

Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy

The Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy at Mount Mercy has a mission to develop highly qualified professionals at the master's level, who possess the knowledge, skills and dispositions to use a systemic perspective to improve the lives of individuals, couples and families. Marriage and Family Therapists believe that individuals, couples and families are complex systems influenced by a wide variety of biopsychosocial dynamics. All human systems are subject to occasionally becoming sufficiently disorganized that they need outside help to become stable again. Students in our program will be trained to help these human systems through a deep understanding of systems, human development and intimate human relationships. The program provides the academic and experiential training needed for students to apply for licensure as Marriage and Family Therapists. To become fully licensed in Iowa students are required to complete a two year post-graduate supervised clinical experience, the completion of 3,000 clinical hours (1500 direct client contact) and the passage of the national MFT examination. Graduates will be prepared for work as therapists and consultants in clinical and counseling settings, in private practice as therapists, and in businesses, schools, hospitals and churches.

The MFT program aims to develop the student's ability, for example, to: assess, evaluate, and create treatment plans and goals for individuals, families and couples experiencing distress; cultivate empathetic, respectful and congruent interpersonal skills; and research and evaluate the latest advances in the field.

Course requirements (60 Total Credits):

MFT Specialization Courses

MF 503	Family Systems	3
MF 518	Models of Marriage and Family Therapy	3
MF 545	Micro-Counseling	3
MF 546	Pre-Practicum	3
MF 569	Ethical and Professional Issues in Marriage and Family Counseling	3
MF 582	Models of Couples Therapy	3
Total Hours		18

General Courses

MF 524	Human Development and the Family	3
MF 550	Systemic Sex Therapy	3
MF 602	The Cross-Cultural Family	3
MF 626	Psychopathology and the Family	4
MF 640	Research Methods for Marriage and Family Therapy	3
MF 671	Therapeutic Techniques with Parents and Children	3
Total Hours		19

Elective Course (12 hrs)

MF 571	Play Therapy & Family Therapy	3
MF 605	Neuroscience for Marriage and Family Therapy	3
MF 610	Treatment of Substance Abuse with Marriage and Family Therapy	3
MF 655	Spirituality and the Family	3
MF 678	Medical Family Therapy	3
Thesis Option		1
		-3
MF 695	Thesis	

Clinical Courses

MF 590	Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy I	4
MF 690	Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy II	4
MF 692	Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy III	4
Total Hours		12

MFT Specialization Courses must be passed with a "B-" or higher to receive credit.

Courses

MF 503 Family Systems: 3 semester hours

Marriage and family therapists emphasize the systemic viewpoint of human functioning, which hold that the individual is influenced in important ways by the family, then extended family and the society surrounding him or her. This course studies the family as a system, including family life cycle stages, tasks and difficulties. Communication patterns and interpersonal perceptions and expectations make up a large part of the therapeutic focus of marriage and family therapy. Students will be able to articulate how the systemic viewpoint differs from individual models of human functioning, and how the systemic model would conceptualize the goals of therapy, the process of change and the role of the therapist.

MF 518 Models of Marriage and Family Therapy: 3 semester hours

This graduate seminar is designed to introduce models of marriage and family therapy. These include strategic, structural, Bowen, intergenerational, contextual, communications, behavioral, cognitive, object relations, solution-focused, narrative, and collaborative language systems. Current trends in assessment and intervention in marriage and family therapy will also be covered. If a student has not taken an undergraduate course in individual theories of counseling and psychotherapy, supplemental reading will be expected. Students will be able to conceptualize cases from each perspective, stating the goals of therapy, the process of change and the role of the therapist.

MF 524 Human Development and the Family: 3 semester hours

This course is designed to supplement material taught in lifespan development, PS 124 Developmental Psychology (or equivalent). The course is designed to emphasize how developmental issues impact systems, especially families. The course will emphasize the family life cycle and family subsystems. Students will be able to describe their own developmental path, as well as the predicted outcome of several developmental issues.

MF 545 Micro-Counseling: 3 semester hours

This experientially-based course will review the values, knowledge and skills necessary to work theoretically with individuals, counselors and families. Counseling practice with peers and community volunteers is required. If a student has not taken an undergraduate course in basic counseling skills, supplemental reading and practice will be required. Students will be able to demonstrate listening and basic helping skills.

MF 546 Pre-Practicum: 3 semester hours

This course is designed as an orientation to the clinic, including observation of counseling through a one-way mirror, or by way of a video camera. Students also discuss cases, learn a model for an intake interview, demonstrate skill in conducting an intake interview and learn to write case notes. Prerequisites: MF 518, MF 524 and MF 545.

MF 550 Systemic Sex Therapy: 3 semester hours

This course is designed to supplement material taught in SW 250 Human Sexuality (or equivalent). The course is designed to emphasize how normal and abnormal sexuality affect family systems, including sexual addiction. If a student has not taken an undergraduate course in human sexuality, supplemental reading will be expected. Students will be able to describe the categories of sexual disorders and interventions to treat them, as well as stating strategies for sexual enrichment.

MF 569 Ethical and Professional Issues in Marriage and Family Counseling: 3 semester hours

This course deals with ethical, legal and professional responsibilities of MFT counselors. The ethical code of the AAMFT will be examined and ethical dilemmas will be discussed. Students will examine legal responsibilities and liabilities of MFTs, issues in independent practice and the role of the professional organization. Students will be able to state categories of ethical concerns and apply ethical principles to hypothetical cases. They will be able to state legal responsibilities of MFTs and apply the law to hypothetical cases.

MF 571 Play Therapy & Family Therapy: 3 semester hours

This course offers an overview of the essential elements and principles of play therapy. The course will address both theoretical and practical interventions for using play therapy in the treatment of a variety of presenting problems. This course will include a review of the history of play therapy and the profession, the role of the play therapist in a variety of settings. Participants will discover basic and advanced play therapy techniques. In addition, the process for becoming credentialed as a play therapist will be examined along with the increasing international demand for therapists with specialization in play therapy. Students will be introduced to the Association for Play Therapy and the State of Iowa branch for play therapy.

MF 582 Models of Couples Therapy: 3 semester hours

This course focuses on dynamics in dyadic relationships. A variety of therapeutic interventions and therapeutic models intended to enhance and improve couples' relationships will be examined. Special attention will be given to Evidence Based Methods (Gottman and Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy, Johnson). Marital Enrichment and pre-marital programs will also be considered.

MF 590 Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy I: 4 semester hours

The practicum courses are intended to place the student in a professional counseling setting where they will provide direct client services under the supervision of a licensed mental health care provider. Students will be encouraged to develop sites that are of particular interest to them or to choose from a list of approved sites. Students will be required to accumulate 300 direct client contact hours providing therapeutic services and a minimum of 60 hours of supervision over the course of three courses. In addition to on-site supervision students will receive supervision in a weekly group supervision section at the University.

MF 602 The Cross-Cultural Family: 3 semester hours

This course will examine the impact of culture on individual and family functioning. The course will emphasize the family in social context, both historically and contemporarily. It will study the impact of changing social conditions on individual and family functioning. Students will be able to describe how culture has impacted him/herself, as well as hypothetical clients.

MF 605 Neuroscience for Marriage and Family Therapy: 3 semester hours

This course will introduce students to the basic facts of developmental neurobiology, brain structure, relation of structure to function and the physiological and psychological effects of environment on the brain. Special emphasis will be placed on the reciprocal influence of relationships on brain development and the influence of brain development on relationships and their effects on couples and families.

MF 610 Treatment of Substance Abuse with Marriage and Family Therapy: 3 semester hours

This course will introduce students to the basic theoretical and practical dimensions of Marriage and Family Therapy in the treatment of Substance Abuse Disorders (SA). The course will examine the etiology, progression and short and long term effects of SA on individuals, families and society. Traditional and investigational models of SA treatment will be discussed and opportunities for assessment, treatment planning and treatment options will be provided.

MF 626 Psychopathology and the Family: 4 semester hours

This course will provide systemic and relational perspectives for the Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of the American Psychological Association (DSM) as well as an introduction to the how the DSM is organized and the diagnostic categories and content of the Manual. A biopsychosocial and systemic framework will be utilized to conceptualize and understand the cause and effect of mental illness as well as alternative conceptualizations of mental illness from a systemic epistemology. Students will be able to describe the symptoms of major categories of mental illness, distinguish between different diagnostic categories and demonstrate competence in assigning DSM diagnoses and relating those diagnoses to relational and family issues.

MF 640 Research Methods for Marriage and Family Therapy: 3 semester hours

This course will introduce students to basic research methods in the social sciences, research methods used predominantly in MFT, and exposure to both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Students will be able to access, read and interpret research articles in primary MFT and related mental health journals in order to critically evaluate and apply research findings to clinical practice.

MF 655 Spirituality and the Family: 3 semester hours

This course will explore the place of spirituality in the family functioning, including mindfulness, meditative practice, spiritual disciplines and forgiveness. The role of spirituality in mental health, addictive behavior and substance abuse will be explored. Interventions with a spiritual focus will be addressed. Students will state how spirituality affects their own functioning, as well as describing how a hypothetical family is affected by spiritual issues.

MF 671 Therapeutic Techniques with Parents and Children: 3 semester hours

This course covers interventions in families with children and teens. Students will be trained in assessment of children and adolescents, and in therapeutic techniques in families, such as parent education, behavior modification and play therapy. Students will be able to conceptualize cases from each perspective, including describing interventions from that perspective.

MF 678 Medical Family Therapy: 3 semester hours

This course will introduce students to the basic theoretical and practical dimensions of Marriage and Family Therapy in acute and chronic medical settings. Acute and chronic medical situations present high levels of stress for families and the medical professionals who are working with them. These larger system phenomena provide opportunities for which MFTs are uniquely trained and situated to be helpful. As health care seeks to become more holistic and integrative the need for individuals adept at systems thinking and the developments of holistic views such as MFTs will become critical.

MF 690 Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy II: 4 semester hours

The practicum courses are intended to place the student in a professional counseling setting where they will provide direct client services under the supervision of a licensed mental health care provider. Students will be encouraged to develop sites that are of particular interest to them or to choose from a list of approved sites. Students will be required to accumulate 300 direct client contact hours providing therapeutic services and a minimum of 60 hours of supervision over the course of three courses. In addition to on-site supervision students will receive supervision in a weekly group supervision section at the University.

MF 692 Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy III: 4 semester hours

The practicum courses are intended to place the student in a professional counseling setting where they will provide direct client services under the supervision of a licensed mental health care provider. Students will be encouraged to develop sites that are of particular interest to them or to choose from a list of approved sites. Students will be required to accumulate 300 direct client contact hours providing therapeutic services and a minimum of 60 hours of supervision over the course of three courses. In addition to on-site supervision students will receive supervision in a weekly group supervision section at the University.

MF 695 Thesis: 3 semester hours

The thesis is a culminating experience that provides a record of a student's achievement in the program. The thesis requires research leading to the discovery of new knowledge or enhancement of existing knowledge in the field of interest. A project that helps solve a practical problem may also be acceptable. The thesis is a complete documentation of the research study, including the theoretical background, description of the problem, the method used to investigate or solve the problem, presentation of results, interpretation of results, and explanation of the significance of the results. The thesis is optional but is recommended for students considering an advance degree.

MF 700 MFT Practicum IV: 1 semester hour

MF 700 - 703 are designed to provide additional registrations for students who do not complete the required number of hours during the regular sequence of practicum courses. Students select the course number based on the number of hours remaining to be acquired.

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MF 702 MFT Practicum IV: 2 semester hours

MF 700 - 703 are designed to provide additional registrations for students who do not complete the required number of hours during the regular sequence of practicum courses. Students select the course number based on the number of hours remaining to be acquired.

MF 703 MFT Practicum IV: 3 semester hours

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