

Syllabus for
PRM 643—Marital and Family Systems Theory
3 Credit Hours
Fall 2009

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

A survey of systems theory, the family system, and the integration of systems theory with marriage and family therapy and a review of major contributors to family systems theory and therapy. Examines various components of this system, including gender-related, family of origin, and communication issues.

Prerequisites: None.

The Bible is used to illustrate the family system from Judeo-Christian history. An important aspect of the course is examining how Scripture and prayer can be an integral part of the healing process in marriage and family therapy.

II. COURSE GOALS

The purpose of this course is to enable the student to do the following:

- A. Study the history and development of systems theory as they relate to marriage and family therapy.
- B. Examine the work of major marriage and family systems theorists.
- C. Explore the relationship of the family life cycle, gender issues, and family development to family systems therapy.
- D. Study the differences between functional and dysfunctional families.
- E. Be exposed to the role of the therapist and other professional and ethical issues in marriage and family therapy.
- F. Gain increased knowledge and awareness of the family or origin issues in personal life.
- G. Recognize the historical Judeo-Christian roots of family systems.
- H. Be introduced to the use of professional journals.

III. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THIS COURSE

As a result of successfully completing this course, the student will be able to do the following:

- A. Trace the history and development of marriage and family therapy.
- B. Identify selected contributors to the systems approach to marriage and family therapy, and explain the concepts and principles of the system they represent.
- C. Discuss how family development, gender issues, and communication patterns influence the practice of marriage and family therapy.

- D. Express how families become dysfunctional and how to assess the degree of functionality of a marriage or family system.
- E. Discuss the impact of the student's family of origin on personal life.
- F. Identify and discuss functional and dysfunctional families from early biblical history.
- G. Enumerate the professional and ethical issues involved in marriage and family therapy.
- H. Use professional journals and books in research and writing.

IV. TEXTBOOKS AND OTHER LEARNING RESOURCES

A. Required Materials

1. Textbooks

Becvar, D. S., and R. J. Becvar. *Systems Theory and Family Therapy*. New York: University Press of America, 1999.

Gilbert, R. M. *Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking About Human Interactions*. Minneapolis, MN: Chronimed Publishing, 1992.

Steinke, P. L. *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*. Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2002.

Watzlawick, P., J. H. Weakland, and R. Fisch. *Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1974.

2. Other

None

B. Optional Materials

1. Textbooks

None

2. Other

None

V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. University Policies and Procedures

- 1. Attendance at each class or laboratory is mandatory at Oral Roberts University. Excessive absences can reduce a student's grade or deny credit for the course.
- 2. Students taking a late exam because of an unauthorized absence are charged a late exam fee.
- 3. Students and faculty at Oral Roberts University must adhere to all laws addressing the ethical use of others' materials, whether it is in the form of print, video, multimedia, or computer software. By submitting an assignment in any form, the student gives permission for the assignment to be checked for plagiarism, either by submitting the work for electronic verification or by other means.

4. Final exams cannot be given before their scheduled times. Students need to check the final exam schedule before planning return flights or other events at the end of the semester.
 5. Students are to be in compliance with university, school, and departmental policies regarding Whole Person Assessment requirements. Students should consult the WPA handbooks for requirements regarding general education and the students' majors.
 - a. The penalty for not submitting electronically or for incorrectly submitting an ePortfolio artifact is a zero for that assignment.
 - b. By submitting an assignment, the student gives permission for the assignment to be assessed electronically.
- B. School of Theology and Missions Policies and Procedures
1. **Completion of Assignments**
 Assignments are due on the dates established in the course calendar, which is published in the syllabus. **Any assignments turned in after the scheduled due date are penalized five percent (5%) of the original value per day including weekends, breaks, and holidays.** All work turned in two weeks after the assignment deadline is received but is granted a grade of zero for that assignment. **No work** is accepted after the final date of regular classes.
 2. **Incompletes**
 - a. An incomplete is given only after the student establishes with the academic committee by written petition that student's work is incomplete for good cause (i.e., lengthy illness, death in the family). **Incompletes are rarely granted.** Only those absences that are incurred within the time period of the extenuating circumstances prompting an incomplete are excused. The student is still accountable for any other absences and will be penalized for them according to the attendance policy.
 - b. A Petition for Incomplete Grade with all supporting documentation must be submitted for approval one week prior to the end of normal classes. **The submitting of a petition does not automatically ensure the granting of an incomplete.** The petition must be approved by the academic committee of the School of Theology and Missions. Students are expected to continue all course work until an incomplete is granted.
 3. **Examinations**
 - a. Early examinations **are not** allowed. Late examinations without grade penalty are administered only when extenuating circumstances are present (such as a death in the family the week before exams or a sudden and major illness the week of exams that is documented by a physician).
 - b. A Petition for Late Examination must be submitted to the academic dean's office. A **\$15 fee**, plus proper documentation, must accompany the petition. The academic committee reviews each petition and grade penalties are assessed. (Late exam fee is not a grade penalty.)
 - c. Students taking late exams should expect alternate versions of the original exams.
 - d. **Not being present for the final examination automatically results in failure of the course.**

4. **Attendance**

The Official Attendance Policy for the School of Theology and Missions is as follows:

- a. If the class meets three times a week, the missing of **6** class sessions results in a grade reduction of **one letter** grade. Missing **8** class sessions results in a grade reduction of **two letter** grades. Missing **12** class sessions automatically results in a **grade of F**. If a class meets twice a week, the missing of **4** class sessions results in a grade reduction of **one letter** grade. Missing **6** class sessions results in a grade reduction of **two letter** grades. Missing **8** class sessions automatically results in a **grade of F**. If the class meets once a week, then the missing of **3** class sessions results in a grade reduction of **one letter** grade. Missing **4** class sessions results in a grade reduction of **two letter** grades. Missing **5** class sessions automatically results in a **grade of F**.
- b. **The absences allowed prior to a grade reduction are designed to allow for emergencies and illnesses and are not designed for indiscriminate use.**
- c. Administrative excuses are granted only when a student is on official university business and has received approval in advance from the university administration.
- d. Students are expected to be prompt for classes.
- e. Students are expected to remain for the entire class session.
- f. Leaving early without permission constitutes an absence.

C. Course Policies and Procedures

1. Evaluation Procedures:

- a. The final evaluation for this course is based on the 400 possible earned points available, allotted as follows:

Take-Home Exam	100 points
Systemic Diagram	100 points
Problem Formation	100 points
Final Exam	<u>100 points</u>
Total	400 points

- b. Grading scale:
A=360-400 points
B=320-359 points
C=280-319 points
D=240-279 points
F=239 points and below

2. Whole Person Assessment requirements

- a. All students entering the seminary are required to enroll in PRF 059—ePortfolio: Whole Person Assessment, which provides specific training to develop the skills needed to create an ePortfolio.
- b. WPA requirements for this course:
None

3. Other Policies and/or Procedures
 - a. Problem Formation and Resolution Assignment: Working in groups, students seek to demonstrate how second-order change could be facilitated based on an assigned case study. Instructions are provided in class.
 - b. **Systemic Diagram of a Patterned Interaction**
 Using the format presented in class, each student diagrams a patterned interaction between two or more people. Although the student is not required to be one of the people involved in the interaction, it may be insightful if a pattern that includes the student is diagrammed. There is both a visual and written component to this assignment. This assignment is worth 100 points, divided as follows:

Visual Diagram	45 points
Written Explanation	45 points
Creativity	<u>10 points</u>
Total	100 points

VI. COURSE CALENDAR

Week	Subject	Reading
1	Overview and Introduction to Systems Theory	Becvar, ch. 1 Hanson, ch. 1
2	The Paradigm Shift to Systems/Cybernetics Thinking Cybernetic Epistemology	Becvar, ch. 2 Hanson, chs. 2-3
3	Concepts from First-Order Cybernetics	Becvar, ch. 3 Hanson, chs. 4-6
4	Concepts from Second-Order Cybernetics	Becvar, ch. 4
5	Second-Order Change	Watzlawick, et.al. chs. 1-2, 7-8
6	Family Interpretive Systems/Stories & Narrative Therapy	Becvar, ch. 5 Hanson ch. 7
7	The Family as a System	Becvar, chs. 7-8
8	Implications for Family Therapy	Becvar, ch. 9 Hanson ch. 8
9	Introduction to Bowenian Family Systems Theory	Steinke, chs. 1-2 Gilbert, chs. 1-2
10	Take-Home Exam Due Differentiation of Self: Individuality vs. Togetherness	Gilbert, chs. 3, 16-18
11	Emotional Process and Relationship Patterns	Gilbert, chs. 4-12
12	Application of Bowen Family Systems Theory	Gilbert, chs. 3-14, 19-20
13	Congregations as Emotional Systems	Steinke, chs. 6-10
14	Differentiation of Self and Leadership	Handout
15	Review for Final Final Exam (university schedule)	

Course Inventory for ORU's Student Learning Outcomes
PRM 643—Marital and Family Systems Theory **Dr. Bill Buker, Instructor**
Fall 2009

This course contributes to the ORU student learning outcomes as indicated below:

- Significant Contribution** – Addresses the outcome directly and includes targeted assessment.
Moderate Contribution – Addresses the outcome directly or indirectly and includes some assessment.
Minimal Contribution – Addresses the outcome indirectly and includes little or no assessment.
No Contribution – Does not address the outcome.

The Student Learning Glossary at <http://ir.oru.edu/doc/glossary.pdf> defines each outcome and each of the proficiencies/capacities.

Outcomes & Proficiencies/Capacities	Significant Contribution	Moderate Contribution	Minimal Contribution	No Contribution
1 Outcome #1 – Spirit-Filled Living				
1A	Entry-level competency —Possesses Christian character, personal integrity, a sense of calling, and a demonstrated interest in ministry-related endeavors	X		
1B	Mid-level competency —Exemplifies the fruit of the Spirit, spiritual gifts, ongoing spiritual growth, and clarification of a call to ministry	X		
1C	Candidacy-level competency —Demonstrates involvement in charismatic signs and wonders and integration of ethics and personal integrity in the healing ministry in obedience to a defined call to ministry	X		
2 Outcome #2 – Academic Excellence				
2A	Entry-level competency —Demonstrates an aptitude for graduate theological education	X		
2B	Mid-level competency —Practices theological reflection and sound scholarship in acquiring knowledge through learning and research	X		
2C	Candidacy-level competency —Evidences critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making	X		
3 Outcome #3 – Professional Competence				
3A	Entry-level competency —Demonstrates awareness of professional requirements		X	
3B	Mid-level competency —Communicates discipline-specific information effectively in written and spoken discourse as pertaining to ministry calling	X		
3C	Candidacy-level competency —Integrates leadership in ministry and academic excellence with Spirit-led practices of ministry	X		
4 Outcome #4 – Cultural Relevance				
4A	Entry-level competency —Demonstrates knowledge about cultural diversity	X		
4B	Mid-level competency —Pursues participation in diverse social/cultural contexts	X		
4C	Candidacy-level competency —Evidences skill while engaging in healing, ministry, and acts of justice and mercy in diverse contexts	X		