

Marriage and Family Research
PCs 381-3
Spring 2011

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“There are three kinds of lies: Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics.”

Benjamin Disraeli

“If sufficiently tortured, data will confess to anything.”

Unknown

“87.6% of all statistics are made up on the spot.”

Unknown

Course Description

This course is a study of empirical research methods and their application to pastoral counseling and marriage and family therapy. Students completing the course will develop skills to understand common MFT research methods, how research methods are applied, and how these are used for evidence-based practice in pastoral counseling/marriage and family therapy and the dialogue between religion and mental health.

Objectives

By the end of the term, students will:

- Understand the importance of research in marriage and family therapy.
- Be able to describe dominant research methods in marriage and family therapy.
- Know how to conduct literature searches through appropriate databases.
- Be able to interpret research methodology and statistical information in journal articles and to evaluate conclusions drawn from these data.
- Be able to articulate a basic understanding how statistics are used in research methods.
- Be able to discuss the current literature related to evidence-based practice.
- Be able to discuss current research in religion and mental health.
- Be able to state a position related to evidence-based practice and the relationship between faith and mental health practice.

Core Competencies Addressed

6.1.1	Know the extant MFT/PCC literature, research, and evidence-based practice.
6.1.2	Understand research and program evaluation methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, relevant to MFT/PCC and mental health services.
6.1.3	Understand the legal, ethical, and contextual issues involved in the conduct of clinical research and program evaluation.
6.2.1	Recognize opportunities for therapists and clients to participate in clinical research.
6.3.1	Read current MFT and PCC professional literature.
6.3.2	Use current MFT and PCC research to inform clinical practice.
6.3.3	Critique professional research and assess the quality of research studies and program evaluation in the literature.
6.3.4	Determine the effectiveness of clinical practice and techniques.
6.4.1	Evaluate knowledge of current clinical literature and its application.
6.5.1	Contribute to the development of new knowledge.

Texts

Norcross, J. C., Beutler, L.E. & Levant, R. F. (Eds.) (2009). *Evidence-based practices in mental health: Debate and dialogue on the fundamental questions*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Patten, M. (2009). *Understanding research methods* 7th ed. Los Angeles: Pryczak Publishing.

Required Reading From (also on library reserve)

Koenig, R. (2005). *Faith and Mental Health: Resources for Healing*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation

Sprenckle, D. (ed.). (2003). *Effectiveness research in marriage and family therapy*. Washington, D.C.: AAMFT.

Other Useful Texts

Girden, E. [Evaluating Research Articles From Start to Finish](#). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996.

Locke, L. F., Silverman, S. J., & Spiruso, W. W. *Reading and Understanding Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Sprenckle, D., Piercy, F. (Eds.). (2005). *Research methods in family therapy* (2nd ed). New York: The

Guilford Press.

Pyrzczak, R. *Evaluating Research in Academic Journals: A Practical Guide to Realistic Education*. Los Angeles, CA: Pyrczak Publishing Co., 1999.

JMFT articles and other readings as assigned below are library reference or reserved at the circulation desk.

Patten, M. (2000). Proposing empirical research: A guide to fundamentals. Los Angeles: Pyrczak Publishing.

Galvan, J. L. (1999) Writing literature reviews: A guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences. Los Angeles, Pyrczak Publishing.

Requirements

- **Two Journal Article Critiques (15% each, total 30%)**

Critiques should be a substantial review of assigned article and should demonstrate competent understanding of class content for the week. Critiques must be written in APA style. For instructions about evaluating articles, see Pyrczak, *Evaluating research in academic journals*. **Maximum: 5 pages. Article to be reviewed:**

Article 1, Due March 8.

Werner-Wilson, R. (1997). Is therapeutic alliance influenced by gender in marriage and family therapy? *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 9 (1), 3-16.

Article 2, Due April 26.

Stith, S., Rosen, K., & McCollum, E. (2004) Treating intimate partner violence within intact couple relationships: Outcomes of multi-couple versus individual couple therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, Vol 30(3), 305-318.

- **Evidence-based practice classroom debate/presentation (20%)**

- **Clinical Research Review (Due: Last day of class) (25%)**

1. Select a clinical problem, perhaps a problem presented by one of your practicum clients (for example generalized anxiety, school phobia in a child, a specific manifestation of depression, etc.).
2. Conduct a literature search.
3. Select 5 articles that you consider good or helpful about this problem.
4. Summarize conclusions
5. Critically analyze the quality of the research and usefulness of these conclusions.
6. Describe how conclusions can be useful (or not) in your work with the clients.

- **Final Examination (25%)**

The final examination is computerized and will be available in the library the week of finals.

2011 Research Schedule

Feb. 10 **Introduction: The Nature of Social Sciences (Lecture A)**

Reading:

Patten, Topic 1, 9, 10, 13

- A. Introduction to Research Methods
- B. Qualitative research and postmodern critique

Feb. 15 **Introduction: Research, Clinical and Pastoral Practice (Lecture B & B1)**

Reading:

Sprenkle (2003) Chapter 1 (CAMS) **Library Reserve.**

- A. Research in a Theological Context
- B. Science and Practice

Feb. 17 **Reading and Evaluating Journal Research Reports (Lecture C & C1)**

Reading:

Patton, Topic 12,71-76

- A. The Nature of Research Reports/Research Articles
- B. Evaluation of Ethics

*Feb. 22 **Quantitative Research Strategies**

Reading:

Patton, Topic 2-8; 37-42

- A. The nature of quantitative research
- B. Variables, definitions, operationalization
- C. Methods and purposes:
 - a. Questions, purposes, hypotheses
 - b. Nature, meaning & limitations of causation
 - c. Experimental methods
 - d. Quasi-experimental methods
 - e. Causal-comparative methods
 - f. Mathematical models and statistics as descriptive language
 - g. Mixed methods

Feb. 24 **KAMFT**

March 1 **Central Concepts: Reliability and Validity**

Reading:

Patton, Topic 27-36

- A. Concepts of reliability and validity
- B. Measuring reliability and validity
- C. Test, self-report, observation, etc.

March 3 **Statistical Concepts: Organizing Data (Lecture E)**

Reading:

Patton, Topic 43-46

- A. Description and inference in statistics
- B. Nature and function of hypothesis in quantitative research
- C. Organizing data in ways that make sense

March 8 Library session—Bibliographical research and literature review

March 10 **Statistical Concepts: Sampling and Comparing Data (Lecture G & G1)
Practice test 1**

Reading:

Patton, Topic 20-26

- A. Assessing sampling procedures
- B. Descriptive statistics

March 15 **Non-Parametric tests: Chi square**

Reading:

Patton, Topic 47-48

- A. Hypothesis building
- B. Chi Square

March 17 **Outcome and Evidence Based Practice**

Reading:

Sprengle, D. (ed.). (2003). *Effectiveness research in marriage and family therapy*.
Washington, D.C.: AAMFT. (CAMS)

Norcross et al: Prologue & Chapter 1

Class session discussion/debate led by:

March 22-24 **Research and Reading**

March 29 **Statistical Concepts: Variability and the Normal Curve (Lecture I, J, L)**

Reading:

Patton: Topic 49-52, 57; Appendix D (pg. 189)

- A. The normal curve
- B. Randomness and probability
- C. Statistical significance

March 31 **Outcome and Evidence Based Practice**

Reading:

Norcross, et al: Chapter 2

Class session discussion/debate led by:

April 3 **Statistical Concepts: Correlation and Regression (Lecture S)**

Reading:

Patton: Topic 53

- A. Correlation
- B. Causation
- C. Measures: r and R
- D. Significance

April 7 **Outcome and Evidence Based Practice**

Reading:

Norcross, et al: Chapter 4

Class session discussion/debate led by:

April 12 **Statistical Concepts: Comparing Means t -test and ANOVA**

Reading:

Patton: Topic 54-56

April 14 **No class: President's Inauguration**

April 19 **Outcome and Evidence Based Practice**

Reading:

Norcross, et al: Chapter 5

Class session discussion/debate led by:

April 21 **Easter Recess**

April 26 **Meta Analysis**

Reading:

Patton: Topic 58-63

April 28 **Qualitative Methods**

Reading:

Patton: Topic 64-70

- A. The nature of qualitative research
- B. Research questions
- C. Usefulness and validity
- D. Postmodern framework
- E. Example

May 3 **Qualitative Methods Again**

Examples

May 5 **Outcome and Evidence Based Practice**

Reading:

Norcross, et al: Chapter 7

Class session discussion/debate led by:

May 10 **Outcome and Evidence Based Practice**

Reading:

Norcross, et al: Chapter 8

Class session discussion/debate led by:

May 12 **Spirituality and Mental Health Research**

Reading:

Koenig: Chapter 3 & 22

Appendix

Critical Class Policies

Grade Scale and Philosophy

A	96.6-100
A-	93.6-96.5
B+	90.6-93.5
B	87.6-90.5
B-	85.6-87.5
C+	83.6-85.5
C	81.6-83.5
C-	79.6-81.5
D	70.6-79.5
F	Below 70.6

Individuals admitted to graduate study are expected to perform well consistently in academic work. This is translated into grades in the following way. Basic mastery of the body of knowledge required for a course at a level expected for graduate study results in scores in the B to B+ range. Grades of A- are granted for work which demonstrates: 1) basic mastery of the body of knowledge and 2) independent thought about the subject matter. Grades of A are granted for work which demonstrates: 1) mastery of the required body of knowledge, 2) independent thought about the subject matter, and 3) creative/integrative use of the material, exceptional writing and expression which integrates the material into a student=s own system of thought, and/or exceptionally well done or articulated research.

Set in Stone Expectations: A revised ethos.

- Assignments are due on the day they are assigned.
- Given the intensive nature of this class, late assignments will be graded down one letter grade per day, beginning the day after the assignment is due.
- Late assignments will not be accepted past two days overdue.
- Reading and discussion are expected of all participants.
- As per seminary policy, an incomplete will be granted only because of serious personal or family problems or a major illness. Procrastination and poor planning are not generally acceptable as illness. While these may be personal problems, they do not qualify as the kind of circumstantial disruption of life that will qualify for an incomplete.

Attendance

Learning is a complex activity that requires conceptual and experiential participation by those who wish to learn. Student attendance and participation is fundamental to the way the learning environment is

structured for this course. Attendance and participation is required to earn a passing grade. While circumstances may require an adult learner to miss class occasionally, absence from more than 10% of the classroom experience will affect student learning and (consequently) the student=s grade. Extreme circumstances, such as health problems, family concerns, etc. must be discussed with the professor *prior* to multiple missed classes. Students unable to attend at least 75% of classes are advised to drop the class prior to the registrar=s WP deadline, or receive a failing grade.

Form for Writing Assignments

All papers submitted for grades must be written in APA approved style and be double-spaced.

- Major research papers, book reviews, etc. should include a cover sheet with the assignment title, your name, and the class for which you are writing.
- Weekly assignments should include at the top of the first page your *name, title of the assignment, and the date the assignment is due*. These papers are to be folded in half (vertically) with your name and mailbox number on the outside. This allows returning them to you through campus mail.
- All sources used in writing assignments must be cited appropriately and according to APA style. *Failure to cite sources is plagiarism. You must give credit for quotes and ideas used in your writing. Papers submitted for grades that demonstrate plagiarism will receive a failing grade, and students will be subject to the seminary policy regarding plagiarism.*

Inclusive Language is a Seminary Policy

Learning is fundamentally concerned with communication, self-expression, and personal and social transformation. Learning respects individuals, their feelings, their value and worth, and their particular potential for contribution to common knowledge and community virtue. Learning is fundamentally and intentionally inclusive.

Since all learning is inherently ethical and political, and theological discourse has been traditionally patriarchal and gender exclusive, the Seminary has established a policy, in the interest of constructing an inclusive and egalitarian community, that the language (symbols, metaphors) used in our class discussions and written work shall be gender inclusive and respectful of all persons and groups as valued human creatures of God.

Racism also permeates our society and is detrimental to any learning environment. We need to use language, symbols, and metaphors that honor our commitment to racial inclusiveness.