

**Webster University**  
**Syllabus**

**Family Counseling**

**SOCS 5290.01**

**Spring, 2003**

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

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**Webster University Session:**

**Spring, 2003:** There will be **8 sessions**, beginning **January 13th** and ending **March 7th**. All classes will meet **Thursday 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 of building a healthy society. More often, healthy families produce individuals who are more able to contribute 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-ism, and abuse issues (e.g., physical, sexual, & substance abuse) are some examples of the challenges many families encounter. This course is

offered to help the student begin to think about methods of evaluating family functioning and how he or she could use this information as a professional helper.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To gain a beginning understanding of systems theory and family counseling principles.
2. To be able to demonstrate basic communication skills for working with students or clients and their families.
3. To be able to recognize, assess, and intervene with students and their families in need of specialized individual attention.
4. To demonstrate an awareness of community services that are available to individuals and families and ways to access these resources.
5. To become sensitized to issues in the changing family.

**Course Requirements:**

**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.**

**NOTE:**

The student is required to complete activities 1 & 2. The student will also choose one additional assignment from activities 3-5. Then, during the final class, the student will either give a brief oral presentation of one of the their lesson plans (from activity #1), or the student's choice from activities 3-5.

1. **Curriculum Project.** The student will develop six lesson plans on a topic related to family counseling or family development that could be incorporated into the classroom. As you think about your role as an educator, what aspect of the family could you help your students to focus on that may improve their family functioning or general well-being? **Each plan should contain:** 1) title 2) rationale, 3) goals or outcomes, 4) reflect a specific area of the family and classroom subject area, 5) grade level and age level, 6) list of materials needed, 7) detail of activity and procedure, 8) reflection and/or processing questions/activities with students about what they learned (**Note:** this section is very important), 9) any follow-up, extension activities, or evaluations, and 10) any references used or needed to develop/execute this plan. A sample of your lesson plans may be presented orally in the last class.

2. **Journal.** Keep a journal (**1 entry minimum, 2-3 entries per week preferred**). This is your opportunity to express your thoughts and feelings about any issue related to class activities, readings, assignments, life, etc.. It will be turned in twice, but not graded.

3. **Written Case Presentation.** The student will choose an individual or family client case that he or she has worked with or heard about (or use a published case, or make up a client case). A written review of the case should be presented using the following format (or a similar one that includes the following):  
1) introduction of the case and how you chose it, 2) describe the client's/family's presenting concerns, 3) summarize the client's family history (Include a genogram &/or structural family diagram.), 4) discuss in detail how a family theorist of your choice might explain the case and what interventions they might suggest, and finally, 5) recap what you have learned from this experience.

4. **Interview a Family/Child Therapist or Family-Oriented Agency.** The student will visit and interview one of the above and will give a written report that includes: 1) why you chose this agency or professional, 2) description of the office/agency, 3) target populations, 4) problems encountered, 5) methods and services utilized, 6) eligibility criteria, 7) mission statement,

8) location, contact information, fees, etc., 9) and a reflection about what you thought of this professional/agency and how you would feel about using this as a referral for your students and their families as well as sharing this with other colleagues. **Note:** Be sure to include any additional information that would be helpful if giving this person/agency as a referral source.

5. **Current Issues Paper.** Write a 5-6 page paper (not counting references) on a particular topic related to family counseling issues. The references for your paper should come from professional journals, books, current news articles, "expert" interviews, etc.. The paper should center around information that would benefit you in your understanding of the issue and in working with persons/families you may be teaching or counseling. **Note:** **Your paper should be in APA style (see Webster University APA style sheet).**

6. **Class Participation.** Participate in as many ways as you can. This is an environment which will allow us to take risks, to try new things, to learn from each other, to see things in different ways, and to confront ourselves in a non-threatening community. Your efforts in full participation and attendance will be part of your grade. It is extremely important that you are punctual and present at **all** classes. **Note:** Two absences, or the equivalent, will lower your grade one full point.

### **Final Projects:**

These oral presentations will be given during the final class and will last approximately 10 minutes each. Students should be prepared with any handouts, visual aids, props, or materials to enhance the learning experience of their presentation.

Final projects/papers 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. **Please note:** Papers will not be available for pick up from the School of Education Office.

## **Class Schedule:**

- WEEK 1:**     **\*Topic:** Warm-up exercises; "Getting to know you"  
**Jan. 16th**    exercises, discussion of syllabus, and course  
                  requirements. Video: "Going Home, A Family Systems  
                  View of Change."  
                  **\*Class discussion.**  
                  **\*Read: Text: Ch. 1 & 2;**  
                  **Handout: Ch.s 1 & 3 (Becvar & Becvar)**
- WEEK 2:**     **\*Topic:** Systems, Family Life Cycle Development, and  
**Jan. 23rd**     Genograms.  
                  **\*Read: Text: Ch.s 3 & 4;**  
                  **Handout: Ch. 6 (Becvar & Becvar)**
- WEEK 3:**     **\*Topic:** Minuchin Family Therapy--The Structural  
**Jan. 30th**     Approach.  
                  **\*Read: Text: Ch. 5 & 6;**  
                  **Handout: Ch. 9 (Becvar & Becvar)**
- WEEK 4:**     **\*Topic:** Understanding the Challenges of Divorced  
**Feb. 6th**      and Remarriage. Video: "A Child's View of Grief."  
                  **\*Speakers:**  
                  - **Bonnie Rudden - Counselor, Private**  
                  **Practice & School**  
                  **\*Read: Text: Ch.s 7 & 8;**  
                  **Handout: Ch.s 10, 11, & 13 (McKenry &**  
                  **Price)**
- WEEK 5:**     **\*Topic:** The Impact of Substance Abuse on Family  
**Feb. 13th**     Development  
                  **\*Speakers:**  
                  - **Rob Weiss - Director of Counseling -**  
                  **Maryville Univ.**  
                  **\*Read: Text: Ch.s 9 & 10;**  
                  **Handout: Ch.s 12 (McKenry & Price)**

**WEEK 6:**        **\*Topic:** Gay and Lesbian Issues in Families and  
Feb. 20th        Schools.

**\*Speakers:**

- **Tim Gore: Panel Moderator**  
**PFLAG and GLSEN members**

**\*Read: Text: Ch.s 11 & 12;**

**Handout: Ch. 2 (McKenry & Price)**

**WEEK 7:**        **\*Topic:** Understanding Students and Families With  
Feb. 27th        Special Needs

**\*Speaker:**

- **Peppy Howard-Willms: Director of Spec. Ed.**  
**Edgewood Children's Home**

**\*Read: Handout: Ch. 15 (McKenry & Price)**

**WEEK 8:**        **\*Oral Presentations and Wrap Up!**

March 6th        **\*Note: All final papers and lessons handed in**  
**with self-addressed stamped envelop**