

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
MF 602	The Cross-Cultural Family	3

Total Hours 21

General Courses

MF 524	Human Development and the Family	3
MF 550	Systemic Sex Therapy	3
MF 626	Psychopathology and the Family	3
MF 640	Research Methods for Marriage and Family Therapy	3
MF 671	Therapeutic Techniques with Parents and Children	3

Total Hours 15

Elective Course (12 hrs)

MF 571	Introduction to Play Therapy & Family Therapy	3
MF 605	Neuroscience for Marriage and Family Therapy	3
MF 630	Trauma, Violence & Addiction	3

MF 655	Spirituality and the Family	3
MF 665	Applications of Play 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

Academic Requirements

1. All students are required to achieve a minimum GPA of 3.0. Only two C grades are permitted in the graduate program. A third grade of C or below will result in suspension or dismissal from the program. No MFT Specialization course can be accepted with a grade below 80%. A student receiving a C+, C-, or C may repeat a graduate course once. A maximum of two courses may be repeated. Any grade below a C- or "Fail" is grounds for dismissal from the program. Additionally, students have a maximum of six years from the entrance date to complete the program and graduate.
2. Pending Clinical Director approval, Masters students may take up to 9 credit hours of electives from the Doctoral program's elective courses. These are the "non-advanced" doctoral courses. There are several options within the advanced couples; leadership; and neuroscience tracks that are available. In all cases, it requires Program Director approval. These are doctoral level courses; there will not be masters-level remediation for the course work; students will be expected to do the doctoral level work.

See the Doctor of Philosophy in Marriage and Family Therapy (<http://catalog.mtmercy.edu/graduateprograms/curriculum/mftphd/>) page for more information on doctoral study.

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 Introduction to 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: 3 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 630 Trauma, Violence & Addiction: 3 semester hours

This course will explore a foundational understanding for working with clients that have presenting concerns of current or historical trauma, violence and addiction. This course will highlight some of the neurobiology/physiological underpinnings of trauma, violence and addiction and their interrelatedness. This course will also explore traditional and systemic frameworks for assessment and treatment and building resource connections with the community at large. Prerequisites: MF 503, MF 518, MF 569, MF 626.

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 665 Applications of Play Therapy: 3 semester hours

Applications of Play Therapy will provide students with the opportunity to further their education and training in play therapy following completion of the course MF 571. Students will learn and practice a variety of evidence based play therapy theories such as Adlerian Play Therapy, Filial, Theraplay, and Sand Tray Therapy. Students will learn how to discern which theories to use based on child and family assessment, how to apply theories and interventions, treatment planning and how to work through the stages of therapy with each specific approach. Prerequisite: MF 571.

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 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 699 Independent Study: 3 semester hours

If a student wishes to independently study or research a particular topic, he/she may propose to work with an appropriate faculty member within their discipline. No more than 2 courses may be taken as independent study by any student.

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.

MF 701 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.

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

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 704 Advanced Family Systems: 3 semester hours

Advanced Family Systems will provide an in depth analysis and integration of primary sources and advanced theoretical discussion and application of systemic epistemology as applied to MFT theories.

MF 718 Advanced Models of MFT: 3 semester hours

This course will offer students the experience of applying and integrating advanced thinking and analytic skills to the practice of family therapy. The course will integrate advanced knowledge with practice through clinical experiences and teaching of theories.

MF 740 Advanced Research Methods I: 3 semester hours

This course will introduce students to basic research methods in the social sciences. If a student has not had a graduate research methods course, supplemental reading will be expected. Students will be able to access, read, and interpret research articles in primary counseling journals in order to evaluate evidence based best practices in counseling and therapy. In addition, students will learn the basics of statistical procedures and multiple research methodologies including quantitative and qualitative. Students will be able to design and interpret a basic research study.

MF 750 Professional and Community Leadership in MFT: 3 semester hours

Professional and Community Leadership in MFT will provide students with the skills, knowledge and tools to integrate systemic principles and analysis into leadership roles in Mental Health and in particular leadership advocacy for MFTs and systemic theory and therapy in organizations. As a specialization course within the Leadership specialization in the DMFT program this course will provide essential knowledge for those seeking to increase their position in the field.

MF 755 Advanced Spirituality and the Family: 3 semester hours

Advanced Spirituality in MFT will offer students the opportunity to direct and develop spiritual and holistic interventions and experiences for themselves and clients. A deep integration of alternative and complimentary healing strategies will be presented.

MF 760 Gender Affirming Couple and Family Therapy: 3 semester hours

This course is designed to deepen students' understanding of best practices for offering gender affirming care for transgender and gender non-binary individuals and their couple and/or family system. Students will be challenged to deconstruct gender norms, learn best practices for supporting youth and adults in exploring their gender identity and expression, and learn how to assist parents and partners in exploring what it means to be transgender or gender non-binary. Students will learn the GRACE model, a family therapy model for transgender youth and their families. Student will explore the intersectionality of gender diversity and neuro divergence. Students will also explore how to assist couples and families in navigating social and medical transitions and ways to best support their child or partner.

MF 769 Advanced Ethics and Professional Issues in MFT: 3 semester hours

Advanced Family Therapy will offer students the experience of applying and integrating advanced thinking and analytic skills to the practice of family therapy. The course will integrate advanced knowledge with practice through clinical experiences and teaching of theories.

MF 782 Advanced Models of Couples Therapy: 3 semester hours

Advanced Models of Couples Therapy will provide an opportunity to become proficient in the application and function of models of couple's therapy beyond the introductory level of the master's class. Students will have the opportunity to integrate theory with practice in class role plays and in actual client contact in the clinic. Students who have not had the Master's level introductory courses will have to do additional readings and in class work to demonstrate competency.

MF 802 Advanced Cross Cultural Families: 3 semester hours

This course will take a deeper dive beyond the introductory level of the master class, examining the impact of cross-cultural factors and social justice issues on the individual and family functioning of the clients we serve. 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 connect these cultural factors and issues of social justice to the professional mandate as a Marriage and Family Therapist in our code of ethics of the "commitment to service, advocacy, and public participation. The areas of service, advocacy, and public participation are recognized as responsibilities to the profession equal in importance to all other aspects (AAMFT, 2015)". This will be demonstrated by identifying cultural factors or social justice needs in our community and completing a service or advocacy project to address it as the capstone of this course. Students who have not had the Master's level introductory courses will have to do additional readings and in class work to demonstrate competency.

MF 805 Neurophysiological Essentials for Treatment: 3 semester hours

This course will focus on the knowledge needed to assess and design treatment protocols for application of EEG Biofeedback. Emphasis will be placed on the functional aspects of the brain, especially as measured by EEG. Detailed knowledge of how the brain produces, uses, and integrates electrical aspects into human abilities and normal function will be gained. The ability to discern how and where and in what ways dysfunction in electrical function interferes with normal function will also be discovered. Basic knowledge of brain structure, integration with other physical systems, effects of injury and disease and effects of medication and relational aspects will all be discussed and integrated into a model for effective intervention.

MF 811 Mental Health Public Policy: 3 semester hours

This course will consist of an advanced examination of mental health public policy and the impact of policy on mental health care. This will include examining the implications for mental health access, funding, and services delivery based on local and national policy initiatives. The course will consider these topics through a social justice lens to identify the systemic and cultural implications of public policy on maintaining systems of oppression within the context of mental health policy and practice. Students will also gain advanced knowledge of policy-making within the field of marriage and family therapy. The advocacy and policy efforts of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). This course will prepare students to fulfill the ethical mandate of marriage and family therapists to maintain a "commitment to service, advocacy, and public participation. The areas of service, advocacy, and public participation are recognized as responsibilities to the profession equal in importance to all other aspects (AAMFT, 2015)".

MF 820 Communication Processes in Couples: 3 semester hours

This course will enable students to observe, analyze and intervene in the communication processes of couples. Principles of communication theory and systemic processes of communication will be studied and applied to intimate human communication with the intent of being able to interrupt or modify dysfunctional patterns and establish healthy ones.

MF 822 Attachment and Differentiation in Couple Therapy: 3 semester hours

A growing body of research over the past 60 years has compelled counselors, therapists and psychologists to take into account the experience of attachment and differentiation in individuals and families. Additional study has revealed that the influence of attachment and differentiation on individual development has a profound effect on how a couple is able to form and provide healthy interactions and human bonding. This course will seek to better understand how attachment theory is integral to couple's happiness and function. It will also examine how to use this understanding to best effect change and growth in distressed or unhappy couples.

MF 823 Couples in Crisis: 3 semester hours

MFTs tend to experience two sorts of couples as initiators or seekers of therapy. One type realizes that things are not going as well as they might and they are unhappy and they seek therapy as a possible resource to improve their relationship. Another type of couple is one that is in severe crisis and who present as needing a sort of "emergency" treatment. This may be as a result of domestic violence, a trauma experienced by one or another of the members, a sudden and unexpected shift in attachment and relationship. This course will train students to know how to assess and intervene in "emergency" situations presented by the second type of client. Students will learn what theories are most suited, what things to be cautious of, when to refer for more extensive or perhaps medical treatment and the all-important, when to say no.

MF 840 Advanced Research Methods II: 3 semester hours

In this course students will move from a basic understanding of research to full implementation and analysis. Students will design, interpret and complete an independent research project that was conceptualized in the first research course. Students will be required to understand and apply statistical or qualitative methodology appropriate to a wide range of projects, as well as demonstrate knowledge of alternative methods and research principles. The course focuses heavily on appropriate data analysis and interpretation of results. Prerequisite: MF 740.

MF 841 Neuroscience and Emotional Regulation: 3 semester hours

This course will focus on attachment influences on behavior throughout the life cycle, with an emphasis on concomitantly changing neuroscience. The course will give students the opportunity to inquire into relationships from both an emotional and neuroscientific stance. The course will examine attachment with respect to etiology, intervention, assessment and diagnosis, and treatment from a systemic perspective. In addition the course will include discussion about evaluation of study designs and outcomes.

MF 843 Complementary and Alternative Healthcare: 3 semester hours

Students in this course will have the opportunity to learn about and experience some of the many complementary and alternative healthcare practices. Mental health care has been involved in integrating a wider range of healing practices into standard mental health care efforts. These include meditation, breath work, acupuncture, neuroscience, supplements, nutrition and diet, and exercise. Students will learn more about these and other practices, how they work, the mechanisms of effect and how to integrate them into MFT. The class will include both theoretical and experiential aspects.

MF 844 Principles and Application of Neurofeedback: 3 semester hours

This course will enable students to record, analyze, interpret and apply EEG recordings in order to design and apply protocols to address and change dysfunctional EEG patterns related to distressing symptoms of mental or physical dysfunction. Students will have a hands-on opportunity to set-up and record 19 channel EEG. They will learn to analyze the EEG using computer based normed databases and determine specific training protocols for the individual. They will learn to apply the protocols through individual electrodes or with full cap 19 channel LORETA z score training. They will learn how to provide ongoing assessment and follow-up to insure effective outcomes.

MF 890 Internship I: 4 semester hours

Internship is an application course in which students provide clinical services independently while under the supervision of assigned faculty or other designated supervisors with appropriate experience and credentials. Students will have the opportunity to provide and practice a variety of clinical skills and theories to community members who come to the Olson Clinic for issues and problems in their lives. Continued enrollment is required each term of attendance (fall, spring, summer) once course is begun until successful completion.

MF 891 Internship II: 4 semester hours

Internship is a non-academic course in which students provide clinical services independently while under the supervision of assigned faculty or other designated supervisors with appropriate experience and credentials. Students will have the opportunity to provide and practice a variety of clinical skills and theories to community members who come to the Olson Clinic for issues and problems in their lives. Continued enrollment is required each term of attendance (fall, spring, summer) once course is begun until successful completion.

MF 892 Internship III: 4 semester hours

Internship is an application course in which students provide clinical services independently while under the supervision of assigned faculty or other designated supervisors with appropriate experience and credentials. Students will have the opportunity to provide and practice a variety of clinical skills and theories to community members who come to the Olson Clinic for issues and problems in their lives. Continued enrollment is required each term of attendance (fall, spring, summer) once course is begun until successful completion.

MF 895 Dissertation: 11 semester hours

Dissertation/capstone project is the culmination of doctoral studies. Students will be required to enroll in a minimum of 12 credit hours. Students will choose a mentor who will serve as their dissertation/project advisor. Generally, this would be the faculty member in their area of specialization. The student will work closely with their mentor in the design, implementation and completion of their dissertation, research or project. The student will also solicit a committee to aid in the direction and evaluation of the dissertation/research/project. The final results will be presented in a public oral presentation/defense. Continued enrollment is required each term of attendance (fall, spring, summer) once course is begun until successful completion. Course can be taken for a range of 1 - 11 hours. Prerequisite: Completion of all required program coursework.

MF 896 Dissertation Continuation: 1 semester hour

Students will take one credit hour of dissertation continuation until the dissertation has been successfully completed and approved by the student's dissertation chair and committee. Students must maintain continuous enrollment in dissertation to satisfy program requirements for graduation. Prerequisite: Completion of all required program coursework.

MF 897 Dissertation Defense: 1 semester hour

This course is required for students who have completed at least 11 hours of dissertation direction in order to complete their defense.

Prerequisite: Completion of all required program coursework.