

# Adler Graduate School

Richfield, Minnesota

## AGS Course 541

### **Family Systems: Theoretical Foundations. Theories and Practical Applications**

#### 1. Course Designation and Identifier

- 1.1 Adler Graduate School
- 1.2 Course number **541**
- 1.3 **Family Systems: Theoretical Foundations. Theories and Practical Applications**
- 1.4 Three (3) credits
- 1.5 Prerequisites: **none**

#### 2. Course Description

This course provides basic information about theory and the earlier history of the various theories which have impacted the study of Family as a discipline. The conceptual framework such as family systems theory (via general systems theory), family development, symbolic interaction, communication, human ecology, feminist and the biosocial theories are reviewed.

Key concepts and basic assumptions will be identified in order to assist the student to understand and conceptualize core components of the Family Science discipline.

This course is designed to teach you how to integrate Adlerian Individual Psychology with Family Systems Therapy. You will gain a broad overview of this approach and information about key concepts, theorists and practitioners in the field. By comparing and contrasting some of the theory practice styles, you will be better able to know this information and practice more effectively with clients.

#### 3. Texts, Materials, and Resources (required and optional)

##### 3.1 Required texts:

Goldenberg, I., & Goldenberg, H. (2008). *Family therapy: An overview* (7th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

##### 3.2 Optional texts (recommended):

- Sherman, R., & Dinkmeyer, D. (1987). *Systems of family therapy: An Adlerian integration*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Grunwald, B., & McAbee, H. (1985). *Guiding the family: Practical counseling techniques*. Muncie, IN: Accelerated Development.
- Gurman, A. S., & Kriskern, D. P., (Eds.). (1991). *Handbook of family therapy, Vol. 2*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Krause, C. (1995). *How healthy is your family tree: A complete guide to tracing your*

*family's medical and behavioral history*. New York: Simon & Shuster.

- McGoldrick, M., & Gerson, R. (1985). *Genograms in family assessment*. New York: Norton.
- Sprenkle, D. H., & Moon, S. (Eds.). (1996). *Research methods in family therapy*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Sprenkle, D. H., & Bailey, C. E. (Eds.), (1995). *The effectiveness of marital and family therapy*. (Special Issue). *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 21 (4).

#### 4. Competencies and Learning Outcomes

Students in this course will:

- 4.1 Learn the basic theories which have provided for the basic thought frameworks of family science (standards met are 9a, 9b)
- 4.2 Become familiar with the key aspects of what a theory is and the significant concepts that are part of model-building (standards met are 5c, 5e, 9s, 9b);
- 4.3 Know some of the work of the early theorists and a history of the major theoretical models (standards met are 1a, 3a);
- 4.4 See the connections between these theoretical models and how they are linked to the practice of family therapy;
- 4.5 Examine the specific frameworks such as family development, symbolic interaction, communication, human ecology, and feminist, biosocial, and social family systems theories; (Standard met is 3a)
- 4.6 Be able to think creatively in a multidimensional fashion, in order to better formulate a family systems approach in alignment with the student's own personal and professional understanding of family as a discipline (standards met are 9a, 9b);
- 4.7 Be able to gain some ability to theorize about an Adlerian/Dreikursian family-oriented Theory (standards met are 10 c, 10d, 10e);
- 4.8 Learn key family systems concepts (standards met are 9b);
- 4.9 Become sensitized to the multiplicity of family forms and the ramifications for treatment (standards met are 9c)
- 4.10 Become familiar with select theoretical perspectives and practitioners of family therapy (standards met are 9a, 9b);
- 4.11 Be able to think from a "systems" perspective about assessment and treatment of family (standards met are 5c, 5e, 9b, 9c);
- 4.12 Conceptualize the role of an "Adlerian" family systems therapist (standards met are 10c, 10e);
- 4.13 Learn the 3 phases of family therapy and the therapist's role for each phase (standards met are 5a, 9b);
- 4.14 Become aware of a variety of family assessment methods and innovative treatment Methods (standards met are 7g, 8e, 9a, 9b, 9c);
- 4.15 Consider some issues related to special problems and populations (e.g. separation, divorce, adoption, medical patients) (standards met are 9a);
- 4.16 Increase appreciation for personal and professional issues and ethical dilemmas related to working within this area of focus (standards met are 1b, 1c, 1g, 5a, 9d).

## 5. Course Outline

### 5.1 Unit 1

- Introductions
- Syllabus overview
- Approach of the course
- Basic concepts

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Reading due: Goldenberg, Chapter 1 (Adopting a family relationship framework)  
 Chapter 2 (Family development; continuity and change)  
 Chapter 3 (Gender, culture, and ethnicity factors in family functioning)

### 5.2 Unit 2

- History and background (marriage and family field)
- Key systems information
- Video: Family patterns
- Video: Family therapy Theories

Reading due:  
 Goldenberg: Chapter 4 (Interlocking systems: the individual, the family, and the community)  
 Chapter 5 (Origins and growth of family therapy)  
 Chapter 8 (Transgenerational models)

Sherman: Chapter 1 (Understanding human behavior)  
 Chapter 2 (Family organization and change)

Video: Multigenerational Family Genogram: Exploring a problem in context

### 5.3 Units 3 & 4

5.4

- Issues in family assessment.
- Treatment and interventions.

Video: family systems interventions

Reading:  
 Goldenberg: Chapter 7 (Psychodynamic models)  
 Chapter 9 (Experiential model)  
 Chapter 11 (Strategic model)  
 Chapter 12 (The Milan model)  
 Chapter 13 (Behavioral and cognitive models)

5.5 Units 5 & 6

5.6

- New directions
- Adlerian family therapy
- Special concerns and approaches

## Reading:

Sherman: ~~Chapter 3 (Structure of Adlerian family therapy)~~  
 Chapter 4 (Basics of change)  
 Chapter 5 (Adlerian family therapy as an integrative theory)  
 Chapter 11 (Adlerian family therapy techniques)  
 Chapter 10 (Adlerian family therapy: an educational approach)

Goldenberg Chapter 17 (Research on family assessment and therapeutic outcomes)

5.7 Unit 7

Evolving models of family therapy

## Reading:

Goldenberg: Chapter 10 (structural model)  
 Chapter 14 (social construction model I: solution-focused and collaborative)  
 Chapter 15 (social construction model II: narrative)

5.8 Unit 8

Research, training, and professional issues

## Reading:

Goldenberg: Chapter 6 (Professional issues and ethical practices)  
 Chapter 17 (Research on family assessment and therapeutic outcomes)  
 Chapter 18 (A comparative view of family theories and therapies)  
 Appendix (Becoming a family therapist: training and supervision)

5.9 Unit 9

Final Exam

6. Special Project Time (SPT)

Special Project Time (SPT) allows students the opportunity to integrate course materials. SPT is meant to be a self-contained, 30 hour experience, requiring no more than 30 hours to complete. SPT generally focuses on either (a) an experiential exercise paired with an integrative writing component or (b) a research exercise and a short integrative writing component.

An integrative, SPT experience can be based on an individual project or a group project. Once again, the individual or group completes an experiential or a research oriented exercise, followed by a short integrative writing assignment. This should all be planned within the context of a 30 hour student expectation.

SPT experiences may be constructed in such a way that they pertain to students' unique degree plans. For example, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist students, Licensed Professional Counselor students, and Licensed School Counselor students might construct a SPT experience unique to their chosen disciplines. This is done in consultation with the course instructor.

## 7. Writing Guidelines including APA Format

All written assignments in courses at the Adler Graduate School must be in APA format unless specifically noted by the course instructor (*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> edition), 2009, American Psychological Association).

## 8. Assessment/Evaluation Procedures

Grades will be based on your performance in the following areas:

- 8.1 Class Participation. Your participation will be solicited for small and large group discussion. You are expected to actively participate and attend all classes.
- 8.2 An open book final exam will be given to evaluate your knowledge about key concepts, theories, practitioners, and treatment techniques. Write 10 multiple choice test questions to be handed in for 10 bonus points, if well written. Due at the 6th class meeting.
- 8.3 Special project: Write a 10-15 pp. paper defining your intended approach to Family Therapy. Due 2 weeks after the class ends, specific date to be determined. In the paper:
  - a) Identify the kinds of families you are most likely would work with. What would be some of the key variables and definers of the population? Highlight the types of problems, stage of family development that this population has.
  - b) Select a "systems approach" to which you are most drawn. What kinds of interventions would you be most likely to make? Describe in detail the family systems approach that you would utilize and how you would use it.
  - c) Cite a case example (either real or fictitious) of how you would go about the treatment process with a typical client family. Include a real 3- or 4-generation genogram which covers a general format, or the time line genogram format of a case, or of your own family.
  - d) Incorporate citations and references from the required readings and course materials.

### 8.4 Assessment Plan:

15 points - class participation  
 50 points - final exam  
 35 points - course project

### 8.5 Grading

A	90-100 points
B	80-89 points
C	70-79 points

## 9. Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all class meetings. When a student is unable to attend class, it is a courtesy to notify the course instructor in advance using either e-mail or phone.

## 10. Participation Disclaimer

Active participation in class discussions/exercises/demonstrations is encouraged. As with other AGS courses, ~~in this course, individual students must determine for themselves the level of disclosure/intimacy~~ that is appropriate for them.

Whenever confidential information/material is used in any AGS course, students and faculty members are expected to observe AGS policy concerning the handling of confidential information/material. Full descriptions of these policies are readily available.

## 11. Academic Integrity Policy

Honesty and trust among students and between students and faculty are essential for a strong, functioning academic community. Consequently, students are expected to do their own work on all academic assignments, tests, projects, and research/term papers. Academic dishonesty, whether cheating, plagiarism, or some other form of dishonest conduct may result in failure for the work involved. Academic dishonesty could also result in failure for the course and, in the event of a second incident of academic dishonesty, suspension from the Adler Graduate School. Here are examples of academic dishonesty:

- Cheating - Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit.
- Fabrication - Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
- Facilitating academic dishonesty - Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of academic integrity.
- Plagiarism - The deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas or words or statements of another person as one's own without acknowledgment.

## 12. Internet/On-Line Activity

On-line components Adler Graduate School classes provide an opportunity for open and insightful dialogue. As in face-to-face discussions, there are differences in opinions concerning topics discussed. We view these differences as welcomed attribute of a good scholarly discussion. Respect for differences will also be viewed as a sign of scholarly debate.

Following are guidelines governing on-line discussions:

- Never post content that is known to be illegal. Never post potentially harassing, threatening, or embarrassing statements, as well as statements that that might be potentially offensive and seen as disrespectful in any way.

- Faculty members monitor discussion and intervene when requested or as deemed necessary.
- On-line communication presents a significant level of ambiguity, as verbal content of communication is not well supported by its non-verbal (including contextual) components. If a student feels threatened or offended by a statement made by another student during on-line portion of a class, please address the issue immediately with the other student(s) to clarify their position and your reaction. If this does not work, contact your class instructor so actions can be taken if necessary.
- During on-line discussion, follow the same rules concerning protection of confidential information as you would follow in face-to-face discussion.

### 13. Nondiscrimination Clause

The Adler Graduate School is an equal opportunity educator and employer. The Adler Graduate School does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, or physical disability in the employment of faculty or staff, the admission or treatment of students, or in the operation of its educational programs and activities. The institution is committed to providing equal education and employment opportunities in accordance with all applicable State and federal laws.

### 14. Learning Accommodations (including students with disabilities)

If a student in this course has a documented learning disability, he or she should tell the instructor during the first week of class. The instructor needs to know on the front end so that he or she can work with the student. The Adler Graduate School is committed to helping all students be successful, as best as can be reasonably accommodated. Documenting a learning disability occurs at the student's expense. When documented appropriately, the Adler Graduate School makes all reasonable accommodations.

### 15. Instructor Contact Information

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