

“The mission of Tyndale Seminary is to provide Christ-centred graduate theological education for leaders in the church and society whose lives are marked by intellectual maturity, spiritual vigour and moral integrity, and whose witness will faithfully engage culture with the Gospel.”

Semester, Year	FALL, 2026
Course Title	COUPLE THERAPY: AN INTEGRATIVE PERSPECTIVE
Course Code	COUN 0773 1S
Date	From September 14 to December 11, 2026 Every Monday
Time	11:15 PM – 2:05 PM
Delivery Format	SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE
Class information	The classes will be livestreamed <i>via Zoom</i> on MONDAYS 11:15 AM – 2:05 PM.
Instructor	HOLLY A. KRISTENSEN, PhD Email: hkristensen@tyndale.ca
Office Hours	After class (2:05-2:25 PM) or by appointment.
Course Materials	Access course material at classes.tyndale.ca or other services at Tyndale One . Course emails will be sent to your @MyTyndale.ca e-mail account only.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Provides an integrative therapeutic perspective incorporating cognitive behavioural, solution focused and an integrative therapeutic orientation for couple counselling. Students should develop their own informed approach to couple counselling based on reflective consideration of the major systemic therapies and their own personal interactional style.

Guiding Question: How do we help couples create secure, emotionally healthy, and resilient relationships?

Pre- or corequisite: COUN 0601. COUN majors only or by permission of program coordinator.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

1. State their philosophy of couple counselling and examine personal biases about intimate relationships and couple life.

2. Identify the stages of couple life and the critical points and issues that precipitate therapeutic intervention.
3. Identify and practice using several therapeutic approaches in counselling couples and critically evaluate these approaches for relevance and efficacy.
4. Demonstrate competence in assessing and treating couples through a specific therapeutic orientation, as well as evaluate outcomes.
5. Identify challenging couple dynamics (anger, violence, infidelity) and select appropriate treatment modalities.
6. Demonstrate understanding of inter-cultural dynamics that impact couples and families.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. REQUIRED READING

1. Gurman, A., Lebow, J. & D. Snyder (2023). [*Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy*](#). (6th ed.) New York: Guilford Press. ISBN 978-1-4625-1392-5
2. Assignment of one book from the **V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY** at the end of the syllabus for oral & written presentation (assigned by instructor on second day of class)
3. Allen, J.R. & S. A. St. George (2001). [*What couples say works in domestic violence therapy*](#). *The Qualitative Report*, 6(3), 1-20.
4. Christians, Russell, Miller, & Peterson (1998). [*The process of change in couple therapy: A qualitative investigation*](#). *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 24(2), 177-188.
5. Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (2007). Summaries of the egalitarian and complementarian positions. <https://cbmw.org/2007/06/26/summaries-of-the-egalitarian-and-complementarian-positions/>
6. Fishbane, M. & DeKoven (1998). [*I, thou and we: A dialogical approach to couples therapy*](#). *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 24(1), 41-58.
7. Goldner, V. (1992). Making room for both/and. *Family therapy Networker*, 16(2), 55-62.
8. Hampton, K. (2013). New Communication Technologies and the nature of community. *Family Therapy*, March/April, 10-15.
9. Nichols, W. (1988). *Marital Therapy: An Integrative Approach*. Guilford Press, Chapter 6.

10. Vatcher, C. & Bogo, M. (2001). [The Feminist/Emotionally Focused Therapy practice model: An integrated approach for couple therapy](#). *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 27(1), 69-83.
11. Valenzuela, S., Park, N. and Kee, K.F. (2009). [Is There Social Capital in a Social Network Site?: Facebook Use and College Students' Life Satisfaction, Trust, and Participation](#). *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14: 875-901.

B. SUPPLEMENTARY / RECOMMENDED READING AND TOOLS

- Beck, A. T. (1988). *Love is never enough: How couples can overcome misunderstandings, resolve conflicts, and solve relationship problems through Cognitive Therapy*. New York: Harper and Row. ISBN 0-06-091604-
- Dattilio, F. (Ed.) (1998). *Case Studies in couple and family therapy: Systemic and cognitive perspectives*. New York, NY: Guilford Press. ISBN 1 57230 696 3
- Gottman, J. (2002). *The Relationship cure: A 5 step guide to strengthening your marriage, family, and friendships*. Harmony Books.
- Heitler, S. (1990). *From Conflict to Resolution: Skills and Strategies for Individual Couple and Family Therapy*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company. ISBN 0 393 31093 0
- Hudson, P. & O'Hanlon, W. (1993). *Rewriting love stories: Brief marital therapy*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton. ISBN 0 393 31094 9
- Levine, A. & Heller, R.S.F. (2010). *Attached: The new science of adult attachment and how it can help you find and keep love*. New York, NY: Penguin Group (USA) Inc. ISBN 978-1-58542-913-4
- Luquet, W. (2007). *Short-term couple therapy: The Imago Model in action*. (2nd Ed.) New York, NY: Routledge. ISBN 978-0-415-95380-1
- Papp, P. (2001). *Couples on the Fault Line*. New York, NY: Guilford Press. ISBN 1572307056
- Spring, J. & Spring, M. (1997). *After the affair: Healing the pain and rebuilding trust when a partner has been unfaithful*. New York, NY: Harper. ISBN 0060928174
- Tyndale recommends [STEPBible](#) – a free and reputable online resource developed by Tyndale House (Cambridge, England) – for word searches of original-language texts, as well as for topical searches, interlinear texts, dictionaries, etc. Refer to the library for other [online resources for Biblical Studies](#).

C. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. Critical Book Review: Evaluating a Model of Couple Therapy (6-7 pages) - **Due November 2nd**, 25% of final grade.

- The purpose of this assignment is to critically evaluate a major model of couple therapy and reflect on how it informs your development as a couples' therapist. Your paper should demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the text, integration of course concepts, and critical reflection on the model's theoretical assumptions and clinical application.
- You will be assigned a **book** from the [Selected Bibliography Reading List](#) at the end of the syllabus.
- You will write a **6 – 7 double-spaced typed** commentary on the book addressing the following:

A. Theoretical foundations of the model

Briefly summarize the therapeutic model presented in the book. Identify its foundational assumptions about relationship distress, change, and healing. Discuss the model's core values, view of human relationships, and the mechanisms through which the author believes therapeutic change occurs.

B. Critical evaluation

Evaluate the strengths and limitations of the model for contemporary couple therapy practice. Consider questions such as:

- What types of couples or presenting problems is this model particularly well suited for?
- What evidence or clinical rationale supports its effectiveness?
- What limitations, blind spots or challenges do you identify in the approach?

Support your evaluation with specific examples from the book and, where appropriate, relevant course readings or research.

C. Personal and professional integration

- Reflect on how this model aligns with or challenges your emerging philosophy of couple therapy.
- Discuss how it fits with your personal values, theological perspective (where relevant), and understanding of healthy relationships.
- Explain how this model has influenced your clinical thinking.
- Identify **two or three specific interventions, concepts, or therapist practices** that you could realistically incorporate into your work with couples and explain why they would be valuable.

D. Key learning summary

Conclude by identifying the **most significant insight** you gained from the book. Explain how this learning has contributed to your growth as a therapist and how it may shape your future work with couples.

Use APA 7th edition format throughout and engage the book critically rather than simply summarizing its content.

2. Group Presentation: Due dates vary from Oct 26th onward (see weekly schedule below); 30% of final grade.

Students will be assigned to groups of **5–6** and will present a **30-minute interactive presentation** on an assigned couple therapy model from the course bibliography. The goal is not simply to summarize the book, but to **teach the class how the model conceptualizes relationship distress and demonstrate one clinically useful intervention.**

Your presentation should help your classmates understand **when, why, and how** the model is used with couples.

Presentation structure (30 minutes total)

A. Overview of the therapeutic model (8 minutes)

Provide a clear overview of the model and its theoretical foundations.

Address the following:

- the model's core assumptions about relationship distress and change.
- why the authors developed this approach.
- the types of couples or presenting problems it is designed to address; and
- the primary goals and expected outcomes of therapy.

Note: Focus on the model's central concepts rather than a chapter-by-chapter summary.

B. Clinical application (8 minutes)

Explain the interventions and therapist strategies that make this model distinctive.

Address:

- two or three key interventions.
- the problems or conditions these interventions target.
- how the interventions are implemented in therapy; and
- the changes the therapist is attempting to facilitate.

Identify and describe **one intervention** that your group will demonstrate in the role-play.

C. Skills demonstration (10 minutes)

Demonstrate one intervention through a **“real-time” role-play or a pre-recorded therapy vignette.**

The demonstration should:

- reflect a realistic couple presenting concern.
- illustrate the therapist's use of the model.
- show the intervention in action (not merely describe it); and
- briefly highlight the therapist's rationale for the intervention.

Choose an intervention that is strongly associated with the model and has not already been demonstrated extensively in class.

Note: A prerecorded video is acceptable, provided the audio and video quality are clear.

D. Class discussion (4 minutes)

Facilitate questions and discussion with the class.

Be prepared to discuss:

- the strengths and limitations of the model.
- situations in which you would or would not use it; and
- how it compares with other approaches studied in the course.

A strong presentation will demonstrate:

- accurate understanding of the therapeutic model.
- effective teaching and organization.
- integration of theory and clinical practice.
- a realistic and skillful role-play; and
- engagement with class discussion.

The emphasis should be on **clinical understanding and practical application**, enabling your classmates to leave with interventions they could begin using in their own work with couples.

3. Final Case Conceptualization Paper (10-12 pages): Due on November 30th; 45% of total grade.

- The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your ability to **conceptualize a couple case, apply one evidence-based therapeutic model, develop a strategic treatment plan, and reflect on your emerging philosophy of couple therapy.**
- Use a current or past couple case (with identifying information changed), or a fictional or media-based couple that is sufficiently realistic for clinical analysis. You may not use the therapeutic model you presented in your group presentation.

A. Couple assessment and case conceptualization

- Provide a concise but comprehensive description of the couple and their presenting concerns. Include relevant relationship history, family-of-origin influences, cultural and spiritual factors, strengths, and the interactional patterns that maintain their distress.
- Identify **one therapeutic model from the course** (Solution-Focused Couple Therapy, Cognitive/Behavioral Couple Therapy, or Nichols' Integrative Couple Therapy) and explain why it is the most appropriate approach for this couple. Your rationale should demonstrate a clear connection between the couple's values, presenting problems, relational dynamics, and therapeutic needs.

B. Personal philosophy and theoretical integration

- Briefly articulate your developing philosophy of couple therapy. Explain the core assumptions that guide your understanding of relationship distress and change and evaluate how well your chosen therapeutic model aligns with your personal values, clinical beliefs, and therapeutic style.

C. Treatment planning and intervention strategy

Using your chosen model, develop a comprehensive treatment plan that includes:

- your assessment approach.
- a clear case conceptualization from the perspective of the model.
- treatment goals.
- specific interventions you would use.
- the sequence of treatment (what you would prioritize first, second, and third); and
- the changes you would expect each intervention to facilitate.

Discuss any limitations of the model for this particular couple and explain how you might thoughtfully integrate interventions from other therapeutic approaches if needed.

D. Applied clinical intervention

Select **one intervention from your treatment plan** and demonstrate how you would implement it in session. Present this as a therapist-client dialogue (approximately 2–3 pages) that illustrates your clinical skills, use of the model, and therapeutic decision-making. The dialogue should resemble a realistic session transcript and include both therapist and client responses (e.g., similar to the transcripts required for Skills Lab)

E. Outcome evaluation and termination

Describe how you would evaluate therapeutic progress throughout treatment and determine when therapy is ready for termination. Include the indicators you would use to assess treatment effectiveness, the couple's readiness for discharge, and how you would facilitate a successful termination process.

NOTE: Support your paper with **at least two scholarly sources beyond the course readings**, integrate relevant course concepts, and use APA 7th edition format throughout.

Tyndale Seminary's **policy on late assignments** will be followed. For each week late, the grade will be **reduced by a letter grade**. Extensions will be considered if the circumstances are extreme. **No final assignments or examinations will be accepted later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, December 11.**

D. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

Class Therapy Presentation	30%
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Critical Book Review	25%
Final Paper	45%
Total	100%

Given the nature of this course, the class will consist partly of lecture, partly of student presentations, and partly of skills practice. Each student is expected to participate in the large group practice sessions. Therefore, attendance is required.

IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

SESSION 1: Introduction to Couple Therapy

Date: September 14

- Course overview and expectations
- The changing landscape of couple relationships
- Trends in marriage, partnership, and family life
- Introduction to integrative approaches in couples' therapy

Readings:

- Hampton, K. (2013). New Communication Technologies and the nature of community. *Family Therapy*, March/April, 10-15.
- Valenzuela, S., Park, N. and Kee, K.F. (2009). [Is There Social Capital in a Social Network Site?: Facebook Use and College Students' Life Satisfaction, Trust, and Participation](#). *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14: 875-901. (on class page)
- Margaret Swanson: Marriage and Modern Society: Lagging Evolution toward Egalitarianism (on class page)

SESSION 2: Healthy Relationships and Therapist Self-Awareness

Date: September 21

- Characteristics of healthy relationships
- Personal beliefs and values about marriage and family relationships
- Therapist self-awareness in couple therapy
- Genesis 1-3: Beginning Theology of Marriage and Family

Reading:

- Genesis 1-3

SESSION 3: Power, Gender, and Bias

Date: September 28

- Power and Gender in couple relationships
- Dealing with personal bias in couple therapy
- The process of change in couple therapy
- Introduction to the three therapeutic approaches to be addressed: Solution-Focused, Cognitive-Behavioural, and Integrative.

Readings:

- Victor Shepherd: *What did Paul really say about women?* (on class page)
- *Summaries of gender role position* (on class page)
- Manfred Brauch: *Male over Female* (on class page)
- Article: *The Process of Change in Couples Therapy* (on class page)
- Gurman et al: Chapter 1

SESSION 4: Clinical Assessment and Solution-Focused Therapy**Date: October 5**

- Assessment protocols
- Therapeutic interviewing
- Introduction to Solution Focused Couple Therapy

Reading: Gurman et al, Chapter 2**SESSION 5: Solution-Focused Interventions****Date: October 12**

- Solution Focused Couple Therapy
- Solution Focused Tool kit – exceptions, scaling, and future-oriented interventions
- Identifying relational strengths
- **Clinical Skills:** Solution-Focused practice session (intake)

Reading: Gurman et al., Chapter 11

Reading Week – October 19th (no class scheduled)
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SESSION 6: Cognitive-Behavioural Couple Therapy**Date: October 26th**

- **Student Group Presentation: Gottman**
- Introduction to Cognitive Behavioural Couple Therapy
- Behavioural change strategies

Reading: Gurman et al, Chapter 3**SESSION 7: Enhanced Cognitive-Behavioural Couple Therapy****Date: November 2nd**

- **Student Group Presentation: Hendrix**
- Enhanced CBCT
- Cognitive Therapy and Couple work
- Assessment using CBCT
- **Clinical Skills:** CBCT practice session (intake)
- **NOTE: *Critical Book Review Due at 11:59pm**

SESSION 8: Communication and Integrative Couple Therapy

Date: November 9

- Introduction to Integrative Couple Therapy
- Problem solving interventions
- Communication models
- **Clinical Skills:** Communication coaching

Readings:

- Nichols: Chapter 6 Marital Therapy (class page)
- Gurman et al. pp. 339-343
- Diagrammatic Helps (on class page)
- Thought Record sample (on class page)
- Communication model and feeling sheets (on class page)
- Communication model (on class page)

SESSION 9: Integrative Couple Therapy Cont'd

Date: November 16

- **Student Group Presentation: Richardson**
- Assessment in Integrative Couple Therapy
- Goal Setting
- Treatment priorities and strategic planning
- Therapist role

Readings:

- Nichols: Chapter 2 *Treating People in Families* (class page)

SESSION 10: Attachment and Object Relations Theory

Date: November 23

- **Student Group presentation: Ripley and Worthington**
- Object Relations
- Attachment Theory
- Emotion and Relationship Functioning
- **Clinical Skills:** Integrative couple therapy role-play

Readings: Gurman et al, Chapter 7

SESSION 11: Couples Experiencing Violence

Date: November 30

- Intimate Partner Violence
- Treatment modalities
- Safety planning
- Risk Assessment
- Diversity and Intersectionality
- **NOTE: *Final Paper Due at 11:59pm**

Reading:

- Article: What couples say works in treatment of domestic violence (class page)
- Gurman et al, Chapter 17

SESSION 12: Repair, Reconciliation, and Treatment Termination**Date: December 7**

- **Student Group Presentation: Johnson**

- Infidelity and affair recovery
- Facilitating repair
- Planning treatment termination
- Exploring spiritual perspectives

Reading:

- Gurman et al, Chapter 18

No assignments accepted after 5:00pm December 11th**V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Gottman, J. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers. ISBN 0 609 60104 0

Hendrix, H. (1990). *Getting the love you want: A guide for couples*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial. ISBN 0 06097292 0

Johnson, S. (2004). [*The practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy: Creating connections*](#). New York, NY: Routledge. ISBN 0415945682

Richardson, R. (2010). [*Couples in conflict: A Family Systems approach to marriage counseling*](#). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press. ISBN 978-0-8006-9628-3

Ripley, J. and E. Worthington Jr. (2014). [*Couple Therapy: A new hope-focused approach*](#). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. ISBN 978-0-8308-2857-9

VI. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL COURSES**A. EQUITY OF ACCESS**

Students with permanent or temporary disabilities who need academic accommodations must [contact](#) the [Accessibility Services](#) at the [Centre for Academic Excellence](#) to [register](#) and discuss their specific needs. *New students* must self-identify and register with the Accessibility Office at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible to access appropriate services. *Current students* must renew their plans as early as possible to have active accommodations in place.

B. REQUIREMENTS FOR LIVESTREAM INTERACTION (*SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE COURSE ONLY*)

- Livestream attendance for the entire duration of the class at announced times
- Headphones (preferred), built-in microphone, and web-camera
- Well-lit and quiet room
- Stable high-speed internet connection, preferably using an Ethernet cable over Wi-Fi
- Full name displayed on Zoom and Microsoft Teams for attendance purposes*
- A commitment to having the camera on to foster community building*

**exceptions with permission from professor*

C. GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTIONS

Tyndale University prides itself in being a trans-denominational community. We anticipate our students to have varied viewpoints which will enrich the discussions in our learning community. Therefore, we ask our students to be charitable and respectful in their interactions with each other, and to remain focused on the topic of discussion, out of respect to others who have committed to being a part of this learning community. Please refer to “Guidelines for Interactions” on your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca.

D. GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Grading Rubric

Please consult the rubric provided for each assignment on your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca.

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 (including improper use of artificial intelligence programs). Tyndale University takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty. Please refer to the [Academic Integrity website](#) for further details.

For proper citation style, consult [Citation Guides](#) for different styles. Students are encouraged to consult [Writing Services](#).

Students should also 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.

Turnitin Text-Matching Software

Tyndale has a subscription to Turnitin, a text-matching software that ensures the originality of academic writing and verifies the proper citation of all sources. The instructor for this course will use Turnitin for assignments submitted through your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca. Upon submission, you will receive a summary that includes your submitted files along with a similarity report generated by Turnitin. Please be aware that Turnitin can also detect AI-generated content from tools like Grammarly, so students should be mindful of when using such software. It's advisable to confirm with your instructor before using any AI tools into your assignments. Below are some useful resources:

- [Student](#) Guides for Turnitin via classes.tyndale.ca course resource page
- Interpreting Similarity ([Guide](#), [Video](#), [Spectrum](#))

Research Ethics

All course-based assignments involving human participants requires ethical review and may require approval by the [Tyndale Research Ethics Board \(REB\)](#). Check with the Seminary Dean's Office (seminaryoffice@tyndale.ca) before proceeding.

Late Papers and Extensions Policy

All papers and course assignments must be submitted by the due dates indicated in the course syllabus. Unless the instructor already has a policy on grading late papers in the course syllabus, grades for papers submitted late without an approved extension will be lowered at the rate of two-thirds of a grade per week or part thereof (e.g., from "A+" to "A-," from "B" to "C+"). Please note that some programs, such as cohort-based or intensive courses, may follow a different policy due to the nature of the program.

Faculty may not grant an extension beyond the last day of exams for the semester. Requests for extensions beyond this date must be addressed in writing to the Registrar by filling out the [Extension Request Form](#). The application will be considered only in cases such as a death in the family, medical emergency, hospitalization of oneself or immediate family member or prolonged illness requiring treatment by a physician. Factors such as assignments for other courses, holidays, and technology-related difficulties are insufficient grounds for requesting an extension.

A temporary grade of incomplete ("I") may be granted by the Registrar. Once an extension is granted, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor and make satisfactory arrangements to complete the outstanding work. A grade of "F" will be recorded for students who do not complete the outstanding work by the deadline.

E. 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 link can also be found in the left column on the course page. 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.

F. LIBRARY RESOURCES

[Tyndale Library](#) supports courses with [e-journals, e-books](#), and the [mail delivery of books](#) and circulating materials. See the [Library FAQ page](#).

G. GRADING SYSTEM & SCALE

For each course's grading rubric, please refer to your course syllabus or classes.tyndale.ca. For general grading guidelines, refer to Seminary [Grading System & Scale](#).