

**ANDREWS UNIVERSITY**  
**Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary**  
RLED758 Internal Dynamics of Families (3 semester credits)  
Summer 2007

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Class Dates: July 15-20, 2007  
Times: Sun: 7:00-9:00pm, Mon-Fri: 8:00am – 5:30pm

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

A study of family systems theory and its applications to key issues in internal family dynamics. Exploring an understanding of family strengths and weaknesses and how family members relate to each other. Meets NCFR requirements for Internal Dynamics of Families module.

**Required Text:**

**The Marriage & Family Experience : Intimate Relationships in a Changing Society.** (2005). Bryan Strong, Christine DeVault, Theodore F. Cohen. 9th Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning, Inc. ISBN-10: 0534609309

**Course Content Areas:**

I. Childhood

- Family members as individuals
- Individuality and importance of all family members
- Getting along in the family
- Expressing feelings in families
- Personal family history
- Family similarities and differences
- Impact of change on families
- Responsibilities, rights, interdependence of family members
- Family rules
- Families as sources of protection, guidance, affection, support
- Families as possible sources of anger and violence
- Family problems

II. Adolescence

- Becoming an adult within the family
- Changes in family composition – births, divorce, death
- Managing and expressing feelings in families

- Coping with internal change and stress in the family
- Interaction of friends and family
- Personal and family decision making
- Communicating in families
- Interaction between family members
- Different needs and expectations of family members
- Responsibilities, rights, interdependence of family members
- Family rules – overt and covert
- Intergenerational relationships

### III. Adulthood

- Individual development in the family
- Individual and family roles
- Intimate relationships in the family
- Sources of stress and coping with stress
- Lifestyle choices
- Changing needs and expectations of family members
- Intergenerational dynamics throughout the life span
- Responsibilities, rights, interdependence of family members
- Family transitions – marriage, birth, divorce, remarriage, death
- Family history, traditions, celebrations
- Factors affecting marital and family relationships
- Giving and receiving affection
- Power and authority in the family
- Effects of family on self-concepts of its members
- Family rules – overt and covert
- Families as sources of protection, guidance, affection, support
- Differences in families – membership, economic level, role performance, values
- Families as possible sources of anger and violence
- Varying influences on family interaction patterns – ethnic, racial, gender, social, cultural

### IV. Later Adulthood

- Individual development in the family
- Individual and family roles
- Intimate relationships in the family
- Sources of stress and coping with stress
- Lifestyle choices and changes – retirement planning, retirement
- Changing needs and expectations of family members
- Intergenerational dynamics throughout the life span
- Responsibilities, rights, interdependence of family members and productivity

- Family transitions – marriage, birth, divorce, remarriage, retirement of mate, death
- Family history, traditions, celebrations
- Factors affecting marital and family relationships
- Giving and receiving affection
- Power and authority in the family
- Effects of family on self-concepts of its members
- Family rules – overt and covert
- Families as sources of protection, guidance, affection, support
- Differences in families – membership, economic level, role performance, values
- Families as possible sources of anger and violence
- Varying influences on family interaction patterns – ethnic, racial, gender, social, cultural
- Changes in power and authority in family
- Understanding the effects of self-perceptions on relationships

### **Student Outcomes**

#### **Knowledge**

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will:

1. Understand family systems theory as it applies to normal family processes;
2. Know communication patterns and problems in family relationships;
3. Know methods for the prevention, control and resolution of conflict;
4. Understand effective procedures for family decision-making and goal-setting;
5. Recognize Anormal@ times of stress in families, such as, transition periods in the family life cycle, care-giving, and dual careers;
6. Understand the effects on families caused by crises such as, divorce, remarriage, death, economic uncertainty and hardship, violence, substance abuse;
7. Recognize the situations which result in families having special needs: adoptive, foster, migrant, low income, military, clergy, new Christian, and blended families, as well as those with disabled members.

#### **Skills**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able:

1. To obtain, read, understand, and use social research as a basis for family intervention
2. To observe, describe, and assess interactive dynamics within family systems;
3. To model healthy family communication skills and demonstrate methods for resolving typical family conflict;
4. To teach family members decision-making and goal-setting procedures;
5. To locate and organize community resources (human, financial, spatial) that assist families with special needs (including clergy families) or families in crisis;
6. To refer families in need to appropriate community resources;

7. To teach church members principals of unconditional love and acceptance;
8. To find ways to acknowledge and affirm the faithful service provided by caregivers for their own family members in need.
9. To use these skills to increase self-awareness and make behavior changes in their own lives and relationships.

Values

Upon successful completion of this course, students will value:

1. Research knowledge as an important basis for program development;
2. Confidentiality when working with families;
3. The local church as a supporting and teaching agency of families;
4. Care-giving and care providers who are faithfully serving their family members;
5. Family ministry as a means to serve their community and improve its quality of life.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

You will demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and values outlined above through four course requirements:

1. Complete web-based exams with scores of at least 80%.
2. Identify research-based information on a family issue of interest and demonstrate its use through an in-class presentation
3. Conduct a family assessment, using family dynamics concepts, and write up the assessment.
4. Demonstrate family assessment and intervention skills (communication and conflict resolution).
5. Develop a data base of community resources.
6. Develop a research-based intervention plan focusing on family issues that could be implemented in an agency or your local church.

**Evaluation/Grading**

1. Web/based learning	100 points
2. Research presentation	50 points
3. Family assessment	100 points
4. Assessment demonstration	50 points
5. Data base	50 points
6. Intervention plan	<u>100 points</u>
TOTAL:	450 points

100-95 %	= A
94-93	= A-
92-90	= B+
89-87	= B
86-84	= B-

## COURSE PLAN

Much of the knowledge you gain about the theoretical foundations of family dynamics will come from your independent study of the text and through web-based learning activities. These exercises will prepare you with the background knowledge needed to complete the course projects and provide you with a balanced knowledge base on family dynamics. The course projects are designed to help you demonstrate the knowledge, values, and skills outlined in the course objectives.

Class time will be used to supplement, reinforce, and compliment text information. Most of class time will be devoted to experiential learning, skills practice, and knowledge application. I will give you an agenda each day so you can know how we will use our time together.

### **Preparing for the One-Week Intensive:**

You will need to demonstrate basic knowledge about family dynamics through reading chapters 1 – 16 in the course textbook and then taking the web-based quizzes for each chapter. You will need to pass the exams with a score of 80% or greater in order to get the 100 points allotted for this learning activity. You are allowed to take the exams as many times as you need to in order to demonstrate this level of proficiency.

### **In-class Assignments**

Additional readings will be required during the week of the intensive that supplement the textbook readings. These will be posted to WebCT. All requirements for in-class and post-class assignments will be handed out in class and posted to WebCT.

#### **Research presentation (50 points)**

You will develop and present research on a topic related to this course. The topic must be approved by the instructor. The approval process may be done prior to the intensive. You will find 10 peer-reviewed empirical research articles and present the findings of your research in class.

#### **Assessment demonstration (50 points)**

You will demonstrate your ability to conduct a family interview and engage in family assessment. In the role-play interview, you will lead the family through an abbreviated assessment and conflict resolution situation. The assessment demonstration must include family configuration information and data about the family's relationship to the environment. The conflict resolution portion should include at least three parts of the Interest-based Negotiation Model that will be presented in class.

### **Post-Class Assignments**

#### **Intervention Plan (100 points)**

Create an intervention plan that could be implemented in a church or service agency that helps improve family life. The plan should discuss what the need is and how you can/will document the need. You will need to show how this problem has been addressed through research studies

(10 research sources minimum). Some of the research should address what seems to work with this population and this problem. You will need to offer information about resources you will need in order to implement this intervention. Identify the key players that could help or hinder your plan. Develop a time/event sequence for your intervention. Note how you will get the target audience to participate. Note in your plan how you will evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. You will need an evaluation form to do this. If one does not already exist, develop one of your own.

### **Family Assessment (100 points)**

You will write a family assessment of your own family of origin. Use the outline below to write a comprehensive family assessment.

#### **Family Configuration**

Who are the family members? (Age, sex, birth order)

How is each family member occupied?

Where do they each live now?

Why did they leave the family?

Identify extended family members important in the family.

Describe any non-family members live(d) with the family or are important in the family.

What is their role (i.e. friend, caseworker, lawyer, minister, neighbor etc.)?

#### **Family Organization**

Describe the bond between parents and children (this may be different for each child)

What types of boundaries exist between spouse subsystem and the child system?

Describe the parenting philosophy of the parents.

How accessible is the parental subsystem to the children?

How did parents show preferences for one child over another?

Identify family triangles (either within the immediate family or with extended family members or persons outside the family)

How is the power distributed in the family? Who has the most relative power? The least?

#### **Marital Relationship**

What is the quality of the marital relationship?

Note divorce, infidelity, alcoholism, conflict, physical or psychological abuse.

How did your parents express love to each other?

How and why did they argue? How did they "get over it?"

Explore attitudes of father toward women; attitudes of mother toward men.

#### **Family Communication Process**

Describe the quality and quantity of communication in your family. Who talks to whom, who talks the most, who are left out, etc.

How are feelings discussed in the family? What emotions or thoughts may not be expressed? Are certain topics "taboo?"

How are "difficult" feelings such as anger and sadness dealt with in the family?

### **The Family Context**

How did parents earn their income, provide education for children, and maintain suitable standards of living?

What were parent's conceptions of those outside the family? Outside the church? Outside their racial/ethnic group?

What place did parents hold in the community? Church? Business?

Has the family experienced any major losses (death, separation, or other crisis)?

Are there major family stories, myths, heroes, heroines?

Is there a significant emotional cut-off from either the maternal or paternal side? Explain.

Are there serious unresolved intergenerational family issues?

Are outside events or influences "draining" the resources of this family?

How does the family make use of community resources?

### **Family Strengths**

What is it that helps the family thrive and go on?

What environmental advantages are accessible to the family?

What psychological strengths are demonstrated by the family (cognitive, emotional, motivational, coping, interpersonal)?

### **Data Base (50 points)**

You will develop a resource data base that you can use in your community. The data base should contain resources for people needing food, housing (shelter), reduced cost medical and legal care (or places that supply money to help with those costs), resources for victims of domestic violence, child abuse, or sexual violence. You'll need to supply the name of the agency or resource person, the type of service they offer, phone number, address, email address if available, and the name of the contact person.