

SYSTEMS THEORY AND PASTORAL CARE

Dr. Martha Robbins
Winter, 2000

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to help participants to think in terms of "systems" as this applies to families and congregations. While focusing on an intergenerational model of systems theory rooted in the thought of Murray Bowen, we will critically examine Bowenian theory in light of theological insights, and contextual factors such as race, gender, economic, and ethnicity. Throughout the course we will explore the implications of the above for pastoral care to families and congregations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE:

1. Students will have an adequate grasp of the basic content and processes inherent in family systems within the Bowenian model.
2. Students will be able to critique this model from racial, feminist, and cultural perspectives.
3. Students will develop an initial theological perspective on the ministry of care to families and congregations.
4. Students will identify a key issue pertaining to family or congregational process and research this issue.
5. Students will develop the basic skills of constructing a multigenerational genogram by doing their own genogram.

COMPONENTS OF THE FINAL PAPER:

1. Identify the issue/ or case study and why it is significant to you. (This may arise from your own experience with family or from your experience in ministry. Confidentiality must be understood and practiced.
2. Identify and elaborate upon the contextual factors that bear upon this issue/case, (i.e., race, gender, economic, natural forces).
3. Identify and focus on the key concepts in family structure and process that are pertinent to your issue/case.
4. Identify and elaborate on the biblical or theological perspective that informs your understanding of the issue/case.

5. Identify and describe some practical applications or strategies for pastoral care of families/congregations that emerge from your analyses of issue/case in #2, 3, 4.

Papers are to be 15-18 pages; typed, double-spaced, and good ink quality (not the end life of your printer ribbon). Organizational clarity, complete sentences, accurate grammar, and correct spelling greatly affect the presentation and, frequently, the content of your paper and its evaluation.

REQUIRED READING:

- Anderson & Fite, Becoming Married, W/JK, 1993.
 Anderson & Foley, Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals, Jossey-Bass, 1998.
 Carter, B. and M. McGoldrick, The Expanded Family Life Cycle (3rd. ed.), Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999. (Selected Chapters)
 Roberta Gilbert, Extraordinary Relationships, John Wiley, 1992.
 Ronald Richardson, Creating a Healthier Church, Fortress, 1996.

RECOMMENDED READING:

- Airhart, Phyllis, Margaret Bendroth, (Eds.), Faith Traditions and the Family, Louisville, Ky.: W/JK Press, 1996.
 **Barton, Stephen (Ed.), The Family in Theological Perspective, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996.
 Boyd-Franklin, Nancy. Black Families in Therapy, Guilford, 1989.
 Boyer, Ernest, Finding God at Home: Family Life as Spiritual Discipline. Harper & Row, 1984, 1988.
 **Berg-Cross, Linda, Basic Concepts in Family Therapy, Binghamton, N.Y.: Haworth Press, Inc., 1988.
 Browning, D. et al., From Culture Wars to Common Ground: Religion and the American Family Debate, Louisville, Ky: W/JK, 1997.
 **Burton, Laurel (Ed.), Religion and the Family: When God Helps, NY: Haworth Pastoral Press, 1992.
 Eugene, Toinette, Balm for Gilead: Pastoral Care for African American Families, United Church Press, 1997.
 **Friedman, Edwin, Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue, NY: Guilford Press, 1985.
 Franklin, Robert Michael, Another Day's Journey: Black Churches Confronting the American Crisis, Fortress, 1997.
 Graham, Larry K. Care of Persons, Care of Worlds, Abingdon, 1992.
 Hertz Brown, Fredda (Ed), Reweaving the Family Tapestry, W.W. Norton & Co., 1991.
 Imber-Black, Secrets in Families and Family Therapy, Norton, 1993.
 Imber-Black, Roberts, Whiting (Eds.) Rituals in Families and Family Therapy, Norton, 1988.
 Lerner, Harriet G., The Dance of Intimacy, Harper & Row,
 **Lyon, B. & A. Smith (Eds.), Tending the Flock: Congregations and

- Family Ministry, W/JK, 1998.
- **Marlin, Emily, Genograms: The New Tool for Exploring the Personality, Career, and Love Patterns You Inherit, Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989.
- McGoldrick, Anderson, Walsh (Eds.) Women in Families, W.W. Norton, 1989
- **McGoldrick & Gerson, Genograms in Family Assessment, W.W. Norton, 1985.
- Olson & Leonard, Ministry with Families in Flux, W/JK, 1990.
- Post, Stephen G., More Lasting Unions: Christianity, the Family and Society, Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000.
- Roberts, Janie, Tales and Transformations: Stories in Families and Family Therapy, Norton, 1994.
- Shapiro, Ester, Grief as a Family Process, NY: Guilford, 1994.
- Smith, Archie, Navigating the Deep River: Spirituality in African American Families, United Church Press, 1997.
- Smith, Wallace Charles, The Church in the Life of the Black Family, Judson, Press, 1985.
- **Stackhouse, Max, Covenant and Commitments: Faith, Family, and Economic Life, W/JK, 1997.
- **Walsh and McGoldrick, Living Beyond Loss: Death in the Family, Norton, 1991.
- **Walsh, Froma, Strengthening Family Resilience, N.Y.: Guilford Press, 1998.
- **Walsh, Froma (Ed.), Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy, N.Y.: Guilford, 1998.
- Wimberly, Edward, Counseling African American Marriages and Families, W/JK, 1997.
- **Wright, Lorraine, Beliefs, The Heart of Healing in Families and Illness, NY: Basic, 1996.
- **Vande Kemp, Hendrika (Ed.), Family Therapy: Christian Perspectives, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991.

FAMILY SYSTEMS COURSE OUTLINE

Sept. 11 INTRODUCTION

Overview: The Expanded Family Life Cycle
 Course Expectations and Syllabus; Genograms
 & Religious Faith/Spirituality, Spiritual Resources
 p. 226
Video: "Constructing the Multigenerational Genogram"

Sept.18 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS OF FAMILIES AND CONGREGATIONS

Read:

The Expanded Family Life Cycle, Chs. 4,5,6,7
Culture, Class and Gender

Rec. Read: Spiritual Resources, Ch.8 " Stress of
Poverty & Comfort of Spirituality"

1. What would be important for you to know as a Pastor about Ethnic differences in the five groups discussed in Ch. 4? Why?
2. What are the different social classes described in Ch.5 and how does this affect ministry to families within different classes?
3. What are the issues facing women throughout the lifecycle today? How do these issues affect your ministry to women? (Ch.6)
4. What are the issues facing men throughout the lifecycle today? (Ch.7) How may these issues affect your ministry to men? How do men and women's issues differ?
5. How would each of the above affect you
Congregational Family Structure and Dynamics?

Sept.25 UNDERSTANDING FAMILY PROCESS/DYNAMICS

Read: Gilbert, Extraordinary Relationships, Chs.1-15
Glossary and Appendices may be helpful.

Spiritual Resources, Ch.9 "Feet Planted Firmly Midair:
A Spirituality for Family Living"

What is meant by **The Individuality and Togetherness forces?** How may race, class, gender affect this notion? Give example from life or ministry of Ind.& Togetherness forces at work?
What Biblical or theological concepts address, or challenge this notion? Richardson, Ch.4

Ask the same above questions for the following:

Differentiation of Self, Ch.2,3; Richardson, Ch 6

Basic Self & Functional Self, Ch.3; Richardson, Ch. 8

Thinking Systems, Ch.4; Richardson, Ch.2
Watching Process, Ch.4-5; Richardson, Ch.2
Nuclear Family Emotional Process, Ch.6; Rich,Ch.2
Anxiety, Ch.6 ff (&Glossary); Rich, Ch.3

Relationship Patterns:

Conflict, Ch. 7; Richardson, Ch.7
Distance, Ch. 8; "
Cutoff, Ch. 9: "
Over & underfunctioning,Ch.10; Richardson, Ch.5
Triangles, Ch.11; Richardson, Ch. 9
Repetitions, Ch.12
Sibling Positions, Ch.13

Protrait of Ideal Relationship pp. 95-110

OCT. 2 UNDERSTANDING FAMILY PROCESS, Afternoon Session

Guest Lecturer: Rev.Dr. Carl Jensen, PPI

Read: Gilbert, Chs.16- 20, Answer above questions re:
Richardson, Chs.10,12,13

Growing a Self
Managing the Emotional Self in Relationships
Processing Feelings and Dealing with Crisis
Ten Misconceptions
Ten ways to promote success
Friendships; Love Relationships
Parents and Children; Single Life; Divorce
Prof. Rel.; Workplace rel; Societal Process

Oct. 9 LIFE CYCLE EVENTS: BECOMING MARRIED

Read: Anderson & Fite, Becoming Married
Expanding Family Life Cycle, Ch.14

What is your theology of marriage?
Respond critically to the pastoral roles that Anderson
& Fite outline.
How would you incorporate learnings from readings in
your marriage preparation ministry to couples?

OCT.16 LIFE CYCLE EVENTS: BECOMING PARENTS/ BIRTH STORIES

Read: Anderson & Foley, Mighty Stories, Ch. 4
Expanding Family Life Cycle, Ch.14

Richardson, Creating a Healthier Church, Ch.11
Walsh, "Belief Systems: The Heart and Soul of Resilience" Strengthening Family Resilience

What insights do the readings offer to your pastoral care-giving to families around issues of becoming parents, baptisms, birth stories? How does your birth order or birth story affect your vocation and ministerial leadership?

How would you know a Family's Belief System and deal with it in ministry around crucial transitional times? (Applies to next two classes as well).

OCT.23 DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Read: Expanding Family Life Cycle, Chs.22,23
Anderson & Foley, Ch. 7

Prepare: What are the major issues facing couples? What concept/insights came from your readings that may be helpful in ministering to couples who are having difficulty? What informs your practice of ministry with divorcing, and remarrying couples? What theological reflections ground your ministry in these areas? What rituals facilitate persons/families in transition?

OCT. 30 LIFE CYCLE EVENTS - LOSS, ILLNESS, DEATH, Funerals

Read:
Expanding Family Life Cycle, Ch. 11
Anderson & Foley, Ch. 6

Choose one Chapter from each book:

Living Beyond Loss,

Ch. 1 "Loss and the Family: A Systemic Perspective;

Ch. 2 "A Time to Mourn: Death and the Family Life Cycle";

Ch. 4 "Family Reaction to Death"

Strengthening Family Resilience

Ch. 7 "Loss, Recovery, and Resilience"

Ch. 8 "Coping & Resilience in Chronic Illness & Family Care-giving"

Ch. 9 "Strengthening Multicrisis Families"

Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy \

Ch. 3 "Spirituality, Suffering and Beliefs"

NOV. 6 FAMILIES AND FAITH

Read: Spiritual Resources,
Ch. 1, "Religion and Spirituality"
Ch.12 "Opening Therapy to Conversations with a
Personal God"
Strengthening Family Resilience
Ch. 10 "Reconnection and Reconciliation..."

NOV. 13 INTEGRATIVE SEMINAR