

## Preview: MFT5876 : Research Methods in Marriage and Family Therapy

### Syllabus

#### Course Overview

This course presents an overview of design and methodology that Marriage and Family Therapists utilize to evaluate and conduct research with their clients. Learners will be taught how to become consumers of research, providing informed therapy. In an era in which therapists are increasingly pressed to demonstrate that therapy is effective, understanding the role of research and research methods that can be applied to systemic clinical practice in its many forms is essential.

Developing an understanding of and appreciation for the role of research is an essential component in preparing professionals to make a positive impact on the social problems and issues that confront contemporary society. Research has the potential both to inform and validate professional practice, and with the increased call for accountability, therapists must possess a basic understanding of research methods to help them determine the most efficient and effective service options.

To be an effective agent of social change, the professional scholar-practitioner confronting these problems must be equipped with basic knowledge of the research methods and tools of disciplined inquiry that are necessary to identify, assess, and evaluate professional problems, needs, opportunities, concerns, and programs in the search for appropriate and viable solutions to the issues we face.

We will pay special attention to bridging the gap between clinical practice and research.

#### MFT5876 Methods of Family Research

<b>MFT5876 Course Competencies</b>	<b>Version 12 COAMFTE Standards</b>
------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

MFT5876 Course Competencies	Version 12 COAMFTE Standards
<p><b>1. Evaluate research relevant to marriage and family therapy.</b></p> <p><b>Assessed by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>u04a1: Comparing Systemic Models.</b></li> <li>• <b>u09a1: Application of a Single Study or Systematic Review.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FCA 1: Foundations of Relational/Systemic Practice, Theories, and Models.</li> <li>• FCA 2: Clinical Treatment with Individuals, Couples, and Families.</li> </ul> <p><b>SLO–3. Clinical Practice:</b> Clinical application and practice of systemic theory relevant to family dynamics in the field of marriage and family therapy.</p>
<p><b>2. Identify appropriate marriage and family therapy research methodology.</b></p> <p><b>Assessed by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>u04a1: Comparing Systemic Models.</b></li> <li>• <b>u09a1: Application of a Single Study or Systematic Review.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FCA 1: Foundations of Relational/Systemic Practice, Theories and Models.</li> <li>• FCA 2: Clinical Treatment With Individuals, Couples and Families.</li> </ul> <p><b>SLO–3. Clinical Practice:</b> Clinical application and practice of systemic theory relevant to family dynamics in the field of marriage and family therapy.</p>
<p><b>3. Develop a research proposal.</b></p> <p><b>Assessed by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>u04a1: Comparing Systemic Models.</b></li> <li>• <b>u09a1: Application of a Single Study or Systematic Review.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FCA 1: Foundations of Relational/Systemic Practice, Theories and Models.</li> <li>• FCA 4: Research and Evaluation.</li> </ul> <p><b>SLO–1. Knowledge and Research:</b> Effectively integrate and apply research and theories in the practice of marriage and family therapy, including individual, systemic, and relational theories and theories of individual and family development across the lifespan.</p>

MFT5876 Course Competencies	Version 12 COAMFTE Standards
<p><b>4. Communicate effectively through the appropriate application of grammar, punctuation, spelling, writing mechanics, and professional tone, while adhering to current APA formatting and style.</b></p> <p><b>Assessed by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>u04a1: Comparing Systemic Models.</b></li> <li>• <b>u09a1: Application of a Single Study or Systematic Review.</b></li> </ul>	

## Course Competencies

(Read Only)

To successfully complete this course, you will be expected to:

- 1 Evaluate research relevant to marriage and family therapy.
- 2 Identify appropriate marriage and family therapy research methodology.
- 3 Develop a research proposal.
- 4 Communicate effectively through the appropriate application of grammar, punctuation, spelling, writing mechanics, and professional tone, while adhering to APA (6th edition) formatting and style.

## Course Prerequisites

*There are no prerequisites for this course.*

## Syllabus >> Course Materials

### Required

The materials listed below are required to complete the learning activities in this course.

### Integrated Materials

Many of your required books are available via the VitalSource Bookshelf link in the courseroom, located in your Course Tools. Registered learners in a Resource Kit program can access these materials using the courseroom link on the Friday before the course start date. Some materials are available only in hard-copy format or by using an access code. For these materials, you will receive an email with further instructions for access. Visit the [Course Materials](#) page on Campus for more information.

Book

Williams, L., Patterson, J., & Edwards, T. M. (2014). *Clinician's guide to research methods in family therapy: Foundations of evidence-based practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press. ISBN: 9781462515974.

## Library

The following required readings are provided in the Capella University Library or linked directly in this course. To find specific readings by journal or book title, use [Journal and Book Locator](#). Refer to the [Journal and Book Locator library guide](#) to learn how to use this tool.

- Withers, M. C., & Nelson, T. S. (2015). [A method for creating individualized practice-based evidence](#). *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 26(3), 210–225.

## Suggested

The following materials are recommended to provide you with a better understanding of the topics in this course. These materials are not required to complete the course, but they are aligned to course activities and assessments and are highly recommended for your use.

## Optional

The following optional materials are offered to provide you with a better understanding of the topics in this course. These materials are not required to complete the course.

# Unit 1 >> The Importance in Conducting Family Research

## Introduction

As a clinician and not a researcher, you need to understand the value of well-conducted research. Some of the key questions guiding the review and critique of research relate to such things as whether the findings from a given study are trustworthy or relevant to the kinds of people, issues, and settings encountered in everyday work. Scholar-practitioners are concerned with the overall validity and trustworthiness of the research they read and the validity and reliability of the instruments used to measure variables in quantitative studies.

The term *validity* is less frequently used when discussing the quality or trustworthiness of qualitative research. Rather, the critical consumer of qualitative research is concerned with credibility, dependability, confirmability, verification, and transferability.

Family research methods require understanding the stages of social research and how research on families presents a unique challenge.

## Learning Activities

### u01s1 - Studies

## Readings

From *Clinician's Guide to Research Methods in Family Therapy*:

- Read Chapter 1, "Learning to Apply Research: Why Bother?" pages 16–26.

### u01d1 - Family Therapy Benefits From Research

For this discussion:

Discuss three different ways research can inform our knowledge. Elaborate.

## Response Guidelines

Respond to two learners by adding to their discussion posts in a substantive way.

### Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

## u01d2 - Clinician's Reluctance to Do Research

For this discussion, respond to the following:

- What are some reasons why clinicians might be reluctant to do research?

## Response Guidelines

Respond to two learners by addressing the strengths and weaknesses of the challenges listed in their discussions, identifying your own reluctance to do research in the reasons they have posted in their discussions.

### Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

## Unit 2 >> What Is an Evidence-Based Approach?

### Introduction

When a clinician applies the best practices available, they are using evidence-based approaches. Approaches that are scientifically proven to produce positive results. Applying evidence-based approaches requires a process of reviewing new research and basing clinical practice on those findings.

### Learning Activities

### u02s1 - Studies

## Readings

From *Clinician's Guide to Research Methods in Family Therapy*:

- Read Chapter 12, "What Is an Evidenced-Based Approach?" pages 160–169.

## u02d1 - Overview of Evidence-Based Practice Steps

For this discussion:

- Discuss how one of the five evidence-based practice steps could be a challenge and a benefit for you in your clinical practice.

## Response Guidelines

Respond to two other learner's posts and elaborate on how the steps they have identified as challenging may or may not be challenging for you.

### Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

## Unit 3 >> Ask and Acquire: Creating Questions and Conducting a Search

### Introduction

Where do you begin when looking for the best treatment of a specific family, couple, or individual problem? Identifying the right question will help you to narrow your focus and lead you to the most effective resources.

### Learning Activities



## u03s1 - Studies

### Readings

From *Clinician's Guide to Research Methods in Family Therapy*:

- Read Chapter 13, "Ask and Acquire: Creating Questions and Conducting a Search," pages 170–182.

## u03d1 - Literature Review Plan

For this discussion:

- What portions of the reading were the most helpful to you?
- Explain.

### Response Guidelines

Respond to the post of two peers. Provide them with feedback and insight into any additional considerations for at least one other portion of the readings.

#### Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

## Unit 4 >> Appraise: Reading and Evaluating Research Articles and Systematic Reviews

### Introduction

Research articles are an important source of information for informing treatment. Understanding how to read, understand, and critically evaluate the quality of research is a prerequisite for translating

research findings into clinical practice.

## Learning Activities

### u04s1 - Studies

## Readings

From *Clinician's Guide to Research Methods in Family Therapy*:

- Read Chapter 14, "Appraise: Reading and Evaluating Research Articles and Systematic Reviews," pages 183–197.

### u04a1 - Comparing Systemic Models

In this assignment you will be reviewing systemic models in order to assist you in your search for a systemic model to use in your Unit 9 assignment. After you have completed the interactive media piece, Comparing Systemic Models, select one that you feel would be most effective with a problem you are currently working on with a client or client system.

Access the interactive media piece, Comparing Systemic Models, linked in the Resources. Work through the activity. This piece is set up as a quiz, where you will read a case example, select a systems model (one of 11), and answer two questions through the lens of a particular systems model:

- Why do people have problems?
- How can they change?

At this point in your training, you should have a basic understanding of many systems models. The case example will be used as reference for 11 systems models. By answering these two questions for each model, you will begin to see the core differences among them.

Not all systems models are represented here, nor are they complete descriptions of the models; they are initial starting points for systems model selection. No single theory is effective for all client problems. Many times there may be multiple theories that can be effectively applied to a specific client problem.

## Assignment Description

Write a 6–8-page paper, discussing the rationale for selecting a systemic model. Include in your rationale a detailed description of the problem you are currently working on with a client or client system you will be using for your Unit 9 assignment.

## Submission Requirements

- **Written communication:** It should be free of errors that detract from the overall message.
- **APA formatting:** Resources and citations are formatted according to current APA style and formatting.
- **Number of sources:** A minimum of 10 peer-reviewed journal articles.
- **Length:** 6–8 double-spaced, typed pages.
- **Font and font size:** Times New Roman, 12 points.

### Course Resources

[Comparing Systemic Models](#) | Transcript

[APA Style and Format](#)

[Capella University Library](#)

[RefWorks](#)

## u04d1 - Case Illustrations: Single Study and Systematic Reviews

This discussion is in preparation for the Unit 9 assignment. In the Unit 9 assignment, you will be applying a Single Study or Systematic Review to a problem that you are currently working on with a client or client system.

For this discussion:

1. Identify a problem you are currently working on with a client or client system.

2. Select either a Single Study or Systematic Review.
3. Discuss how the initial process of your search for a systemic model is going.

## Response Guidelines

When responding to at least two peers, identify the strengths and weaknesses of their searches. Make suggestions for improvement.

### Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

## Unit 5 >> Apply I: Translating Research Findings Into Clinical Practice

### Introduction

Once you have identified approaches that have empirical support, the next challenge is to combine the knowledge gained from your research with creativity and clinical expertise, in order to select a systemic model and develop a treatment plan that suits your client or client system.

### Learning Activities

### u05s1 - Studies

## Readings

From *Clinician's Guide to Research Methods in Family Therapy*:

- Read Chapter 15, "Apply I: Translating Research Findings Into Clinical Practice," pages 198–207.

## u05d1 - Translating Research Findings Into Clinical Practice

In the Unit 4 discussion, you identified a problem you are currently working on with a client or client system, selected either a Single Study or Systematic Review, and searched for research evidence that supported a systemic model to apply to your client problem.

In this unit, discuss your next steps for applying the evidence-based approach you found for your client problem.

## Response Guidelines

When responding to at least two other learners, identify the strengths and possible limitations in using the approach identified in their posts.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

## Unit 6 >> Apply II: Utilizing Couple and Family Therapy Research in Clinical Practice

### Introduction

There continues to be a divide between research and practice in marriage and family therapy. While solutions have been proposed, they have focused primarily on doctoral rather than master's training, and have been based more on observations than empirical data. This divide limits the effectiveness of clinical practice by not providing empirical support for the application of various approaches applied to specific clinical problems and populations.

### Learning Activities

#### u06s1 - Studies

## Readings

From *Clinician's Guide to Research Methods in Family Therapy*:

- Read Chapter 16, "Apply II: Utilizing Couple and Family Therapy Research in Clinical Practice," pages 208–221.

### u06d1 - Closing the Gap in Clinical Practice

For this discussion:

- Discuss your plan for incorporating evidence-based practices into your clinical work.
- Identify any obstacles that you anticipate.

## Response Guidelines

When responding to at least two other learners, offer additional information from the readings that will support the other learner's success in implementing evidence-based practice into their clinical work.

### Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

## Unit 7 >> Apply III: How to Talk to Clients About an Evidence-Based Approach

### Introduction

In the past, the therapist made all of the decisions regarding treatment. The evidence-based practice model proposes shared decision making whereby the therapist presents treatment options based on the best available evidence, and then collaborates with the client to determine the best fit given the client's goals, values, and preferences. This process of shared decision making requires that a clinician summarizes the results of literature searches for the client and includes their participation, resulting in the therapist and client arriving at an agreed upon treatment plan.

## Learning Activities

### u07s1 - Studies

## Readings

From *Clinician's Guide to Research Methods in Family Therapy*:

- Read Chapter 17, "Apply III: How to Talk to Clients About an Evidence-Based Approach," pages 222–231.

### u07d1 - Data Collection Procedures

For this discussion:

- Identify the pros and cons of therapist and client shared decision making for developing treatment plans.
- Give examples using your experience with developing treatment plans.

## Response Guidelines

Provide substantial feedback to at least two other learners. Provide alternate views regarding types of clients and client problems.

## Unit 8 >> Analyze and Adjust: Evaluating Your Clinical Work

### Introduction

Our ongoing challenge as therapists is finding out if we are being successful with our clients. Are they improving, getting worse, or not changing at all? What are the factors that influence our effectiveness? The client who regularly attends, appearing satisfied with therapy, may be making little progress. The client who frequently misses therapy, eventually dropping out, may have benefited significantly. In this unit, you will pursue how to evaluate your own practice and effectiveness with your clients.

### Learning Activities

#### u08s1 - Studies

### Readings

From *Clinician's Guide to Research Methods in Family Therapy*:

- Read Chapter 18, "Analyze and Adjust: Evaluating Your Clinical Work," pages 244–258.

#### u08d1 - Client-Focused Progress Research for Family Therapists

For this discussion:

- Identify the next steps you will consider taking to implement a process for evaluating the effectiveness of your clinical work.
- Utilize what you have learned in this unit's chapter reading.



# Response Guidelines

When responding to at least two other learners, offer suggestions for strengthening their plans for evaluating clinical effectiveness.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

## Unit 9 >> The Future of Evidence-Based Practice: Looking Into the Crystal Ball

### Introduction

Evidence-based practice is becoming a central focus of many mental health professionals. There is a growing expectation from those who provide mental health benefits to prioritize treatments that are supported by empirical research. Although not all clinicians choose to incorporate evidence-based practice into their work, the movement is gaining momentum and support across disciplines. As the demand for evidence-based practice increases, educators, professional organizations, Internet resources, the managed care system, and consumers will all shape the way that clinicians find, evaluate, and apply evidence-based knowledge.

### Learning Activities

#### u09s1 - Studies

## Readings

From *Clinician's Guide to Research Methods in Family Therapy*:

- Read Chapter 19, "The Future of Evidence-Based Practice: Looking Into the Crystal Ball," pages 244–258.

## u09a1 - Application of a Single Study or Systematic Review

### Assignment Description

Write a 10–12-page paper that applies a Single Study or Systematic Review to the client or client system you identified in the Unit 4 discussion. Use the example of “Case Illustrations for Single Study or Systematic Review” in Chapter 14 of *Clinician's Guide to Research Methods in Family Therapy*.

### Submission Requirements

In addition to following the outline above, your paper will be graded on the following criteria:

- **Written Communication:** It should be free of errors that detract from the overall message.
- **APA formatting:** References and citations are formatted according to current APA style and formatting guidelines.
- **Number of references:** Minimum of 10 academic references.
- **Length:** 10–12 typed, double-spaced pages.
- **Font and font size:** Times New Roman, 12 points.

#### Course Resources

[APA Style and Format](#)

[Capella University Library](#)

[RefWorks](#)

## u09d1 - Staying Current With Trends and Patterns

For this discussion:

Post your plan for staying current with the multiple sources that will help you to stay on course regarding the provision of clinical services. What specific sources will you track noting why they would

be more significant than others for you?

## Response Guidelines

When responding to at least two other learners, clarify and provide additional strategies for tracking trends in mental health provision of services.

### Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

## Unit 10 >>

### Evaluation: Objectively Measuring Practice Effectiveness and Addressing Contemporary Challenges

#### Introduction

The era of managed care initiated a new phase in mental health. What we subjectively assume works in therapy is no longer acceptable. We must now objectively demonstrate the effectiveness of our profession. When you are licensed MFTs, some of you may work for agencies, or, if you are entrepreneurial, you may seek funding to support a private enterprise. Understanding how to evaluate your client's progress will allow you to demonstrate your effectiveness as a Marriage and Family Therapist in this environment of higher accountability.

#### Learning Activities

#### u10s1 - Studies

## Readings

From the Capella University Library, read the following:

- Withers, M. C., & Nelson, T. S. (2015). [A method for creating individualized practice-based evidence](#). *Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 26(3), 210–225.

## u10d1 - Practice-Based Evidence vs. Evidence-Based Practice

For this discussion:

- Compare the article in this discussion, "A Method for Creating Individualized Practice-Based Evidence," with the course readings in *Clinician's Guide to Research Methods in Family Therapy*.
- Review the Case Study Example and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of Practice-Based Evidence versus Evidence-Based Practice.
  - What are some ways the application of Evidence-Based Practice would be different from the application of Practice-Based Evidence?

## Response Guidelines

Respond to at least two other learner posts by elaborating upon their posts referencing the readings for this post and the course text.

- How effective do you think they will be in evaluating both cost- and therapeutic effectiveness?
- What might their proposed approaches be missing?
- What are potential areas for improvement?

### Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

[A Method for Creating Individualized Practice-Based Evidence](#)