

MARRIAGE, COUPLE, AND FAMILY THERAPY

Family therapy is a distinct profession with its own history, theories, models, professional organizations, and journals. Family therapists are generalists in that we typically treat a wide variety of psychological, emotional, and relational problems. We work with individuals, couples, families, and community groups. The hallmark of family therapy is our systemic and social constructionist approaches, as well as our preferred inclusion of multiple people in the therapeutic process. Family therapists share the premise that human behavior occurs within family, social, and cultural contexts. We understand thoughts, feelings, and behaviors/interactions as interrelated across individual, family, community, societal, and global systems. This includes acknowledging individual psychological, physiological, and genetic factors as well as family and other relational patterns of interaction. Importance is placed on understanding how race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, abilities, language, country of origin, religion, and other social identities/locations interconnect to maintain systems of power and privilege. Family therapists are concerned with how these contextual factors influence well-being and are committed to challenging social structures that maintain individual and family problems.

Program Mission

To prepare competent systemic marriage, couple, and family therapists who demonstrate excellent therapeutic skills and ethical and socially responsible practice.

Goal 1. Knowledge. Teach systemic/relational theories and research.

Goal 2. Human Diversity and Social Responsibility. Foster a relational approach to therapy and learning that centers curiosity, compassion, and embracing differences.

Goal 3. Clinical Skills and Practice. Prepare students to provide quality entry-level clinical services.

Goal 4. Professional Identity and Ethics. Develop students' professional identity and ethical standards of practice.

Accreditation and Licensure

The Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy program at Lewis & Clark is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE). It meets the academic requirements for state licensure in Oregon and most other states. Graduates of this program will have met the academic requirements needed to become licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFT) and clinical fellows of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT).

Most other states grant eligibility for licensing to graduates of our Marriage, Couple and Family Therapy program. However, some states may have additional educational requirements that must be met prior to licensure.

Master of Arts in Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy

The Master of Arts in Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy (MCFT) Program is designed to lead graduates to eventual licensure and employment as marriage and family therapists in a variety of clinical and agency settings. The MCFT curriculum provides the knowledge and skills necessary for practitioners to provide high-quality, effective

therapy using active, positive approaches that help individuals, couples, and families build on their strengths, improve their relationships, and generate solutions to mental health and relational problems. The program is unique in its emphasis on taking a social justice perspective in the practice of family therapy.

The MCFT program uses a cohort model which encourages students to build relationships and help each other develop over time. Throughout the program, students complete readings and assignments to prepare for active participation and application exercises in the classroom. Practice skills are integrated throughout courses and students complete an extensive supervised clinical internship during the last 15 months of their program in order to develop core practice competencies. MCFT students practice individual, couple, and family therapy under the supervision of full time faculty and experienced, qualified supervisors at the Lewis & Clark Community Counseling Center while also practicing in a community agency during their 15-month internship.

Students can choose one of two special concentrations to add to their studies beyond the standard 60 hour program. Selections include: Addictions Treatment or Ecotherapies. Addictions treatment is in great demand across the country. The opportunity to be trained in this area strengthens the practice focus of our students and increases their marketability. The ecotherapies track focuses on expanding systemic thinking beyond human interactions to include affirmation, interaction, and healing within larger ecological systems. MCFT students may also take the Eating Disorders Certificate (<https://docs.lclark.edu/graduate/counselingpsychology/eatingdisorders/>) if they wish to add this specialization to their training.

Degree Requirements

A minimum of 60 semester hours, including:

Degree Courses

MCFT 502	Introduction to Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy	1
MCFT 504	Family Therapy: Theory and Practice	3
MCFT 511	Equity in Family Therapy	3
MCFT 510	Ethical and Legal Issues in MCFT	2
MCFT 516	Family Development: Cross-Cultural Perspectives	2
MCFT 522	Diagnosis of Mental and Emotional Disorders	2
MCFT 523	Psychopharmacology and Medical Issues in Family Therapy	1
MCFT 526	Practical Skills in Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy	3
MCFT 541	Systemic Assessment and Treatment Planning	2
MCFT 564	Treating Addictions in MCFT	2
CTSP 514	Group Counseling With Children and Adolescents	3
or CTSP 515	Group Counseling With Adults	
MCFT 533	Research Methods in Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy	3
MCFT 546	Trauma and Crisis Intervention	3
MCFT 506	Applied Child and Adolescent Development	2
MCFT 582	Internship in Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy	12
MCFT 560	Couple Therapy	3
MCFT 562	Advanced MFT Theory & Practice	3
MCFT 591	Professional Development Seminar	1
MCFT 563	Treatment Issues in Family Therapy	2

Elective Courses

The remaining 7 semester hours will be earned by taking elective courses. See options for adding concentrations to your program below.

Graduate Convocation Requirement

Students must attend Convocation (CORE 500).

Additional Courses for Addictions Treatment Track (6 semester hours)

MHCA 545	Drugs, the Brain, and Behavior	3
MHCA 546	Models of Addiction and Recovery	3
or MHCA 547	Addictions Treatment: Procedures, Skills, and Case Management	

Additional Courses for the Ecotherapies Track (8 semester hours)

Note: No applications are being accepted for the Ecotherapies Certificate for the 2025-26 academic year. Applications will reopen in 2026-27.

ECOT 501	Introduction to Ecotherapy	1
ECOT 554	Theoretical & Empirical Basis of Ecopsychology	1
ECOT 596	Wilderness and Adventure Therapy Immersion	2
ECOT 597	Ecotherapy and Applied Ecopsychology	2
ECOT 598	Topics in Ecotherapy and Applied Ecopsychology (Students take 2 semester hours for 1 credit each.)	2

Internship and Externship Information

During the final 15 months of the program, students are involved in direct clinical work with individuals, couples, families, and groups. Throughout four semesters of internship, students move toward increasingly independent practice. There are select agencies in Portland and its surrounding areas that are well-suited for training in family therapy. Lewis & Clark faculty and staff work closely with agency supervisors to ensure positive and appropriate internship placement of MCFT students. Concurrent with this placement, MCFT students also spend two semesters of internship at the Lewis & Clark Community Counseling Center under the supervision of program faculty.

While in their internships, MCFT students must complete at least 400 hours of direct client contact, 150 of which must be relational (with couples and families). Students participate in weekly individual and group supervision, which relies heavily on "raw data," including video and live observation of students' clinical work.

Throughout the program, students also complete a professional portfolio and submit it during the final semester of internship. More information is in the program handbook, available online.

Master of Arts Courses

MCFT 502 Introduction to Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy

Content: Basic theoretical assumptions of the profession of marriage, couple and family therapy, with an overview of its historical roots, social and cultural contexts, types of practice, ethical principles, and professional orientation.

Prerequisites: None.

Credits: 1 semester hour.

MCFT 504 Family Therapy: Theory and Practice

Content: Overview of the fundamental assumptions and ideas of general systems theory and the basic premises of theoretical orientations within family therapy.

Prerequisites: None.

Credits: 3 semester hours.

MCFT 511 Equity in Family Therapy

Content: Development of diversity awareness and knowledge necessary to practice family therapy from liberation and social justice based frameworks. This includes interrogating multiple embedded systems of power and privilege relative to interconnections of identity and social position. Focus is on helping students become capable family therapists in diverse global and multicultural contexts, including becoming aware of their own beliefs, biases, and prejudices relative to culture, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, religion or spirituality, health or legal status, or nation of origin, or other marginalized and underserved communities.

Prerequisites: None.

Credits: 3 semester hours.

MCFT 510 Ethical and Legal Issues in MCFT

Content: Survey of current issues relating to ethical practice and legal responsibilities in family therapy. Addresses issues such as confidentiality, informed consent, dual relationships, and therapist liability. Includes models for ethical decision making, working with the legal system, and relevant aspects of family law.

Prerequisites: None.

Credits: 2 semester hours.

MCFT 516 Family Development: Cross-Cultural Perspectives

Content: Family interaction processes and development within cultural contexts. Topics include: family development, diverse family forms, patterns and dynamics of family interaction, and the impact of social context and culture on family life.

Prerequisites: Prerequisites MCFT-502, MCFT-504.

Credits: 2 semester hours.

MCFT 522 Diagnosis of Mental and Emotional Disorders

Content: Introduction to the structure and uses of the DSM 5 for diagnosing mental and emotional disorders. Limits and weaknesses of these approaches—especially with regard to sociocultural differences—and alternatives to them. How to use these systems effectively in the context of relational, biopsychosocial/spiritual, systemic interventions, and in culturally diverse environments. Current knowledge, theory, and issues regarding selected disorders and their treatment.

Prerequisites: MCFT-502, MCFT-504, MCFT-511

Credits: 2 semester hours.

MCFT 523 Psychopharmacology and Medical Issues in Family Therapy

Content: This course examines biological and medical issues in the practice of MCFT and includes an introduction to pharmacology. Emphasis is on understanding medical issues in family context and collaborating with other health professionals, as well as an examination of the sociopolitical context in which psychotropic drug regimens are developed, researched, and prescribed.

Prerequisites: MCFT-504 and MCFT-530

Credits: 1 semester hour.

MCFT 526 Practical Skills in Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy

Content: Overview of basic relational therapy concepts and skills, including skill development through role-playing and simulated counseling experiences.

Prerequisites: Take MCFT 504, MCFT 502, and MCFT 510.

Credits: 3 semester hours.

MCFT 541 Systemic Assessment and Treatment Planning

Content: Application of family systems theories, social equity, and evidence based practice to assessment, diagnosis, and treatment planning in marriage, couple and family therapy. Course examines the theoretical assumptions and values underlying approaches to the treatment of major mental health issues and other presenting issues such as child behavior problems, addiction, suicide, familial violence, and families managing acute and chronic medical conditions. Specific assessment techniques and tools are discussed, evaluated, practiced, and applied to clinical diagnoses and treatment planning, including risk assessment and crisis intervention.

Prerequisites: MCFT 504. MCFT 511.

Credits: 2 semester hours.

MCFT 564 Treating Addictions in MCFT

Content: Family Systems view of the development and maintenance of substance abusing patterns for family therapists and other health practitioners. This course will examine the contributions made to the understanding and treatment of substance abuse by family researchers, theorists, and clinicians; and will consider clinical intervention methods of substance abuse with attention to the treatment of adolescents, couples and families.

Prerequisites: MCFT-504

Restrictions: MCFT students only

Credits: 2 semester hours.

MCFT 533 Research Methods in Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy

Content: This course addresses the essential concepts related to research design and methodology that systemic and relational practitioners need to become critical evaluators and consumers of research. Students learn to apply research and literature with critical awareness to socially responsible practice.

Prerequisites: MCFT 502. MCFT 504.

Restrictions: MCFT students only

Credits: 3 semester hours.

MCFT 546 Trauma and Crisis Intervention

Content: This course is designed to examine chronic stress and trauma across the lifespan in individuals, families, and communities. Intergenerational, historical, and complex trauma will be covered. Students will learn how to use a trauma-informed lens to assess and treat various forms of trauma and crisis - including safety planning strategies. Special attention will be given to self-of-the-therapist work around compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, burnout, and self-care.

Prerequisites: MCFT 504.

Credits: 3 semester hours.

MCFT 506 Applied Child and Adolescent Development

Content: This course offers an integrated application of developmental theory relevant to working with children and adolescents in family therapy. Emphasis is on developmentally and contextually appropriate intervention that addresses child and adolescent behavior, attachment, and other presenting issues such as child abuse, with attention to the impact of larger systems of power and privilege.

Prerequisites: Prerequisites MCFT-502, MCFT-504.

Credits: 2 semester hours.

MCFT 582 Internship in Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy

Content: Supervised clinical practicum bridging basic family therapy concepts and theories to practice. Students apply their emerging skills and understanding of family therapy models to their work with individuals, couples, families, and groups in various clinical settings. Supervision includes case conceptualization, video, and live supervision modalities.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Consent of program clinical director.

Credits: 1-5 semester hours.

MCFT 560 Couple Therapy

Content: Systems/relational therapies and practices relative to assessment, research, and treatment of couples, with an emphasis on promoting relational justice through addressing power/privilege and the links between neurobiology, emotion, societal context, and couple interaction. Students develop competencies to work with a wide range of couples across the life span and diverse sociocultural contexts, with attention to issues such as intimacy, conflict, co-parenting, spirituality, infidelity, divorce, loss, and illness. Couple therapy for the treatment of trauma and mental health disorders will also be addressed.

Prerequisites: MCFT 504.

Credits: 3 semester hours.

MCFT 562 Advanced MFT Theory & Practice

Content: This advanced family therapy theories course integrates theory with practice. Pulling from systemic, social constructionist, experiential, and attachment models, students establish their own model of working with individuals, couples, and families in diverse sociocultural contexts. Special attention is given to the intersections of clinical practice, social advocacy, and change.

Prerequisites: MCFT 504

Restrictions: Must be enrolled in MCFT program

Credits: 3 semester hours.

MCFT 591 Professional Development Seminar

Content: This seminar course provides a capstone experience in developing professional skills to prepare students for entry level career development and clinical practice in the field of family therapy. Students will self-reflect on their own social locations and consider how to build their career practices in ways that demonstrate attention to social justice and cultural democracy. This course will cover career related topics such as: AMFTRB practice exam preparation and successful achievement of a passing score, the OBLPCT licensing process, resume writing, cover letter writing, professional disclosure writing, exploring post-graduation MFT positions and career options, building a private practice, clinical membership, and engaging in professional MFT networks.

Prerequisites: None.

Corequisites: MCFT-582.

Restrictions: MCFT students only

Credits: 1 semester hour.

MCFT 563 Treatment Issues in Family Therapy

Content: Applications of systems/relational approaches to treatment of clinical issues. Course offerings address a variety of topics. Each course includes an emphasis on clinical case conceptualization, treatment planning, and intervention.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Priority for this course will be given to students in the MCFT program.

Credits: 1 semester hour.

CTSP 514 Group Counseling With Children and Adolescents

Content: Instruction and practice in developing group treatments for children and adolescents in clinical and school settings. Students gain practice as group leaders in addressing issues related to group dynamics, cultural diversity, potential problems encountered when running groups, and generalization and maintenance of behavioral change. Students also gain experience constructing curricula for specific issues such as divorce, substance use, grief, and social skills.

Prerequisites: For Professional Mental Health Counseling or Professional Mental Health Counseling - Specialization in Addictions students, take MHCA 502 or MHC 503, and MHC 506, and MHC 550. For Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy students, take MCFT 516. For students in the School Psychology program, take SPSY 502.

Restrictions: Consent of Counseling, Therapy & School Psychology department required.

Credits: 3 semester hours.

CTSP 515 Group Counseling With Adults

Content: Introduction to the major schools of thought regarding group therapy and the common factors associated with positive outcomes. Covers group dynamics, obstacles to success in group therapy, and the stages of group process. Role-playing, outside group membership, and demonstrations illustrate principles of effective group leadership.

Prerequisites: For students in Professional Mental Health Counseling or Professional Mental Health Counseling - Specialization in Addictions, take MHCA 502 or MHC-503, and MHC 506, MHC 513, and MHC 550.

For Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy students, take MCFT 516. For students in the School Psychology program, take SPSY 502.

Credits: 3 semester hours.

Additional Courses for Addictions Concentration**MHCA 545 Drugs, the Brain, and Behavior**

Content: Psychopharmacology of alcohol and drug abuse. Major drugs and classes of abused substances. Mechanisms of action in the brain, patterns of physiological response in abuse, addiction, and recovery. Impact on brain function, cognition, emotions, behavior, and social effects. Pharmacological adjuncts to detoxification and treatment.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Permission of the Professional Mental Health Counseling - Specialization in Addictions program director.

Credits: 3 semester hours.

MHCA 546 Models of Addiction and Recovery

Content: Theories of the nature, course, causes, and effects of addiction to alcohol and drugs of abuse. Conditions, processes, and patterns of recovery. Emphasis on physiological, social learning, and interpersonal models and theories. Natural history of onset, abuse, addiction, and recovery; effects of intergenerational transmission, genetic predilection, developmental risk, and sociocultural factors; effects on psychosocial development; impact of culture and gender differences. Implications for treatment.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Permission of the Professional Mental Health Counseling - Specialization in Addictions program director.

Credits: 3 semester hours.

MHCA 547 Addictions Treatment: Procedures, Skills, and Case Management

Content: Emphasis on developing detailed understanding and beginning skills in the use of specific strategies, procedures, and interventions in assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of substance abuse and addictive disorders. Topics include multiple modes and models of assessment, intervention and treatment, content and basic assumptions of different treatment modalities, organization of comprehensive treatment strategies, motivational interviewing in the context of stages-of-change models, contracting with clients, consultation, integration of medical and psychosocial treatments, referral processes and standards, issues of moderation versus abstinence, relapse prevention, and case management. Also covers documentation, record keeping and management, confidentiality, and ethical and legal issues.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Permission of the Professional Mental Health Counseling - Specialization in Addictions program director.

Credits: 3 semester hours.

Additional Courses for Ecotherapies Concentration**ECOT 501 Introduction to Ecotherapy**

Content: Ecotherapy is the field of inquiry concerned with the human-nature relationship and includes a substantial body of evidence demonstrating the physical and psychological benefits of interacting with nature. A basic tenet of the field is that our inner worlds and the outer world are intimately connected. The need for nature still resides in our bodies, minds, and spirit. From an ecotherapy perspective, a central challenge of our time is the integration of our connection with nature with our scientific culture and our technological selves. As such, ecotherapy has a role to play in addressing such issues as the decreased presence of nature in our lives; the exponential growth of technology in daily living; and the impact of global climate change. This course guides students toward self-reflection regarding their environmental identity and their "sense of place". It also explores the motivations for integrating ecological perspectives into academic and professional work.

Prerequisites: None.

Credits: 1 semester hour.

ECOT 554 Theoretical & Empirical Basis of Ecopsychology

Content: This course provides an introduction to ecopsychological theory and surveys research that supports the theoretical foundations of nature based practices found in Ecotherapy, Wilderness Therapy, and other Nature-based therapies. The course also surveys related concepts, findings and practices in psychology and counseling/therapy that provide a foundation for conservation and sustainability work, environmental education, advocacy, and activism.

Prerequisites: ECOT-501

Credits: 1 semester hour.

ECOT 596 Wilderness and Adventure Therapy Immersion

Content: This course provides an opportunity to explore ecopsychology concepts and nature based practices in the context of a multi-day outdoor experience. Topics include backcountry safety, outdoor leadership, wilderness philosophy and conservation, benefits of immersion in natural settings and retreats from modern technologies; multicultural rites of passage; and techniques for counseling/therapy in the outdoors. The course typically features an off-campus weeklong or multi-weekend residential format including tent camping along with other activities such as day and/or overnight hiking; mindfulness and team building exercises; and other nature based and/or adventure based activities. Outdoor experience not required. There is a course fee.

Prerequisites: ECOT-501

Credits: 2 semester hours.

ECOT 597 Ecotherapy and Applied Ecopsychology

Content: This course in Ecotherapy focuses on broadening and deepening the practice of counseling and therapy by extending the psychotherapeutic context to include the natural world in which we live. We will further our survey of research that supports the theoretical foundations of ecotherapy found in environmental and conservation psychology, ecopsychology, evolutionary psychology, and biophilia. Specific practices and methods that incorporate nature into the therapeutic process will be explored and students will have the opportunity to practice these techniques. We will further explore the restorative effects of direct contact with nature, the psychological impact of "a sense of place", the concepts of a Nature Language and Human Rewilding, and contemporary influences that affect the human-nature relationship. Ethical issues unique to the practice of ecotherapy and incorporating ecotherapy with special populations will be discussed.

Prerequisites: ECOT-501. ECOT-554.

Restrictions: Admission to Ecotherapies Certificate

Credits: 2 semester hours.

ECOT 598 Topics in Ecotherapy and Applied Ecopsychology

Content: This course provides an opportunity for students to do in-depth exploration of specialized topics or practices related to ecopsychology and to gain experience in various roles such as counselor, therapist, educator, activist, consultant, or researcher. Course focus and format varies given year and instructor. Topics have included human animal bond, environmental justice, and creative interventions.

Prerequisites: None.

Credits: 1 semester hour.