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), Integrative Behavioral Couples Therapy (IBCT) and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) for couples
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, and basic knowledge of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFT), another empirically supported treatment
7) Basic knowledge of second wave behavioral therapy as applied to couples, and exposure to third wave treatments

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.

COURSE OUTLINE

1. **January 20**  
   Introduction To Course & “Normal” Couple Relationships  
   **READ**: Nothing - First Day of Class  
   **RECOMMENDED**: 1) E & B, Chapter 1 (Introduction, pp. 9-26)  

Understanding Couples and Cognitive-Behavioral Theory

2. **January 27**  
   The Cognitive-Behavioral Model And Its Empirical Foundations  
   4) Christensen, A., Atkins, D.C., Baucom, B., & Yi, J. (2010). Marital status and satisfaction five years following a randomized clinical train comparing traditional versus integrative behavioral couple therapy, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 78, 225-235. (or in the last class)  

3. **February 3**  
   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)  
significantly and chronically distressed married couples. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 72,* 176-191. (has IBCT outcomes)


**Interview, Assessment, and Case Formulation**

4. **February 10** 
**Assessment, Part I - Getting To Know A Couple**

**STUDENT-LED DISCUSSION – GENDER:**

**READ:**
   (Chapter 3, Initial interview, pp. 51-66; a seminal primer by early pioneers).
4) Informed Consent Sheet, oral history interview, and Marital assessment outline handouts

**RECOMMENDED:**

5. **February 17** 
**Assessment, Part II – Basic Instruments**

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


1b) Sabourin, S., Valois, P., & Lussier, Y. (2005). Development and validation of a brief version of the dyadic adjustment scale with a nonparametric item analysis model. *Psychological Assessment, 17,* 15-27. (an important scale derived from the DAS that you have)
4) Glance over and bring to class the (two page) Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and Areas of Change Scale, and the Marital Problem Inventory.

**RECOMMENDED:**


6. **February 24**

   **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)


   4) **Conflict Tactics Scales II**


**Cognitive-Behavioral (& Affective) Interventions**

7. **March 2**

   **Behavioral Interventions I - Basics**

   **SLD – PARENTHOOD:** ________ &/OR **STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION:** ________

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


8. **March 9**  
   Behavioral Interventions II – Communication/PREP  
   SLD (TBA) __religion?___ &/OR STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION: _________  


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

*** SPRING BREAK March 14 – March 18 ***

9. **March 23**  
   Behavioral Interventions III – Problem-Solving/PREP  
   STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION: _________  
   **READ:** 1) Fincham, F. D., Fernandes, L. O. L., & Humphreys, K. (1993). *Communicating in relationships: A guide for couples and professionals*. Champaign, IL: Research Press. (Chapter 8 on advanced steps in learning to communicate effectively, pp. 113-143)


3) Glance over and bring to class the communication handouts and the problem solving handouts.

10. **March 30**  
    Cognitive Interventions  
    STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION: _________  
    **READ:** 1) E & B, Chapter 10 (Cognitive Interventions, pp. 333-374)  


11. April 6  Affective Interventions

STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION: __________

READ:  1) E & B, Chapter 11 (Addressing Emotions, pp. 375-402)


12. April 13  Broad Behavioral Patterns & Individual Problems

SLD (TBA): ________ &/OR STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION: ________

READ:  1) E & B, Ch. 12 (Interventions for Couple Patterns and Interactions, pp. 403-440)

13. April 20  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)


STUDENT CASE PRESENTATION: ________

CASE WRITE-UPS DUE, Course Feedback Forms Handed Out


15. May 4 Evaluation of Enhanced BCT & Future Directions

**Course Wrap-up/Oral Feedback**

**CLASS DEBATE**


**RECOMMENDED:** 1) Sullivan, K.T., & Davila, J. (2014). The problem is my partner: Treating couples when one partner wants the other to change. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration, 24*, 1-12. (repeat)


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance and full participation in all class sessions: 25% 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])

2a. Student-led class discussions: 25% 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. All SLD articles must be published within the last 10 years (preferably last 5 years). 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 summary hand out of the SLD reading s/he chose, AND any reactions related to the readings for that topic (1-2 pages MAX). They can be in the form of questions, concerns/criticisms, reflections, or an active learning task for the group. 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 TOTAL (including discussion) for one presenter and one hour for two (should you choose to do them together). After the assigned SLD topics are used up (the assigned topics MUST be done), some potential SLD topics include prevention of couple distress, couples and illness or family transitions, couples and religion, cybercheating, couples and stress, couples and aging/developmental stages, or whatever topic that you would like to present that is relevant to a broad swath of couples can be chosen.

My date is: ______  My topic is: _________ OR, For Those With Cases (for classes of 10+):

2b. Present couple case in class (45 minutes 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 20-25 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 last 20 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). **Students who audit the class or who do not pick up cases do not need to present. If they would like case presentation experience, they can present a couple from a movie that has a characteristic related to their SLD, and they can add 15 minutes to the SLD to present behavioral concepts related to the SLD.**

**My Presentation is Due On:** _____________________

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) mental status and behavioral observations, 5) assessment procedures and a multiaxial diagnosis for one or both, and your rationale/symptoms for your procedures and diagnoses (this can range from use of the DAS, AOC and an individual adjustment measure to more specific measure(s) and a V61.1 diagnosis of partner relational problem and potential rule-outs to serious diagnoses), 6) case formulation and theoretical bases for the formulation, including an analysis of the cognitive-behavioral principles underlying one or more repeating problem sequences (e.g. cognitive distortions, classical conditioning, reinforcement and/or punishment, modeling etc.) 7) some review of theoretical and/or empirical literature relevant to the unique presenting problems of the couple, 8) treatment interventions used, your rationale for selecting these (at minimum they must relate to/flow naturally from your case conceptualization), and their success or failure, 9) objective data about the progress of treatment, OR potential obstacles and how you would address them when movies are used, and 10) 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, but all other students must do this.**

4. **Class “debate” (THE LAST CLASS SESSION): 20% of grade**

The last class will be devoted to a quasi-debate about the advantages and limitations of behavioral couples therapy, **related to empirical findings, therapist concerns, 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.
NOTE REGARDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:
Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible.

To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form