COUN 513: Communication in Marriage
Spring 2015

INSTRUCTOR
Linda Ball, EdD                         (903) 886-5637
e-mail:  linda.ball@tamuc.edu (preferred method of contact) (903) 886-5649

OFFICE HOURS: To be determined by first week of Spring Semester

CATALOG DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE
Coun 513. Communication in Marriage. Three semester hours.
Theories and techniques of verbal and nonverbal communication in marriage relationship are studied.

COURSE OBJECTIVES include, but are not limited to, the following.
Students should be able to:
1. Understand the behaviors and patterns of verbal and nonverbal communication in marital relationships.
2. Understand the individual (emotional and developmental) and family (developmental and multigenerational) dynamics that contribute to and influence marital communication.
3. Understand the systemic context in which communication is perceived, defined, and responded to by individuals within marital dyads.
4. Know the characteristics of functional and dysfunctional marital communication.
5. Become familiar with several approaches to marital therapy.
6. Become familiar with current models of marital enrichment program.
7. Become aware of current research on marital functioning.

REQUIRED TEXTS

On Reserve in Library or through online resource
Selected articles

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION/COURSE FORMAT
The class will consist of lectures, discussions of assigned readings, audio and video tapes of theoretical presentations and clinical applications.

STUDENT REQUIREMENTS
Attendance & Participation
Students are expected to attend all classes and to be prepared to discuss assigned readings. Attendance and participation will be considered as part of your final grade. You will be responsible for any material missed due to an absence. You will also be responsible for material assigned, but perhaps not discussed in class.
**Note due dates** on all assignments and assume a professional position on this. Specific requirements include:

**Couple Interview**
You will be required to interview one (1) couple, at a selected stage of marriage from the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1:</td>
<td>0-3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2:</td>
<td>4-8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3:</td>
<td>9-15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4:</td>
<td>16-25 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5:</td>
<td>25+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus Stage:</td>
<td>50+ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicate whether the couple is within their first marriage or remarried, with or without children.

This should be an informally structured interview designed to discover how the couple makes the marriage work. As such, no specific set of questions is required. This allows you, the interviewer, the privilege and freedom to explore the unique set of dynamics that exists in your couple. Also, videotaping or recording the interview will allow you to be fully involved in the process, while simultaneously providing you with the recording to reflect on later. Provide a permission to record document and execute with signatures (form will be distributed). Areas to tap into, using your own style of engagement, are:

- How long have you been married?;
- Initial attractions;
- How did you know this person was the one for you?;
- Qualities you love and appreciate in your partner;
- How do you express that to each other?;
- Discoveries/surprises along the way;
- How do you handle conflicts?;
- What characteristic or quality would you say contributes the most to the success of your marriage?;
- What advice or suggestions for a successful marriage would you give to couples contemplating marriage? Any other areas that naturally flow out of the interview can be addressed as well. Summarize your interview by incorporating the above information as well as your observations of the couple in areas of style of communication, level of connectivity, ways of interacting, verbal/non-verbal patterns, seating arrangement, etc. Include any personal reaction you might have had to the couple.

**Reflective Paper**
You will keep a working written reflection of readings and their application to your personal and professional development, particularly pertaining to your own style of communication. At the end of the semester you will write an integrated personal reflection on your progress throughout the course regarding your style of communication within relationships, working with couples, your fit, and your walked path into an increased level of self-awareness and hopefully congruence. As this assignment is partly developmental in nature, you may be asked to show your written reflections after you have turned in your paper.

**Presentation**
You will participate in a group presentation of a preventative approach in couples therapy. You may select from the approaches discussed in the second text listed above, or from another source with permission from the instructor. You are encouraged to be creative, yet professional, in your presentations. Use of technology is required.

**Case Conceptualization**
Using the couple from our initial class video, select a preventative approach and apply this approach to “our class couple.” A handout with guidelines will be given, though basically you will include background information, assessment of the couple along the lines of healthy functioning, constructs
associated with this approach applied, role of the facilitator/therapist, goals of treatment, and how you might use the techniques of this approach with a rationale for use. Again, your grade will be based on demonstrated applied knowledge of the constructs of the approach you select, overall presentation of the material, and thoroughness.

Exam
Multiple choice short answer format based on assigned readings

GRADING

All components will be graded on a \(\checkmark\) system: \(\checkmark+ = 95; \checkmark = 85; \checkmark- = 75\)

The following components with assigned percentages will be reflected in arriving at your final grade:
1. Attendance & participation 15% (more than 3 absences results in one letter grade reduction)
2. Interview 20%
3. Reflective Paper 10%
4. Presentation 20%
5. Case Conceptualization 15%
6. Exam 20%

Thus, averaging the above with assigned percentages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90 &amp; up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library Rm 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu

CONDUCT AND ACADEMIC HONESTY

"All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment." (See Student's Guide Handbook, Polices and Procedures, Conduct) “Graduate students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all their scholastic work.” (See Section A13.12, Academic Honesty, A&M-Commerce Procedures.)

UNIVERSITY CLOSING DUE TO WEATHER

Check http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/ regarding class cancellations. Also, KETR radio on 88.9 FM and television channels 4, 5, and 8 (channel 7 for Tyler & Longview Area).
**Course Calendar** (with flexibility intended)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Course overview, communicating expectations</td>
<td>Opening Video</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Myths, Mistakes, &amp; Reparation</td>
<td>Chapter 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>“Sound Marital House”</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Aspects of Assessment</td>
<td>Chapter 4 &amp; 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Interventions…overview</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Marital friendship</td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Dealing with conflict</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Dealing with conflict, continued</td>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9 (week of March 16-20)</td>
<td><strong>Spring Break</strong></td>
<td><em>(NO CLASS)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Life Dreams</td>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Working with resistance</td>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Avoiding relapse</td>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Putting it all together</td>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Emotions &amp; the relationship</td>
<td>Chapter 14</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Marital Conflict and the Children</td>
<td>Chapter 15</td>
<td>Case conceptualization; Reflection paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 16</td>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>