Course Number and Title  
SW 624 – Social Work Methods with Couples and Families

Instructor

Contact Information

Office Hours

Credits  
2

Co-requisite  
SW 620

COURSE DESCRIPTION

SW 624 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 incorporate knowledge, values and skills you acquired in SW 620, in particular those skills related to basic professional communication. To facilitate your understanding of evidenced-informed practice, it is taken with or after completion of SW 640—Principals of Evidenced Informed Practice I. This course also draws upon the knowledge you have gained in previous theory courses (e.g., SW 610 HBSE I) and knowledge of human functioning acquired during undergraduate studies.
Relevant MSW 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:

624.1 Enact the generalist social work roles in work with couples and families
624.2 Maintain healthy professional boundaries in all professional interactions
624.3 Incorporate feedback to alter and improve interventions with couples and families
624.4 Apply models of ethical reasoning to explore complex ethical dilemmas in practice
624.5 Explore of how personal beliefs and cultural practices in relation to families shape our understandings and interventions with clients.
624.6 Apply basic communication principles to effectively engage, assess, intervene and terminate with couples and families
624.7 Analyze the influence of power, professional role and diverse statuses in work with couples and families
624.8 Prepare accurate and non-biased written assessments, reports, case plans and documentation
624.9 Apply the principles of cultural humility to build rapport, conduct thorough assessments and identify cultural-appropriate interventions with diverse client groups
624.10 Identify evidence-based practices for work with couples and families
624.11 Support assessments, caseplans and intervention strategies with empirical evidence
624.12 Identify theoretical assumptions influencing understandings of families
624.13 Analyze the influence of organizational culture and policy on service delivery
624.14 Articulate the purpose of and role within helping relationships with couples and families
624.15 Identify mutually agreed-upon goals with couples and families
624.16 Use assessment tools to elicit relevant client information
624.17 Provide accurate and clear documentation for work with couples and families
624.18 Complete written assessment, including family timelines, genograms, and ecomaps with a family
624.19 Prepare a case plan with goals, tasks, roles, and timelines
624.20 Provide opportunities for closure upon terminating with couples and families
624.21 Engage in evaluation of outcomes in work with couples and families

**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 2 class sessions will lose 10 points. Students who miss 3 class sessions will lose 15 points. Those students who miss 4 or more class sessions will receive a grade of “F” for the course.

- **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 the Instructor will record these simulations. 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 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 Course Calendar.


- **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
  - Journal of Family Psychology
  - Journal of Family Psychotherapy
  - Journal of Family Therapy
  - Journal of Feminist Family Therapy
  - Journal of Marital and Family Therapy (Healey Library Full Access)
  - Journal of Systemic Therapies
  - The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families

**Assignments**
In-Class Activities and Family Assessment Handbook Exercises
As this class focuses largely on skill development, you will be graded on your demonstration of these skills in class. These assignments will be completed in class and will be worth 3 points each. There will be a total of ten such assignments spread throughout the semester. Examples of topics for the assignments 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.

Midterm and Final Exams
There will be two exams given during the semester. These exams will consist of multiple choice, true/false, and essay questions. Questions will be designed to elicit your understanding of the skills, values and knowledge relevant to work with couples and families. The dates for these exams are noted in the Course Calendar. Each exam is worth 50 points. Make-up exams will only be given to students who experience an unexpected emergency. Students requesting make-up exams must present documentation supporting their need to miss the original exam date.

Family Assessment and Case plan
Students will complete a thorough assessment of a family either from their field placement using several empirically validated tools as well as traditional genograms, family timelines and ecomaps. 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. A complete outline for this assignment will be handed out in class. This assignment is worth 70 points. Twenty of these points will be awarded based upon clarity of writing, correct use of APA, and correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.

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

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>In-Class Activities</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Assessment and Case plan</td>
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The following scale will be used to determine letter grades:
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<th>Score Range</th>
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<td>190 or higher</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>180 – 189</td>
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<td>174 – 179</td>
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<td>Week One</td>
<td>Introductions and Class Overview</td>
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<td>Week Two</td>
<td>Communication Skill Building (Continue)</td>
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<td>9/6</td>
<td>Simulation Lab</td>
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<td>Week Three</td>
<td>Engaging Couples and Families</td>
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<td>Week Four</td>
<td>Psychodynamic and Experiential Therapies</td>
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<td>Week Five</td>
<td>Behavioral and Cognitive-Behavioral Family Therapies</td>
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<td>Week Seven</td>
<td>Structural Family Therapy</td>
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<td>Week Eight</td>
<td>Strategic Family Therapies</td>
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<td>10/18</td>
<td>Solution-focused and Narrative</td>
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References


