

**Counseling Across the Lifespan: A Family Systems Perspective  
(CECP 608)  
Western Michigan University  
Muskegon Campus  
Fall, 2004**

**Course Syllabus**

**Instructor:** Craig Vander Maas, Psy.D., M.S. (Clin. Psychopharmacology)  
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**Time Schedule:** Saturdays, 1-5:30 pm

**Required Text:** Carter, B. & McGoldrick, M. (1999). The expanded family life cycle: Individual, family and social perspectives. (3rd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn Bacon.

**Course Description:**

This course describes counseling implications for assessing and enhancing human development across the life span from a family systems perspective. The content includes: a) theories of human development; b) the stages of family development; c) factors which influence family systems patterns (e.g. race, socioeconomic status, sexual/affectional orientations, childbearing status, marital status, and divorce or blending of families; and d) implications for assessing and enhancing the development of family members and family systems within each stage.

This class is highly interactive and requires active participation from all students. Thus, all required readings should be completed prior to each class meeting. Additionally, rather than simply reading the material, students are expected to have critically evaluated the content of each chapter. Such preparation will facilitate a productive and enjoyable class. Students are expected to engage in self-exploration of their own individual and family development and consequently to apply such information in working with other case examples.

**Program Goals Addressed in Course:**

- \* To create a context in which responsible and self-reflective learning can occur.
- \* To encourage a model of reflective practitioners.
- \* To integrate knowledge of theory, method, and practice.
- \* To focus on self-development

**Course Format:**

The course will be a combination of Power Point presentations, lectures, films, discussions, and experiential exercises. Students are expected to assume responsibility for the large majority of learning in this class. To this aim, students are expected to read the assigned chapters and do the assigned research, to critically evaluate their views of the information, and to be prepared to discuss their perspectives in an appropriate manner.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Students will have a basic understanding of family development.
2. Students will have a basic understanding of human development.
3. Students will gain insight into their own personal development.
4. Students will gain insight into their own family development.
5. Students will be able to apply systems concepts to a variety of families/systems.
6. Students will gain basic understanding of several models of family therapy.
7. Students will learn how to construct and interpret genograms.

**Evaluation Criteria:**

- 25% Seasons of Life paper
- 25% Genogram/family of origin paper
- 25% Research and class participation
- 25% Group presentation on family therapy

**1. Seasons of Life Paper**

This will be a 10-page paper (APA style) that examines Daniel Levinson's seasons of men/women's lives and applies this model to your own life and the life of a famous person (which you examine by reading an autobiography of that person). **Due October 16.**

**2. Genogram/Family of Origin paper**

This involves the construction of a family genogram of at least three generations (you and your siblings, your parents' generation, and your grandparents' generation). Include your own children if you have any. Then using information gleaned from your genogram, describe significant themes, interactional patterns, and characteristics of your family of origin, including where appropriate, your role in these areas. Include a history of how you have come to be who you are in the context of your family background, and how that development could be explained by the theories and concepts in the course. **Due on 11/13.**

**3. Weekly research**

You are expected to research each class session's "discussion topic", to reflect on the information, and to be prepared to discuss your research in class. Your research should focus on peer-reviewed journals, utilizing such search engines as PsychInfo. You should bring five (5) abstracts of interesting journal articles to discuss and to hand in to me.

**4. Family Therapy group presentations**

One-hour group presentations on Structural Family Therapy, Bowenian Family Therapy, Strategic/Systemic Family Therapy, and Behavioral Family Therapy. **Presentations on 11/13.**

More information will be given on these assignments in class

**Course Content:**

- 9/11 #1 **Introductions, Syllabus, Course Overview, Seasons of Adult Life**  
*Discussion: Family Values*
- 9/18 #2 **Pre-Natal Development**  
*Discussion: Developmental Neurotoxicants*  
Read chosen autobiography
- 9/25 #3 **Infancy, Attachment issues**  
*Discussion: Adoption*  
C&M: chapters 1, 2, 3, 4
- 10/2 #4 **Childhood, Piaget, Kohlberg, Erickson**  
*Discussion: What makes a good parent?*  
C&M: chapters 13, 14, 15
- 10/9 #5 **Adolescence**  
*Discussion: Violence and Pornography*  
C&M: chapters 16, 17, 18
- 10/16 #6 **Adulthood**  
*Discussion: Marriage and Divorce*  
C&M: chapters 21, 22, 23, 24, 25  
**Seasons of Life paper due**
- 10/23 #7 **Later Adulthood**  
*Discussion: Geriatric issues and concerns*  
C&M: chapters 11, 12
- 10/30 #8 **Family Systems, Genograms, Family Dysfunction**  
Develop class groups  
C&M: chapters 26, 27, 28, 29
- 11/6 #9 **Gay and Lesbian issues, Support Systems, class projects**  
*Discussion: Gay marriage and parenting*  
C&M: chapter 20
- 11/13 #10 **Family Therapy presentations**  
Class presentations on Structural Family Therapy, Bowenian Family Therapy, Strategic/Systemic Family Therapy, and Behavioral Family Therapy.  
**Genogram/Family papers due.**