

Department of Family Relations & Applied Nutrition  
University of Guelph

**FRAN 6180 – Research Issues in Couple and Family  
Therapy  
Fall 2013**

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Instructor:** Lynda M. Ashbourne, PhD, RMFT      **Phone:** Ext. 54237  
**Office:** CFT Rm. 248      **Office Hours:** by appointment  
**e-mail\*:** [lashbour@uoguelph.ca](mailto:lashbour@uoguelph.ca) *Response by next working day. Do not expect a response on weekends.*  
**Classes:** Thursdays, 8:30 am – 11:20 am, Room 'G', CFT Centre

**Course Description:**

The focus of this course is on CFT research issues related to evidence-based practices, therapeutic outcome, and therapeutic process [EG-2]. The course includes an introduction to CFT efficacy research and the importance of evidence-based practice, a review of quantitative and qualitative research methods and exemplary research, and an examination of ethical considerations in conducting research with couples and families. In addition, the course focuses on specific research examining treatment efficacy for selected clinical issues affecting the health and functioning of couple and family systems. Skill-training for research-informed therapists and researcher-practitioners, including accessing research literature, critical appraisal of knowledge, and knowledge-translation strategies is also incorporated into the course.

*Note that relevant Educational Goals [EG] and Expected Student Learning Outcomes [ESLO] are attached below. For complete listing of these, see the Student Orientation Manual.*

**Course Learning Objectives**

By the completion of this course, the successful student will be able to:

1. Articulate an awareness of the current state of outcome/efficacy/evidence-based research in CFT. (broad knowledge of current discourse in field, professional challenges, areas of growth/development)
2. Articulate a broad understanding of current research methods (and associated core principles) utilized within the field of CFT, including qualitative and quantitative methods and analysis, and measurement tools that are utilized widely in research outcome studies as well as clinical assessment.
3. Articulate the difference between outcome and process research, and describe the associated implications for understanding therapy interventions, interactional processes, and the process of change.
4. Review in writing, for a professional audience, a specific (limited) area of current research in the field of CFT that includes a coherent description of primary findings together with a synthesis of the current state of research including clinical applications and gaps or limitations of extant literature.
5. Utilize knowledge translation skills to present research findings and implications (in a specific topic area) in language and terms oriented to a lay audience.
6. Critique professional published research, assessing the quality of research studies and program evaluation literature in terms of the congruence between theoretical orientation, methodological approaches and claims related to clinical implications, as well as taking a critical perspective with respect to the consideration of various social locations and marginalized populations, and potential biases and values associated with these approaches to CFT research.

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\* Students are required to check their uoguelph.ca e-mail account regularly as per university regulations: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

Educational Goals and Expected Learning Outcomes	Incorporation and Assessment
<b>SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY AND CRITICAL EVALUATION [emphases added]</b>	
Educational Goal: Students will <i>develop a professional identity</i> encompassing an interdisciplinary sensibility, informed by relevant research-based information from related disciplines (family therapy, sociology, psychology, social work, health, etc.) and supported by the principles of critical appraisal of knowledge.	Didactic content; assigned and selected readings; class discussion; Assignments #1, #2, #3
ESLO 2 a. Students will <i>develop an appreciation for the core principles</i> of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies and demonstrate an ability to critically evaluate the merits of social science research.	Didactic content; assigned and selected readings; class discussion; Assignments #1, #2, #3
ESLO 2 b. Students will <i>demonstrate an ability to write coherently</i> about integrating theory, research, and practice skills related to their professional work.	Assignments #1, #2, #3
ESLO 2 c. Students will <i>have knowledge of current research</i> developments in the couple & family therapy field, including empirically validated and evidence-based therapy approaches	Didactic content; assigned and selected readings; class discussion; Assignments #1, #2

**Note that various Core Competencies are demonstrated across a variety of courses in the CFT program. The following are integrated into this course and demonstrated through your preparation and participation in class, as well as in your graded assignments (numbers in parentheses refer to course requirements and evaluation items listed below).**

AAMFT Competency	Competency	Demonstration of Knowledge
<b>CONCEPTUAL – TO UNDERSTAND, PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE BASE....</b>		
2.1.7	Understand the concepts of reliability and validity, their relationship to assessment instruments, and how they influence therapeutic decision-making.	Participation in class discussions; graded assignment #1
3.1.1	Know which models, modalities, and/or techniques are most effective for presenting problems.	Participation in class discussions; graded assignment #2
6.1.1	Know the extant MFT literature, research, and evidence-based practice.	Participation in class discussions; graded assignments #1, #2, #3
6.1.2	Understand research and program evaluation methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, relevant to MFT and mental health services.	Participation in class discussions; graded assignments #1, #2, #3
6.1.3	Understand the legal, ethical, and contextual issues involved in the conduct of clinical research and program evaluation.	Participation in class discussions; graded assignments #1, #3
<b>EXECUTIVE – TO DO, SKILL DEVELOPMENT....</b>		
6.3.1	Read current MFT and other professional literature.	Participation in class discussions; graded assignments #1, #2, #3
6.3.3	Critique professional research and assess the quality of research studies and program evaluation literature.	Participation in class discussions; graded assignments #1, #2, #3
<b>EVALUATIVE – TO EVALUATE, CONSIDER APPLICATION...</b>		
2.4.3	Evaluate the accuracy and cultural relevance of behavioural health and relational diagnosis.	Participation in class discussions; graded assignments #2, #3
6.4.1	Evaluate knowledge of current clinical literature and its application.	Participation in class discussions; graded assignments #1, #2, #3

## **Organization**

- All class participants and the instructor have a shared responsibility for collaboratively creating a professional and positive learning environment in which there is a respectful acceptance of conflicting perspectives, complex explanations and challenging ethical dilemmas.
- Differences in perspective and experiences can enrich learning for everyone and there is an expectation that all members of the class will **listen with respect and curiosity** to the ideas of others, as well as **presenting your own ideas** for discussion.
- Class preparation includes reading assigned articles and chapters prior to each class, and thinking about how the ideas presented might be applied to the design and implementation of research projects, the critical evaluation and application of published research, as well as the research-practitioner link.
- Classes will include didactic presentations, discussion of readings in small and large groups, and discussion with guest researcher-practitioners.

**Readings** are available through courselink. A reminder that you may NOT use the CFT printer to print course readings. Printers are available at a cost at various on-campus locations.

Sprenkle, D.H., & Piercy, F.P. (Eds.) (2005). *Research Methods in Family Therapy* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). New York: Guilford Press, is available at the McLaughlin Library Reserve Desk for 2 hour loans (see selected readings list Appendix B)

## **Course requirements and evaluation include the following:**

Weekly Class Readings and Preparation – This course is designed to facilitate your reading of current research related to CFT practice as well as readings associated with your unique and particular interests at this stage in your professional development. As such you are expected to read a minimum of two (2) readings per week – one of these is an assigned reading and the second will be selected by you to fit your interests. You are expected to read BOTH of these readings thoroughly and critically (more than once and using guidelines for critical perspectives contained in Appendix A). You should attend class prepared to discuss your reflections and ideas related to BOTH readings in large and small discussion groups.

Assignment #1 (See Assignment Description) – Module Assignment on Evidence-based Practice and Practice-based Evidence. This assignment allows you to work at your own pace, to start early in the semester, and to revise and resubmit modules based on instructor feedback if you wish. Modules must be submitted to dropbox on courselink FRAN\*6180 site in chronological order, with some exceptions (see description). **This assignment is worth 60% of your total course grade for FRAN\*6180. All submissions (including revised submissions) must be made no later than midnight November 29<sup>th</sup>.**

Assignment #2 (See Assignment Description) – Blog written for lay audience for website/newspaper/waiting room audience – can be related to Assignment #1 review or can review another body of research re: evidence-based practice (see assignment description). **This assignment is worth 20% of your total course grade for FRAN\*6180. Final date to submit this assignment is midnight November 21<sup>st</sup>.**

Assignment #3 (See Assignment Description) – Class presentations/preparation – based on additional weekly readings, submit three (3) 1 page single-spaced reflective memos on your experience of sharing an unassigned reading with others in two or three different classes or of a class discussion with guest speaker (one only). See Assignment 3 description.

Extensions for the final submission of written work will be given for medical or compassionate reasons. **Class members are expected to inform the instructor immediately and in writing should an extension be required.** Use courselink dropbox for submitting assignments and keep a copy of each assignment submitted. Assignments submitted after the due date or previously agreed-upon extension will be assigned a late penalty of 2% per day.

**Instructor feedback** - the University of Guelph is committed to providing students with appropriate and timely feedback on their work. Instructors must provide meaningful and constructive feedback prior to the 40th class

day (October 31<sup>st</sup> for Fall 2013). Assignment #3 requires that at least one reflective memo is submitted by October 17<sup>th</sup> in order for this timeline to be met. If you wish to receive more feedback prior to the 40<sup>th</sup> day, note that all assignments may be submitted earlier than the final submission date.

### **Academic Misconduct**

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Graduate Calendar: [http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/sec\\_d0e1687.shtml](http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/sec_d0e1687.shtml)

### **Course and Instructor Evaluation**

You are invited to talk to the instructor, outside of class time, if you have suggestions for changes at any point during the course. At the halfway point in the semester, we will review the course to date. You will have an opportunity for formal evaluation of the course and instructor at the end of the course.

### **Absences/Class Attendance**

This course depends heavily on collaborative and active engagement of class members in learning activities. In the unlikely event that you are unable to attend class, or know in advance that you will be late, please contact the instructor by e-mail ([lashbour@uoguelph.ca](mailto:lashbour@uoguelph.ca)) or phonemail (ext. 54237) ***prior to class***. If you must leave class early, you are expected to advise the instructor in advance.

**Electronic recording of classes** is expressly forbidden without prior consent of the instructor [or, where appropriate, student or guest presenter] and notice to all class participants. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for this course and may not be reproduced or transmitted to others without further written consent.

**Accessibility**: The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact the Centre for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible.

**Course Schedule and Required Readings**  
(Subject to revision)

**IMPORTANT NOTICE: IN EACH OF WEEKS 3-11, YOU WILL ALSO SELECT ANOTHER READING TO PREPARE FOR CLASS – THIS WILL BE OF YOUR OWN CHOOSING FROM CURRENT CFT RESEARCH PAPERS IN PEER REVIEWED ACADEMIC JOURNALS OR FROM THE LIST CONTAINED IN APPENDIX B. WHEN A GUEST SPEAKER ATTENDS, HE/SHE MAY MAKE SUGGESTIONS FOR THESE STUDENT-SELECTED READINGS AND A LIST OF THESE WILL BE PROVIDED TO YOU AT LEAST ONE WEEK IN ADVANCE WHERE POSSIBLE.**

- Week 1            September 5    Introduction to Couple and Family Therapy Research**
- Week 2            September 12   Introduction to Couple and Family Therapy Research [cont]**  
Sprenkle, D. (2012). Intervention Research in Couple and Family Therapy: A methodological and substantive review and an introduction to the special issue. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 38*, 3-29.
- Week 3            September 19   Stepping in the Deep End – reading EBP literature – what the heck is going on here?**  
Beach, S., & Whisman, M. (2012). Affective Disorders. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 38*, 201-219.  
+ STUDENT SELECTED READING
- Week 4            September 26   Meta-Analysis using Quantative Methods – Evidence-based practice**  
Baldwin, S., Christian, S., Berkeljon, A., Shadish, W., & Bean, R. (2012). The Effects of Family Therapies for Adolescent Delinquency and Substance Abuse: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 38*, 281-304.  
+ STUDENT SELECTED READING
- Week 5            October 3        Qualitative Approaches to Meta-Analysis: Meta-synthesis – Qualitative Methods – Practice-based evidence?**  
Chenail, R., St. George, S., Wulff, D., Duffy, M., Wilson Scott, K., & K. Tomm. (2012). Clients' Relational Conceptions of Conjoint Couple and Family Therapy Quality: A grounded formal theory. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 38*, 241-264.  
+ STUDENT SELECTED READING
- Week 6            October 10      Blending Research and Practice for Larger Social Change [10:00 a.m. Guest Researcher – Ruth Neustifter]**  
Stith, S., McCollum, E., Amanor-Boadu, Y., & Smith, D. (2012). Systemic Perspectives on Intimate Partner Violence Treatment. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 38*, 220-240.  
+ STUDENT SELECTED READING
- Week 7            October 17      DSM – Evidence-based Practice and Medicalised Diagnostic Classification**  
Strong, T., & Busch, R. (2013). DSM-5 and Evidence-Based Family Therapy? *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, 34*, 90-103.  
+ STUDENT SELECTED READING
- Week 8            October 24      Child and Adolescent Presenting Concerns**  
Kaslow, N., Robbins Broth, M., Oyeshiku Smith, C., & Collins, M. (2012). Family-Based Interventions for Child and Adolescent Disorders. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 38*, 82-100.  
+ STUDENT SELECTED READING

- Week 9**      **October 31**      **Couple Therapy**  
Lebow, J., Chambers, A., Christensen, A., & Johnson, S. (2012). Research on the Treatment of Couple Distress. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 38*, 145-168.  
+ STUDENT SELECTED READING
- Week 10**      **November 7**      **Addictions and Substance-Use Problems**  
O'Farrell, T., & Clements, K. (2012). Review of Outcome Research on Marital and Family Therapy in Treatment for Alcoholism. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 38*, 122-144.  
+ STUDENT SELECTED READING
- Week 11**      **November 14**      **Participatory Action Research and Health Research**  
**[10:00 a.m. Guest Researcher – John Beaton]**  
Shields, C., Finley, M., Chawla, N., & Meadors, P. (2012). Couple and Family Interventions in Health Problems. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 38*, 265-280.  
+ STUDENT SELECTED READING
- Week 12**      **November 21**      **Legal, Ethical, and Contextual Issues / Wrap Up**  
Cain, H.I., Harkness, J.L., Smith, A.L., & Markowski, E.M. (2003). Protecting persons in family therapy research: an overview of ethical and regulatory standards. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 29*, 47-57.  
AAMFT Code of Ethics Principle V: Responsibility to Research Participants

**APPENDIX A****Questions Informed by a Postmodern Critical Perspective to Ask and Consider in Relation to Course Readings**

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How would you identify the theoretical and methodological positions that are taken by these authors?

- What assumptions, values and biases (stated and unstated) might be associated with these positions, with respect to:
  - Research?
  - CFT practice?
- What are the implications of taking these positions in terms of:
  - what constitutes 'data', and what is seen/unseen?
  - what constitutes 'findings', and where and how these can be applied?

How are clients or people seeking family therapy services and their concerns or problems constructed within the approaches to research advocated by these authors?

To what degree and in what ways are aspects of social location (such as race, gender, sexual orientation, culture, class, age, ability, etc.) taken into account, discounted, included, or marginalized within this approach?

What ethical questions could arise for researchers, participants and/or therapists within this particular approach?

How might you describe the complexities, inherent tensions, potential contradictions or complementary aspects of research within this approach and in application to CFT practice? Does this approach allow for or take into account such complexities?

Based on what you have read, how would you assess 'quality' of research within this approach? How are these criteria constructed, on what assumptions and values are they based, and to what degree do these take into account diversity and context of human experience?

How are issues of certainty/uncertainty, truth, and expertise considered within this particular approach?

How are issues of power, either within the therapeutic setting or research context, or within the broader social context, taken into account? Are these issues addressed explicitly? What could you say about unstated or implied assumptions about power or authority?

How does your own life experience and social location influence what you attend to in this reading? What might others who have different experiences, locations, or identities hear/see that you don't?

As a clinician, how might findings emerging from studies conducted within this approach contribute to your work?

As a person experiencing some aspect of the focus of a research study conducted within this approach, how might findings contribute to your life?

**APPENDIX B**

**Suggestions for Alternative Readings (feel free to locate readings yourself as well – research reports, research reviews, or discussions of research methodology in peer reviewed journals from past five years<sup>†</sup> are acceptable)**

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Denton, W. H., & Bell, C. (2013). DSM-5 and the Family Therapist: First-order change in a new millennium. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, 34*, 147–155.

Lebow, J. (2013). Editorial: DSM-V and Family Therapy. *Family Process, 52*, 155–160.

Sexton, T., Gordon, K.C., Gurman, A., Lebow, J., Holtzworth-Munroe, A., & Johnson, S. (2011). Guidelines for Classifying Evidence-Based Treatments in Couple and Family Therapy. *Family Process, 50*, 377–392.

Pilling, S. (2009). Developing Evidence-Based Guidance – Implications for systemic interventions. *Journal of Family Therapy, 31*, 194-205.

Beutler, L.E. (2009). Making Science Matter in Clinical Practice: Redefining psychotherapy. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 16*, 301-317.

Baumann, A., Rodriguez, M.D., & Parra-Cardona, J.R. (2011). Community-Based Applied Research with Latino Immigrant Families: Informing practice and research according to ethical and social justice principles. *Family Process, 50*, 132–148.

Couture, S., & Sutherland, O. (2004). Investigating Change: Compatible research and practice. *Journal of Systemic Therapies, 23*, 3-17.

Dickerson, V. (2010). Positioning oneself within an epistemology: Refining our thinking about integrative approaches. *Family Process, 49*, 340-368.

Bender, D.S., et al. (2007). Ethnicity and Mental Health Treatment Utilization by Patients with Personality Disorders. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 75*, 992-999.

Waters, Averill (2011). A Letter to Research. *Explorations: An E-Journal of Narrative Practice, 1*, 36-41.

Sheridan, M., Peterson, B.D., & Rosen, K. (2010). The Experiences of Parents of Adolescents in Family Therapy: A qualitative investigation. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 36*, 144-157.

Friedlander, Myrna (2009). Addressing Systemic Challenges in Couple and Family Therapy Research: Introduction to the special section. *Psychotherapy Research, 19*, 129-132.

Valtonen, H.M., et al. (2009). How Suicidal Bipolar Patients are Depends on How Suicidal Ideation is Defined. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 118*, 48-54.

Furukawa, T.A. (2010). Assessment of Mood: Guides for clinicians. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 68*, 581-589.

Tseliou, E. (online, August 5, 2013). A Critical Methodological Review of Discourse and Conversation Analysis Studies of Family Therapy. *Family Process (Early View)*.

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<sup>†</sup> There are a few readings on this list that were published > 5 years ago. You can make an argument for selecting another reading that is older by providing a rationale to instructor one week in advance about the significance of the selected paper to development of ideas about research and practice, or research methodology in the field of CFT.



Puig, A., Koro-Ljungberg, M., & Echevarria-Doan, S. (2008). Social Constructionist Family Systems Research: Conceptual considerations. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 16, 139-146.

Piercy, F., & Benson, K. (2005). Aesthetic Forms of Data Representation in Qualitative Family Therapy Research. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 31, 107-119.

Nuevo, R., et al. (2009). Cross-Cultural Equivalence of the Beck Depression Inventory: A five-country analysis from the ODIN study. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 114, 156-162.

Garland, A.F., Brookman-Frazee, Taylor, R.M., & Accurso, E.C. (2010). Methodological Challenges of Characterizing Usual Care Psychotherapeutic Practice. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 37, 208-220.

Brock, G.W., Whiting, J.B., & Matern, B. (2009). Integrity of the Marriage and Family Therapy Research Literature: Perceptions and recommendations. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 35, 248-252.

Exemplars of Qualitative Research Methodologies:

Focus group: Bush, A., Collings, S., Tamasese, K., & Waldegrave, C. (2005). Samoan and psychiatrists' perspectives on the self: Qualitative comparison. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 39, 621-626.

Phenomenological: De Mol, J. & Buysse, A. (2008). The phenomenology of children's influence on parents. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 30, 163-193.

Feminist Autoethnography: Jager, K. B., Bak, J., Barber, A., Bozek, K., Bocknek, E.L., & Weir, G. (2009). Qualitative Inquiry and Family Therapist Identity Construction through Community-Based Child Welfare Practice. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 21, 39-57.

GTM: Hartzell, M., Seikkula, J., & von Knorring, A-L. (2009). What Children Feel About their First Encounter with Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 31, 177-192.

Narrative: Rober, P., Van Eesbeek, D., & Elliott, R. (2006). Talking about Violence: A microanalysis of narrative processes in a family therapy session. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 32, 313-328.

Narrative, Feminist: Oke, M. (2008). Remaking Self after Domestic Violence: Mongolian and Australian Women's narratives of recovery. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 29, 148-155.

Where to find readings related to:

Evidence Based Practice – See these journals : JMFT; ANZJFT; Family Process; Journal of Family Therapy; Journal of Systemic Therapies; Contemporary Family Therapy; Journal of Feminist Family Therapy; The American Journal of Family Therapy; Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy; Contemporary Family Therapy; Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy; Sexual and Relationship Therapy; Families, Systems, & Health; Partner Abuse. Ensure that focus of research is on therapy interventions.

Research Methods

Description and examples from FT - Chapters from Sprenkle and Piercy (2005) *Research Methods in Family Therapy* – text on reserve at library.

Descriptions and debates about research methodology - See also: Narrative Inquiry; The Qualitative Report; International Journal of Qualitative Methods; Qualitative Health Research; Qualitative Inquiry; Qualitative Research; Qualitative Research in Psychology; Qualitative Social Work; International Journal of Social Research Methodology; Journal of Mixed Methods Research.

DSM-5: Any papers not already assigned from ANZJFT, summer 2013 (ed. Strong & Busch).