Evaluation Tool* will be used for papers, posters, or presentation. For written exams, the *MFT Exam Evaluation Tool* will be used. Both evaluation tools can be found and downloaded from the MFT website under the *Resources for Students* link.

Required Texts

Bateson, G. (2000). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ISBN = 022603905-6

Flemons, D. (2002). *Of one mind: The logic of hypnosis, the practice of therapy*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton. ISBN = 039370382-7

Keeney, B. P. (1983). *Aesthetics of change*. New York, NY: Guilford. ISBN = 1-57230-830-3

Course Requirements

Your grade rests on three exams, a paper, and the degree to which you are engaged in class. This last item means that if your grade rests between one letter or another, attendance, tardiness, sleeping in class, texting, Facebooking, and playing on other various electronics, cannot fail to shape my impression of your willingness to engage with the ideas presented in this class.

Exams (50 points each). Exams are in class and open book. Exam questions may be drawn from any of the class material (readings, lectures, class discussions or exercises, films, etc.). The tests are cumulative: They cannot be otherwise. Relational ideas are interconnected and interwoven. Your initial understanding will continue to shape and inform your continued and, hopefully, ever deepening understanding. Consistent with the overarching intent of the course, open book exams strive to test the depth of your understanding of systems theory and your success at seeing the connections between ideas rather than your ability to remember facts. See *Use of Grading Rubrics*, above, for information on how your exams are evaluated.

Paper (50 points). You will be writing one short (10 to 12 pages, inclusive of cover and reference pages) paper that must adhere rigorously to APA 6th edition conventions, including cover page, abstract, appropriate headings and subheadings, reference citations, and reference page. The paper is due **November 20th** at the beginning of class. Papers not turned in at that time lose two points at 11am on 11/20 and five points thereafter for every 24 hours that they are late. See *Use of Grading Rubrics*, above, for information on how your papers are evaluated.

Your paper will be a response to two questions:

1. Over the course of the semester, you have learned a number of important concepts. The list below is a partial list of those concepts. Discuss the way the following are related:
 - part/whole relations

- 1st & 2nd order cybernetics
- epistemology/ontology
- observer in the observed
- systemic ethics
- distinctions
- balanced ecologies
- systemic wisdom
- double vision
- objectivity/subjectivity
- reification
- connection/separation
- paradox
- categories of interaction; complementary and symmetrical relations
- mind/Mind
- transcendent and imminent mind
- as response to Cartesian reductionism
- self-correctiveness/stochastic process
- self-referentiality
- recursion
- Creatura/Pleroma
- logical levels of abstraction (objects and ideas and language about objects and ideas)
- relationship between context and content; language and meaning;
- maximization/minimization of variables in otherwise balanced ecologies epistemology (the world as relationally vs linearly organized)

2. How has/will your knowledge/understanding of these concepts shape/inform the practice of therapy?

Concerning references and citations in your paper. Your textbooks may suffice as reference citations. If you wish to use others texts or articles, please do. However, absolutely **no online** (Wikipedia, etc.) references will be accepted in your reference list or in the body of your text. Be very careful that you do not cut and paste lines or paragraphs from the web. These are easily tracked with tracking software (see Academic Honesty Policy, below.).

Points and Grades

200	-	180	A
179	-	160	B
159	-	140	C
139	-	110	D
109			F

Reading and Assignment Schedule

(schedule is subject to change)

- Week 1 - 08/14** **Introductions, Course Overview, and Review of the Syllabus**
Reading for today: Flemons, *Of One Mind*, pp. xiii- 89 (97 pages)
- Week 2 - 08/21** **World as Relationship**
Reading for today: Flemons, *Of One Mind*, pp. 41- 89 (96 pages)
- Week 3 - 08/28** **Knowing is Composed of Boundaries Imposed**
Reading for today: Flemons, *Of One Mind*, pp. 91 – 175 (84 pages)
- Week 4 – 09/04** **Good Therapy Answers the Right Question the Right Way**
Reading for today: Flemons, *Of One Mind*, pp. 177 – 248 (71 pages)
- Week 5 - 09/11** **Exam 1**
- Week 6 - 09/18** **What Causes Cause: The Fundamentals of Epistemology**
Reading for today: Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*
 1. Conscious Purpose vs. Nature, pp. 432 – 445 (14 pages)
 2. Form, Substance, and Difference, pp. 454-471 (18 pages)
 3. Comment on Part V, pp. 472 –473 (2 pages)
- Week 7 - 09/25** **Minding Mind and the Double Bind**
Reading for today: Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*
 1. Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia, pp. 201 – 227 (27 pages)
 2. Pathologies of Epistemology, pp. 486 – 495 (10 pages)
 3. Epidemiology of a Schizophrenia, pp. 194 – 200 (8 pages)
- Week 8 - 10/02** **Where is the Self?**
Reading for today: Bateson – *Cybernetics of “Self”: A Theory of Alcoholism*, pp. 309 – 337 (29 pages)
Comment on Part III, pp. 338 – 339 (2 pages)
- Week 9 - 10/09** **Reading for today:** *Aesthetics*, Introduction & Chapter 2, pp. 1 – 60
- Week 10 - 10/16** **Exam 2**
- Week 11 - 10/23** **From Classification to Process**
Reading for today: *Aesthetics*, Chapter 3, pp. 61 – 109 (49 pages)
- Week 12 – 10/30** **A Relational Theory of Family Therapy**
Reading for today: *Aesthetics*, Chapter 4, pp. 110 – 150 (40 pages)
- Week 13 – 11/06** **The Practice of Therapy**
Reading for today: *Aesthetics*, Chapters 5 & 6, pp. 187 – 201 (51 pages)
- Week 14 – 11/13** *Mindwalk*

Week 15 – 11/20 Last class

Course evaluations

Final papers submitted**Exam 3****Happy Christmas Break, Everyone!****Access Office for Students with Disabilities**

Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications due to a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in the Farber Hall. The phone numbers are 245-2498 (V/VP) and 219-1348 (TTY).

The Student Success Center (SSC)

The SSC at Valdosta State University is located in Langdale Residence Hall and is available to all students. They provide free professional academic advising, peer tutoring in core curriculum courses, and campus job information all in one location. You can reach them by phone at 229-333-7570 or email at ssc@valdosta.edu.

Academic Honesty

Please be aware that the MFT Department adheres very strictly to a policy of academic honesty. VSU's Academic Honesty Policies and Procedures can be found at the following link:
<http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/AcademicHonestyPoliciesandProcedures.shtml>

Recommended Readings

- Bateson, G., & Bateson, M. C. (1987). *Angels fear: Towards an epistemology of the sacred*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Bateson, G. (2000). *Experiments in thinking about observed ethnological material*, in Steps to an ecology of mind. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Becvar, D. S., & Becvar, R. J. (1999). *Systems theory and family therapy: A primer*. Washington, DC: University Press of America.
- Berman, M. (1984). *The reenchantment of the world*. New York, NY: Bantam.
- Berry, W. (1992). *Sex, economy, freedom, and community*. New York, NY: Pantheon.
- Capra, F. (1975). *The tao of physics*. Boulder: Shambhala.
- Capra, F. (1982). *The turning point*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Donaldson, R. E. (Ed.), *Sacred unity: Further steps to an ecology of mind/Gregory Bateson*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Efran, J. S., Lukens, M. D., & Lukens, R. J. (1994). *Language, structure, and change: Frameworks of meaning in psychotherapy*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
- Fisch, R., & Schlanger, K. (1999). *Brief therapy with intimidating cases: Changing the unchangeable*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gergen, K. G. (1999). *An invitation to social construction*. London: Sage.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions (2nd ed.)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Watts, A. (1958). *Nature, man, and woman*. New York, NY: Vintage.
- Watts, A. (1961). *Psychotherapy east and west*. New York, NY: Vintage.
- Watts, A. (1966). *The book: On the taboo against knowing who you are*. New York: Vintage.
- Watzlawick, P. (1976). *How real is real?* New York, NY: Random.
- Watzlawick, P., & Weakland, J. H. (1977). *The interactional view*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.