Course: BEHAVIORAL COUPLE THERAPY (18:821:562:01, #31349) room A224
Instructor: Shalonda Kelly Ph.D., Room A207 (O) 848-445-3922, skelly@rci.rutgers.edu
Semester: Fall 2011, Wednesdays 9:15-noon

COURSE GOALS: To teach the theoretical foundations and clinical applications of behavioral couple therapy. By the end of the semester, students should have some knowledge of:

1) Trends in marriage in the United States
2) Normative couple behavior
3) Components of the theoretical bases of behavioral couples therapy and enhanced forms of behavioral marital therapy, as well as data relevant to these concepts, which includes models such as behavioral couples therapy (BCT), an adaptation model of relationship functioning (Enhanced BCT), and Integrative Behavioral Couples Therapy (IBCT)
4) Procedures for assessing distressed couples, and data relevant to these procedures, including a) interviewing, b) self-report measures, c) structured observational systems, and d) procedures for ongoing monitoring of treatment
5) Behavioral couples interventions and data supporting their use, including a) enhancement of positive exchanges, b) communication training, c) problem solving-training, d) cognitive and affective interventions, and e) acceptance techniques.
6) Empirical and clinical knowledge about relationships in same sex couples and couples from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds
7) Ethical issues in couples therapy
8) The empirical base for behavioral couples therapy

BCT skills that students should have begun to acquire by the end of the semester include:

1) Setting the stage for therapy
2) Initial interviewing
3) Selecting and using appropriate assessment procedures
4) Treatment planning and contracting
5) Implementation of behavioral interventions such as reciprocity enhancement, communication training, and problem-solving
6) Implementation of cognitive and affective interventions, such as reframing, assisting with affect regulation and expression

COURSE FORMAT: The class will generally be split into two or three roughly equal portions. The first portion of the class will be used for didactic presentations, discussion of the readings, identification of major concepts and issues, clarifying issues, etc. Students should participate actively, question, and play with the ideas and materials that we discuss. Where indicated on the syllabus, the second portion of the class will consist of student-led discussions (SLD), and case presentations. Group discussion/supervision of your cases is also appropriate at this time. For most sessions, the third portion of the class will typically involve an active learning task, such as application of the readings to a case, role-playing, viewing videotapes, or case discussions. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss their cases as they become relevant to the issues discussed in class.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS/& ASSIGNED READINGS FOR THE COURSE:
3. **Assigned Readings:** They are ALL available on Sakai.

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**COURSE OUTLINE**

1. **September 7** | **Introduction To Course & “Normal” Couple Relationships**
**READ:** Nothing - First Day of Class  
**RECOMMENDED:**  
1) E & B, Chapter 1 (Introduction, pp. 9-26)  

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2. **September 14** | **The Cognitive-Behavioral Model And Its Empirical Foundations**
**READ:**  
**OR**  
**RECOMMENDED:**  

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3. **September 21** | **Enhancements To The Basic Model**
**STUDENT-LED DISCUSSION - RACE, CULTURE, & ETHNICITY:**________  
**READ:**  
1) E & B, Chapter 6 (An adaptation model of relationship functioning, pp.181-207)  
**RECOMMENDED:**  


Interview, Assessment, and Case Formulation

4. September 28
Assessment, Part I - Getting To Know A Couple

STUDENT-LED DISCUSSION – GENDER: ________

4) Informed Consent Sheet, oral history interview, and Marital assessment outline handouts


5. October 5
Assessment, Part II – Basic Instruments

STUDENT LED-DISCUSSION – SEXUAL CONCERNS: ________

4) Glance over and bring to class the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and Areas of Change Scale, and the Marital Problem Inventory.


6. **October 12**  

**Assessment, Part III – Specialized Instruments And Integration/Case Formulation**

**STUDENT-LED DISCUSSION – SEXUAL ORIENTATION:**

**READ:**  
1) E & B, Chapter 8 (Conducting Couples Therapy, pp. 269-294)  
3) Conflict Tactics Scales II

**RECOMMENDED:**  


7. **October 19**  

**Behavioral Interventions I - Basics**

**STUDENT-LED DISCUSSION – PARENTHOOD:**

**READ:**  
1) E & B, Chapter 9 (Behavioral Interventions, pp. 295-332)  

**RECOMMENDED:**  

8. **October 26**  

**Behavioral Interventions II – Communication/PREP**

**SLD (TBA) __________ &/OR STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION:**

**READ:**  


4) Glance over and bring to class the communication handouts.

9. **November 2**  

**Behavioral Interventions III – Problem-Solving/PREP**
STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION: ________
3) Glance over and bring to class the communication handouts and the problem solving handouts.

10. November 9  Cognitive Interventions
STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION: ________
READ: 1) E & B, Chapter 10 (Cognitive Interventions, pp. 333-374)

11. November 16  Affective Interventions
STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION: ________________
READ: 1) E & B, Chapter 11 (Addressing Emotions, pp. 375-402)

NO MEETING ON NOVEMBER 23RD, DUE TO THE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY!!!

12. November 30  Broad Behavioral Patterns & Individual Problems
STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION: ________
READ: 1) E & B, Ch. 12 (Interventions for Couple Patterns and Interactions, pp. 403-440)

Special Issues Pertaining to Couples

13. December 7  More Individual Problems & Environmental Demands
STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION: ________
STUDENT-LED DISCUSSION – INTERVENTION OR TBA TOPIC: ________
READ: 1) E & B, Chapter 14 (interventions for environmental demands)

14. **December 14**  
**Couple Problems II – Infidelity, Violence & Separation**

**STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION:** ______

**CASE WRITE-UPS DUE, Course Feedback Forms Handed Out**

**READ:**  

**RECOMMENDED:**  

15. **December 21**  
**Evaluation of Enhanced BCT & Future Directions**

**Course Wrap-up/Oral Feedback**

**CLASS DEBATE**

**READ:**  

2) REPEAT SNYDER 2006 PDF FROM WEEK #2


**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Attendance and full participation in all class sessions:**  
15% of grade

Participation involving the readings, questions, and applications of the readings are strongly encouraged. Please contact Dr. Kelly BEFORE each class session that you miss. If you miss more than two classes, make-up work will be negotiated. As this course emphasizes active learning, ALL students must also volunteer for three role-plays over the course of the term. (Required of enrolled students and auditors [ALL students])
2. **Student-led class discussions:** 20% of grade

For each discussion, the student will review one article on a special topic germane to cognitive-behavioral couple therapy. Articles with the designation (SLD) above are available from the instructor for this purpose, but they are not mandatory. The student will do a brief presentation on the material and then engage the class in a discussion of students’ reactions to and application of this material to cognitive-behavioral couple therapy. To assist in preparing to lead this discussion, it is suggested that presenters compose a brief (1 or 2 pages) summary hand out of the SLD reading s/he chose, AND any reactions related to the readings for that topic. They should reveal your thoughts on how to deal with/think about/address (i.e. APPLY) the material to couple therapy, and they should be designed to facilitate discussion. Discussion dates will be chosen on the first day of class. **Discussions should be 30-minutes (including discussion) for one presenter and one hour for two (should you choose to do them together) Students auditing the class do not need to lead discussions.**

My date is: ___________  My topic is: _________

3. **Present couple case in class (1 hour total):** 25% of grade

Each student will present one case. Case presentations will be spaced through the second half of the semester, so the focus of each presentation will be somewhat different. **Please distribute a one-page written case summary before your presentation.** The case summary should include identifying information, presenting problems, and relationship history. Start with this information to orient your peers to the couple’s background. The case presentation should take **30 minutes TOTAL**, and should present one interesting aspect of the case or a session, rather than a comprehensive presentation of the couple. The case presentation could include any of the following: 1) assessment procedures you used and your rationale for selecting these, 2) case formulation and theoretical basis, 3) a specific treatment intervention used, your rationale for selecting the intervention, and the success or failure of the intervention, 4) objective data about the progress of treatment, or 5) special topics related to the case and how you deal with them (e.g. SLD topics, infidelity, etc.). You should also present a current problem or question about the treatment, and use the second 30 minutes for group discussion/feedback/peer supervision. Case presentations should include a videotape or audiotape of your couple, and should be brief enough to allow plenty of time to discuss and problem solve as a class. Presentation of a couple in a movie, Dr. Kelly’s own videotaped cases, or other options arranged with Dr. Kelly beforehand can take the place of an actual therapy case. For those who have difficulties obtaining cases, other application arrangements will be made (see Dr. Kelly in this event). **My Presentation is Due On: ___________** (Required of ALL students)

4. **Paper presentation of your case (DUE ON 14TH WEEK OF CLASS):** 30% of grade

Your paper should be a formal presentation of your couple case. The paper must include: 1) identifying information, 2) presenting problems, 3) relationship history, 4) assessment procedures you used and your rationale for selecting these, 5) case formulation and theoretical bases for the formulation, and 6) some review of theoretical and/or empirical literature relevant to the unique
presenting problems of the couple, 7) treatment interventions used, your rationale for selecting these, and their success or failure, 8) objective data about the progress of treatment, 9) references and APA formatting. Regarding the relevant literature, if the partners are from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds, research on the topic of intercultural marriages would be relevant. Or, if one partner of the couple has panic attacks that impact their relationship, research on conducting couples therapy with a partner that has panic attacks would be appropriate. This should be a substantive section of the paper and reflect the best of the scientific knowledge about the couple/topic you select. If your couple terminates prematurely (3-4 sessions) and you are not able to pick up another couple, then the paper should address your behavioral formulation of why treatment terminated. It is also expected and acceptable that couples who remain in treatment at the time the paper is due are presented as a work in progress. Finally, for those who have made other application arrangements with Dr. Kelly, modifications to the structure of the paper will be discussed individually. N/A for those auditing the course.

5. Class “debate” (THE LAST CLASS SESSION): 10% of grade

The last class will be devoted to a quasi-debate about the advantages and limitations of behavioral couples therapy, related to BOTH empirical findings and therapist and client concerns. During the first class we will divide into two “debating teams” – one team to identify the limitations and weaknesses of behavioral couples therapy, and the other to identify its strengths and advantages. Throughout the semester, as you read, see your couple, sit in class, interact with an intimate other, or think about relationships, jot down ideas that related to the debate. Each debating team should meet once before the last class to pool your ideas and plan your debating strategy. The debate format will include opening arguments and rebuttals, interspersed with good food and drink, should the class decide on a potluck option for this day.