



COLLEGE of SOCIAL AND APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY RELATIONS
AND APPLIED NUTRITION

FRAN*6890-02 Foundations of Relational Family Therapy

COURSE OUTLINE – [FALL 2025]

1. GRADUATE CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

This course explores the historical development of relational/systemic perspectives and theoretical foundations for current approaches to Relational Family Therapy. As a survey course, it provides an overview, comparison, and critical analysis of key foundational family therapy theories and associated practice models. Bowenian, Structural, Strategic, Experiential, and Contextual models will be included and applied in aid of understanding relationships across the lifespan. This course is offered in a clinical section for MRFT and MP students and a non-clinical section for MA.MH students.

Credit Weight:	0.5 credits
Course Hours:	3-0 (36 lecture; 0 lab/seminar)
Pre-Requisite(s):	None
Co-Requisites(s):	None
Restriction(s):	MA.MH students only.

2. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course facilitates the development of students' competencies in foundational and epistemological relational and family therapy (RFT) and psychotherapy concerns and critical perspective-taking. A major component of the course involves critical analysis of the assumptions underlying conceptual frameworks and therapy practices, as well as considering theories within the historical-political context in which they emerged and with respect to major paradigm shifts in the psychotherapy field more generally. We will consider how related empirical and evidence-based research has informed and been guided by various theoretical perspectives. We will also attend to how each theory and practice model takes into account power relations, systemic barriers, and the diversity of clients in their various socio-cultural contexts. Students will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the theory or model of their choice and apply it to a relationship experience or transition associated with a specific phase of life and social cultural context.

3. TIMETABLE

Lecture:

4. INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

Course Instructor:

Office:

Office Hours:

5. LEARNING RESOURCES

Required Resource(s):

All readings posted online on Courselink site. No additional costs for this course.

Recommended Resource(s):

6. LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the completion of the course, successful students will be able to:

Course Learning Outcomes	Program Learning Outcomes	CRPO Competencies	CAMFT Competencies
1. Demonstrate knowledge of foundational RFT theories and techniques, together with related concepts, and discern the differences between these approaches and the historical contexts in which they emerged through scholarly course readings, written assignments, and synchronous class discussion.	1.1-1.3, 3.1-3.3, 4.1-4.3, 8.1-8.3	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 5.1, 5.2	1.1, 1.3, 3, 4.3
2. Access, interpret, synthesize, and critically evaluate the research evidence that supports these therapy models through scholarly course readings, written assignments, and synchronous class discussion.	1.1-1.3, 3.1-3.3, 4.1-4.4, 8.1-8.3	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 5.1, 5.2	1.1, 1.3, 3, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4
3. Understand issues of diversity, power, and privilege through reflective writing assignment as they relate to: a. the development of knowledge in the RFT field,	1.1-1.3, 2.1-2.3, 3.1-3.3, 4.1-4.4, 8.1-8.3	1.1 – 1.5, 2.3, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2	1.1, 1.3, 2.1, 3, 4.3, 4.4

b. the specific concepts and practices of different approaches, c. the applicability of approaches to specific client populations, and aspects of professional training.			
4. Consider elements of social cultural contexts (including, age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, Indigeneity) and how these intersect with life stages and transitions to influence relationships and orientation to relationships through scholarly course readings, written assignments, and synchronous class discussion.	1.2, 2.1-2.3, 3.1-3.3, 4.1, 8.1-8.3	1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 2.3, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2	1.1, 1.3, 2.1, 3, 4.3, 4.4
5. Demonstrate oral and written communication skills, as well as ability to engage in generative dialogues, specifically related to the application of these selected RFT and psychotherapy models.	2.1, 5.1, 5.2, 6.3, 7.1	2.1 – 2.3	1.5, 2.1, 4.1
6. Participate in creating, collaboratively with all class members and informed by self-awareness, a learning environment in which there is a respectful acceptance of conflicting perspectives, complex explanations, and challenging ethical dilemmas.	2.1-2.3, 3.1-3.3, 5.1, 5.2, 7.1	2.1 – 2.3	1.5, 2.1, 3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4

7. TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES/CLASS SCHEDULE

Week	Topics	Assigned Readings, Guest Speakers, and Student Facilitations
1	<p>An Introduction to the Course. Decolonizing Mental Health/Psychotherapy</p> <p>Theory/Research about Successful/Evidence Based Mental Health and Therapy Strategies</p>	<p>Kim Anderson Interview: Decolonizing Mental Health</p> <p>Reading: DECOLONIAL PSYCHOTHERAPY Joining the Circle, Healing the Wound LILLIAN COMAS-DÍAZ AND FREDERICK M. JACOBSEN</p> <p>Scott Miller Evolution of Psychotherapy Video</p>
2	<p>Introduction to Carl Rogers Theory</p> <p>Family Development Systemic Theoretical Perspectives</p>	<p>Reading: Carl Rogers, Barrie Thorne (2003), Chapters 2 & 3</p> <p>Reading: Crapo & Bradford (2021), Multidimensional Family Development, Journal of Family Theory and Review</p>
3	<p>Race and Mental Health</p> <p>Biopsychosocial Theoretical Perspectives and Mind-Body Interventions</p>	<p>Student Facilitation #1: Rolland, J.S. (2019). The family, chronic illness and disability: an integrated practice model. In B. H. Fiese, M. Celano, K. Deater-Deckard, E. N. Jouriles, and M. A. Whisman (Eds.), <i>APA Handbook of Contemporary Family Psychology: Applications and Broad Impact of Family Psychology</i> (pp. 85-102). American Psychological Association.</p> <p>Ornella Harris: Interview, Race and Mental Health Professionals, and Mind-Body Interventions</p>
4	<p>Humanistic and Experiential Family Theories: Satir and Whitaker</p>	<p>Student Facilitation #2: Satir and Whitaker, Veldorale-Griffin (2024). Ch# 11 In Watters and Adamson</p> <p>Somatic Practices: Mark LeRoy Interview</p> <p>Student Facilitation #3 Internal Family Systems Reading: TBD</p>

Week	Topics	Assigned Readings, Guest Speakers, and Student Facilitations
5	Introduction to Attachment Theory	<p>Interview: Adam Davies and Orion Neustifter: Gender and Sexual Minorities and Mental Health/Psychotherapy</p> <p>Student Facilitation #4: Attachment Theory, Cassidy (2016). Ch#1 Nature of the Child Ties, In Handbook Of Attachment.</p> <p>Optional Reading: Emotionally Focused Theory Reading:TBD</p>
6	Family Systems Theory: Bowen	<p>Student Facilitation #5 Family Systems Theory, Knerr (2024). Ch #12 in Watters and Adamson (focus on theory and not genograms)</p> <p>Student Facilitation #6 Genograms, McGoldrick (2020), Chapter 1</p>
7	Contextual Family Theory: Nagy	<p>Student Facilitation #7 Bickler (2024). Contextual therapy, Ch#15 in Watters and Adamson</p> <p>Interview: Melissa Clews Hunt, Eco-Therapy/Nature Based Therapy</p>

Week	Topics	Assigned Readings, Guest Speakers, and Student Facilitations
8	Community Mental Health Theories and Approaches: Trauma, and Intimate Partner Violence	<p>Student Facilitation #8: Trauma, Kealy, D., & Lee, E. (2018). Childhood trauma among adult clients in Canadian community mental health services: Toward a trauma-informed approach. <i>International Journal of Mental Health</i>, 47(4), 284–297.</p> <p>Student Facilitation #9 Scott, K. L., Baker, L., Jenney, A., Lopez, J., Straatman, A.-L., Pietsch, N., Cullen, O., Antwi-Mansah, D., & Jones, K. (2023). Voices of Experience: Development of the Flourishing Practice Model of Capabilities of Intimate Partner Violence Specialists. <i>Journal of Family Violence</i>, 38(6), 1151–1163.</p>
9	<p>Introduction to Cognitive Behavioural Theory</p> <p>Introduction to Dialectical Behaviour Theory</p>	<p>Student Facilitation #10: CBT, Wills (2022), Beck’s Cognitive Therapy, Ch #1-5, pgs 7-32</p> <p>Student Facilitation #11: DBT, Micaela Swales (2019), Chapter 1</p> <p>Optional Readings: Gottman Behavioral Couple Therapy, TBD Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, TBD</p>
10	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Theories and Practice Strategies	<p>Student Facilitation #12: Steele & Roberts (2020), Handbook of Evidence Based Practice with Children and Youth (first and last chapters)</p> <p>Interview: Jess Furtado, Ceilidh Eaton Russell, Samantha O’Leary</p>

Week	Topics	Assigned Readings, Guest Speakers, and Student Facilitations
11	Grief and Loss Theories and Mental Health	<p>Student Facilitation #13: Grief and Loss, Shuurman and Mitchell (2020), https://www.dougy.org/assets/uploads/Becoming-Grief-Informed_A-Call-to-Action.pdf</p> <p>Optional Reading: Grief Reading:TBD</p> <p>Gabrielle Pitt Interview: Disabilities and Mental Health</p>
12	Addictions Approaches and Mental Health	<p>Student Facilitation #14, Addictions and Mental health, https://www.camh.ca/-/media/health-info-files/guides-and-publications/addiction-guide-en.pdf</p> <p>https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/addiction</p> <p>Gabor Mate Reading: TBD</p>

Note: This is a tentative schedule; however, due to various unknown factors there may be changes. Any changes will be announced during class and an announcement will be posted on the CourseLink site.

8. ASSESSMENT DETAILS

Assessment	LOs Addressed	Due Date	% of Final
<p>Discussion Facilitation Groups and Handout: Students in assigned groups of 4-5 will lead a 30- 45 minute facilitated discussion on two different occasions about assigned course readings, and provide a 2 page handout before the class to be posted on courselink . Students will self evaluate themselves for 10% each facilitation, and instructor will evaluate each student for 10% each facilitation, for 20% toral for each facilitation. The instructor may adjust</p>	1.1 – 1.3, 3.1 – 3.3, 4.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 8.1 – 8.2	Weeks 3 through 12	20% each facilitation for total of 40%

Assessment	LOs Addressed	Due Date	% of Final
students' self evaluations (see courselink for more details)			
Final Paper Case Study: Applying a Course Theory/Model/Approach to an Age, Stage, Population Case Students– students will select a class discussed theoretical modality and apply it to a specific client group to address a presenting concern of interest. Attention to the unique social cultural context of the client group is essential. Students will demonstrate awareness of their social locations and knowledge of human development and relational/systemic experiences and transitions as well as their theoretical modality. (see courselink for specific details)	1.1 – 1.3, 3.1 – 3.3, 4.1 – 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 8.1 – 8.3	Monday Dec. 8, 9am	30%
Class Participation, Midterm and End of Term: Students will assess themselves at the midterm and end of the course in terms of their substantive contributions and participation in fostering a generative and constructive class environment. The instructor may adjust these self evaluations (see courselink for specific details)	2.1, 3.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 6.3, 7.1, 8.2, 8.3	Throughout	20% midterm (Oct 17) 10% end of term (Nov 28)
Total:			100%

9. COURSE STATEMENTS

Course Organization

Organization of this course is based on the assumption of shared responsibility for developing a cooperative and non-competitive learning environment where students can responsibly and constructively voice ideas and explore new possibilities for understanding theories and methods of family therapy. Throughout its duration, the course will evolve as students and their instructor dynamically interact using these resources. This course is specifically designed to provide a dynamic and interactive learning process and to encourage active participation and collaboration among students and the instructor. The students and the instructor bring a wealth of valuable personal and professional experience that will benefit the learning of everyone in the course. There is also the assumption that people may have very different views about various topics which 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 own ideas for discussion.

The instructor's hope is that this class will be a place where everyone feels free to respectfully listen and challenge one another. At times this class may invoke some challenging emotions.

The instructor's goal is to set the basic condition for the development of a constructive learning environment, including: (1) goodwill between class members, between the instructor and class members, and between class members and the instructor, (2) mutual respect, and (3) commitment to the intensive mutual learning process.

This course is designed to utilize the unique resources, diverse perspectives, and evolving learning goals that each class member brings to this learning context. Classes will include didactic presentations, discussion of readings, experiential activities, and role-play exercises. Class preparation includes reading assigned articles and chapters prior to each class, and thinking about historical context, empirical support, and therapeutic application of each model.

Land Acknowledgement:

We acknowledge that the University of Guelph resides on the ancestral lands of the Attawandaron people and the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. We recognize the significance of the Dish with One Spoon Covenant to this land and offer our respect to our Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Métis neighbours as we strive to strengthen our relationships with them. Acknowledging them reminds us of our important connection to this land where we learn and work.

Course Website:

There is a course website at <http://courselink.uoguelph.ca>. All components of this course will be housed on the CourseLink site including this course outline, assignments, and links to further resources. Your assignments will be submitted to instructor via email. Marks and feedback will also be released on the site and by email. Please familiarize yourself with this website as soon as possible and visit it regularly throughout the semester.

10. UNIVERSITY STATEMENTS

E-mail communication:

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

When you cannot meet a course requirement:

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the Graduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for [Academic Consideration](#).

Drop date:

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the last day of classes; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of classes in the second semester. The regulations and procedures for [Dropping Courses](#) are available in the Graduate Calendar.

Copies of out-of-class assignments:

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Accessibility:

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required, however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to make a booking at least 14 days in advance, and no later than November 1 (fall), March 1 (winter) or July 1 (summer). Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time.

More information: www.uoguelph.ca/sas

Academic misconduct:

The [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) is outlined in the Graduate Calendar.

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.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

Instructors **shall not** determine if academic misconduct has occurred. This is up to the Associate Dean Academic's office. Instructors shall not assign a grade of zero even if they believe that the student has committed some form of academic misconduct (e.g., copied material from a website like CourseHero) on an assignment or exam.

Instructors **can** determine if a student has poorly paraphrased and/or improperly cited material and can provide a grade accordingly as long as this is clearly identified as part of the assessment criteria via a rubric or other assessment tools.

For more information about Academic Integrity resources and how to prevent Academic Misconduct see: <https://csahs.uoguelph.ca/faculty-research/hub-teaching-learning-excellence/academic-integrity>

Recording of materials:

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

Resources:

The [Academic Calendars](#) are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.

Disclaimer:

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings, changes in classroom protocols, and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via Courselink and/or class email.

This includes on-campus scheduling during the semester, mid-terms and final examination schedules. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (<https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/>) and circulated by email.

Illness:

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).

COVID-19 Safety Protocols:

For information on current safety protocols, follow these links:

- <https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/how-u-of-g-is-preparing-for-your-safe-return/>
- <https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/spaces/#ClassroomSpaces>

Please note, that these guidelines may be updated as required in response to evolving University, Public Health or government directives.