



# TYNDALE

• SEMINARY •

## Course Syllabus

**FALL 2017**  
**FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY**  
**COUN 0677**  
**Section 01**

**SEPTEMBER 12 – DECEMBER 12, 2017**  
**TUESDAYS, 2:15 – 5:05PM**

**INSTRUCTOR: DR. SUSAN ELLFELDT**  
416-226-6620 ext. 6787, 416-695-8486  
Email: [sellfeldt@tyndale.ca](mailto:sellfeldt@tyndale.ca)

Office Hours: Available for consultation Tuesdays 9:30 am -12 pm and Wednesdays 9:30 am – 11 am or by appointment

To access your course material, please go to <http://classes.tyndale.ca>. Course emails will be sent to your @MyTyndale.ca e-mail account. For information how to access and forward emails to your personal account, see <http://www.tyndale.ca/it/live-at-edu>.

### **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

A critical appraisal of basic theoretical concepts in Family Systems Theory. Topics: historical and conceptual development of Family Systems Theory; introduction to General Systems Theory; family rules, roles, structure and interaction patterns; functional and dysfunctional family systems; life cycle issues in marriage and family and ethnicity and family therapy. Recommended prerequisite: COUN 0574. COUN majors only or by permission of instructor.

### **II. LEARNING OUTCOMES**

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a theoretical understanding of the differences between individual/intrapsychic and a systemic/interpersonal perspectives of human behaviour.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the theoretical concepts of family systems theory.
- Demonstrate recognition of system dynamics in individual, couple and family behaviours.
- Demonstrate understanding of the therapeutic relationship, assessment, change techniques and termination of therapy using systems theory.
- Demonstrate an understanding of one's self in relation to one's own family of origin.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of one's self and context on the therapeutic relationship

### **III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **A. REQUIRED READING:**

Barker, P. & Chang, J. (2013). *Basic Family Therapy* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & sons, Ltd. ISBN 978-1-119-94505-5

Becvar, D. S. & Becvar, R. J. (1999). *Systems theory and family therapy: A primer* (revised 2nd ed.). Lanham, MD: University Press of America Inc. ISBN ISBN 0-7618-1295-4

Richardson, D. (2011). *Family ties that bind*. (4th ed.) North Vancouver, BC: Self Counsel Press. ISBN 978-1-77040-086-3

#### **B. SUPPLEMENTARY / RECOMMENDED READING:**

McGoldrick, M. & Shellenberger, S. (1999). *Genograms in family assessments*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company. ISBN 0-393-70294-4

Napier, A. & Whitaker, C. (1978). *The family crucible: The intense experience of family therapy*. New York, NY: Harper & Row. ISBN 0-06-091489-0

Smith-Acuna, S. (2011). *Systems Theory in action: Applications to individual, couples, and family therapy*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. ISBN 978-0-470-47582-9.

Watzlawick, P. Weakland, J. & Fisch, R. (2011). *Change: Principles of problem formation and problem resolution*. (Reprint Ed.) New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company. ISBN 0-393-01104-6

Watzlawick, P., Bavelas, J. B. & Jackson, D. D. (2011). *Pragmatics of human communication: A study of interactional patterns, pathologies, and paradoxes*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company. ISBN 978-0-393-70707-6

### C. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

**Regular attendance in and punctuality for all classes is expected.** Out of respect for your colleagues, please try to be on time for all classes. Absence from more than 2 classes may result in the loss of credit.

#### 1. Family of Origin Paper and Genogram: Due December 5<sup>th</sup>; 35% of final grade

Through the course of our lives we interact in many systems. However, it is the first system with which we interact, our family of origin, that has the most powerful and persistent influence on how we think and feel about ourselves and on how we interact with others. It is this system that has the most powerful impact, both positive and negative, on our future relationships. (Fredda Herz Brown)

An individual acquires from his early-family experiences, or "family of origin," a set of explicit and implicit expectations, values, attitudes, and beliefs which serve as points of reference for the evaluation of all interpersonal life experiences. These interactions with the family of origin begin with the birth of an individual and continue to exert an influence throughout life. (Brian Canfield)

Both of these quotes point to the influence of the family of origin on the individual. Understanding oneself, especially oneself within relationships, requires some understanding of the interpersonal dynamics of one's family of origin.

Most families, however, with all their inadequacies, generally care for their members. To celebrate this reality, however, we need words that identify and validate family strengths as well as family limitations.

The texts for this course have a system's orientation. Considering the information gained in these readings and in the lectures, I would like you to:

- a. Do a "Family-of-Origin Genogram" (incorporating 3 generations). You may do this free-hand or use a computer program for genograms such as Genopro. Whatever method you choose, you must include a legend to indicate what the various symbols mean.
- b. Analyze your family and identify family patterns to understand how the themes, issues and interactional patterns are transmitted across generational lines Apply the concepts from the texts and the content of the course (Family Systems Theory) to your reflections

on your family and to the genogram. Interviewing willing family members to get adequate information for this project is expected.

- c. Identify problematic patterns in your family of origin and how they have influenced you as an adult, and how they will impact safe and effective use of self as a therapist.
- d. Identify qualities and strengths in your family of origin and how they enriched your adult life.

You will then hand in your completed genogram and an 8 to 12 page paper in which you consider the dynamics you identify in your family system, using family system terminology.

I am especially interested in your reflections on how, in the light of your family of origin study, you understand yourself, your current relational patterns, and the impact of those patterns on you as a therapist.

PLEASE NOTE: The research and reflection for this assignment is extremely time consuming. In order to complete this assignment satisfactorily you will need to begin early in the semester.

## 2. Richardson Assignments: Due weekly as noted in Course Schedule; 5% of final grade

From the Richardson text, students will be required to submit their answers to the "Questions" embedded in the required reading for that week. The assignments will be graded weekly on a pass/fail basis. Note: Information in this text is very useful for preparation for Family of Origin paper and genogram.

## 3. Midterm Quiz: Due November 14; 20% of final grade

A quiz will be given mid-semester. This will be a short answer quiz in which the student must define various systems terms discussed over the course of the semester.

## 4. Final Examination; Due December 12; 40% of final grade

To encourage this process of translating theory into practice, there will be a video presentation most weeks and students will participate in a family system's analysis of each video. The final will be a video exam at the end of the course that will focus on your ability to analyze the relational dynamics using Family Systems terms and understandings and to 'think' in family systems terms.

The content which you will be expected to master will be drawn from the class discussions, the texts, and from any handouts that are distributed during the course. This exam will involve

watching a portion of a 'professor-selected' video. Then you will be required to answer questions which will reflect your understanding from a systems perspective of the dynamics in that family in the video. The examination will include questions on the processes of counselling as well (type of therapeutic relationship, therapist's use of self, therapeutic plan and change processes, etc.). In preparation for this exam, students are encouraged to review the lectures, their take-home quiz, and in-class video discussions as well as the texts.

**In addition to the above assignments, all counselling majors are now mandated to have 6 "self-awareness" counselling sessions** with counsellors at the Tyndale Counselling Services. These sessions will be scheduled during the Family Systems course for all beginning counselling students. The sessions will be \$25.00 each. If students want to also engage in therapeutic goals beyond this mandated goal, that would be their decision. During these 6 sessions, students will be expected to read 25 pages of suggested readings prepared for each session (150 pages in all), which will be discussed during their sessions. The suggested references are attached below and the reading is not limited to this list. **When these sessions are completed, the student will receive a Certificate of Completion which will held by the instructor and placed in the students file for graduation.**

#### **D. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK**

1. **The reflection papers** should demonstrate the student's ability to process his/her internal responses personally and professionally. The ability to reflect upon and process feelings and thoughts is an important skill in counselling work.
2. **Title page and documentation:** The title page should include the name of the course, name of the instructor, title of the paper/assignment, student's name, and the date due. Students are expected to honestly reflect use of materials other than their own. Tyndale does not tolerate plagiarism in any form. Any sources used in the paper should be properly documented using the format provided by the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.
3. **Papers** must be typed, double spaced, and written using inclusive language. Students are required to retain a copy of all assignments in hard copy or electronic form. Graduate level spelling, grammar and style are expected, and grades will be lowered if written expression is poor.
4. Tyndale Seminary's policy on late assignments will be followed. For each week late, the grade will be reduced by 1 letter grade. Extensions will be considered if the circumstances are extreme. No final assignments or examinations will be accepted later than 5:00 PM on December 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Academic Integrity**

Integrity in academic work is required of all our students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity, and includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the instructors; using false information (including false references to secondary sources) in an assignment; improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism. Tyndale University College & Seminary takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty.

Students should consult the current Academic Calendar for academic policies on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System. The Academic Calendar is posted at <http://tyndale.ca/registrar/calendar>.

#### **E. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

Family of Origin Paper	35%
Richardson Assignments	5%
Midterm Quiz	20%
Final Exam	40%
Total Grade	100%

#### **F. COURSE EVALUATION**

Tyndale Seminary values quality in the courses it offers its students. End-of-course evaluations provide valuable student feedback and are one of the ways that Tyndale Seminary works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. Student involvement in this process is critical to enhance the general quality of teaching and learning.

Before the end of the course, students will receive a MyTyndale email with a link to the online course evaluation. The evaluation period is 2 weeks; after the evaluation period has ended, it cannot be reopened.

Course Evaluation results will not be disclosed to the instructor before final grades in the course have been submitted and processed. Student names will be kept confidential and the instructor will only see the aggregated results of the class.

#### **IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT, AND REQUIRED READINGS**

##### **Sept. 12 Session I: Paradigm Shift**

- History of systems theory and major contributors
- Paradigm of individual psychology

- Paradigm of relational psychology
- Emergence of Systems Theory

**Reading:** Becvar Chapter 1, Becvar Chapter 2 (pp 5-9), Chapter 10  
 Barker and Chang: Chapters 1, Chapter 3 (pp26-31), Chapter 5 (pp50-54)

**Sept. 19 Session 2: First Order Cybernetics**

- Review of individual and systems therapy, culture and theory
- Boundaries
- Open/closed systems
- Subsystems and suprasystems

**Reading:** Becvar Chapter 3 (p13-19)  
 Richardson workbook: Chapter 1 (no questions due)  
 Barker & Chang: Chapter 3 (pp31-35)

**Sept. 26 Session 3: First Order Cybernetics**

- Entropy, negentropy and information flow
- Rules
- Homeostasis
- Issues of change
- Feedback processes
- Homeostasis & zone of tolerance
- Morphostasis & morphogenesis
- Equifinality
- Reframe
- Recursion & circular causality
- Punctuation
- Wholeness

**Reading:** Becvar Chapter 3 (20-34)  
 Richardson workbook: Chapter 2 (**all 5 sets of Questions due**)  
 Barker & Chang: Chapter 3 (pp35-42)

**Oct. 3 Session 4: Second Order Cybernetics**

- Introduction to 2nd Order Cybernetics
- The Debate

**Reading:** Becvar: Chapter 2 (pp 9-12), Chapter 8  
Barker and Chang: to be announced  
Richardson workbook: Chapter 3 (**1 Question set & 2 exercises due**)

**Oct. 10 Session 5: Second Order Cybernetics**

- Autopoiesis
- Consensual domains
- Epistemology of participation
- Feedback
- Non-purposeful drift
- Open or closed
- Reality as a multiverse
- Structural coupling
- Structural determinism
- Wholeness

**Reading:** Becvar Chapter 4  
Richardson workbook: Chapter 4 (**5 Question sets due**)

**Oct. 17 Session 6: Comparison of 1st & 2nd Order Cybernetics/Human Development**

- Integration of 1st and 2nd Order Cybernetics
- Erikson – Individual development

**Reading:** Becvar Chapters 5 & 6  
Richardson workbook: Chapter 5 (**3 Question sets & 2 exercises due**)  
Barker and Chang: to be announced

**Oct. 24 Reading Week**

**Oct. 31 Session 7: Human Development/Family Life Cycles**

- Erikson Pre-teens through Old Age
- Family Life Cycles
- Phases of family life (from Nichols: *Marital Therapy: an Integrative Approach*)

**Readings:** Barker and Chang: to be announced  
Richardson workbook: Chapter 6 (**4 Question sets & 2 exercises due**)

**Nov. 7 Session 8: Issues of Developmental Theory/Therapeutic Relationship**



- Transitional stress
- Horizontal and vertical stressors
- The person of the counsellor
- Counsellor's impact on therapy
- Boundaries in therapy
- Appropriate use of self
- Therapeutic Alliance
- Begin McGoldrick Genogram video

**Reading:** Barker and Chang: to be announced  
Richardson workbook: Chapter 7 (**1 Question set due**)

**Nov. 14 Session 9:** Observation and Assessment

- Family rules
- Family boundary issues
- Supra and subsystem issues
- McGoldrick Video

**Readings:** Barker and Chang: to be announced  
**Due: Midterm Quiz**

**Nov. 21 Session 10:** Observation & Assessment

- Circumplex model
- Bowen Model: Differentiation of self
- Triangles
- Common patterns of interaction
- Tracking emotional processes
- The therapeutic Process
- McGoldrick Video

**Readings:** Barker and Chang: to be announced  
Richardson workbook: Chapter 8 & 9 (use exercises to facilitate your Family of Origin Paper)

**Nov 28 Session 11: Process of Change/Termination**

- The interview process
- Conceptualizing change
- 1st and 2nd order change
- The dance of change
- Termination

**Readings:** Becvar: Chapter 6, Chapter 11 &12 and 15  
Barker and Chang: to be announced

**Dec. 5 Session 12: Cybernetics and communication (material drawn from Watzlawick et al, *Pragmatics of Human Communication*)**

- Axioms of communication
- Problems in communication

**Reading:** Becvar: Chapter 7  
Barker and Chang: to be announced

**Assignment Due: Family of Origin paper and genogram**

**Dec 12 Final Examination**  
**Self-Awareness Sessions Completion Form**

**No work will be accepted after 5pm on December 15**