

College of Health Sciences | MA in Clinical Counseling

PSY6029 Marriage and Family Therapy

3 Units

Course Information:

Spring 2026 | January 12 - May 10

Meeting days/times: Thursdays 5:30 PM - 8:15 PM

Meeting location: Mission Valley Campus, Room 201

Instructor Information:

Instructor title and name: Professor Jenna Hillman

Email: jhillman@pointloma.edu

PLNU Mission

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Course Description

This course is an overview of current theories and methods of marriage and family therapy interventions. The major theories, their founding clinicians, and some of their contemporaries are reviewed. The instructor will demonstrate each theory that is covered in class via role play demonstration or brief videotape review. There is an emphasis on how family therapy deals with diversity issues (e.g., ethnicity, integration, and blended families) during the clinical hour.

Program Learning Outcomes

The educational goals of Point Loma Nazarene University's *Masters of Arts in Clinical Counseling (MACC)* are to develop graduate students and clinicians who are:

1. competent clinicians and professionals that practice from a wide-range of clinically valuable and research-based approaches;
2. able to cultivate self-awareness and apply professional ethics to the practice of clinical counseling; and,
3. providing services that are respectful of individuals and families as well as the cultural contexts that shape them, particularly focusing on those who are underserved.

PLO 1: Demonstrate competent application of theoretical models and research-based clinical interventions to therapeutic work with individuals, couples, groups and/or families

Competency 1: Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of theories, principles, and practices relevant to clinical counseling, particularly across the lifespan and in family systems.

Competency 2: Utilize assessment tools effectively to diagnose, develop treatment plans, and monitor progress.

Competency 3: Apply clinical knowledge by effectively implementing theory-informed intervention with individuals, couples, groups, and families.

Competency 4: Evaluate and apply relevant research to the practice of clinical counseling.

PLO 2: Develop and apply self-awareness and professional ethics to the practice of clinical counseling.

Competency 1: Demonstrate knowledge of the ACA/AAMFT code of ethics and identify ethical issues when they arise with clients

Competency 2: Demonstrate awareness and effective use of self in the therapeutic process

Competency 3: Develop personal characteristics that enhance professional competence, most importantly effective communication, empathy, boundaries, self-awareness, and respect for others

PLO 3: Demonstrate competence in working with clients from diverse backgrounds, particularly in settings where sociocultural factors influence treatment and there is limited access to care.

Competency 1: Integrate contextual factors, apply multicultural theories, and modify treatment approaches to effectively work with diverse client populations.

Competency 2: Demonstrate awareness of how personal values, beliefs, and sociocultural context impact work with clients.

Competency 3: Attend to the spiritual dimensions of clients and apply faith integration processes as clinically appropriate.

Course Learning Outcomes

CLO 1: Demonstrate competent application of theoretical models and research based clinical interventions to therapeutic work with individuals, couples, groups and/or families (minds).

CLO 2: Demonstrate competent application of personal and professional values into an ethical practice of psychotherapy (character).

CLO 3: Demonstrate competence in working with clients from diverse backgrounds, particularly in settings where sociocultural factors influence treatment and there is limited access to care (service).

This course will seek to develop and enhance outcome competencies that are important in professional psychology. The National Council of Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology have identified six core competency areas: this course will provide content for the development of competencies in each of these areas and students will have the opportunity to demonstrate the following outcome competencies:

Research and Evaluation

Course lectures, readings, and assignments will review current research on family therapy and students will have the opportunity to interact critically with the research to form an understanding of Family Therapy that facilitates clinical interventions that have empirical validation. The clinical case analysis should demonstrate the student's ability to bring together theory and therapeutic practice in an integrated form.

Relationship

The course will provide opportunities for students to enhance their ability to develop and maintain an effective working relationship in the guided experiential exercises in class.

Assessment

Theoretical foundations of family assessment and family assessment instruments will be reviewed and students will have the opportunity to demonstrate their competency to interpret a family assessment device.

Intervention

A variety of family therapy models (including some empirically validated family psychology treatments) will be introduced in the lectures and readings. The clinical case analysis will provide an opportunity for the student to demonstrate their competency in utilizing these models in an actual clinical situation.

Diversity

Course lectures, readings, and assignments will review current research on family therapy with diverse populations and students will have the opportunity to demonstrate competency in application of course materials to diverse family constellations.

Education

Theoretical models will be reviewed and students will have the opportunity to include them in their family therapy theory application paper.

In addition, our program has emphasis in Interdisciplinary Integration and Family Psychology. This course will provide opportunities for student development of outcome competencies in these areas as noted below:

1. Interdisciplinary Integration: Students will continue to develop their own theoretical framework for therapy, including a recognition of the interaction between the bio-psychosocial and the spiritual aspects of human existence.
2. Family Psychology: Students will continue to develop knowledge and skills in family psychology from a family therapy perspective.

RELEVANT IDEA OBJECTIVES:

1. Gaining a basic understanding of the subject.
2. Learning to apply course material.
3. Developing specific skills, competencies and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course.

Course Credit Hour Information

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a 3 unit class delivered over 16 weeks. Specific details about how the class meets the credit hour requirement can be provided upon request.

This course meets PLNU and WASC credit hour policy requirements for contact hours as evidenced by the table below (3 credit units):

Assignments	Pre-Course Hours	Course Hours	Post-Course Hours
Face-to-face Sessions		40	
Online participation	5		5
Reading	10	5	10
Writing	5	5	10
Other Assignments and Learning Activities	9	10	10

Total Hours: 134	29	60	45

Required Texts and Recommended Study Resources

NOTE: Students are responsible to have the required course textbooks prior to the first day of class. Students are also encouraged to begin reading the books in preparation for the class as soon as possible.

- Gehart, D.R. & Tuttle, A.R. (2003). *Theory-based treatment planning for marriage and family therapists*. Toronto, Canada: Brooks/Cole.
- Nichols, M. P. (2021). *Family therapy concepts & methods (12th ed.)*. Pearson.

Required Films

Cardoso, P., & LaVoo, G. (Directors), & Lopez, J. (Writer). (2002). *Real Women Have Curves* [Motion picture on DVD]. United States.

Navasky, M., O'Connor, K., & O'Boyle, M. (Producers). (2015, June 30). Growing Up Trans [Television series episode]. In *Frontline*. WGBH Educational Foundation

SophiesMom318 (2012, September 24). The Judds docuseries - Episode 4- Naomi tells her secret. [Video] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Q0_LM_qZDA

Additional Readings

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. (7th ed.). American Psychological Association.

Assessment and Grading

- **Academic Honesty Verification**

Students must complete the verification before gaining access to the rest of the content.

- **Professionalism and Attendance: 20%; 10% each**

Class participation in a professional manner is necessary to demonstrate familiarity with the assignments and the ability to transfer theory into practice. The following criteria will be used to evaluate professionalism and participation (see the Attendance policies and Professionalism Rubrics in the syllabus below):

Respectful participation in discussions and group work

Appropriateness of comments

Comments useful for clarification or meaningful contribution to the class

Willingness to participate in exercises and simulations

Sensitivity to participation of others in the class; avoids dominating discussions

Class participation demonstrates understanding of learned theory

- **Week 1: Introduction Discussion Post: 1% (5pts)**

Students will create a video responding to prompts on the discussion post as an asynchronous introduction for light week.

- **Pre-Class Video/Reading Organizers: 15 % (5 organizers, 10 points each)** The Pre-Class Video/Reading Organizers are designed to assess students' preparation and engagement with assigned materials before class. These tools aim to provide both educators and students with a clear understanding of the expectations for effective organization and comprehension of pre-class or class substitute materials.

Reading Organizers: Prior to class, students will be asked to complete a Pre-Class Reading Organizer designated to organize and reflect on the information read. Grading will be done on thoroughness of responses based on the readings, rather than correctness of responses. Full credit (10 points) given for answering all questions thoroughly. Partial credit (5 points) if mostly thorough, but some incomplete responses. No credit given if inadequate responses overall.

Video Organizers: As an asynchronous assignment, students will be asked to review the provided video demonstration and complete a Video Reflection Organizer designated to organize and reflect on the therapy demonstration. Grading will be done on thoroughness of responses based on the video review, rather than correctness of responses. Full credit (10 points) given for answering all questions thoroughly. Partial credit (5 points) if mostly thorough, but some incomplete responses. No credit given if inadequate responses overall.

- **Case Conceptualization and Treatment Plans: 24 % (3 treatment plans, 10 points each)** Students will be given a case study of a couple or family and will prepare treatment plans for three (3) of the MFT Theories/Approaches we study during the term. The preparation of the treatment plans is intended to help facilitate your mastery of the material and help you prepare for the final paper, practicum and the licensing exam. Students will be evaluated on how well they demonstrate their knowledge of the information presented in assigned reading and class discussion. This assignment will be done individually. Please use the template provided for each treatment plan and further instructions within the assignment description. *Please submit your assignments via Canvas on the due date.*
- **Genogram and Timeline Reflection PowerPoint: 15 % (30 points)** Students will construct and analyze a genogram so that 1) you are able to do so with future clients and 2) to increase your awareness of possible areas of countertransference that may arise in the therapeutic environment. **Thoughtful completion of this project is possible while still maintaining your privacy. Your slide deck will not be shared with anyone other than the professor/ teaching assistant who is grading it. Your grade will be determined by thorough completion of the prompts, NOT the content you share.** It is possible to discuss an event that occurred that had a profound impact on your thoughts, feelings, relationships, spiritual identity and clinical work without having to describe the event in detail. Please see Canvas for specific prompts for this assignment.
- **Group Case Conceptualization Paper 25 % (30 points)** After watching the movie **Real Women Have Curves** (2002) your group will use the family from this movie as a case vignette for this paper/project. You must choose to **use one of the following theories: Intergenerational (Bowen), Structural, or Experiential.** Your work group **will create a paper to demonstrate your ability to apply systemic thinking and family therapy theory to a case.**
- After submitting your group project, you will meet as a group with your professor to receive feedback. During this meeting every member of the group must be present. The intention of this assignment/meeting is that you will have the opportunity to learn the theory well. "Mis-understandings" (incomplete ways of understanding the model) are part of the process of learning and as such will be addressed in the meeting with your professor. During your meeting, your group should prepare questions regarding the project and will receive feedback from the professor on each section. In order to be eligible to have a meeting with your professor and the opportunity to resubmit your project your group must turn in the project on the assigned due date and time. Although late projects will be accepted as arranged with the instructor, no late submissions will be considered for resubmission. Only **projects with grades of 25 or lower may submit a revised project after the professor meetings. This resubmitted project will be able to earn a maximum of 26 points.** In this event, the entire paper should be re-submitted and revised portions should be highlighted in yellow.

Papers written in the Graduate Counseling program should be in APA 7 student style. Here are some helpful websites to help you write and format your paper:

- [APA Style Essentials - Degelman Vanguard University](#)
- [Psychology with Style: A Hypertext Writing Guide](#)
- [The OWL at Purdue: APA Style](#)

In this course, the final paper needs to include:

- Title page
- Main body with headings
- Reference page

For all other assignments, a small header at the top will suffice:

Name

Class Name

A title page is not needed for other assignments and a References page is only needed if you use outside resources other than the textbook. Please include a Reference slide on the Powerpoint for the group presentation.

Please check the *APA 7 Manual* or the websites for further formatting help.

Assignment Distribution by Percentage:

- Attendance: 10%
- Professionalism: 10%
- Week 1 Discussion Post: 1%
- Pre-Class Video/Reading Organizers: 15%
- Case Conceptualizations and Treatment Plans: 24%
- Genogram and Timeline Reflection PowerPoint: 15%
- Group Case Conceptualization Paper: 25%

Grading Scale:

Grade Scale Based on Percentage of Points Earned				
A 93-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F ≤ 59
A- 90-92	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

Students must achieve a minimum grade of B- to pass this class.

ESSENTIAL GUIDELINES OF THE COURSE

Let us create a dynamic learning environment where we can have **GROWTH**:

- **G – Growth Mindset**
 - Staying curious, allowing yourself grace to be challenged, and uncover discoveries congruent to you
 - The point is to learn and grow... grades are a by-product, not the goal
- **R – Respect**
 - For others, yourself, the professor, and the learning environment
 - Honor diverse experiences, perspectives, and cultures
 - Practice professionalism through punctuality and appropriate technology use

- **O – Ownership of learning**
 - Take responsibility for your learning—you get out what you put in
 - Be prepared, engaged, and proactive in class discussions and activities.
 - Limit distractions (e.g., phones, browsing) and note zero tolerance for being under the influence of drugs or alcohol during class
 - **W – Work together**
 - Collaborate with and for others, build a trusted network of colleagues
 - Welcome differing viewpoints as learning opportunities
 - **T –Trust**
 - Maintain confidentiality and protect the integrity of shared stories and experiences
 - Providing constructive, respectful feedback as colleagues
 - Cultivate a safe space that mirrors the therapeutic environment we aim to create
 - **H –Honesty**
 - Upholding ethical standards in both academic and clinical contexts
 - Being honest in your preparation, work, and engagement
 - Use AI as a supportive tool without compromising your competence or authenticity
 - Being honest with yourself and communicate with professor if there are life circumstances impacting your learning
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PLNU Spiritual Care

Mission Valley: PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as a whole person. To this end, we provide resources for our Graduate students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith. At the Mission Valley (MV) campus we have an onsite chaplain who is available during class break times across the week. If you have questions for or a desire to meet or share any prayer requests with the onsite chaplain, you may email Dr. Sylvia Cortez Masyuk at scortezm@pointloma.edu.

In addition, on the MV campus there is a prayer chapel on the third floor. It is open for use as a space set apart for quiet reflection and prayer.

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU Recording Notification

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See [Graduate Academic and General Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

Note: Additionally, include the below if this pertains to your course:

During the first week of class, you will be asked to submit an Academic Honesty Verification Statement. Submitting the statement is a requirement of this course. By submitting the Academic Honesty Verification Statement, you will be verifying all assignments completed in this course were completed by you. Carefully review the Academic Honesty Statement below.

Statement: "In submitting this form, I am verifying all the assignments in this course will be completed by me and will be my own work."

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

You are allowed to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini Pro 1.5, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc) to generate ideas, but you are not allowed to use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any work submitted to be graded for this course. If you have any doubts about using AI, please gain permission from the instructor.

[MLA Style Center: Citing Generative AI](#)

[APA Style: How to Cite ChatGPT](#)

[Chicago Manual of Style: Citing Content Developed or Generated by AI](#)

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. The EAC makes accommodations available to professors at the student's request.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any special accommodations.

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students. If you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available through the [Title IX Office](#). Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, it is required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors via our [Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#).

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources via our [Nondiscrimination and Anti-harassment Policy](#).

PLNU Course Modality Definitions

1. Online Courses: These are courses with class meetings where all instruction and interaction is fully online.

- Synchronous Courses: At least one class meeting takes place at a designated time.
 - Asynchronous Courses: All class meetings are asynchronous.
2. Hybrid Courses: These are courses with class meetings that take place both in the classroom and online synchronously and/or asynchronously.
 3. In-Person Courses: These are courses that meet in person with the instructor and students in a physical classroom setting. With approval by the area dean, this may include up to 25% of qualified class interactions through a Learning Management System (such as Canvas).

PLNU Attendance

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. Therefore, regular attendance and participation in each course are minimal requirements.

PLNU Policy: If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent (equivalent to two (2) classes in the MACC program), the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

Note: If a student incurs a third absence, they may petition the faculty to remain enrolled in class. The faculty will provide a make up assignment proportionate in length and difficulty to the class missed. This third absence may also result in a referral to the Student Development Committee.

In addition to the university policy, 10% of your course grade will reflect your attendance. Coming to class is mandatory and expected. As extenuating circumstances may happen that prevent you from attending class, a student may incur one absence without losing points. Each subsequent absence will drop this portion of the grade by 5% of the total course points (up to 10%). Note: absences are not categorized as excused or unexcused.

Attending class on time is essential to promote a respectful and professional learning environment. Arriving to class more than 15 minutes late is counted as a tardy. Two tardies count as one absence. Arriving 30 minutes or more late to a class will be considered an absence.

Refer to [Academic Policies](#) for additional detail.

Professionalism

Student professionalism will be assessed in each course, constituting 10% of the total course grade. Professionalism indicators include class participation, interactions with peers and instructors, and self-awareness. The full rubric can be found here: [PLNU MACC Professionalism Rubric](#).

Late Policy

Assignments submitted up to 24 hours past the due date will be deducted 25% of the grade. Assignments submitted up to 48 hours past the due date will be deducted 50% of the grade. Any assignment turned in after 48 hours past the due date will receive no credit. Students are encouraged to alert the professor if an assignment is anticipated to be late. Professors can extend these late penalties if arrangements are made in advance.

Use of Technology

MACC is committed to a distraction-free learning environment. Students are welcome to bring devices to class, but they *must remain stored* throughout class time unless directed otherwise by the instructor. Phones, laptops, iPads/tablets, and other personal devices are not permitted to be passively used during lectures, discussions, or any other activity unless expressly communicated by the instructor.

GPS Academic Resources

PLNU offers the following free academic resources virtually for Graduate Professional Studies (GPS) Students. Visit myPLNU through the links below for more information.

- [The GPS Writing Center](#) offers:
 - **Zoom Writers Workshops** offered each quad on a variety of helpful topics
 - **One-to-one appointments** with the Writing Coach
 - **Microlearning YouTube Video Library** for helpful tips anytime

- [Research Help Guide](#) to help you start your research
 - The physical office is located on the third floor of the [Mission Valley Regional Center](#) off the student lounge
- [Academic Writing Resources Course](#): Found on your Canvas Dashboard, this course is non-credit with 24/7 access, no time limits, and self-paced content. [Watch a quick video run-through](#) and take time now to explore!
- [Grammarly](#): Students have unlimited FREE access to Grammarly for Education, a trusted tool designed to help enhance writing skills by providing real-time feedback, identifying areas for improvement, and providing suggestions. Grammarly's Generative AI is NOT available with our student accounts.
- [Tutoring](#): Students have access to 24/7 live or scheduled subject tutoring through Tutor.com, including a Paper Drop-Off Service with feedback within 12 hours.

We are here to support you! Contact us anytime: GPSWritingCenter@pointloma.edu

Assignments At-A-Glance

The course summary below lists our assignments and their due dates. Click on any assignment to review it.