



Nazarene Theological Seminary

1700 E Meyer Blvd • Kansas City, MO 64131 • 816/268-5400

PTH660 – Family Systems and the Church (Block)
Spring 2011, Tuesdays Feb. 1- May 3, 6:00-9:00 PM

Essential Information

Please refer to the following resources for information essential for the successful completion of courses and degree programs at Nazarene Theological Seminary. Links to these resources are available at http://support.nts.edu/index.php/Essential_Information. Additional technical support information can be found at <http://support.nts.edu>.

- NTS Mission Statement & Purpose and Master of Divinity Objectives
- Tips for online learning success
- NTS library services
- NTS textbook information
- Online technical requirements and Moodle support information
- NTS Student Handbook including statements on quality of work, plagiarism, and academic probation
- *A Handbook for Inclusive Language*

Instructor Information

Professor: Judith Schwanz, Ph.D.
Office: (816) 268-5491
Office Hours: by appointment

Email: jaschwanz@nts.edu

Catalog Description

This course provides an understanding of family systems theory as applied to the local church congregation or any other organized social network. Within this framework, students will consider health and dysfunction in both congregation and pastor and the implications of both for pastoral counseling.

Course Narrative & Rationale

More than simply a collection of individuals, the church is a relational system with emotional, structural, economic and cultural dynamics at work. This course applies an understanding of family systems theory to help the pastor/pastoral counselor function as a better leader and facilitate emotional health within the system of the church.

Course Outcomes

1. To expose students to the dynamics of human systems, and to basic family system concepts.
(All texts, Case studies, class discussions)

2. To assist students in their understanding of collaborative and leadership functions in systems environments. (Case studies, Church assessment paper, class discussions)
3. To equip students to conduct marital, couple, and group counseling within a systems framework. (Case studies, Family of Origin paper, *Family Ties that Bind* and *Systems Theory and Family Therapy* texts, class discussions)
4. To challenge students to apply systems learning to their own families of origin and life experiences. (Family of Origin paper, class discussions)
5. To enable students to apply systems learning to understand the dynamics of organizational functioning, and to improve relational functioning within the church as a system. (Case studies, Church assessment paper, class discussions)

Church of the Nazarene COSAC Competencies

CP 12 - Ability to appropriately express pastoral care & concern for individuals & families in crises, passages, & the normal routines of life

CP 13 - Ability to offer spiritual counsel & to discern for referral counseling needs beyond the minister's ability

CP 14 - Ability to apply the knowledge of basic helping skills gained from historic Christian & appropriate contemporary models

Required Texts & Course Materials

Becvar, D.S., and Becvar, R.J. (2000) *Systems Theory and Family Therapy: A Primer*, 2nd Ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Richardson, R. W. (1996). *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Richardson, R. (1995). *Family ties that bind: A self-help guide to change through Family of Origin therapy*. Bellingham, WA: Self-Counsel Press.

Recommended Texts & Course Materials

Friedman, E.H. (1985). *Generation to generation: Family process in church and synagogue*. New York: Guilford Press.

Course Outline

- I. Basic Systems Principles
 - a. Distance and closeness
 - b. Genograms
 - c. Triangulation
 - d. Anxiety
 - e. Differentiation
- II. Application of principles to relationship systems (family)
- III. Application of principles to social systems (church)

Course Assignments & Requirements

1. Active participation in class discussion is required. The student should read and think about relevant chapters before class. (Outcomes #1-5)
2. Attendance: each class will involve active participation by class members making it difficult to make-up work. Unless it is an emergency, let the instructor know ahead of time if you will miss a class. It is your responsibility to make-up all work. Attendance will reflect on your final grade.
3. Collateral reading: minimum of 500 pages of reading, **excluding** texts. Include books and/or journals. Note: do NOT count reading reported in another class. Reading should pertain to class topics. Report on reading will include full bibliographic citation of all sources read, total number of pages read, and a reaction paper of at least 1,000 words. The reaction paper may include questions raised by the reading, new insights gained, critiques of counseling methodology, personal applications, etc. (Outcomes #1,2,3,5)
4. Case studies: case studies will be distributed in class, and students will prepare a 1-page analysis to be posted on Moodle by Friday of that week. Before the next class session, each student will respond to at least 2 other postings from other students. (8 cases total) (Outcomes #1,2,3,5)
5. Family of Origin paper: write a 12-15 page paper which demonstrates your assimilation of course texts and personal reflection on your family. *Part 1* of this paper is a *Three Generation Genogram* (1 page). This is to include people in your immediate family, your parents, and your grandparents, the key relationships represented by appropriate symbols and lines and key events and dates. Guidelines will be found in the Richardson text. *Part 2* is a *Timeline* (1 page) of all family members who have died, with their date, year, and cause of death, and of all family birth dates, and other key events (e.g., moves, job losses, traumas, significant positive surprises, etc.) *Part 3* is a *Map* (1 page) of the earliest neighborhood you can remember. Include as much detail as you can. Who lived where? What were the secret places? Where were your friends? How did your family “fit” into the neighborhood? *Part 4* is a *Systems Assessment* (6-8 pages). Using text material and personal reflection, write an assessment of your family system. You may want to interview various family members to gather as much information as possible concerning your family and its uniqueness. What does it mean to be “a member of this family,” including strengths, struggles, potential counter-transference issues, secrets, and unknowns? How has this shaped who you are as a person today? The Richardson text will provide helpful questions to get you started on this section of the paper. *Part 5* is a written reflection on *Personal and Professional Implications* (3-5 pages). In this section you will identify your past and present strengths, struggles, and potential issues in light of your analysis. Include in this section a plan for your continued growth and how you will address these issues in your counseling of others. (Outcomes #3,4)
6. Church/organization assessment paper: Using systems concepts and diagrams, “assess” your current congregation. [If you are not currently involved in a local congregation, write about the church or another organization (including counseling agencies) you consider yourself a part of.] Draw on course readings and discussions in your assessment. This paper should be 10-12 pages, including diagrams. (Outcomes # 2,4)

Distribution of Student Learning Hours

	hours
Face-to-face Class Sessions	39
Online Participation in forums, groups, etc.	8
Reading	37
Writing	54
Other Assignments and Learning Activities	10
Exams & Quizzes	0
TOTAL	148

Method for Submitting Assignments

All assignments should be submitted through Moodle no later than 11:55 PM of the due date listed for the assignment.

Form and Style Expectations

All papers shall be written using Turabian format for form and style.

Inclusive Language

NTS is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, NTS urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussions, and in their writings. All written work presented to meet course requirements must use gender inclusive language.

Policy Regarding Late Work & Missed Exams

All written work is expected to be handed in by 23:55 (11:55 PM - Central Time) on the due date given. Late work will be marked down 10% for every week (or portion thereof) that it is late.

Course Grading

Final Grade

The final grade will be based on the following criteria:

Family of Origin paper	30%
Church Assessment paper	25%
Collateral Reading report	10%
Case Studies	20%
Attendance and Participation	15%

Grading Scale:

A=93-100
B+=90-92
B=87-89
B-=84-86
C+=81-83
C=78-80
C-=75-77

In accordance with the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, NTS is committed to providing students with disabilities the opportunity to participate and benefit from its programs and activities. Accordingly NTS will make reasonable modifications to its programs and activities to accommodate otherwise qualified students with disabilities, unless such modifications would impose an undue burden on the operation of the particular program or activity or would fundamentally alter the nature or purpose of the program or activity. Students needing accommodations should contact the Office of the Registrar. They also should contact the instructor no later than the end of the first class session to discuss learning needs and adaptive strategies, which have been beneficial for the student in the past.

Class Attendance

It is expected that students will attend all class sessions except for serious illness or because of other unavoidable circumstances. They are responsible directly to the instructor to see that course requirements are met. A student who is absent 30 minutes or more of the class (including late arrivals and/or early departures) may be counted absent. A student who fails to exhibit a good faith effort of attention during the class (inattentive, visiting, sleeping, etc.) may be counted as "absent".

If you must be absent because of extenuating circumstances, contact the professor as soon as possible to discuss the situation. If a student is absent four or more weeks of the semester, the professor may automatically fail the student. Daily attendance records must be reported for those obtaining V.A. and Department of Education benefits.

Course Calendar

Date	Week	Assignment
		B: Becvar text F: <i>Family Ties</i> book C: <i>Creating a Healthier Church</i>
Feb 1	1	B: 1-50 Basic Systems principles
Feb 8	2	B: 51-end T: ch. 1-5 C: ch. 1-5 Closeness and distance
Feb 15	3	Case Study #1 due T: ch. 6-8 C: ch. 6-8 Genograms
Feb 22	4	Case Study #2 due C: ch. 9-13 Triangulation and anxiety
Mar 1	5	Case Study #3 due Differentiation
Mar 8	6	Case Study #4 due
Mar 15	7	Family of Origin paper due

Mar22	8	Reading and Research Week - no classes
Mar 29	9	Case Study #5 due
Apr 5	10	(MNU/MAC students - licensing exam 4/5); Collateral Reading report due
Apr 12	11	(MNU/MAC students - comprehensive exam 4/16) Case Study #6 due
Apr 19	12	Case Study #7 due
Apr 26	13	Church Assessment due
May 3	14	Case Study #8 due

Bibliography

Gilbert, Roberta M. *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making a Difference*, Falls Church, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2006.

Gilbert, Roberta M. *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory: A New Way of Thinking About the Individual and the Group*, Falls Church, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2006.

Richardson, Ronald W., *Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Family Systems Theory and the Pastor's Own Family*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2005.

Richardson, Ronald W. *Couples in Conflict: A Family Systems Approach to Marriage Counseling*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Steinke, Peter L. *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*, Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006.

Worthington, Everett L. *Hope-Focused Marriage Counseling: A Guide to Brief Therapy*, Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005.

Yarhouse, Mark A. and James Nathan Sells, *Family Therapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal*, Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.