

# **Pastoral Care With Couples and Families**

**CL672**  
Fall 2008-2009

United Theological Seminary

Tuesday Afternoon

Room C

1:30 – 4:45 p.m.

## **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is designed to explore the theory and practice of pastoral care and counseling in the context of the family. A family systems perspective, which focuses on relationships between people rather than on individuals themselves, will be introduced. The class will attempt to address both the ecstasies and exigencies of life in the household. The processes of working with households through their life cycles, with the various concerns that arise will be a central focus for the class.

## **II. COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- A. To give consideration to the multiplicity of configurations of people living in relationship that constitutes a household.
- B. To provide a historical glimpse of the household from the perspective of the Judeo-Christian tradition.
- C. To become more conscious and aware of our own narrative in relationship to our own households.
- D. To understand the basic dynamics of family systems theory as developed by researchers in this field of study.
- E. To honor the unique dynamics of relationships within the framework of a household.
- F. To study the impact of major life transitions throughout the life cycle of those living in relationships.
- G. To understand the unique role of pastoral care and counseling with members of a given household within the context of a faith community.

## **III. COURSE TEXTS**

- Anderson, Herbert. *The Family and Pastoral Care*. Eugene, Ore: Resource Publications, 2001.
- Marshall, Joretta. *Counseling Lesbian Partners*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1997.
- Poling, James Newton. *Deliver Us From Evil: Resisting Racial and Gender Oppression*.

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.  
 Wimberly, Edward. *Counseling African American Marriages and Families*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1997.

#### IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- A. Attendance and participation in class presentations and discussions.** More than two “unexcused” absences will constitute failure for the course.
- B. Completion of your “family history”** taking into account the unique dimensions of your own experience as it relates to the dynamics operative in your own household. You may use a genogram as a basis for the paper or incorporate that into your paper. (Approximately 5-6 pages double spaced)  
**DUE: September 23**
- C. Reviews of Marshall’s and Wimberly’s books.** The reviews should include your analysis of the material in the light of its viability for your ministry. Questions to consider might be:
1. What new insights did you pick up from reading these books?
  2. What was most helpful for you from the book as you contemplate ministry as a lay or ordained person?
  3. What topics would you add to what the author covered or what topics do you think need more attention?
  4. Your overall appraisal of the work for ministry.  
 (Approximately 3-4 pages double spaced)  
**Wimberly Review: Due - October 28**  
**Marshall Review: Due – November 25**
- D. Review of your book of choice that relates directly to the course!** As you consider ministry with couples and households, there may be a particular aspect of this ministry you would like to be more knowledgeable about. Select a book of your own choosing that will accomplish that purpose.  
**Book of Your Choice: Due – November 11**
- E. Participation and involvement** in small group discussions and case studies.
- F. Quality of the oral report on your project to your colleagues.**
- G. FINAL PAPER**(Choose *ONE* of the following projects.)
- a. Develop a class or seminar for congregational use on the topic of “A Healthy Household” or “How To Prepare For Life Together.”
  - b. Select a particular stage in the ‘life cycle’ and research the dynamics of that developmental stage in relationship to the issues in the household.
  - c. Research and write a paper on the unique aspects and dimensions of a household occasioned by:

- i. ethnicity
  - ii. sexual orientation
  - iii. poverty
  - iv. “mixed” households (religion, race, class, economics)
- d. Challenges facing contemporary households in the light of your religious tradition.

**Due: December 8 – Last Day of Class**

## V. COURSE OUTLINE

- September 9 Introduction to the course, expectations and assignments. Discussion of “households,” their configuration and an introduction to the use of “genograms” in noting the dynamics of the household.
- September 16 A History of Households emerging from the Judeo-Christian tradition as evidence in Scripture and church history. This is a brief historical overview of the impact of the tradition in shaping the current understanding of household in the church.
- September 23 Introduction to “Systems” thinking, its concepts, precepts and unveiling in the light of your personal experience. The basic concepts of systems theory will be introduced.  
**Required reading: Anderson, Introduction and chapter 1.**
- Due: Family or Origin Paper**
- September 30 Continuation of systems thinking and the personal impact of systems on individuals in the household. What is involved in understanding systems within systems.
- October 7 Preparation for establishing the covenantal relationship in developing a new household and system. Processes and procedures for assisting couples in preparing for their life together.  
**Anderson, chapter 2**  
Guest speaker
- October 14 The “covenantal relationship,” the basis for households with its unique dynamics and issues. Counseling methodologies and approaches to dealing with couples and families.  
**Anderson, chapter 3**

- October 21**                    **No Class – Reading Week**
- October 28                    The impact of “culture” in the establishment and development of households. Every culture has its own dynamics, rites, rituals and way of appropriating relationships. Sensitivity to “cultures within cultures” will be discussed based on the reading of Wimberly.  
**Required reading:** Wimberly, *Counseling African-American Marriages and Families*.
- Due: Review of Wimberly’s book**
- November 4                    The significance of transitions in the early life cycle of households. Specific counseling issues and pastoral care of young couples and families. A focus on developmental crises in the growth of the household.  
**Required reading: Anderson, chap. 4**
- November 11                    The situational crises encountered by couples and households in their life together. The impact of separation, divorce and death as pivotal situational crises that require pastoral counseling and pastoral care.  
**Required reading: Anderson, chapters 5 - 7**
- Due: Review of Book of your Choice**
- November 18                    Systems and Issues of Abuse  
The rising rate of domestic abuse whether it be in the form of physical, emotional, sexual or spiritual abuse and violence will be considered as a special concern within the context of the household  
**Required reading: Poling – Chapters 1-5**
- November 25                    Same-Sex Households: Challenges and Opportunities  
The household comprised of same sex couples provides a unique and challenging dimension to the pastoral care of all people.  
**Required reading:** Marshall, *Counseling Lesbians*.
- Due: Review of Marshall’s book**
- December 1                    The significance of transitions in the later life cycle of households. Intergenerational concerns and the relationship of the generations presents the pastoral care and counseling minister with specific issues of concern. If time, begin oral reports on research done.  
**Required reading: Anderson, chap. 8**  
**Poling, Chapters 6-9 and Postscript**

December 8                    The cooperative learning model is the occasion for participants in the class to share their insights, concerns, theology and practice of pastoral care with couples and families.

Completion of the oral reports and a general wrap up of the course.

**Due: Final Papers or Projects**

**VI. COURSE GRADING**

The grade for this course will be determined by:

- A. Regular participation in class presentations, discussions and small groups.
- B. Quality of the book reviews.
- C. Quality of the oral report on the final project
- D. Quality of the final project.

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**Office Hours:**

Monday:        1:30 – 4:30  
Tuesday:      10:00 – 11:30  
Wednesday    2:00 – 4:00  
Other times by special appointment.