

M.S. Degree in Marriage & Family Therapy – Course Descriptions

PSI 492 Medical Family Therapy Intensive

This course is a week-long intensive designed to introduce students to the foundations of Medical Family Therapy through didactic presentations, small group learning and skills development. Presentations are focused on medical family therapy, models of collaboration, and specific illnesses and their effect on families. Additionally, students take part in 12 hours of small group learning, focusing on family of origin experiences with illness and healthcare, as well as case and systems consultation. Students also engage in 3 hours of Skills Workshops that employ simulated family role plays to focus on executive and professional skills development.

PSI 539 Family Therapy Theory and Technique

This course provides an overview of the major theories and clinical approaches in Marriage and Family Therapy, and complements the Foundations of Clinical Practice in Family Therapy (PSI 541) and Human Development Across the Family Life Cycle (PSI 545) courses. Students explore primary source materials as well as independently engage with current literature in the MFT field to find recent applications of the major theories.

PSI 541 Foundations of Clinical Practice in Family Therapy

This course is an introduction to the thoughtful clinical interview and the artful use of the therapeutic system to promote change in individuals, families, and other systems. This course is a preparation for the basic skills and concepts in clinical interviewing and the practice of family therapy.

PSI 542 Clinical Assessment in Family Therapy

This course focuses on training students in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes around assessment in individual, couple and family therapy. Readings, role plays, group activities, and assignments highlight the universality of assessment across types of presenting issues, as well as the content specific to a variety of clinical presentations and areas of concern. Students also focus on proper documentation from a systemic perspective, as well as on skills demonstration and practice.

PSI 543 Psychopathology and Systems

This course reviews comprehensive biopsychosocial assessment and diagnosis of mental illness within a relational and systemic context. Students become familiar with DSM-5 and ICD10 as well as common screening measures. Students role-play clinical interviewing skills with individuals, couples and families to learn the differences in individual and relationally-informed assessment as well as the importance of cultural and contextual factors.

PSI 545 Human Development Across the Family Life Cycle

This course is designed as an introduction to key concepts in human development paradigms; family life cycle theory and clinical applications; lifespan development issues within one's own family of origin experience; and relevant transgenerational theories, including Bowen, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Framo.

PSI 548 Family Therapy Ethics and Professional Practice

This course focuses on the AAMFT ethical code expectations, relevant legal guidelines and professional practice standards within the scope of MFT practice. Students review requirements for state licensure in New York or other states/provinces. Students also address personal issues related to the impact of values, worldview, and culture on the practice of family therapy and demonstrate skills to engage with professional literature in the recognized MFT journals.

PSI 560 Narrative and Integrative Approaches to Family Therapy

This course focuses on the use of language, storytelling, metaphor and the construction of meaning in the family and in the lives of individuals. Students review literature and study perspectives on how language, lived experiences and storytelling shape people's lives. The course concludes with a comparative review of major theories and approaches to family therapy.

PSI 562 Family Therapy Practice

This course prepares students for beginning clinical practice by increasing their practical knowledge, skills, and clinical judgment. Throughout the semester students demonstrate competencies in: clinical practice administration including informed consent and how to communicate with patients outside of session; family therapy interventions across a number of common presenting problems, including depression and anxiety; clinical documentation in the electronic health record; and how to transfer and terminate patients.

PSI 564 Family Law, Policy and Social Systems

This course focuses on family law, legal contexts/procedures, and the social/family context within which they have evolved and currently exist in the present day. Students study policies related to parental and children's rights in the context of 'the family' and the social systems that intersect with the law. The course attends to the scope of practice, strengths, frustrations and barriers to helping families, as experienced by relevant professional groups. Field trips to family court and social services offices are course assignments.

PSI 566 Couples Therapy

This course is an introduction to couples therapy. The course reviews principal approaches to couples therapy for common presenting problems. Assessment, relational and systemic formulations, and treatment planning are addressed. Additionally, case discussions invite self-of-the-therapist reflection and awareness of the influence of multiple understandings of culture in the lives of the couple.

PSI 570 Gender, Human Sexuality and Culture

This course develops an historical perspective on the issues related to gender, race and culture in family therapy. Students learn the role that gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic status, language, ability status, and cultural beliefs play in family life and clinical practice. Students engage in a self-directed learning plan as well as the required readings and course activities.

PSI 572 Family Therapy Research

This course is an introduction to quantitative and qualitative methods in family therapy research, where students learn to critically examine and utilize research findings in clinical practice. Students also review measurement techniques and treatment evaluation methods. Opportunities to build professional research writing skills and poster presentation skills are also provided.

PSI 574 Child-focused Family Therapy

This course focuses on learning about child development within the relational family system, including an overview of both normal and abnormal development. Students learn how to work clinically with children in the context of family therapy including assessment and diagnosis as well as effective evidence-informed and culturally appropriate treatment. Students demonstrate their knowledge and skills through role play and written case conceptualizations. Students also complete the required NYS mandated reporter training for child protection.

PSI 584 Masters Project

Students must complete a Masters project as part of the requirements towards graduation, and are required to submit a paper upon completion of the project. The paper should be based on an approved Masters project proposal and should reflect a high level of scholarly work. The project may include, but is not limited to, the following: a case study consisting of an appropriate literature review, an extensive case report and a case presentation; a review essay on a relevant area of research (i.e., a comparison of partner violence in families with and without children in the home); or an essay on aspects of collaboration with faculty research (i.e., designing instruments, analyzing data sets, developing research protocols, program development). Students who plan to pursue doctoral studies are encouraged to work with mentors and program directors in the Spring of their 1st year to prepare for a masters project that will demonstrate readiness for doctoral level scholarship.

PSI 587 & 588 Clinical Practicum

Clinical Practicum provides students with the opportunity to grow in clinical competence and professionalism as an MFT trainee. All students practice in the onsite Office of Mental Health regulated community mental health clinic, Strong Family Therapy Services, in addition to a community placement. Practicum students provide full episodes of care (engagement, assessment, treatment, and discharge planning) that are biopsychosocial, collaborative and culturally-appropriate. In addition, students receive weekly individual and group supervision in accordance with COAMFTE standards.