



CO 707 Procedures in Family Therapy Winter 2026

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Course Dates: February 16-20, 2026

In-person, on campus modular course

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course takes the marriage and family model of understanding people and relationships and applies it to specific behavioural and relational issues, with a concentration on those issues related to working with families. The focus is on counselling practices, especially the use of questions in the context of family meetings that can help families and individual family members experience change toward health.

Prerequisite: CO 603 Foundations of Systemic Therapy

COURSE INTEGRATION

This course is a counselling skills course, intending to build counselling skills and practices that arise from the theories of marriage and family therapy to which students have already been introduced. It integrates marital and family therapy approaches with a theological and biblical understanding of relationships.

This course seeks to fulfill Briercrest Seminary-wide Outcome (SO) # 2 by prompting students to think about their vocation of counselling as embodiment of their faith. This course invites students to consider the vocation of counselling as participating in God's work of bringing hope and healing and helping bring peace and connection in family relationships (SO #3).

This counselling skills course seeks to fulfill the Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy (MAMFT) Program Outcome (PO) #1 and Master of Arts in Couple and Family Therapy (MACFT) by building counselling skills and practices that arise from the theories of marriage and family therapy to which students have already been introduced from CO 603 Foundations of Marriage and Family Therapy. This course equips students to consider ethical issues in working with families (MAMFT PO#2 and MACFT PO #3). This course equips students with skills to improve relationships between family members, including viewing the relationship as the client, rather than the individuals; awareness of relational cycles; developmental considerations; managing therapist anxiety in the intensity of family therapy; and valuing interpersonal relationships (MACFT PO #4 and #5). This course also seeks to meet the CCPA requirement of training in counselling/communication skills and/or CACFT requirement of therapeutic skills (MAMFT PO #3 and MACFT PO #3).

COURSE TEXTS

Required Readings

De Shazer, S., Dolan, Y., Korman, H., Trepper, T., McCollum, E., & Berg, I. K. (2021). *More than miracles: The state of the art of solution-focused brief therapy*. Routledge.

Diorinou, M., and Tseliou, E. (2014). Studying Circular Questioning "In Situ": Discourse Analysis of A First Systemic Family Therapy Session. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 40, 1, 106–121.

Together also read:

Chenail, R. J. (2014). Commentary on studying circular questioning "in situ", *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 40, 1, 122-124.

Furrow, J., Palmer, G., Johnson, S., Faller, G., and Palmer-Olsen, L. (2019). *Emotionally Focused Family Therapy: Restoring Connection and Promoting Resilience*. Routledge.

Hanna, S. M. and Ball, D. A. (2025). *The Practice of Family Therapy: Key Elements Across Models*

Hoyt, M, and Berg, I (2001). Ch. 9: Solution Focused Couple Therapy. In Dattilio, F. (ed.), *Case studies in couple and family therapy. Systemic and cognitive perspectives*. Guildford. **(available on Canvas)**

Palmer, G., & Efron, D. (2007). Emotionally Focused Family Therapy: Developing the model. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 26(4), 17–24. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jsyt.2007.26.4.17>

Pilkington, S. M. (2014). Travelling on the journey to death: A story illustrating narrative practice for counselors. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 33, 4, 79-93. **(available on Canvas)**

Recommended Reading

De Jong, P., & Berg, I. K. (2013). *Interviewing for Solutions*, 4th Edition. Brooks/Cole.

Johnson, S. (2019). *Attachment theory in practice: Emotionally focused therapy (EFT) with individuals, couples, and families*. Guildford. (Only Ch. 1, Ch. 8, and Ch. 9) *This is a required textbook for CO 713

White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice*. W. W. Norton & Company. * This is a required textbook for CO 790

Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's APA Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents here: <https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/seminary-life/documents>.

These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/seminary-life/bookstore>.

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

SEMINARY WIDE OUTCOMES (SO)

Students will graduate:

1. Describing and demonstrating evangelical faith and values.
2. Preparing to serve God's kingdom in its diversity. Describe God, God's kingdom, and your calling (vocational sensitivity) within it, including the types of contexts and people you feel best prepared to serve.
3. Participating in the action of our Triune God through formation of the soul (i.e., virtue and spiritual integrity), mind (academic rigour), and strength (vocation).

PROGRAM OUTCOMES (PO) MACFT (See Appendix A for subpoints)

1. Students and graduates will demonstrate a systemic and strength-focused perspective on people and their problems.
2. Students and graduates will demonstrate competence in a client-centred, collaborative therapeutic approach.
3. Students and graduates will demonstrate ethical clinical practice.
4. Students and graduates will take a reflective stance in their clinical work.
5. Students and graduates will demonstrate skills in working with couples and families to improve their relationship quality.

COURSE OUTCOMES

This course will:

1. Introduce, reinforce, apply, and evaluate student skills in viewing the primary client in family therapy as the relationship and ensuring strong therapeutic alliances with all parties through empathetic, non-judgmental, and collaborative conversation with all (PO 2.1, 2.2, 3.3, 5.1).
2. Reinforce, apply, and evaluate student recognition of relational cycles and interactional patterns in families including how these connect to attachment needs, skills in managing these in session, and making these explicit to the clients (PO 1.1, 5.2, 5.3).
3. Introduce, reinforce, and apply student's ability to manage self-of-the-therapist's anxiety and comfort with intense emotions being expressed by clients in relational therapy in order to grow confidence in working with multiple clients at once, such as families experiencing conflict (PO 4.2, 5.4).
4. Introduce, reinforce, apply and evaluate student's practices of working with families, especially solution-focused, emotionally-focused, and narrative therapy approaches (PO 1.1, 2.3).
5. Reinforce and apply means of student's honouring interpersonal relationships as an inherent human need reflecting the image of a triune God (PO 5.5).
6. Reinforce student exploration of their calling and vocation and how they feel best equipped to serve and in what ways they find meaning in counselling work (SO 2.2, 3.3, 3.4).

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

DAY	TOPIC	SUPPORTING RESOURCES
Monday	REVIEW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therapeutic Stance (Person-centred, Systemic, Collaborative, Influential) • Integrated Model for Marriage and Family Counselling • Attachment relationships MFT APPROACHES	Hanna, S. M. and Ball, D. A. (2025). The Practice of Family Therapy: Key Elements Across Models Notes from CO 603

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotionally Focused Therapy Solution Focused Brief Therapy Narrative Therapy 	
Tuesday	<p>MFT SKILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working collaboratively with multiple clients at once to create shared goals and plans for therapy. Recognizing healthy and unhealthy relational cycles and interactional patterns. Attending to process, rather than content, in session and recognizing the distinction between the two. Attunement to socio-cultural context of client and self. Self-of-the-therapist awareness of one's own internal cognitive and emotional processes and experiences and how these may facilitate and constrain interpersonal interactions. 	<p>Hanna, S. M. and Ball, D. A. (2025). The Practice of Family Therapy: Key Elements Across Models</p> <p>Diorinou, M., and Tseliou, E. (2014). Studying Circular Questioning "In Situ": Discourse Analysis of A First Systemic Family Therapy Session. <i>Journal of Marital and Family Therapy</i>, 40, 1, 106–121. <u>And together also read:</u></p> <p>Chenail, R. J. (2014). Commentary on studying circular questioning "in situ", <i>Journal of Marital and Family Therapy</i>, 40, 1, 122-124</p>
Wednesday	SOLUTION FOCUSED BRIEF THERAPY	<p>De Jong, P., & Berg, I. K. (2013). <i>Interviewing for Solutions</i>, 4th Edition. Brooks/Cole.</p> <p>De Shazer, S., Dolan, Y., Korman, H., Trepper, T., McCollum, E., & Berg, I. K. (2021). <i>More than miracles: The state of the art of solution-focused brief therapy</i>. Routledge.</p> <p>Hoyt, M, and Berg, I (2001). Ch. 9: Solution Focused Couple Therapy. In Dattilio, F. (ed.), <i>Case studies in couple and family therapy. Systemic and cognitive perspectives</i>. Guildford.</p> <p>Hanna, S. M. and Ball, D. A. (2025). The Practice of Family Therapy: Key Elements Across Models</p>
Thursday	<p>EMOTIONALLLY FOCUSED THERAPY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families 	<p>Furrow, J., Palmer, G., Johnson, S., Faller, G., and Palmer-Olsen, L. (2019). <i>Emotionally Focused Family Therapy: Restoring Connection and Promoting Resilience</i>. Routledge.</p> <p>Johnson, S. (2019). <i>Attachment theory in practice: Emotionally focused therapy (EFT) with individuals, couples, and families</i>. Guildford. (Ch. 1, Ch. 8, and Ch. 9)</p> <p>Palmer, G., & Efron, D. (2007). Emotionally Focused Family Therapy: Developing the model. <i>Journal of Systemic Therapies</i>, 26(4), 17–24. https://doi.org/10.1521/jsyt.2007.26.4.17</p>
Friday	NARRATIVE THERAPY	<p>Hanna, S. M. and Ball, D. A. (2025). The Practice of Family Therapy: Key Elements Across Models</p>

	CONCLUSION	Pilkington, S. M. (2014). Travelling on the journey to death: A story illustrating narrative practice for counselors. <i>Journal of Systemic Therapies</i> , 33, 4, 79-93.
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ASSIGNMENTS

Please ensure all written assignments follow APA formatting and are submitted to Canvas. **Please note: The use of AI, such as Grammarly, can only be used for final editing of the papers and the case study. AI cannot be used for any outline or content creation for any of the assignments.**

Acknowledgement of any AI use must be included in the assignment as per the Academic Honesty policy.

Pre-Course Assignments:

Family Therapy Paper. Write a 5-page paper based on Hanna and Ball (2025) pages 145-290. In this paper provide an overview of:

- the four overarching common factors in family therapy (ch. 4),
- tasks of beginning therapy (ch. 5-6), and
- tasks of middle therapy (ch. 7) that are common across models.

Due: February 14, 2026

Value: 15%

Analysis Paper. Write a 5-page paper comparing and contrasting the therapeutic practices of Solution-focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), Emotionally-focused Family Therapy (EFFT), and Narrative Therapy (NT) with *families* based on the required readings. Comparison should include similarities between the approaches as well as contrasting aspects that make the approaches different from one another. In addition to the 5-6 page paper, include a 1-page "map" for each approach that helps you to visualize the key steps and processes of that approach.

Due: February 14, 2026

Value: 20%

Case Study. Watch *This is Us, Season 2, Episode 11: The Fifth Wheel* (available on Netflix or for rent on YouTube). Write a 3-4 page case study of the Pearson family, including presenting problem(s), family members, key historic events, and ethnic or socio-economic considerations that may help to understand this family based on what you could pick up from this episode (only). In addition, create a genogram, with descriptive lines, indicating the quality of relationships, the existence of triangles, and intergenerational patterns, as well as indicators of strengths.

Due: February 14, 2026

Value: 10%

Post-Course Assignment:

Pearson Family (young) Session. Based on the flashback scenes from the *This is Us, Fifth Wheel* episode, imagine what a family therapy session would look like when the family was younger. Choose one of the following combinations of family members to include in this session:

- Parental session
- Sibling session
- Parent(s) with Kate
- Parent(s) with Kevin
- Parent(s) with Randall

The assignment includes:

- 1) Participation. Students will be assigned to groups in class for this assignment and you will need to make yourself available to your other group members to act as the Pearson family for the recorded role plays.
- 2) Written file note (1-page single spaced). Based on the information shared in the episode's flashback scenes, prepare for your session by writing a file note from *an imagined previous session* that includes more fulsome "assessment" and "case planning" using the DAP format:
 - a. Data (D): presenting problem(s), relevant family history, and racial or socio-economic factors
 - b. Assessment (A): your perspective and your hypothesizing related to the problems the family is facing (grounded in family systems ideas).
 - c. Plan (P): indicate your initial overall case plan collaboratively developed for therapy with this family and indicate if you will use EFFT, SFBT, or NT; also include a specific plan for the next session including your rationale about which *two or three* family members to include in the session, and the counselling practices that you believe will be helpful for this family, including a few key questions to help family members to engage in the therapeutic conversation.
- 3) Role play and transcript. For this assignment you need to:
 - a. Conduct a 50-min role play where you are the therapist and your group members act as the members of the Pearson family;
 - b. Watch your entire recorded session;
 - c. Select and submit a 20-min continuous section that you feel best demonstrated your use of the therapeutic approach you chose; and
 - d. Along with the role play recording, prepare and submit a transcript for the 20-min section. The transcript should include: time stamps, all therapist speech, all client speech, and for each of your interactions as a therapist indicate the microskill(s) you used (question, reflect, validate, etc.) and your purpose in doing it.
- 4) Written progress note (1-page, single spaced) of the full role play session using the DAP format including:
 - a. Data (D): relevant information that emerged in the session
 - b. Assessment (A): your perspective on family challenges, the family members' healthy and unhealthy ways of relating, strengths, and resources (grounded in family systems ideas).
 - c. Plan (P): indicate your plan for the next family session, indicating which family members to include and how you plan to use counselling practices of your selected approach to continue to be helpful to the Pearson family, including aspects you'd like to explore and a couple key questions to help family members to engage in the therapeutic conversation.
- 5) Reflection paper: write a 4-5 page paper after having watched your whole recorded session and reflect on your experiences as a therapist in the role play session. Reflect on your ability to:
 - a. work collaboratively with multiple clients at once and help in pursuing a mutually agreed upon direction;
 - b. utilize specific therapeutic approaches from NT, EFFT or SFBT;
 - c. attend to process, rather than content, in session; and

- d. be aware of your own internal cognitive and emotional experiences during the session and how these affected the session, such as any socio-cultural-spiritual values of the family and your own socio-cultural-spiritual influences.

For this assignment, please ensure the following are uploaded in **one** submission:

1. Written file note (word doc)
2. Transcript (word doc)
3. Link to role play recording and indication of time range to watch (word doc)
4. Written progress note (word doc)
5. Reflection paper (word doc)

Due: April 17, 2026

Value: 55%

SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current [Seminary Calendar](#).

Attendance Policy

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

Modular Courses

Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Online Courses

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Semester-Based Courses

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

Modular Course Schedules

Modular classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

Assignment Submission

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

Return of Graded Assignments

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

Academic Honesty

As members of the Briercrest learning community, students have a responsibility to conduct themselves with integrity and honour. Students who cheat on exams, plagiarize, inappropriately collaborate, or use generative AI without instructor authorization violate the trust placed in them by their instructors, fellow students, and the seminary. Any such actions constitute a breach of academic honesty and will result in serious consequences, such as failure of an assignment, failure of a course, or expulsion from the seminary.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or involuntary, is the submission of the work of others, published or unpublished, in whole or in part without acknowledgment or proper documentation. All information, ideas and/or direct quotations taken from other primary or secondary sources must be documented appropriately.

Generative AI is an umbrella term for a type of machine learning and a group of algorithms that can create new content, such as text, code, images, videos, music, or a combination of all these formats. Generative AI produces output in response to a query or prompt using generative models such as Large Language Models (LLMs) that rely on large datasets. Generative AI features are also often embedded within tools such as Grammarly, allowing these tools to generate new content, such as the rewriting, paraphrasing, or summarizing of existing text. The generated responses of these tools are probabilistic, which can result in errors and biases in responses.

The use of generative AI to create audio or visual media, to produce outlines, to generate partial or complete drafts of assignments, to answer questions on quizzes or exams, or to edit the grammar of assignment drafts is considered unauthorized unless it is explicitly permitted by the course instructor in writing. All use of generative AI tools must be properly documented.

Students are responsible for ensuring they are using their sources and completing their assignments with transparency and honesty. For more details, consult the [Seminary Calendar](#) and the Briercrest Format Guide. In addition to being familiar with these pages, instructors assume that you have completed the Briercrest Academic Integrity course on [Canvas](#) and understand the information contained in it.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition (mental or physical) who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should contact the ARC Coordinator in person (L234 in the Library), by phone (1-306-801-6159), or by email (arc@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.). It is recommended that students meet with their professors to discuss the requirements of their accommodations (i.e., how the student will receive lecture notes, or how the professor wants to receive extension requests).

Appendix A: MACFT Program Outcomes

- 1. Students and graduates will demonstrate a systemic* and strength-focused perspective on people and their problems.**
 - 1.1. Take a systemic orientation understanding of the impact of family and developmental factors based on the knowledge of major models and key theories.
 - 1.2. Understand the influence on clients of contextual/ systemic and individual factors, such as culture, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, and sexual orientation.
 - 1.3. Take a non-pathologizing approach to assessment, case conceptualization and treatment planning.
 - 1.4. Work with clients in a way that is knowledgeable and respectful of diversity in its many forms.
 - 1.5. Honour all people's inherent dignity and worth as created in God's image.
- 2. Students and graduates will demonstrate competence in a client-centred, collaborative therapeutic approach.**
 - 2.1. Engage with clients in an empathetic, nonjudgmental, and trauma-informed manner.
 - 2.2. Engage in collaborative relationships with clients based on understanding power dynamics and prioritizing partnership with clients based on being two equals with differing expertise.
 - 2.3. Adapt their therapeutic approach to a diversity of populations and problems (emotional, behavioural, relational) while understanding scope of practice issues.
 - 2.4. Prioritize continuous growth in one's clinical practice by integrating research and ongoing professional development.
 - 2.5. Respect client autonomy and choice as image bearers of God.
- 3. Students and graduates will demonstrate ethical clinical practice.**
 - 3.1. Understand legal obligations and code of ethics requirements, practice these in all aspects of therapeutic and professional relationships, and maintain professional boundaries.
 - 3.2. Prioritize engagement in supervision and ethical decision-making in clinical dilemmas.
 - 3.3. Engage in ethical business and organizational practices, including proper client records.
 - 3.4. Identify and utilize the various professional organizations they can/must engage with.
 - 3.5. Integrate their faith into their professional therapy practice which includes the resolution of any moral or faith dilemmas arising from parameters of the profession.
- 4. Students and graduates will take a reflective stance in their clinical work.**
 - 4.1. Strong awareness of one's own social location, perspectives, values, privileges, and vulnerabilities.
 - 4.2. Ability to recognize self of the therapist issues arising in therapeutic work and have the ability to regulate and make clinical decisions about appropriate therapeutic actions.
 - 4.3. Safe and Effective Use of Self (SEUS) in therapeutic relationships.
 - 4.4. Prioritize care for own spiritual, social, and psychological health.
 - 4.5. Engage in clinical practice as an embodiment of one's Christian faith and calling.

5. **Students and graduates will demonstrate skills in working with couples and families to improve their relationship quality.**
 - 5.1. Skill in viewing the relationship as the primary client and ensuring strong therapeutic alliances with all parties.
 - 5.2. Awareness of relational cycles and dynamics and skills in making these explicit to the clients.
 - 5.3. Understand attachment patterns and behaviours in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood and how they impact relationships.
 - 5.4. Manage their self of the therapist's anxiety and comfort with intense emotions being expressed by clients in relational therapy
 - 5.5. Honour the value of interpersonal relationships as an inherent human need reflecting the image of a triune God