



CO 606 Marriage & Family Therapy

Winter 2027

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Course Dates: January 4 – January 8
Course Delivery Method: Online
3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will provide a comprehensive survey and a broad understanding of the major models of couples, marriage, and family therapy, as well as diverse family systems.

Prerequisite: CO 603 Foundations of Marriage and Family Therapy

COURSE INTEGRATION

This course is a counselling theory class intended to build students' knowledge of Marriage and Family Therapy models, interventions, and systems-orientated perspectives. This course requires students to examine their understanding of marriage, family, and human relationships from both a systemic and biblical perspective.

COURSE TEXTS

Required Reading before the first day of class:

McGoldrick, M., & Hardy, K. v. (Eds.). (2019). *Re-visioning Family Therapy: Addressing Diversity in Clinical Practice* (3rd ed.). Guilford Publishing.

Nichols, M. P., & Davis, S. (2021). *Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods* (12th ed.). Pearson.
(Read only Chapters 1-7, 9, 12-13)

*Available as an e-text at [Pearson eText Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods](#) and **NOT** available at Briercrest Bookstore

Derrick, J. M. (2021). My World Is Not Your World: Sit and Listen and We Can Learn Together. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 42(3), 281–299.

Falicov, C., Nakash, O., & Alegría, M. (2021). Centering the voice of the client: On becoming a collaborative practitioner with low-income individuals and families. *Family Process*, 60(2), 670–687.
(Available on Canvas).

Holyoak, D., Johnson, W., Garcia, M., & Johnson, D. J. (2020). I see you: Addressing diversity in clinical practice through therapist's way-of-being. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 42(2), 131–139. **(Available on Canvas)**

Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents [here](#).

These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <https://textbooks.briercrest.ca/>.

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

SEMINARY-WIDE OUTCOMES

This course seeks to fulfill Briercrest Seminary-wide Outcome (SO) #1 by encouraging students to consider how evangelical faith and values inform their understanding and practice of Couple and Family Therapy. It fulfills SO #2 by preparing students to serve God's kingdom in its diversity through culturally responsive work with couples and families and by considering their vocational calling to serve diverse people and contexts. It also fulfills SO #3 through the formation of students as counsellors who integrate spiritual integrity, academic rigour, and vocational development.

This course seeks to fulfill MC/MAMFT Program Outcome (PO) #1 by developing students' ability to think systemically and understand and apply major Marriage and Family Therapy models. It fulfills PO #2 by developing ethical and culturally responsive practice with diverse couples and families. It fulfills PO #3 through the application of systemic therapeutic skills and interventions. Finally, it fulfills PO #4 by encouraging students to reflect on culture, social location, theology, and self-of-the-therapist as they develop their therapeutic identity.

COURSE OUTCOMES

Systemic thinking: Students can conceptualize couple and family concerns relationally rather than locating the problem solely within an individual.

Theory: Students can differentiate major MFT models according to their assumptions about people, problems, change, therapist role, and intervention.

Clinical application: Students can apply systemic concepts and interventions to diverse couple and family presentations.

Professional formation: Students can critically examine how culture, social location, power, ethics, theology, and self-of-the-therapist influence clinical work.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

Foundations of Systemic Couple and Family Therapy

History of MFT; systemic concepts; biblical and theological foundations; self of therapist

Major Models in Couple and Family Therapy

Bowen; Structural; Strategic; Experiential; CBT; Narrative; Solution-Focused; contemporary approaches

Culture, Context, and the Therapeutic Relationship

Culture; social location; power; cultural humility; therapist values and assumptions; ethical and theological considerations

Working with Diverse Couples and Families

Indigenous; immigrant/refugee/intercultural; 2SLGBTQ+; disability/neurodiversity; stepfamilies; clergy/ministry families

Integration and Application of Systemic Practice

Case conceptualization; intervention; culture/context; theological integration; developing a systemic therapeutic approach

ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas in APA 7 format.

No generative AI can be used for any assignment.

Pre-Course Assignments:

All required texts listed above must be read in completion before the start of class.

Pre-Course Reading & Integration Reflection (3–4 pages)

For this assignment, draw specifically from McGoldrick and Hardy, Holyoak et al. (2020), Falicov et al. (2021), and the assigned chapters in Nichols & Davis. You are not expected to summarize each reading individually. Instead, synthesize the readings as you engage the questions below.

- What does it mean to understand people systemically rather than primarily as isolated individuals?
- How do culture, social location, power, socioeconomic context, family structure, and other larger systems influence the way we understand clients and their presenting concerns?
- What did the readings challenge, complicate, or expand in your own thinking?
- What do the readings suggest about the therapist's use of self, including the assumptions and perspectives we bring into the therapy room?
- How might a biblical and theological understanding of persons, relationships, dignity, and community inform your engagement with these ideas?

This is an integrative reflection rather than a summary of each reading. Use the readings to develop and support your own thinking.

Due: January 1, 2027

Value: 10%

Pre-Course MFT Model Presentation

Prepare a 5–7-minute recorded presentation on your assigned Marriage and Family Therapy model (available on canvas by December 1).

Your presentation should help your classmates understand:

- Where does this model come from? Briefly identify its historical development and key figures.
- How does this model understand people and relationships?
- How does it understand problems? Where does it locate the source or maintenance of relational distress?
- How does change happen?
- What is the role of the therapist?
- What are 2–4 interventions or practices characteristic of the model?
- What are important strengths and limitations of the model?
- What should a therapist consider when applying this model across diverse family systems or cultural contexts?

Use credible academic sources, including course texts where appropriate. Include references at the end of the presentation.

Peer Engagement

Watch all assigned presentations. Choose **three** and provide a brief substantive response to each. Rather than simply identifying what you liked, consider:

- What does this model help a therapist see particularly well?
- What might it overlook or understand less well?
- How does it compare with other systemic approaches you are encountering?
- What questions would you have about applying it with diverse couples or families?

By December 1, you will be assigned one of the following in canvas: Structural Family Therapy, Strategic Family Therapy, Emotionally Focused Couples, Therapy, Psychoanalytic Family Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Couples Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Family Therapy, Narrative Family Therapy, Solution Focused Family Therapy, Bowen Family Systems Therapy, Gottman Method for Couples, Polyvagal Theory for Couples, Scott Sells- Treating Traumatized Families, Satir Transformational System Therapy, Milan Systemic Family Therapy, Psychodynamic Family Therapy, Family-Centered Treatment Model, Frankfurt Multi-Family Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, Internal Family Systems for Families, Internal Family Systems for Couples, Alternatives for Families: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (AF-CBT) -24, Attachment-Based Family Therapy

Due Date for submission of presentation: December 21, 2026

Due Date for watching presentations and comments: December 28, 2026

Value: 10%

Mid-Course Assignments:

In-Course Learning & Application — 10%

Throughout the modular, students will complete a series of individual and collaborative learning activities designed to apply systemic concepts, compare theoretical approaches, reflect on self-of-the-therapist, and engage culture and context in clinical practice. Activities may include case conceptualization exercises, reflective activities, assigned readings and responses, video

observations, and preparation for class consultation. These activities are intended to support active engagement with course material rather than polished academic performance. Students will be assessed primarily on completion, thoughtful engagement, and evidence of preparation, rather than on arriving at a particular "correct" answer.

Value: 10%

Post-Course Assignments:

1. Systemic Case Conceptualization & Integration Paper (8-10 pages)

Choose one couple or family population or context from the list below and develop a systemic approach to working with a hypothetical couple or family within that context. Possible contexts include:

- Stepfamilies
- Single-parent families
- Families with adopted children
- 2SLGBTQ+ families
- Immigrant families
- Transnational families
- Families navigating disability and/or neurodiversity
- Families involved with social services
- Families experiencing poverty
- Clergy & Missionary families

****If you would like to focus on a diverse family system not listed above, please seek permission from your professor **before** beginning.**

Your paper should address the following:

Understanding the Family in Context

Briefly describe the population or family context and identify important relational, developmental, cultural, social, economic, spiritual, or systemic factors that may shape the family's experience. Avoid treating members of a population as though they share a single experience. Use current and credible scholarly literature to support your understanding of the selected family context, MFT model, and clinical approach. Course texts may be used but should not constitute the entirety of your scholarly support.

Systemic Case Conceptualization

Create a brief hypothetical presenting concern involving a couple or family from this context. Conceptualize the concern systemically.

Consider:

- relational patterns and interactional cycles;
- relevant family or intergenerational dynamics;
- strengths and resources within the system;
- larger systems influencing the family;
- cultural and social context;

- power and social location where relevant.

The goal is to move beyond asking “What is wrong with this person?” toward asking “What is happening within and around this relational system?”

Application of an MFT Model

Select one primary Marriage and Family Therapy model and explain why it is appropriate for this case.

Using that model:

- explain how the model conceptualizes the presenting concern;
- identify the primary goals of therapy;
- describe the therapist's role;
- identify and explain specific interventions you would use;
- demonstrate how those interventions logically follow from the theory rather than simply providing a list of techniques.

Culturally Responsive and Ethical Practice

Consider how culture, social location, power, socioeconomic realities, family structure, identity, community, or other contextual factors should influence your work.

Reflect on your own position as therapist:

- What assumptions might you bring?
- What might you need to learn rather than assume?
- How will you ensure that the family's own understanding of their experience remains central?

Biblical and Theological Integration

Engage biblical and theological scholarship relevant to your understanding of persons, relationships, family, suffering, healing, community, or other aspects of the case.

Integration should go beyond attaching a biblical principle to a clinical intervention. Consider where theology and systemic theory meaningfully illuminate, challenge, or complicate one another.

Clinical Integration

Conclude by drawing the pieces together.

What would responsible, systemic, culturally responsive care look like for this family?

Due: February 19, 2027

Value: 35%

1. **Indigenous Families, Reconciliation & Systemic Practice** (8-10 pages)

The purpose of this assignment is to develop an informed and personally reflective understanding of the historical and ongoing experiences of Indigenous peoples and families in Canada and to consider the implications of this learning for your identity and practice as a Couple and Family Therapist. Your research should include Indigenous-authored scholarship and/or resources that centre Indigenous perspectives and voices. This assignment is intended to provide a foundation for the Indigenous-focused reflection required as part of the CACFT credentialing process following graduation. Because credentialing requirements may change, completion of this assignment does not guarantee that the paper can be

submitted unchanged as part of a future CACFT application. Students are responsible for reviewing current CACFT requirements at the time of application.

Your paper should address:

Historical Context and Indigenous Family Systems

Discuss significant aspects of Indigenous history in Canada through a systemic lens. Include consideration of the residential school system and other historical policies and practices that disrupted Indigenous families, kinship structures, culture, language, community, and relationships. Consider the intergenerational and systemic effects of these histories rather than discussing trauma solely at the individual level.

Contemporary Context

Discuss ongoing issues affecting Indigenous peoples and families in Canada. Consider how historical and contemporary systems intersect and continue to influence family and community life. Where appropriate, also attend to Indigenous resilience, strengths, cultural continuity, community, and healing rather than presenting Indigenous experience only through trauma and deficit.

Truth and Reconciliation

Engage the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's *Calls to Action*. Identify Calls to Action particularly relevant to counselling, mental health, family wellbeing, education, or helping professions and consider what responsibilities they raise for Marriage and Family Therapists.

Systemic Understanding

Apply a systemic lens to what you have learned. Consider questions such as:

- How might family experiences that appear individual or relational also be connected to historical, cultural, institutional, and societal systems?
- How do power, colonization, intergenerational relationships, community, culture, and larger systems influence the way we understand presenting concerns?
- What might conventional Western models of family therapy fail to see or misunderstand?

Self-of-the-Therapist and Professional Identity

Reflect personally on how this learning intersects with your own history, assumptions, beliefs, cultural location, and previous understanding of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Consider:

- What has challenged or changed your understanding?
- Where do you recognize limitations in your own knowledge?
- How might your own social location influence what you see, assume, or fail to notice?
- How does this learning shape your developing identity as a Couple and Family Therapist?

Implications for Systemic Practice

Discuss how this learning should influence your future clinical practice with Indigenous individuals, couples, families, and communities. Consider cultural humility, relationship, trust, power, collaboration, assessment, intervention, community resources, and the limits of your own competence. Identify areas in which ongoing learning, consultation, relationship, or further development will be necessary.

Biblical and Theological Reflection

Reflect on how your Christian understanding of human dignity, relationship, justice, reconciliation, truth, humility, community, and care informs your response to what you have learned. Be attentive to both the resources of Christian theology and the ways Christianity and Christian institutions have been implicated in harm toward Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Due: March 5, 2027

Value: 35%

SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current [Seminary Calendar](#).

Attendance Policy

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

Modular Courses

Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Online Courses

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Semester-Based Courses

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

Modular Course Schedules

Modular classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

Assignment Submission

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

Return of Graded Assignments

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

Academic Honesty

As members of the Briercrest learning community, students have a responsibility to conduct themselves with integrity and honour. Students who cheat on exams, plagiarize, inappropriately collaborate, or use generative AI without instructor authorization violate the trust placed in them by their instructors, fellow students, and the seminary. Any such actions constitute a breach of academic honesty and will result in serious consequences, such as failure of an assignment, failure of a course, or expulsion from the seminary.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or involuntary, is the submission of the work of others, published or unpublished, in whole or in part without acknowledgment or proper documentation. All information, ideas and/or direct quotations taken from other primary or secondary sources must be documented appropriately.

Generative AI is an umbrella term for a type of machine learning and a group of algorithms that can create new content, such as text, code, images, videos, music, or a combination of all these formats. Generative AI produces output in response to a query or prompt using generative models such as Large Language Models (LLMs) that rely on large datasets. Generative AI features are also often embedded within tools such as Grammarly, allowing these tools to generate new content, such as the rewriting, paraphrasing, or summarizing of existing text. The generated responses of these tools are probabilistic, which can result in errors and biases in responses.

The use of generative AI to create audio or visual media, to produce outlines, to generate partial or complete drafts of assignments, to answer questions on quizzes or exams, or to edit the grammar of assignment drafts is considered unauthorized unless it is explicitly permitted by the course instructor in writing. All use of generative AI tools must be properly documented.

Students are responsible for ensuring they are using their sources and completing their assignments with transparency and honesty. For more details, consult the [Seminary Calendar](#) and the Briercrest Format Guide. In addition to being familiar with these pages, instructors assume that

you have completed the Briercrest Academic Integrity course on [Canvas](#) and understand the information contained in it.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition (mental or physical) who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should contact the ARC Coordinator in person (Room 217 across from Academic Services), by phone (1-306-801-6159), or by email (arc@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.). It is recommended that students meet with their professors to discuss the requirements of their accommodations (i.e., how the student will receive lecture notes, or how the professor wants to receive extension requests).

BIBLIOGRAPHY