

**CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND FAMILY THERAPY  
SUMMER, 2016**

- Course Title:** Internal Family Systems Therapy
- Course Number:** MFT 558
- Prerequisites:** MFT 541 or permission from instructor
- Credits:** 3 Graduate Credits
- Day & Time:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer Session – Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:30 – 9:00 p.m  
Henry Barnard Hall, Room 329
- Instructor:** Dr. Ralph Cohen  
Office: 125 Barnard Hall – Department of Counseling & Family Therapy
- Course Description:** Basic theory and techniques and clinical applications of the Internal Family Systems model of psychotherapy will be presented. This experiential course will emphasize exploration of the student's own "internal family system" through in-class exercises and written assignments.
- Teaching Methods:** Didactic instruction, videotapes, experiential exercises, hands-on practice of skills, and written assignments.
- Basis for Evaluation:** Class participation and attendance, written assignments, and completion of assigned project.

**Course Objectives:**

- 1) To expose students to fundamental concepts of the Internal Family Systems model of psychotherapy;
- 2) To provide opportunities for graduate-level students to gain exposure and practice to techniques of the Internal Family Systems Therapy model;
- 3) To provide students with a vehicle for exploring personal “triggers” when working with clients;
- 4) To provide students with an opportunity to expand the Internal Family Therapy model beyond the boundaries of psychotherapy and explore applications of the model to the larger system.

**A. Learner Objectives**

- 1) Students will develop an understanding of the conceptual framework of the Internal Family Systems (IFS) model;
- 2) Students will learn to apply the IFS model to working with clients utilizing the techniques of the model;
- 3) Students will be able to assess and develop treatment strategies for their clients, utilizing the IFS model;
- 4) Students will learn to expand the model to other levels of systems (e.g., couples, families, organizations, etc.)

**Textbooks:**

Schwartz, R.C. (1995). Internal Family Systems Therapy. New York: The Guilford Press.

Various Articles as assigned

**Recommended Readings:**

Goulding, R. A. & Schwartz, R.C. (1995). The Mosaic Mind: Empowering the Tormented Selves of Child Abuse Survivors. New York: Norton. Eight (8) copies are on reserve in the CCSU library.

Mones, A. (2014). Transforming Troubled Children, Teens, and Their Families. New York: Routledge Press

Schwartz, R.C. (2001) Introduction to the Internal Family Systems Therapy Model. Oak Park, IL: Center for Self Leadership.

Schwartz, R.C. (2008). You Are the One You've Been Waiting For. Chicago: Trailheads Publications

Sweezy, M. & Ziskind, E. (2013) Internal Family Systems Therapy: New Dimensions. New York: Routledge Press

### **Assignments:**

#### **1) Written Assignments:**

- a. Parts Awareness Paper:** Using the section in the IFS book on “Therapist’s Parts” (page 86 – 87), identify a part of you that would most likely dominate in your role as a therapist. Go inside\* and get to know this part, using the experiential techniques learned in class. In doing so, pay attention to the following:
- 2) A sensory or visual description of the part
  - 3) How do you feel toward the part? (See if you can unblend with any parts that don’t like or fear it)
  - 4) Notice what happens when you pay attention to it
  - 5) Ask it to tell its story to the extent it’s willing to trust you.
  - 6) Ask about the part’s role, including how it got the role, when it got the role, and under what circumstances
  - 7) How old does the part seem to be? How old does it think you are? (Update the part, if necessary)
  - 8) What parts is it polarized with, and what parts is it protecting?
  - 9) What does it need in order to let go of the role or to de-polarize from other parts?
  - 10) Check to see if it would be willing to allow you to work at some point with the part it is either protecting or protecting you or others from.
  - 11) Thank all your parts and close the session.

**\*You might find a partner in class to help you to do this. It would be good practice for both of you.**

Write a detailed description, recounting the above steps. You may leave out “content” details, if you wish, but make sure you address each of the above points. Please type and double-space this paper, no longer than 10 pages (less is fine, if it takes less to write). **This paper will be due on Thursday, July 21.**

- 2) Class Mini- Demonstration:** On the last day of class, students will make mini-presentations (approximately 10 - 15 minutes) on the analysis of something in a non-therapy context that reflects some aspect of the Internal Family Systems process. Such items can include (for example):
- 1) A current event that has been in the news (local, national, or world politics; sports; human interest)
  - 2) A piece of music
  - 3) A movie
  - 4) A book
  - 5) Artwork
  - 6) Poetry
  - 7) Anything else your creative parts would like to express

For the presentation, you should be prepared to present a sample of the item (e.g., newspaper or magazine clippings, photographs, film clip, passage of a book, poem, samples of the artwork, etc.). Such concepts as self-leadership, extreme parts processes (exiles, managers, firefighters, etc.), and unburdening are examples. Discuss how the item reflects IFS applications in everyday life and present your ideas on how IFS therapy principles might be applied to the situation being presented. Please write up a brief (1 – 2 pages) description for the class of how you related your choice to IFS.

This exercise is intended to be an opportunity for you to share with the class and formulate for yourself your own process with and reactions to the IFS model. You are encouraged to be creative! This is a Pass-Fail assignment.

- 3) Practice Triads:** Various skills and techniques will be practiced in triads, facilitated by a class assistant. Assistants are students who have either completed a IFS Level 1 training program. These students have had over 100 hours of training in the IFS model and have been selected by the instructor based on their experience and competence in understanding the model. These student assistants will provide supervision of practice groups under the direction of the instructor.
- 4)** The practice triads are carefully supervised, and SAFETY COMES FIRST. See the Ground Rules and Caveats for safety rules.

**Grading  
Criteria:**

Grading will consist of: Attendance (no unexcused absences); class participation, class assignments; and class project.

Excellent A

Distinction for work of exceptional quality; all required assignments, papers, and exams completed using graduate level style, handed in on time and receiving a grade of A; attend and actively participate, where appropriate, in all class meetings; always prepared with having read the assigned readings.

Good B

Above average achievement, quality expected of a graduate student; all required assignments, papers, and exams completed using graduate level style and receiving a grade of B; attend and participate, where appropriate, in most class meetings; usually prepared with having read the assigned readings.

Fair C

Minimal achievement, not up to the standards of graduate work; most required assignments, papers, and exams receiving a grade of C; attend most class meetings; sometimes prepared with having read the assigned readings.

**Date Prepared: May 5, 2014**

**TOPICAL OUTLINE**

**Session 1**

Tuesday, July 5

Introduction: IFS, Multiplicity, and Systems  
Overall Goals of IFS Therapy  
Parts  
Assignments: *Internal Family Systems Therapy*, Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, & 3  
Video: "Patricia" or Live Demo

**Session 2**

Thursday, July 7

Basic Concepts: Self  
Qualities of Self Leadership  
Self as the Witness State  
Assignments: *Internal Family Systems Therapy*, Chapter 4  
\* *Class ends early*

**Session 3**

Tuesday, July 12

Working with Managers: Getting Started Doing IFS  
The Flow of the IFS Model  
Working with Managers  
Common Fears of Managers and How to Respond to Them  
Assignments: *Internal Family Systems Therapy*, Chapter 5

**Session 4**

Thursday, July 14

Working with Firefighters  
Firefighters Defined  
How to Work with Firefighters  
Assignments: *Internal Family Systems Therapy*, Chapter 8

**Session 5**

Tuesday, July 19

Exiles and Burdens  
Exiles Defined  
Unburdening  
Typical Questions  
Assignments: *Internal Family Systems Therapy*, Chapter 9.

**Session 6**

Thursday, July 21

Putting it All Together  
Beginning IFS Therapist Challenges  
Therapist Fire Drill: Staying Present With a Client  
Video: Trauma Behind Rage  
**Parts Awareness Paper Due**

**Session 7**

Tuesday, July 26

Expanding the Model: Applying IFS to Couples  
Assignments: *Internal Family Systems Therapy*, Chapters 6 & 7  
Video: The Angry Couple

**Session 8**

Thursday, July 28

Expanding the Model: Applying IFS to Family Therapy  
Family Therapy Simulation  
Interpersonal Checklist

**Session 9**

Tuesday, August 2

Presentations and Completion  
Presentations  
Course Wrap-up and Evaluations

**MFT 558 – Internal Family Systems Therapy**  
**Dr. Ralph Cohen – Instructor**

**Ground Rules and Caveats – Student Agreement**

- 1) **Experiential Nature of the Course** - This course is very experiential, and much of the learnings will occur through class exercises, small group practice of skills, class demonstrations, etc.
- 2) **Self-Disclosure** – Because of the experiential nature of the course, many of the exercises may stimulate thoughts and feelings that you might be uncomfortable sharing with the class and/or instructor. You are free to censor what you disclose, and exercising this right will in no way affect your grade in the course.
- 3) **Confidentiality** – All personal material that students disclose are to be treated as confidential and are not to be shared with persons who are not participants in the class. This includes classmates, family members, friends, colleagues, etc. You may discuss didactic materials and the nature of class exercises with appropriate people.
- 4) **Safety Issues** – The nature of the material and the therapy process of IFS may stimulate psychological and emotional issues for students. If you develop such difficulties as a result of participation in class, please let the instructor know. The following remedies are available:
  - a. Discussion regarding the effects of the class on the student
  - b. Opportunity to be excused from experiential exercises, with alternative assignments provided to the student
  - c. Withdrawal from the course with no penalty
  - d. Referral for therapy
  - e. Other negotiated remedies
- 5) **Exercises and Practice Sessions** – Many of the class exercises and practice sessions are designed to teach therapy techniques that require supervision, and should not be attempted with practicum or internship clients without proper supervision. You should also refrain from practicing on family members or friends. In practicing with fellow students, it is imperative that you respect boundaries, including the right to stop an exercise or practice session for any reason, maintaining confidentiality, and immediately reporting any difficulties that arise to the instructor or assistant. The instructor and/or designated assistants reserve the right to step in at any point in an exercise if safety concerns arise in the course of the process.
- 6) **Giving and Receiving Feedback** – This course encourages safety and experimentation to develop new therapy skills. As such, giving and receiving feedback is an important aspect of such learning. It is important to ask and give permission, and to speak FOR parts that come up, as opposed to FROM parts (in other words, to filter feedback, particularly of an emotional nature, through Self leadership).
- 7) **Personal Responsibility for Decisions** – By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the ground rules listed on this page and your participation constitutes an agreement to adhere to these guidelines. You also understand that there is some degree of risk for psychological and emotional issues to surface in the class and take responsibility to avail yourself to the remedies listed above. You further understand that this course is not designed to provide therapy to students, but that students will be practicing specific therapeutic techniques with other each other in a learning context. In the event that problematic therapeutic issues surface in the process of the class, such issues may require your discussing them with a personal therapist. If you are not currently in therapy and would like a referral, such referrals will be made in confidence.

I have read and understand the Ground Rules and Caveats listed above and agree to these terms in taking this course. I understand that I may withdraw from the course without penalty if I do not agree to these terms.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Instructor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date