DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
Department of Psychology

Psychotherapy with Children and Couples
PSYCH 673
Summer 2012

Instructor: Jessic Goicoechea, Ph.D.
Room: 305 RH
Class Time: Tues-Fri. 9-12:15
June 19th – July 6th

Office: 907 Rockwell Hall
Office Hours: Wed. 1-3pm
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Course Description:

This course will introduce doctoral students in clinical psychology to psychotherapy with children and couples. Special emphasis will be given to the theory and technique of child-centered play therapy, an approach grounded in Carl Rogers’ work, initially developed by Virginia Axline in the 1940s, and now practiced by a number of experts. This approach, for which there is empirical support, holds that play is the child’s natural medium of expression and that children, like all people, have an inherent tendency toward self-actualization. Child-centered play therapy aims to provide a genuine therapeutic relationship based on empathy and unconditional positive regard within which children can experience increased agency, develop positive views of themselves, assume greater responsibility, become more self-directing, experience and exercise self-control, and develop internal sources of self-evaluation.

The second half of the course will cover couples therapy from an approach that integrates humanistic, object relations, and skill building perspectives. Such an approach views couples’ conflicts as in part repetitive for each person of early family and involves the application of empathic, interpretive, and coaching skills to work through conflicts toward new ways of relating.

The course will consist of reading and discussion of pertinent literature, self-reflection, video review, role-plays, and class presentations.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Articulate the basic conceptual underpinnings and skills of several approaches to child therapy
- Engage children in therapy through the use of structuring, tracking, empathic listening, and limit setting -- the core skills of CCPT
- Conceptualize couples’ difficulties from an object relations perspective, a perspective that understands the recurring fight as repetitive for each person of
dynamics in their families of origin, particularly of repressed and projected dynamics

- Engage couples in therapy toward understanding how their respective character styles (including defense, anxiety, and hidden feelings) contribute to their conflicts and how those styles are informed by early family dynamics
- Apply humanistic, interpretive, and coaching skills toward working through couples' conflicts, a working through that involves the acknowledgment and withdrawal of projections and a transformation in one's experience of and relating toward self and other

Course Schedule:

June 19    Syllabus Review
           Overview of Child Therapy Models
           Rationale for Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT)
           The child's world


           Video of Landreth *Child Centered Play Therapy: A Clinical Session*

June 20    Historical, Theoretical, and Empirical foundations of CCPT
           The therapist

           Chapter 3 of VanFleet, Sywulak, & Sniscak
           Excerpts from Chapter 3, Sweeney & Landreth from


           Student Presentation
           Video of Baggerly *Play Therapy: Basics for Beginning Students*

June 21    The Playroom, the Materials, and the Core Skills of CCPT

           Chapters 4 & 5 of VanFleet, Sywulak, & Sniscak
Role Play the Core Skills

Student Presentation

**June 22**

**Common Challenges & Limit Setting**

Chapters 10 & 11 of VanFleet, Sywulak, & Sniscak

Role Play Limit Setting

Student Presentation

**June 26**

**Intakes, Assessments, & Interactions with Parents**

Chapters 6 & 7 of VanFleet, Sywulak, & Sniscak

Role Play Intakes, Assessments, & Orientations

Field Trip to Curriculum Center

**June 27**

**Integrating a Humanistic Approach with other Modalities, in other Settings, and with Diverse Populations**

Video of E. Gil *Essentials of Play Therapy with Abused Children*

2 Student Presentations

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**June 28**

**Overview of Couples Therapy**

Aims of a 3-pronged approach: humanistic, object relations, and skill building

Ch. 1 of Donovan

Student Presentation

**June 29**

**The Triangle of Focus & Implications for Intake Interviews and Assessments**

Ch. 3 of Donovan

Bring a map of the triangle of focus

Student Presentation
July 3  An Object Relations Approach

Ch. 2 of Donovan

Guest Speaker: Ray Naar, Ph.D., ABPP on Relationship Enhancement Therapy for Couples

July 4  Happy 4th!!! No Class

July 5  The Triangle of Conflict

Ch. 4 of Donovan
Bring in a map of the triangle of conflict
Student Presentation(s)

July 6  Working through

Ch. 6 of Donovan
Student Presentation(s)

Readings:


Grading:

- 70% of your grade will come from class participation which includes having done the reading each day, contributing to discussion of the readings and videos, and participating in in-class role play exercises

- 15% of your grade will come from two brief, written assignments: 1) mapping a client’s or couple’s triangle(s) of focus, and 2) mapping a client’s or couple’s triangle of conflict
15% of your grade will come from a class presentation on either a mode of child therapy, or an issue pertinent to couples therapy. These presentations should be well organized and may require that you've written an outline or notes from which to speak, but you will not be required to turn in a paper.

PLEASE NOTE

As outlined in the University Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct, academic dishonesty (plagiarism, etc.) will not be tolerated and will be subject to disciplinary actions.

Students with concerns, questions, or problems regarding the course material are encouraged to contact me by phone, email, or during my office hours.

Students with documented disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations if needed. If you need accommodations, please contact the Office of Freshman Development and Special Student Services in 309 Duquesne Union (412-396-6657) as soon as possible. Accommodations will not be granted retrospectively.