UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA - RENO
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
BSW PROGRAM

Course Number and Title: SW 424 – Social Work Methods with Couples and Families

Instructor: 

Contact Information

Office Hours

On-line Office Hours

Credits 3 credits

Meeting Times:

Location:

Prerequisite Admission to the Professional Sequence

COURSE DESCRIPTION
SW 424 is one of a four-course sequence that emphasizes the competent application of skills, knowledge and values to social work practice. This course focuses on developing competency in intervening with couples and families. Students will learn how to engage in each stage of the social work intervention process with couples and families, including: rapport building, exploration, assessment, planning, implementation, goal attainment, evaluation and termination. This course furthers students’ understanding of the strengths-based, generalist social work perspective. Special emphasis is placed on analyzing the ways in which client characteristics (i.e., biological, psychological and socioeconomic factors as well as class, gender, ethnicity, culture, and sexual orientation) interact with the resources and demands of the environment in identifying appropriate intervention strategies. Students will be asked to use critical thinking skills to identify and implement interventions with couples and families that are evidenced-informed, as well as contextually and culturally relevant.

COURSE LINKAGES
This course is designed to build upon the knowledge, values and skills you acquired in SW 321—*Basics of Professional Communication*. To facilitate your understanding of evidenced-informed practice, it is taken with or after completion of SW 440—*Principals of Evidenced Informed Practice I*. This course also draws upon the knowledge you have gained in previous theory courses (e.g., SW 310 HBSE I, SW 311 HBSE II, Psychology 101, and so forth). Ultimately, it fosters your development as a *generalist practitioner* who utilizes a variety of social work theories and approaches in working with micro client systems.

**Relevant BSW Program Competencies**
In accordance with the Council on Social Work Education’s (CSWE) 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), the program prepares BSW students who:

- Identify themselves as professional social workers and conduct themselves accordingly (2.1.1)
- Apply social work ethical principles to guide their professional practice (2.1.2)
- Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments (2.1.3)
- Engage diversity and difference in practice (2.1.4)
- Advance human rights and social and economic justice (2.1.5)
- Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research (2.1.6)
- Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment (2.1.7)
- Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services (2.1.8)
- Respond to contexts that shape practice (2.1.9)
- Engage, assess, intervene and evaluate their interactions with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities (2.1.10)

**Course Objectives / Educational Outcomes:**
At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

424.1 Enact the generalist social work roles in work with couples and families (Practice Behaviors: f3, f29)
424.2 Maintain healthy professional boundaries in all professional interactions (Practice Behaviors: f3)
424.3 Incorporate feedback to alter and improve interventions with couples and families (Practice Behaviors: f2, f6)
424.4 Apply models of ethical reasoning to explore complex ethical dilemmas in practice (Practice Behaviors: f8, f9, f10)
424.5 Explore of how personal beliefs and cultural practices in relation to families shape our understandings and interventions with clients. (Practice Behaviors: f2, f7, f15, f16)

424.6 Apply basic communication principles to effectively engage, assess, intervene and terminate with couples and families (Practice Behaviors: f4, f13, f30)

424.7 Analyze the influence of power, professional role and diverse statuses in work with couples and families (Practice Behaviors: f1, f14, f18, f20)

424.8 Prepare accurate and non-biased written assessments, reports, caseplans and documentation (Practice Behaviors: f13, f35, f36)

424.9 Apply the principles of cultural humility to build rapport, conduct thorough assessments and identify cultural-appropriate interventions with diverse client groups (Practice Behaviors: f15, f16, f17)

424.10 Identify evidence-based practices for work with couples and families (Practice Behaviors: f11, f12, f22)

424.11 Support assessments, case plans and intervention strategies with empirical evidence (Practice Behaviors: f11)

424.12 Identify theoretical assumptions influencing understandings of families (Practice Behaviors: f11, f12, f23, f31)

424.13 Analyze the influence of organizational culture and policy on service delivery (Practice Behaviors: f9, f20, f31)

424.14 Articulate the purpose of and role within helping relationships with couples and families (Practice Behaviors: f31)

424.15 Identify mutually agreed-upon goals with couples and families (Practice Behaviors: f31, f35)

424.16 Use assessment tools to elicit relevant client information (Practice Behaviors: f33)

424.17 Provide accurate and clear documentation for work with couples and families (Practice Behaviors: f13)

424.18 Complete written assessment, including family timelines, genograms, and ecomaps with a family (Practice Behaviors: f13, f33)
424.19 Prepare a case plan with goals, tasks, roles, and timelines (Practice Behaviors: f13, f34, f35, f36)

424.20 Provide opportunities for closure upon terminating with couples and families (Practice Behaviors: f40)

424.21 Engage in evaluation of outcomes in work with couples and families (Practice Behaviors: f12)

**Instructional Methods**
This course will implement a variety of collaborative learning techniques. Some of these techniques will include: lecture, class discussion, small group activities, role plays, fishbowl activities and videos.

**Course Policies**

- **Class Attendance and Participation:** As much of the learning in this class is dependent upon class member contributions, you will be expected to come prepared and ready to actively participate in every class meeting. Active participation will include: involvement in class activities and discussions, timeliness to class, and collegial conduct.

  Students who miss 4 hours of a Sunday (face-to-face) Lab class will drop a grade (e.g. A- to B+), and forfeit the participation points for the day. Students who miss a full Sunday session (8 hrs) will drop a full letter grade (e.g. A- to B-) and forfeit participation points. If a student misses more than 8 hrs of face-to-face class time, she/he will receive a final grade of “F”, and will therefore not pass the course. In the event of illness, a doctor’s note will be required; In the event of family emergency, please talk to me personally about the situation. The consequences of missing face-to-face class time will be at the discretion of the instructor, but the above policy will be adhered to. The reason is that the labs are designed to be experiential, and cannot be re-created for make-up purposes.

- **Disabilities:** Students who have documented disabilities that may affect their learning or performance in this class should contact the UNR Disability Services Office (Thompson Student Services Building, room 101). The instructor will make all those accommodations that are requested in writing by the aforementioned office.

- **Academic Success Services:** Your student fees cover usage of the Math Center (784-4433 or www.unr.edu/mathcenter/), Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring/), and University Writing Center (784-6030 or www.unr.edu/writing_center). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.

- **Academic Dishonesty:** “Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses” constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling
a student's enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment. For more details, see the UNR General Catalog.

- **Audio and Video Recordings:** To protect the privacy of other class members, students may not record class lectures or labs without consent from the Instructor. Consent will only be given to those students who request accommodations for a disability and show evidence of the need for said accommodation from the DRC.

A central component of this class entails pre-professional simulations. To enhance learning and skill growth these simulations will be recorded by the Instructor. The Instructor and classmates may view these recordings to provide students feedback on skill use. All recordings will be destroyed upon the conclusion of the class and recordings will be used only for the purposes of feedback within this class. Students will be asked to sign a release to record at the start of the first class.

**Course Requirements**

**Required Readings:** You will be expected to have completed all assigned readings prior to the class session. Assigned readings can be found in the Semester-at-a-Glance calendar, and on WebCampus.


- **Selected List of Family and Systemic Therapy Journals**
  - (Alphabetical Order)
    - American Journal of Family Therapy
    - Australian and New Zealand Family Therapy Journal
    - Contemporary Family Therapy
    - Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy
    - Journal of Family Therapy (Full Access through Healey Library)
    - Family Process (paid subscription full access)
    - Family Systems & Health
    - Human Systems: The Journal of Systemic Consultation and Management


Assignments

Course & Lab Participation - In-Class Activities (50 pts)
As this class focuses largely on skill development, you will be graded on your demonstration of these skills in class. Examples of activities include: provision of peer feedback, accurate reporting of a brief exchange, use of open-ended questioning, ability to paraphrase or summarize, identification feelings in interaction, use of a level four empathetic response, and cultural humility. Students must be present in the class to complete the assignments. Additionally, the instructor will identify selected exercises from the Family Assessment Handbook that are to be completed and turned in. Make-up assignments will not be provided.

Weekly Chapter Assignments (12) (25 pts each for a total of 300 pts)
These assignments will come from the “Family Assessment Handbook”, and will be due each week. Student will type out the responses to the questions at the end of the chapter, and submit them through WebCampus as an email attachment. Please observe the due dates on the schedule provided.

Mini-Case Assignments (3) (50 pts each for a total of 150 pts)
Students will complete three case assignments from the “Family Assessment Handbook”. Students will read the case, address the questions asked in the case, and be able to discuss the case during Lab sessions.

Family Assessment and Case plan (200 pts)
Students will complete a thorough assessment a family case from the “Family Assessment Handbook”, using several empirically validated tools as well as traditional genograms, family timelines and eco-maps. Students will incorporate theoretical and research findings to support their assessments. The assessment should form the basis of a thorough case plan. The case plan should include evidence-informed intervention strategies. This graded assignment will be based upon clarity of writing, correct use of APA, and correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Presentation (100 pts)
Students will present their Family Assessment and Case Plan (assignment described above) to their instructor and classmates in the final class session.
**Final Exam (200 pts)**
A final exam will be given in the final class session. It will include a combination of multiple choice and open-ended questions, and will involve a family case, where students can demonstrate their learning about family assessment and case planning. Much of the information students are tested on will come from the primary text “Family Therapy”.

**Grading**
- **Grading**: Grades will be awarded based upon your performance on the aforementioned course requirements.

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<tr>
<th>Course &amp; Lab participation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Chapter Assignments (12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mini-Case Assignments (3)</td>
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<td>Family Assessment &amp; Case Plan</td>
<td>= 200 pts</td>
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<td>Case Plan Presentation</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td><strong>Total points for the course</strong></td>
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**TOTAL POINTS for the COURSE = 1000 pts.**

**Grading Scale:**

- “A” 1000 – 950
- “A-” 949 – 900
- “B+” 899 – 870
- “B” 869 – 830
- “B-” 829 – 800
- “C+” 977 – 770
- “C” 769 – 730
- “C-” 729 – 700
- “D+” 699 – 670
- “D” 669 – 630
- “D-” 629 – 600
- Any grade below a 600 is
References


Coontz, S. (Ed.). (1992). *The way we never were: American families and the


experiences of growth. *J Marital Family Therapy, 32*(1), 45-57.


# Sample Week by Week Schedule – SW 424

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Dates (2013)</th>
<th>Lab (full day)</th>
<th>Topics &amp; Reading Assignments</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<td><strong>Topics:</strong></td>
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<td>• Intro to the course &amp; syllabus</td>
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<td>• Family Life Cycles</td>
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<td>Sunday, Sept. 8th, 9:00am – 5pm</td>
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<td>• Healthy &amp; Dysfunctional Families</td>
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<td>• Family Contexts for Providing SW Services</td>
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<td>• Working with Culturally Diverse Families</td>
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<td>• Working with Single-parent Families</td>
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<td><strong>Case Assign #2:</strong> Handbook Chapter 15</td>
<td>(The Fernandez Family: Supporting an Older Adult)</td>
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| 9    | 10/21 to 10/27 | • Experiential Family Therapy  
• Evidence-Based Practices – Strengths Perspective | • Gladding Text – Chapter 10  
• Thomlison Handbook – Chapter 8 | • Assign #8: Handbook Chapter 8 (EBP & Stengths) |
| 10   | 10/28 to 11/3  | Sunday, Nov. 3rd, 9:00am – 5pm (guest: Valeri Bianchi-Wood – custody mediation) | • Behavioral & CBT Therapies  
• Critical & Reflective Thinking | • Assign #9: Handbook Chapter 9 (Reflection)  
• Case Assign #3: Handbook Chapter 17 (The McCoy Family: Coping with Role Change and Parenting Concerns) |
| 11   | 11/4 to 11/10  | • Structural Family Therapy  
• Use of Narratives in Family Therapy | • Gladding Text – Chapter 11  
• Thomlison Handbook – Chapter 9 | • Assign #10: Handbook Chapter 10 (Narratives)  |
| 12   | 11/11 to 11/17 | • Strategic Family Therapies  
• Exploring our own Family Systems | • Gladding Text – Chapter 12  
• Thomlison Text – Chapter 10 | • Assign #11: Handbook Chapter 11 (Your Family) |
| 13   | 11/18 to 11/24 | • Solution-Focused Family Therapies  
• Pulling it all together | • Gladding Text – Chapter 14  
• Thomlison Handbook – Chapter 16 (case) | • Assign #12: Handbook Chapter 16 (Del Sol Family) |
<p>| 14   | 11/25 to 12/1  | Happy Thanksgiving! | | |</p>
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<td>15</td>
<td>12/2 to 12/8</td>
<td>Sunday, Dec. 8th, 9:00am – 5pm</td>
<td>Professional Issues</td>
<td>Gladding Text – Chapters 15, 16, &amp; 17</td>
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<td>Working with Substance abuse, Domestic Violence &amp; Child Abuse</td>
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<td>Research &amp; Assessment in Family Therapy</td>
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<td><strong>Lab - Student Family Case Presentations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lab – Final Exam (The Foxx Family)</strong></td>
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<td>Final</td>
<td>12/9 to 12/15</td>
<td><strong>Due by midnight 12/15</strong></td>
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