Introduction: This a beginning foundational course in understanding the family as a system, and applying that knowledge to the pastoral care of families and individuals, with a special focus on older adults and their families. All families have intricate patterns of communication, and systems theory gives us a more precise way of interpreting and effectively interfacing with those patterns. Concepts such as triangulation, enmeshment, differentiation, homeostasis, identified patient (and many more) give us new windows into family communication. Conflict arises regularly and naturally in families, and can be either constructive or destructive. It is both an inevitable and necessary component of family life and when managed well, it can bring forth wonderful fruits. Sometimes elders and their family members need caring assistance in navigating conflicts, and pastors and caregivers need training to be able to step in and help effectively. All family members, and in this culture (due to its ageism) especially elder family members, need empowerment; thus our work as pastors and caregivers should ultimately serve this end. For empowerment means that the special gifts and graces of an individual family member are allowed and encouraged to flourish, so that she or he truly experiences the full meaning of creation in the image of God.

Purpose of the Course: The purpose of this course is to introduce students to basic concepts in family systems theory, from a variety of perspectives, including a strong practical training component related to families with elders. Students will learn how to use some of the dynamics of the journey through their family of origin in the service of ministry to elders and their families, as well congregations. They will be asked to engage in a pastoral way with family members and elders for minimum of ten hours across the semester, and choose one conversation to present in class as a Verbatim for peer review and consultation. Film and video resources will be used in class on occasion to both supplement the readings and discussions, as well as to meet the learning style needs of a range of students.

Course Outcomes: Students will be able to

1. Describe basic concepts of family systems theory from a variety of perspectives and schools of thought.
2. Understand and describe the importance of doing “family of origin work” for ministry with older adults and their families and for effective leadership in congregation or community ministry settings.
3. Discuss the various approaches to family systems therapy, including couples counseling.

4. Understand the role of the pastoral visitor/caregiver regarding situations of conflict/change with elders and their families.

5. Write up an effective Verbatim (including theological reflection) demonstrating pastoral caregiving with elders/family members and show openness to receiving feedback from peers.

6. Discuss various approaches a church or congregation could take in providing ministry for family members of older adults.

7. Discuss the importance of empowerment for older adults in this culture from a theological and psychological perspective, and share approaches in pastoral ministry that work toward this goal.

**BTS M.Div. Program Goals addressed by this course**

Knowledge of:

- The cultural, social, and ethical realities in which the churches live and respond both globally and locally.
- The arts of ministry

Ability to:

- Develop and express mature personal faith, and with sensitivity and skill, teach the traditions of the church, lead worship and preach, and engage in pastoral care.
- Integrate the elements of the Christian tradition in a theology and practice of ministry; act with moral sensitivity and in accord with professional ethics, and advocate for compassion and justice in personal, congregational, and community settings.

Opportunities for:

- Developing one’s own ecclesiastical identity within an ecumenical ethos, identifying one’s strengths and limits, and learning how to engage in ongoing professional development.

**Course Requirements:**

*Please note: points will be deducted for required work that is turned in late.*

1. Active engagement with all readings and full participation with discussions in class. (15%)

2. Seven page (double space) integrative essay describing and analyzing your own family of origin from a systems perspective. (15%)

3. Ten (10) hours of face-to-face pastoral ministry conversation with family members of older adults and/or older adults together with family members accomplished over the course of the semester. These contacts and conversations can be primarily from one setting, or spread out over several settings, as you wish. These may NOT be conversations with family and friends, but must be taken from settings where you are clearly “in role” as a pastoral caregiver to elders and their families. Keep a brief and confidential
(use no real names) log of your hours of pastoral conversations; this log will be due at the last class. (10%)

4. Verbatim that demonstrates “conflict or communication or empowerment” in a family including elder(s) will be presented and processed in small group in class. A guide for writing up your Verbatim with theological reflection will be distributed at the first class. (20%)

5. One-page outline of your final paper or project for the class. (Due at Class VIII (10%)

6. Final Paper: 15 -20 pages doubles spaced with proper footnotes or endnotes and bibliography (absolutely no more than 20 pages) (30%)

Guide: A research paper on any aspect of your ministry related to family systems and eldercare issues that you wish to pursue at a deeper level. Your research should include significant reading beyond the requirements of the course syllabus. The instructor must approve your topic in advance (note that a one page outline of your paper topic is due on Week VIII including an initial bibliography – see requirement #5 above). The topic should be defined in such a way that is it is manageable for the time you have to research and write and still remain within the 15-20-page limit.

Final Paper is due on or before Friday May 17, 2013 at Noon.

PLAGIARISM: You are reminded that using others’ words or ideas without attribution and citation constitutes plagiarism, an act of intellectual dishonesty that may result in failing the course. See the Student Guide for a complete description of plagiarism.

Required Readings: (In order of use across the semester)


Grading for the Course:
Class Participation 15%
Family of Origin Essay 15%
Log of Conversations with families of elders 10%
Verbatim and Theological Reflection 20%
One page outline of final paper 10%
Final Paper 30%

Please note: points will be deducted for required work that is turned in late. Also note (only for Husson University students) that a grade of Incomplete will be given only in unusual circumstances, e.g., illness, death in the family, or change in job responsibilities. Procedures outlined by Husson must be followed in order to request an Incomplete Contract. Completion of the course requirements does not assure you of an A in the course. The quality of your work will determine the quality of your grade. No Incompletes will be granted this semester for BTS students for any reason.

Class Calendar:

Week I:
Opening Prayer by Professor
Introduction to the Course
Presentation and Opening Discussion: Family Systems Theory/Communication, Conflict and Empowerment in Families (with a Focus on Elders)
- Overview of Syllabus
- Assignment of Opening Prayers and Building the Classroom Covenant
- Sharing of Students Concerns and Interests in the Course
- Verbatim and Theological Reflection - A format for writing up your Verbatim will be distributed in class.
Closing Prayer

Week II: Read --- Reclaiming Your Story: Family History and Spiritual Growth by Jordan
Opening Prayer
- "Embracing Aging – Families Facing Change" (2007 Mennonite Media Productions)
  DVD documentary presentation and discussion on families of the elderly
- Discussion of film and Jordan reading
- Discussion of Requirements #2, #3, #4 (family of origin essay, 10 hours of pastoral conversation with families/elders and verbatim for class presentation - sign ups)

Week III: Read --- Generation to Generation by Friedman (assigned sections)
Opening Prayer
- Discussion of Friedman reading
-Sharing in triads on family of origin dynamics
-More sharing in triads on requirement #2 – essay on family of origin (due at the beginning of next class—Week IV)

**Week IV:** Read ***Generation to Generation*** by Friedman (assigned sections)
**Due:** Essay on Family of Origin Dynamics (see requirement #2 above)
Opening Prayer

- Presentation and Discussion: Key concepts in family systems theory
- Discussion of Friedman reading
- Sharing in triads on Course Requirements #4 and #5

**Week V:** Read ***Generation to Generation*** by Friedman (assigned sections)
Opening Prayer

- Presentation and discussion: More detailed concepts in family systems
- Discussion of Friedman reading
- Sharing in triads: relating family systems concepts to your family of origin
- Sharing in triads on pastoral conversations with families/elders; encouragement of class participants' continuing ministry with family members/elders
  (Course requirement #3)

**Week VI:** Read ***Counseling Families Across the Stages of Life*** by Weaver
Opening Prayer

- Discussion of Weaver reading
- Presentation and discussion on applying systems theory for effective family counseling across the life cycle
- In class role-plays on family counseling concerns
- Sharing in triads on course requirement #5: name your topic for the final paper

**Week VII:** Read ***Getting the Love You Want*** by Hendrix
Opening Prayer

- Presentation and discussion: various approaches to couples therapy
- Discussion of Harville Hendrix reading; Presentation and discussion on couples' counseling (Imago therapy approach)
- In class role-plays on couples counseling
- Other new developments: IFS = Internal Family Systems work; Narrative therapy

**Week VIII:** Read ****Mutuality Matters**** edited by Anderson (assigned sections)
Work on Verbatim and Theological Reflection (for Week IX)
**Due:** One page outline of your final paper (See course requirement #5)
Opening Prayer

Film and Discussion: “Tuesdays with Morrie”
Large group discussion of film and class themes on systems theory;
Theological/spiritual reflection on the film

**Week IX:** Read ****Mutuality Matters**** edited by Anderson (assigned sections)
Work on Verbatim and Theological Reflection (for Week X)
Opening Prayer____________________

Due: Verbatims - Group I
Verbatims will be processed in the small group setting in a confidential manner.

__________________________, _________________________ , ________________________
__________________________, _________________________ , ________________________

Week X: Read --- *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times* by Steinke (assigned sections)
Opening Prayer____________________

Due: Verbatims – Group II
Verbatims will be processed in the small group setting in a confidential manner.

__________________________, _________________________ , ________________________
__________________________, _________________________ , ________________________

Week XI: Read --- *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times* by Steinke (assigned sections)
Opening Prayer____________________

-Presentation and Discussion on family of origin “work” and leadership concerns in the congregation and in other organizations

Week XII: Complete the log of 10 hours pastoral visits
Due: Confidential log of 10 hours of pastoral conversation with elders/family members (see course requirement #3)
Opening Prayer____________________

-Review and discussion of major themes of the class – communication, conflict and empowerment in families with elders
-Reviewing “loose ends”: review final paper requirements, course evaluation, group closure.

Reminder: Final Paper is due on or before Friday May 17, 2013 at Noon.

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**Recommended Readings: (For the Reserve Shelf in Bangor)**

**Family Systems**

* **Perspectives on Congregational Leadership: Applying Systems Thinking for Effective Leadership** by Israel Galindo (2009, Alban Institute)
**ISBN 978-097157657-5**  **$25.94**


Cutting a New Path: Helping Survivors of Childhood Domestic Trauma by Laura Delaplain (United Church Press, 1997) ISBN 978-0829812039 @$10.00


Elder Issues

Overview/General
 ISBN 0835808505  $11.20

Koepke, Donald R.  *Ministering to Older Adults: The Building Blocks.* (Haworth Pastoral Press, 2006) ISBN 0789030489  $100.00

Koenig, Harold G. and Andrew Weaver.  *Pastoral Care of Older Adults.* (Fortress Press, 1998) ISBN 0800629647  $17.00


*Books on Programming for Older Adult Ministries:*


Carlson, Dosia.  *Engaging in Ministry with Older Adults.* Alban Institute, 1997.  ISBN 15666991862  $12.00

*Books on Grief, Death and Dying:*


*Other Titles on Aging:*


(Note: All retail book prices are taken from Amazon.com)