P-646 Families and Larger Systems
Summer I—2008, May 20-June 6
TWThF—12:45pm-3:30pm
Professor: Suzanne M. Coyle, Ph.D.

Catalogue Description
Family systems analysis of dynamics and ways of entering and functioning in larger systems such as churches and institutions.

Course Learning Objectives
1) Students will learn an integrated approach in using select family systems theories to assess, intervene, and function in large systems.
2) Students will learn to apply a basic understanding of select family systems theories—Bowen as explicated by Friedman, narrative therapy, and collaborative therapy—to larger systems.
3) Students will participate in experiential training in Bowenian approaches (Friedman and community genograms), narrative approaches (The Public Conversations Project and “Tree of Life”), and collaborative approaches (appreciative inquiry) which can be used the context of larger systems.
4) Students will explore the dynamics of larger systems such as churches, mental health/social service systems, medical systems, school systems, and business systems.
5) Students will integrate theological reflection in their learning of family systems theory and larger system contexts.

Course Outcomes
This course meets some requirements for licensure as a marriage and family therapist in Indiana and other states. In addition, specific MFT core competencies are met upon completion of this course.

Marriage and Family Therapy Core Competencies

#1.1.1—Understand systems concepts, theories, and techniques that are foundational to the practice of marriage and family therapy.
#1.2.1—Recognize contextual and systemic dynamics (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic state, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, spirituality, religion, larger systems, social context).
#1.2.2—Consider health status, mental status, other therapy, and other systems involved in the clients’ lives (e.g., courts, social services).
#3.3.7—Work collaboratively with other stakeholders, including family members, other significant person, and professional not present.
#3.3.8—Assist clients in obtaining needed care while navigating complex systems of care.
#3.5.1—Advocate with clients in obtaining quality care, appropriate resources, and services in their community.
#4.3.8—Empower clients and their relational systems to establish effective relationships with each other and larger systems.

**Course Requirements**

*Detailed descriptions of the written assignments are included in the syllabus as appendices.*

*Reading*—The successful student will complete the books, articles, and website articles as assigned in the course schedule.

*Experiential learning*—Students will participate in experiential learning in the classroom which is designed to equip participates to learn consultative approaches to larger systems based on family systems theory. Larger systems will be studied contextually and analyzed in class. Further, students learn how to implement Bowen/Friedman, narrative, and collaborative approaches as a consultant to larger systems.

*Video learning*—Students will discuss select films and video and how this learning may be applied to the family systems theories being studied.

*Systems reflection paper*—One reflection paper of 2 pages double-spaced in length will be written on either Bowen/Friedman theory, narrative theory, or collaborative theory. Choose your preferred approach. DUE June 3.

*Theological reflection paper*—Students will select concepts from either process theology or liberation theology to integrate with their preferred systems theory in a 3 page double-spaced paper. You may use something you have already read or consult the professor for suggestions. DUE June 5.
Final paper/project—Students will integrate the learning from Imber-Black’s Families and Larger Systems: A Family Therapist’s Guide through the Labyrinth with a family systems theory and theological perspective to a selected larger system context. Students can choose either a project which can be replicated or a paper of 15 double-spaced pages to accomplish this assignment. DUE June 13.

Course Expectations and Grading

Class attendance is required. Students who do not meet the minimum class attendance as described in the student handbook will not receive credit for the class. Absences must be reported to the instructor by e-mail. Requests for extensions must be made 24 hours in advance of the assignment’s due date. Otherwise, the grade on that assignment will be penalized.

It may be necessary for the course requirements or schedule to be modified. In that case, the professor will notify the class and make alternate plans.

Students need to provide mailbox numbers on all written assignments. Communications to students by e-mail will only be sent to the CTS e-mail address. Students are required to check their CTS daily.

Detailed grading rubrics for written assignments will be included in the descriptions of assignments in the syllabus appendices.

The final course letter grade will be determined as follows:

- Systems reflection paper 15%
- Theological reflection paper 20%
- Final paper/project 40%
- Class participation 25%

Required reading


“Collective Narrative Practice.”


**Supplemental Reading**


Theology—Select reading in process theology or liberation theology.
Course Schedule

*Larger Systems Concepts and Approaches*

**May 20—Introduction to the Course and Larger Systems**
Video: “Mindwalk”

**May 21—Basics of Larger Systems**
Reading: Imber-Black, Chapters 1, 2, 3

**May 22—Approaching Larger Systems**
Reading: Imber-Black, Chapters 4, 5

*Larger Systems: Therapeutic and Theological Reflections*

**May 23—Bowen Theory--Friedman**
Reading: Friedman, Sections I and II
Larger System: Churches
Video: “Reinventing Leadership”

**May 27—Bowen Theory--Friedman**
Reading: Friedman, Sections III and IV
Larger System: Churches
Theological reflection: Process theology

*(The following schedule may be extended to facilitate better learning.)*

**May 28—Narrative Theory**
Reading: *Extending Narrative Therapy*—Chapters 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14 (Read chapters 13 and 14 first); “Collective Narrative Practice
Larger System: Mental Health System
Theological reflection: Liberation theology
Video: “When Wittgenstein and Lyotard Talked with Jack and Jill” and “Tree of Life”

**May 29—Collaborative Theory**
Reading: *The Appreciative Organization*; Roth essay; Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava essays
Larger System: Social Service System
Theological reflection: Martin Buber’s I and Thou
Video: “Public Conversations Project” and “Social Construction of Spirituality”

Learning and Integrating Consultative Approaches to Larger Systems

May 30
Reading: Imber-Black, Chapter 6
Larger System: Medical System

June 3
Reading: Imber-Black, Chapter 7
Larger System: Businesses
Video: “Family Run Business”

June 4
Reading: Imber-Black, Chapters 8, 9
Larger System: Legal Services
Video: “Business as an Agent of World Benefit”

June 5
Larger System: Community Organizations

June 6
Larger System: Schools

June 13
DUE: Final Paper/Project
Appendix A
Systems Reflection Paper
DUE: June 3

Description of Paper

Students will select either Bowen/Friedman, narrative, or collaborative theory and discuss the following questions in 2 double-spaced pages.

❖ What is your basic understanding of the theory?

❖ What is its strength?

❖ What are its limitations?

❖ How might you use this theory in your professional context?

Grading Rubric

❖ Does the paper reflect knowledge of the reading material?

❖ Is the critique of the theory well-balanced?

❖ Is the theory applied critically to a professional context?
Appendix B
Theological Reflection Paper
DUE: June 5

Description of Paper

Students will identify a specific reading in either process theology or liberation theology and integrate that theology with the theoretical approach previously selected. Students may select a theological essay they have already read or consult with the professor for suggestions. The paper needs to identify specifically the theology primary source as well as the family systems theory. The purpose of the paper is to integrate theology and therapeutic theory in a 3 page double-spaced paper. The paper will first discuss the theology, briefly recap the approach of the systems theory, and then discuss how they inform each other.

Grading Rubric

- Is the understanding of the theology and systems theory accurate?
- Does the paper demonstrate a grappling with the limitations of both perspectives?
Appendix C
Final Paper/Project
DUE: June 13

Paper/Project Description

Students may choose either a paper or project. The paper will be 15 double-spaced pages and build on the two reflection papers in applying the theology and systems theory to a larger system of their choosing. An adequate amount of resources must be researched for the paper. The purpose of the paper is to use an integrative approach of theology and systems theory in consulting with a larger system.

Students may also elect to create a project for the final written assignment. This project would be a tool in working with a larger system or providing training for consultants to a larger system. It can utilize technology in various forms. The important proviso for a project is that it must be in a format that can be replicated by another person. This means that it is likely that there needs to be a written guide to explain the project.

Examples:
- Paper—“An Integration of Liberation Theology and Narrative Theology in an Assisted Living Facility”
- Project—PowerPoint—“Applying Friedman’s Leadership Points to Your Church”—a training for new pastors in your judicatory

Grading Rubric

- Does the paper/project demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical material?
- Does the paper/project demonstrate an ability to integrate the material in a professional context?
- Does the author/creator’s personal and professional interest in the topic show in the work?