

Marriage and Family Therapy Program  
**Valdosta State University**  
**MFTH 7602 - Couples and Sex Therapy, Spring Semester 2014**  
Begin January 15 - End April 30, 2014  
MFT Classroom, Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.

**Instructor:** Martha Laughlin, Ph.D. **Email:** [mjlaughl@valdosta.edu](mailto:mjlaughl@valdosta.edu)  
**Office Hours:** Monday 10 - 2pm **Telephone:** (229) 249-4961  
Tuesday and Thursday 10 - 1pm  
Friday 11am - 4pm

"Sex is not something you do, it is a place that you go." — Ester Perel

"Identical genital acts can mean very different things to different people."  
— Eve Sedgwick

This course critically examines, questions, and opens for discussion the cultural context within which we develop and refine our definitions and values about sexuality. We will be exploring in depth such issues as sexual exploitation, pornography, gay/lesbian relationships, male and female definitions of sexuality, HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse, and the diversity of sexual expression. And we will be evaluating through a systemic lens a variety of clinical approaches dealing with client- and DSM-defined sexual issues. You will have the opportunity to pose difficult questions, to soul search, to reflect on your assumptions and biases, to open your eyes, to experience.

Over the course of your career as a therapist treating families, couples, and individuals, you will encounter many gender- and sexuality-related concerns. To be effective in responding to these concerns, you will need to be comfortable with your own sexuality and sensitive to gender-related /sexuality-related issues with which you may not be so comfortable. You will have to be skilled at discussing intimate and explicit details of clients' lives without becoming embarrassed or aroused. And you must find a way to be accepting—or least respectful—of your clients' sexual orientation, choices, and practices, adapting your language to fit with theirs. This class is designed to assist you with these complexities by allowing you a variety of opportunities to challenge yourself. Expect to learn something new about sexuality, intimacy, and gender; about couples; about sex therapy; about yourself. Here is something new to get things started: In Malay, the term for orgasm literally means "*the structure has gone into an ecstatic trance*" and to fall in love is "*to allow one's liver to tumble onto or into or towards somebody*"

[courtesy of Douglas Flemons via Anthony Burgess via David Lodge].

**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**

1. This course explores couples therapy and sexuality from a systemic point of view by evaluating a variety of clinical approaches dealing with client- and court-defined sexual issues through a systemic lens. (Student Learning Outcomes: 2, 3, & 4).
2. Students will learn in-depth such issues as sexual exploitation, pornography, gay/lesbian relationships, male and female definitions of sexuality, HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse, and the diversity of sexual expression (Student Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, & 4).
3. By the end of this course, students will be able to apply a systems/relational understanding to the assessment and treatment couples and sexual issues (Student Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4).
4. Students will be able to critically examine, question, and discuss the cultural context within which we develop and refine our definitions and values about sexuality. (Student Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, & 4)

**Course Assignments Linked to SLO's**

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

### **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**

Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (2000). *The seven principles for making marriage work: A practical guide from the country's foremost relationship expert*. New York: Three Rivers Press. ISBN: 0609805797.

Green, S., & Flemons, D. (Eds.). (2007). *Quickies: The handbook of brief sex therapy*. Revised and Expanded. New York: W. W. Norton. ISBN: 978-0-393-70527-0

Kleinplatz, P. J. (2012). *New directions in sex therapy, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Brunner-Routledge. ISBN: 0876309678

Perel, E. (2007). *Mating in captivity: Unlocking erotic intelligence*. New York, NY: HarperCollins. ISBN-10: 0-06-075363-3 (pbk)

Teifer, L. (Ed.). (2004). *Sex is not a natural act and other essays* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press. ISBN: 0-8133-4185-x

### **Required Articles/Chapters**

Additional articles and book chapters may be assigned (see reading schedule).

### **Your Responsibilities**

Your grade for this course rests on your attendance/participation, two exams, a sexuality journal, an individual project or a case study, and a short presentation.

### **Grading**

Attendance/Participation	70	35%	200 - 180	A
Quizzes X 4	60	30%	179 - 160	B
Sexuality Journal	30	15%	159 - 140	C
Project or Case Study	30	15%	139 - 110	D
Presentation of project or paper	<u>10</u>	10%	109 - below	F
<b>Total Points</b>		<b>200</b>		

### **Attendance (70 points)**

I will be taking attendance. After three absences (not returning after a break constitutes an absence) **and/or** late arrivals, you cannot get higher than a "C" in the class overall. Specifically, following the 3<sup>rd</sup> time that you are absent and/or arrive late at the beginning of class and/or return late to class after a break, you cannot get higher than a "C" in the class overall.

### **Participation (taken for granted)**

Participation is taken for granted, so you will be graded on its absence. I assume that you will come to class consistently and on time, stay the whole time, and lend your thoughtful voice to class discussions. If instead, you are returning from break many minutes after it is over, sleeping in class, texting, holding conversations with your neighbor, playing on Facebook, email, etc., my impression of you as a learner and as an engaged student of family therapy cannot help but be shaped by the ways you've decided to use your in-class time. In such cases, points will be taken from the 70-possible Attendance/Participation points.

### **Four Quizzes (15 points each)**

Approximately every 4<sup>th</sup> week, there will be a short quiz over the reading. These are **closed** book and will take place at the beginning of class. Questions will be drawn from the readings of the previous three weeks. If you're keeping up with the reading, you'll have no problem with the quizzes.

### **Sexuality Journal**

Although there is a near infinity of ways to be sexual and to experience our own sexuality, all of us have in common the fact that each of us was brought up as a gendered person—usually a girl or a boy—and each of us comes to hold some belief

about sex and sexuality in general and specifically about ourselves as sexual beings. This includes those people who have not yet or never will engage in sexual activity and who consider themselves asexual. People's ideas about sexuality can be very complex, non-linear, and completely contradictory. In this class, you will be making a mental journey through your own childhood, noticing, excavating, and writing about the secrets, silences, and meta-messages that comprised your own gendered and sexual upbringing. Your journal will be a snapshot of your current sexuality, sexual thinking and will reflect your examination of your own current sexual orientation, epistemology, and practices (noting, of course, that "practice" may include not being sexually active in any way).

Your thoughts may be inspired/prompted/facilitated by responses to class readings and discussions, videos, and conversations with friends and classmates outside of class. So, for example, if a video, a reading or a class discussion incites brain activity and provokes thought about something, personal or otherwise, write about it. I will be giving you reflection questions from time to time that you can use to prompt your thinking. But mostly you will be writing on your own.

### **Individual Project OR Couples Case Study (each is 30 points)**

You may do an individual project OR write a case study paper.

#### **Individual Project**

Early on in the semester, you will be contracting with me to develop and carry out an individual project. As noted above, you will be taking a "snapshot" of who you are as a sexual, gendered person. Your project should allow you the means to carefully examine one or more aspects of this snapshot. Your project will be successful to the degree that your chosen activity inspires reflective questions and thoughtful exploration of yourself/your experience. Thus, it will involve active exploration of an issue(s), preferably one that generates some personal discomfort (i.e., stretches you) within some realm of sexuality/gender that is related to your development as a therapist. Possibilities for these projects will be discussed in class, and you will be responsible for selecting a topic, carrying out some kind of learning experience, and then writing about it in a significant way (see final paper, below). Your project must be approved prior to implementation. You cannot choose a project that puts you at risk of injury (mental or physical), but it should

challenge you significantly, providing you with a vehicle to critically examine your comfort/discomfort with some issue of sexuality and/or gender. While reading articles and books on a subject is an interesting, and, in many circumstances, a useful intellectual exercise, it is an exercise of the brain, rather than a full mind and body participative activity. As such, it is not sufficient for this project. I want you to create an educational inquiry into some aspect of sexuality that provides experiential exploration. If your proposal is too "bookish," too intellectual, I will turn your proposal back to you and urge you to try to create a more personal experience. The more academic, intellectual the project, the lower the points; the more experiential the project, the higher the points. In the process of carrying out and writing about your project, you will be delving into your assumptions, biases, beliefs, and practices. If you choose to do an individual project, a detailed, typed (1/2 - 1 page) proposal is due on February 5. Please *do not* enclose it in a plastic folder.

**Writing Up the Individual Project.** After you have conducted the activities of your individual project, you will write the project up in a paper that thoughtfully narrates your personal experience. Your paper will be a synopsis of your project, including an in-depth reflection on how it allowed you to successfully challenge your personal and/or professional values/understandings/beliefs/experiences. You don't need to supply project details that you would be uncomfortable sharing, but you do need, in some way, to talk about what you did and what you learned. The paper isn't to be a "term paper" as that type of writing is commonly understood; rather, it should be a polished, personal reflection on how your *doing*—the project activity—shaped and informed (for better or for worse) your *thinking*.

This final paper should be 9-12 double-spaced pages of text (inclusive of title page, abstract, and references), written as a personal reflection, but using APA 6<sup>th</sup> ed. conventions for the title page, abstract, reference page, formatting headers, citing books and articles, and so on. Your paper will be due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, **April 30<sup>th</sup>**. Please, no plastic folders: Just a staple in the upper left corner, please.

Your grade will be determined in part by my best guess of the effort you expended in class preparation and on your project; that is, the degree to which you make it clear that you used the readings and project to challenge your assumptions about yourself and sexuality/gender. However, I will also be assessing the quality of the paper itself, writing quality, thoroughness, depth, clarity, and so on. Make sure your spelling is perfect, your sentences are complete and clear, and your formatting, quotations, and citations follow APA 6th guidelines.

### **Couples Case Study Paper (30 points)**

If you choose to write a couples case study paper rather than do an individual project, you will submit a final paper on the last day of class that will be a case study of a couple with whom you have worked. There are a variety of ways to write a case study, and the family therapy literature has many, many case studies that you can access and review to decide for yourself the best way to structure your own paper. The paper should be 10-12 double-spaced pages of text (exclusive of title page, abstract, and references).

While the structure of your paper is your own, the writing conventions that guide your paper must adhere rigorously to APA 6<sup>th</sup> standards (so, title page, reference list, formatting headers, citing books and articles, headers and sub-headers, margins, and so on). Your paper is due at the beginning of class **April 30<sup>th</sup>**. Do not submit your paper in a folder of any kind: a staple in the upper left corner will do nicely, thank you.

The quality of your paper will be assessed on thoroughness, depth, clarity, grammar, punctuation, spelling, the quality of your writing, adherence to the directions in this syllabus and APA 6<sup>th</sup>. The mechanism by which papers are assessed is a score averaged from 6 categories:

1. **Overall coherence** (clarity, organization, thoughtfulness, comprehensiveness, flow and organization, logical connection between ideas.
2. **Sophistication of the concepts presented** (integration and synthesis of information, accuracy of knowledge, the depth and detail used to describe your ideas)

3. **Use of examples** (concrete illustrations of abstract concepts)
4. **Mastery and integration of systems theory** (demonstrates a clear understanding and articulation of systems theory and clearly links conceptualization and practice)
5. **Writing Quality and Organization** (correct use of APA 6<sup>th</sup> conventions, appropriate citations and references, grammar, punctuation, no excessive wordiness or jargon)
6. **Content** Does the paper fulfill the assignment as outlined in the syllabus and/or discussed in class?

Each of the above categories is given a score of 5 to 1:

- 5 Excellent. As it is, this paper addresses this category consistently and well throughout
- 4 Good. This category shows most of the time throughout but minor changes could be made for excellence.
- 3 Workable. The category is addressed infrequently and/or not well. Major revisions would be necessary to bring the paper to a scholarly level.
- 1 or 2 Not workable. As it is, the category does not show at all in the paper. Author would need to make significant revisions

Again, as previously mentioned, the scores of the 6 categories are averaged to arrive at an overall score and grade for the paper.

- |        |          |  |
|--------|----------|--|
| 5      | (A)      | Excellence in all or most categories                 |
| 4      | (B)      | Good in many categories                              |
| 3      | (C)      | Workable paper but one lacking in several categories |
| 1 or 2 | (F or D) | The paper fails in a number of categories            |

**Presentation (10 points).** On the last two final days of class, you will be giving a brief (no more than 10 or 15 minutes or so) presentation summarizing your individual project or the case study you wrote.

**Diversity, Confidentiality, Untimeliness, University Policy, and Accommodations**  
**Respect for Diversity.** In order to thrive and excel, any culture, particularly one as small as a family or a class, must hold sacrosanct the safety, dignity, and well-being of its members, no matter their race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, national origin, religious beliefs, physical, or cognitive ability. The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect through

understanding that each individual's ways of being, thinking, and deciding are context-dependent; thus, each is valid and worthy of understanding. To the extent possible and appropriate, this course will explore these differences in a safe, positive, and supportive environment.

**Confidentiality.** Keep in mind that we may be discussing confidential material. As always, adhere to the highest ethic of maintaining respect for the lives of clients and classmates and hold disclosures in confidence.

**Late Assignments/Papers.** I will not accept late assignments unless you've made prior arrangements with me. The life circumstances under which I allow late assignments are for things over which you have little control (mandatory or emergency surgery, illness, etc.). Getting married, being in your best friend's wedding, and trips abroad do not qualify. Assignments lost because your computer crashed or you lost your flash drive, etc., simply tells me that you started the paper too late to be able to accommodate such a calamity or that you are not yet taking the sort of steps to protect your work that a person about to graduate from graduate school should know to do by now. Papers not submitted at 10:30am, April 30 deadline lose five points at that time and two points every 24 hours thereafter.

**University Policies.** In accordance with university and school policies, an "incomplete ("I") can be given only when a student in good standing is unable to complete the required course work for *reasons beyond his or her control*. You must initiate a written request for an "I" prior to the end of the semester.

**Accommodations.** Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in room 1115 Nevins Hall. The phone numbers are 245-2498 (voice) and 219-1348 (tty).

### Schedule of Topics and Readings

Jan 15      **Introduction to Couples and Sex: What is the Relationship  
Between Love and Desire?**

- Jan 22      **The Social Construction (and Deconstruction) of Sex and Sexuality**
- Tiefer - Part I, Chapters 1 - 4
  - New Directions in Sex Therapy, Part I, Chapter 1
  - Continue reading *Mating in Captivity*

Jan 29      **Relational Approaches to Sex Therapy**  
**Readings**

- Quickies - Chapter 7 & 8
- Finish *Mating in Captivity*
- Tiefer - Part III

Feb 05      **Politics of Sexual Identity - Feminism and Pornography**

- **Reading Quiz**

**Readings**

- Califia, P. (1986). Feminism and sadomasochism. In A. Kleiner & S. Brand (Eds.), *News that stayed news* (pp. 206-214). San Francisco: North Point Press.
- Ackerman, D. (1994). On the sensuality of looking. In *A natural history of love* (pp. 255-256). New York: Random House. **HQ 801.A513**
- Palac, L. (1995). How dirty pictures changed my life. In A. M. Stan (Ed.), *Debating sexual correctness* (pp. 236-252). New York: Delta. **(HQ1237.5. U6 D43)**

Feb 12      **Issues Sexual Harassment/Ethical & Professional**

**Readings**

- Quickies - Chapter 11
- Rutter, P. (1989). Sex in the forbidden zone. *New Age Journal*, Nov/Dec. (36-40; 98-100).
- DeLozier, P. (1994). Therapist sexual misconduct. *Women and Therapy*, 15(1), 55-67.
- Folman, R.Z. (1991, Spring). Therapist-patient sex: Attraction and boundary problems. *Psychotherapy*, 28, 168-173.
- Pogrebin, M.R., Poole, E.D., & Martinez, A. (1992). Accounts of professional misdeeds: The sexual exploitation of clients by psychotherapists. *Deviant Behavior*, 13, 229-252.

**Feb 19 Issues of Sex & Disability**

**Readings**

- Irvine, J. M. (1990). Repairing the conjugal bed: The clinical practice of modern sex therapy. In *Disorders of desire* (pp. 187-227). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

**Feb 26 Relational Approaches to Sex Therapy**

**Readings**

- Tiefer - Part IV
- Quickies - Chapter 8, Flemons & Green
- Kleinplatz: Chapters 7 & 8

**March 5 Relational Approaches to Sex Therapy (continued)**

**Reading Quiz**

**Readings**

- Quickies - Chapters 5, Todd & 6, Nelson
- Kleinplatz - Chapters 9 & 10

**March 12 Relational Approaches to Sex Therapy**

**Readings**

- Kleinplatz, Chapter 5 and 6
- Keystone, M., & Carolan, M. (1998). A feminist revision of contemporary sex therapy. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 6(4), (289-295).10:

**March 19 Spring Break - No Class**

**March 26 Sexual Abuse and Exploitation: Survivors' Voices**

**Readings**

- Gaitskill, M. (1995). On not being a victim. In A.M. Stan (Ed.). *Debating sexual correctness* (pp. 259-272). New York: Delta.  
**HQ1237.5. U6 D43**
- Sheinberg, M., & Fraenkel, P. (2001). *The relational trauma of incest* (pp. 3-50). New York: Guilford.
- Quickies - Chapter 14, Laughlin & Warner
- Kleinplatz - Chapters 1, 3, 4.

**April 2 Sexual Abuse and Exploitation: Offenders' Voices**

### Readings

- Pryor, D. W. Answering the question why. In *Unspeakable acts: Why men abuse children*.
- Dolan, Y. (1991). Special concerns for the therapist. In *Resolving sexual abuse*.
- Quickies - Chapter 13, Rambo

## April 9 AIDS/HIV

### Reading Quiz

### Readings

- Quickies - Chapters 3, Miller et al., & 9, Doan
- Palmer, R., & Bor, R. (2001). The challenges to intimacy and sexual relationships for gay men in HIV serodiscordant relationships: A pilot study. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 27, 419-432.
- Shelton, D. (1997). Balancing contexts of separation and connection: Applying the relational metaphor to people diagnosed HIV+. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 16(1), 25-35.

Highly recommended: Monette, P. (1988). *Borrowed time: An AIDS memoir*.

## April 16 Contemporary Theories of Marriage and Couples

- **Begin presentation of case studies / individual projects**
- Gottman & Silver's, Seven Principles. (Core triad of balance, three types of stable happy couples, perpetual problems in stable marriages, the sound marital house)
- Attachment theory - Johnson, S. M. (2001). Attachment injuries in couple relationships: A new perspective on impasses in couples therapy, *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 27(2), 145-155.

## April 23 **Course evaluations**

**Presentations of case studies**

## April 30 **Reading Quiz**

**Finish presentations of case studies**

**Due—Final Case study paper**

### Recommended Reading

Accounting for unsafe sex: Interviews with men who have sex with men. *Journal of Sex Research*, 37(1), 24-36. **Full text online**

Bernstein, A. C. Straight therapists working with lesbians and gays in family therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 26(4), 443-454.

Brod, H. (1996). Pornography and the alienation of male sexuality. In L. May, R. Strikwerda, & P. Hopkins (Eds.), *Rethinking masculinity* (pp. 237-253). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Butler, K. (1999, March/April). Satori in the bedroom. *Family Therapy Networker*, 34, 22-33, 52.

Dolan, Y. (1991). Reclaiming the body: Special concerns for the therapist. In *Resolving sexual abuse* (pp. 164-178; 206-223). New York: Norton.

English, M. (1996). Transgenerational homophobia in the family: A narrative. In J. Laird & R. Green (Eds.), *Lesbians and gays in couples and Families: A handbook for therapists* (pp. 15-27). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fischer, N. (1999, July). Falling in love. *Shambhala Sun*, 36-39.

Fishbane, M. D. (1998). I, thou, and we: A dialogical approach to couples therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 24(1), 41-58.

Gender in lesbian relationships: Cultural, feminist, and constructionist reflections. JMFT **Full text online**

hooks, b. (1999, July). Penis passion. *Shambhala Sun*, 66-69.

Laird, J. (2000). Gender in lesbian relationships: Cultural, feminist, and constructionist reflections. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 26(4), 455-467.

LaSala, M. (2000). Lesbians, gay men, and their parents: Family therapy for the coming-out crisis. *Family Process*, 39(1), 67-81.

Lesbians, gay men, and their parents: Family therapy for the coming-out crisis. *Family Process*. **Full text online**

Love, P. (1999, March/April). What is this thing called love? *Family Therapy Networker*, 34, 36-45.

Monette, P. (1988). *Borrowed time: An AIDS memoir*. **Highly recommended.**

Pryor, D.W. (1996). Answering the question why. In *Unspeakable acts: Why men abuse children* (pp. 251-283). New York: New York University Press.

Sanders, G. L., & Kroll, I. T. Generating stories of resilience: Helping gay and lesbian youth and their families. *JMFT*. **Full text online**

Sanders, G., & Tomm, K. (1989). A cybernetic-systemic approach to problems in sexual functioning. In D. Kantor & B. Okun, (Eds.), *Intimate environments* (pp. 346-380). New York: Guilford.

Shelton, D. (1997). Balancing contexts of separation and connection: Applying the relational metaphor to people diagnosed HIV+. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 16(1), 25-35.

Simon, R. (Ed.). (2002, March/April). *Family Therapy Networker*, 26(2).

Tannen, D. (1990). *You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Tannen, D. (2001). *I only say this because I love you: Talking to your parents, partner, sibs, and kids when you're all adults*. New York, NY: Random House. ISBN-13: 9780345407528

Tannen, D., Kendall, S., & Gordon, C. (Eds.). (2007). *Family talk: Discourse and identity in four American families*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Tannen, D. (2011). *That's not what I meant!: How conversational style makes or breaks relationships*. New York, NY: HarperCollins. ISBN-10: 0062062999 or ISBN-13: 978-0062062994

Young, M., & Long, L. (2007). *Counseling and therapy for couples*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.