



## **COUN 615: Seminar in Advanced Marital Counseling / Therapy**

### **Course Syllabus**

Summer II, 2026

July 8 – August 8

Online Synchronous

### **INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

**Instructor:** Robyn L. Flores, Ph.D., LMFT-S (TX, CO, MO), LPC (CO), NCC, ACS, CFT

**Office Location:** Dallas Campus (take elevator to 19<sup>th</sup> floor, then go up the “lion elevator” to 20<sup>th</sup> floor). Office #2058

**Zoom link:** <https://tamuc.zoom.us/j/7421321052>

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 8:00 AM – 2:00 PM (summer hours)

**University Email:** [robyn.flores@etamu.edu](mailto:robyn.flores@etamu.edu)

**Preferred Form of Communication:** Email

**Communication Response Time:** Within 24 business hours

### **COURSE INFORMATION**

#### **Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Reading**

#### **Required Textbooks:**

Liddle, H. (2022). *The handbook of systemic family therapy: The profession of systemic family therapy*. Journal of Family Therapy. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.12399>

#### **Recommended/Suggested Readings – will be used for presentation:**

Gambescia, N., Weeks, G., Hertlein, K. (2020). *A clinician's guide to systemic sex therapy*. Routledge.

Gibson, L. (2024). *Treating adult children of emotionally immature parents: A clinician's guide*. New Harbinger Publications

Perel, E. (2018). *The state of affairs: Rethinking infidelity*. Harper Paperbacks.

Pruchno, R. (2020). *Surrounded by madness: A memoir of mental illness and family secrets*. Author.

Rosenberg, M. (2015). *Nonviolent communication: A language of life: Life-changing tools for healthy relationships*. PuddleDancer Press.

Thomas, K. W. (2016). *Conscious uncoupling: 5 steps to living happily even after*. Harmony Publishers.

**Academic/Peer-Reviewed Journals:**

*The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families* (IAMFC)

*Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* (AAMFT)

*The Family Process*

AAMFT Code of Ethics (2026)

**Optional Readings:**

Haber, R., Braga, C., Benda, J., Fitch, J., Mitran, C. L., & Nelson, K. A. (2022). Therapist use of self and the development of a culturally-aware professional in family therapy. *The Family Journal*, 30(3), 274–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807211061834>

Nunes, C. E., Antoniette, A., and Darwiche, J. (2022). Engaging in coparenting changes in couple's therapy: Two contrasting cases. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 48(4), 998-1016.

Spengler, P. M., Lee, N. A., Wiebe, S. A., and Wittenborn, A. K. (2022). A comprehensive meta-analysis on the efficacy of emotionally focused couple therapy. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cfp0000233> (/doi/10.1037/cfp0000233)

**Catalogue Description of the Course**

*CATALOG DESCRIPTION of COUN 615. Marital Counseling.* A study of counseling theories applied to marital and other dyadic relationships. Emphasis will be placed on the assimilation, integration and application of information pertaining to such topics as marital/divorce developmental tasks theory, object relations theory, systemic family of origin theory, interaction patterns in marriage, divorce process, and post-divorce adjustment. Techniques and historical development of marriage enrichment, marital therapy, and divorce therapy interventions will be included.

**Prerequisite:** Completion or concurrent enrollment in Counseling 611, 612 and/or consent of instructor

**Dr. Flores's description of the course with lectures, activities, and experientials in mind:**

A comprehensive study of counseling theories and interventions as applied to marital and other relationships, including diverse relational structures. Emphasis is placed on the assimilation, integration, and application of theoretical and practical knowledge associated with relational, marital, and divorce; object relations theory; systemic family-of-origin theory; and interaction patterns in intimate partnerships. Special attention is given to dynamics of unconventional relational dynamics, sexuality issues (i.e., sexual identity, orientation, desire discrepancies in relationships), intimacy, and infidelity/betrayal. In addition, complexities of blended family systems, including co-parenting (“sharenting”), blended family, and post-divorce adjustment, are examined through a systemic lens. Ethical and affirming counseling practices, creative interventions, and fostering collaborative care with other providers is explored.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Minimal Technical Skills Needed

In this class, you will utilize the Learning Management System (LMS) entitled D2L for portions of instructional and learning methods, submitting assignments, participating in online discussions, and completing quizzes. You will need to utilize other technologies such as SPSS, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, etc. If you have issues with this system, it is your responsibility to contact the help desk immediately.

### *Instructional Methods, Student Responsibilities, Tips for Success in the Course*

As a student in this course, you are responsible for the active learning process. Expectations of this course include the following:

1. You are expected to demonstrate professionalism at all times. Be respectful of your professor and peers. Be open to feedback, as you will receive this throughout the program.
2. Prepare for classes in the way that you learn best. Some students are *proactive* readers, meaning they read prior to class. Some students are *reactive* readers, meaning they read after lecture to help support their learning.
3. Complete all assignments before each deadline.
4. Adhere to the university student code of conduct.
5. Participate. During face-to-face classes, you are expected to actively participate in all activities and discussions. In the online format, you are expected to participate in all online discussions/activities. This is crucial to your learning.
6. All writing assignments **must be done according to APA 7<sup>th</sup>** edition standards.
7. Regularly check your University email. My suggestion is to check this at least once a day as your instructors and others from the department and University may contact you.
8. Begin your readings ASAP. Sometimes it may take more than one attempt to digest the material.
9. Be open to the process. This degree takes time, work, effort, and growth.

## Assignments/Assessments

**Critical Book Review, Consultation, and Presentation (50 points):** You will choose one book from the recommended reading list. In the format of a group consultation (masters) or supervision (doctoral) session, you will provide a case presentation with the following elements:

- Overview of a (real or fictional) relational dynamic/presenting concerns that would benefit from the information learned from this course and the integrated book study material.
- Overview of the relational dynamic and/or presenting concern(s).
- Treatment plan implementing both 1) a systems theoretical disposition, 2) interventions from that theory, and 3) objectives/experimentals that may be used for the case based on the information gathered from the book study material.

- In addition to the book choice, please provide a “mini” literature review of at least ten (10) additional relevant, scholarly articles from within the past five (5) years supporting your methods and approach to this case.
- No less than three (3) questions for the group in relation to what you need for support for this case.

**Class Presentation Rubric**

	<b>1 – Does Not Meet Expectations</b>	<b>2 – Meets Expectations</b>	<b>3 – Exceeds Expectations</b>
<b>Overview of a (real or fictional) marginalized relational dynamic/presenting concerns) that would benefit from the information learned from both books.</b>	Cited incorrectly, no mention of the books chosen during presentation. Overview does not include adequate demographic and cultural identity information. Presenting concerns not addressed.	Appropriate citation via APA 7, mentioning the books throughout presentation. Overview includes adequate demographic and cultural identity information. Presenting concerns addressed.	Books, authors, and literature review articles integrated into the presentation with accurate APA 7 citations. Overview includes demographic and cultural identity information with depth and detail. Presenting concerns addressed with depth and detail.
<b>Overview of the marginalized dynamic and/or presenting concern(s).</b>	Does not provide an overview of the marginalized dynamic and/or presenting concern(s).	Provides brief overview of the marginalized dynamic and/or presenting concern(s).	Provides a detailed overview of the marginalized dynamic and/or presenting concern(s).
<b>Treatment plan implementing both 1) a systems theoretical disposition, 2) interventions from that theory, and 3) objectives/experientials that may be used for the case based on the information gathered from the two (2) books.</b>	Does not include a treatment plan; if provided, there are missing elements.	Includes a treatment plan with an overview of the elements described in the syllabus.	Includes a detailed and culturally sensitive treatment plan with brief overview of the elements described in the syllabus.

<b>“Mini” literature review of at least ten (10) additional scholarly articles from within the past five (5) years supporting your methods and approach to this case.</b>	Does not provide a literature review; less than ten (10) scholarly articles; older than 5 years.	Provides a literature review with ten (10) scholarly articles; within 5 years.	Provides a literature review with more than ten (10) scholarly articles; within two (2) years.
<b>No less than three (3) questions for the group in relation to what you need for support for this case</b>	Does not include questions.	Includes three (3) questions.	Includes three (3) questions and relevant sub questions.

**Final Exam (30 points):** The Final Exam will engage you in documentation of a supervision session (doctoral) or client case (masters).

**Participation and attendance (20 points, 4 points per week).**

### Grading

Grading in this class will include both points and percentages so that students can determine at any time in the class where they stand. The grade book will be available through D2L, and students may access it at any time they wish.

*Grades will be determined as follows:*

	Master’s	Doctoral
Critical Book Review, Consultation, and Presentation	40	50
Final Exam	40	30
Participation	20	20
<b>Total Possible</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Points Earned and Grading Scale:**

Final Letter Grade	
A (90%)	90-100 points
B (80%)	80-89 points
C (70%)	70-79 points
F	Less than 70 points

**NOTE: Written assignments are due on the day noted in the syllabus. All assignments are due on/before the deadline. Late assignments will have 10% of the grade deducted per day late from the final score. After one (1) week late, the student will receive a 0.**

### **Grade Appeals**

If a student disagrees with a course grade, it is encouraged that the student discusses their concerns with the instructor of that course. If a satisfactory outcome cannot be reached, the student may refer to the appeals policy (13.99.99.R0.05).

### **Remediation**

Students who demonstrate areas of concern, such as failing to meet academic expectations, clinical skill deficiencies, unprofessional behavior, dispositional concerns, challenges in interpersonal effectiveness, and so forth, may be required to complete a remediation plan to support their growth and continued progress in the program. Remediation may include, but is not limited to, additional supervision, repeating a clinical course, seeking personal counseling, completing targeted skill-building assignments, participating in professional development activities, or engaging in a structured improvement plan designed to address identified areas of concern. Additionally, students who exhibit personal limitations that significantly interfere with their professional performance, cause harm to clients, or engage in conduct that violates ethical and professional standards may be dismissed from the program. See the CMHC Counseling Department Handbook or CES Handbook, or reference East Texas A&M University Procedure 13.33.99.R0.39, Section 4 (Graduate Academic Probation, Retention and Suspension).

### **Annual Evaluation of Students**

The program faculty has a systematic process in place for the use of individual student assessment data—KPI and Student Disposition data—in relation to retention, remediation, and dismissal. The systematic process involves program faculty annually reviewing CMHC students across the 10 KPIs and CES students across the 6 KPIs. Note that KPI 10 for the CMHC program and KPI 6 for the CES program directly measures students' professional dispositions using the Professional Dispositions Competency Assessment – Revised (PDCA-R). See CMHC Student Handbook.

## **TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS**

### **Minimal Technical Skills Needed**

Students will utilize D2L, the learning management system, for this course. D2L is used to enhance instructional and learning methods and provides a place for students to submit assignments, participate in online discussions, complete quizzes, receive interactive feedback from the instructor, etc. Students will need to utilize other technologies such as Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint/Canva, etc. The ETAMU IT Helpdesk can assist with technical assistance:

[HelpDesk@etamu.edu](mailto:HelpDesk@etamu.edu)

### **Zoom Video Conferencing Tool**

[https://inside.etamu.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom\\_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu](https://inside.etamu.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu)

### **Access and Navigation**

Students will need a campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. Please contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or [helpdesk@etamu.edu](mailto:helpdesk@etamu.edu) for support.

**Note:** Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, an ETAMU campus open computer lab, etc.

### **Communication and Support**

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor using their preferred method of communication listed on p. 1.

### **COUNSELING DEPARTMENT: Social Media Guidelines**

Counselors in training and Counselor Educators and Supervisors in training must maintain an ethical disposition throughout the program and beyond. The Counseling Department seeks to promote open dialogue on social media sites, subject to professional and ethical guidelines and applicable law. Members of the ETAMU community -- students, staff and faculty -- are expected to adhere to the ACA (2014) *Code of Ethics* online and offline.

## **UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES**

### **Syllabus Change Policy**

The syllabus serves as a guide and living document. Circumstances and/or events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

### **Student Conduct**

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the Student Guidebook.

<https://inside.etamu.edu/admissions/registrar/documents/studentGuidebook.pdf>.

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

### **ETAMU Attendance**

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedures 13.99.99.R0.01](#)

<http://www.etamu.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

### **Academic Integrity**

Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

### **Graduate Students Academic Integrity Policy and Form**

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<https://inside.etamu.edu/aboutus/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10.pdf>



### **Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement**

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**

East Texas A&M University

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: [studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu)

Website: [Student Disability Services](#)

<https://www.etamu.edu/student-disability-services/>

### **Nondiscrimination Notice**

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

### **Campus Concealed Carry Statement**

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and East Texas A&M University

Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer. Web url:

<http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M University campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

### **ETAMU Supports Students' Mental Health**

The Counseling Center at ETAMU, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit [www.etamu.edu/counsel](http://www.etamu.edu/counsel)

### **Mental Health and Well-Being**

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it.



<http://telusproduction.com/app/5108.html>

### **AI use policy [May 25, 2023]**

East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course. Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism). Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed. In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty

13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty



## COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Week 1	Introduction; ACA (2014) <i>Code of Ethics</i> ; AAMFT (2026) <i>Code of Ethics</i>	Choose book	Keep up with reading
Week 2	Skills and Methods; experiential	Liddle (2022), book choice	Keep up with reading
Week 3	Applications and Special Populations; grand rounds	Liddle (2022), book choice	Keep up with reading
Week 4	Special Issues; grand rounds supervision	Liddle (2022), book choice	Keep up with reading
Week 5	PRESENTATIONS		<b>Final Exam DUE IN CLASS</b>