

**Webster University  
Course Syllabus**

**Family Counseling**

**EPSY 5290.01**

**Fall 1, 2005**

**Professor: Becky Mulvihill McKenna, Ph.D.**

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**Webster University Session:**

**Fall 1, 2005: There will be 8 sessions, beginning August 23rd and ending October 11th. All classes will meet Tuesday evenings from 5:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.. (Phone - Education Dept.: 968-7490)**

**Course Description:**

This course will provide students with the opportunity to explore their assumptions about "the family" and how it develops in a social/cultural context. The course is designed to give students an opportunity to obtain a beginning understanding of selected theories and principles of family counseling and classroom dynamics. There will be a combination of theoretical and practical information with opportunities for students to gain insights using a variety of approaches. These will include "out-of-class" experiences, video-presentations, guest speakers, didactic, and experiential activities.

**Course Rationale:**

We are all a representative of a Family System. The family, as an institution, is the foundation for building a healthy society. More often, healthy families produce individuals who are more able to adapt well to challenges and to contribute constructively to society. In this postmodern era, there are many challenges that influence the development of a family system. Gender role changes, new family constellations, poverty, class-isms, and abuse issues (e.g., physical, sexual, & substance abuse) are some examples of the challenges many families encounter. The purpose of this course is to help teachers to be sensitive to the issues and challenges that families face and how those challenges might impact their classroom. The purpose is also to help teachers to begin to think about methods of understanding family functioning and how they could use this information as a teacher and/or professional helper to teach students better and to communicate well to their students' families.

### **Learning Objectives:**

Students will demonstrate accomplishments in the following areas:

1. Beginning understanding of Systems theory and family counseling principles.
2. Developing a series of lesson plans which incorporate family issues/development into regular classroom curriculum.
3. Demonstrating basic communication skills for working with students or clients and their families.
4. Perceiving and responding to challenging classroom behaviors in a positive and constructive manner.
5. Recognizing, assessing, and intervening with students and their families in need of specialized individual attention.
6. Demonstrating an awareness of community services that are available to individuals and families and ways to access these resources.
7. Increasing sensitization to issues in the changing family and to reflect this sensitivity in all communication with students and their families.

### **Textbook:**

Molnar, A. & Lindquist, B. (1989). Changing problem behavior in schools. San Francisco: Wiley.

ISBN: 1-55542-134-2

### **Handouts:**

Becvar, R.J. & Becvar, D.S. (2000). Family therapy: A systemic integration. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

McKenry, P. & Price, S. (Eds.). (1994). Families and change: Coping with stressful events. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### **Evaluation and Requirements:**

1. Attendance, required readings, and participation in class

**Attendance:** It is extremely important that the student is punctual and present at all classes, for the entire semester.

**Note:** Two absences, or the equivalent, will lower the student's grade one full point.

**Required Readings:** Because of the brief number of weeks to the semester, it is important that the student has read and is ready to discuss the assigned readings as they are presented in the course schedule.

**Participation in Class:** It is essential that the student participate in as many ways as possible (e.g., large group lecture/discussion, small group discussion/activities, dyad interactions, etc.). This is a learning

environment which will allow students to take risks, to try new things, to learn from each other, to see things in different ways, and to confront themselves in a supportive, non-threatening community.

2. Develop **six lesson plans** that incorporate family, family issues, and/or personal/family development into the regular classroom curriculum.
3. Keep a **journal** of reflections throughout the semester.
4. Choose from **one** of the following:
  - A. **Written case presentation** of a classroom student and their family incorporating Family Systems Theory
  - B. **Interview** of a family/child therapist or family-oriented agency
  - C. **Current issues paper** on a topic related to classroom students and family counseling issues.
5. **Oral presentation** of one of the student's written assignments (i.e., lesson plan, case presentation, interview, or current issues paper), to be presented **BY** the last class (**October 11th, 2005**).

**NOTE:**

The student is required to complete activities 1, 2, & 3. The student will also choose one additional assignment from activities 4. (A., B., or C). Then, during the semester, the student will either give a brief (approx. 10 min.) oral presentation of one of their lesson plans (from activity #2), OR the student's choice from activities 4. (A., B., or C.).

25% Attendance/Class Participation

5% Journal

30% Six Lesson Plans

20% Choice A, B, C

20% Oral Presentation

**Grades:**

99-100%	A+
94-98%	A
90-93	A-
88-89	B+
83-87	B
80-82	B-
78-79	C+
73-77	C
70-72	C-
68-69	D+
66-67	D
65 and below	F

## Policies

- \* **Attendance** -- class attendance is expected. Missing class will result in a lowered grade.
- \* **Late assignments** -- work is to be completed on time. Consult the syllabus for specific due dates. **Note: Some due dates will be determined in class.**
- \* **Late work** -- is only accepted if an agreement is set in advance with the professor.
- \* **Incompletes** -- are given at the discretion of the professor.
- \* **Absentee work** -- the student is responsible for getting notes, handouts, assignments, discussion information, any information, etc. for the missed class time.
- \* **Absentee work** -- is due the first class after the student's absence, unless otherwise agreed upon with the professor.
- \* **Any papers handed in during the last class** -- will be returned to students in the following manner:  
Students should provide a self-addressed envelope (appropriate size and full postage) to the instructor so project/paper(s) can be returned.  
Note: Papers will not be available for pick up from the School of Education Office.

## Supplements:

### Instructional Practices:

Instructional practices for this course include cooperative learning, one-to-one teaching, pairing, reflective practices, inquiry-based learning and teaching, whole group/small group activities and discussion, and field-based experiences. The professor will try to offer students a variety of methods for assessment such as, written assignments, oral presentation, class discussions, reflections, hands-on activities, cooperative learning, problem-solving, and more.

- \* This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.