

SYLLABUS

MFT-557: ACTION METHODS IN MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY

Instructor: Daniel J. Wiener, Ph.D.

Prerequisites: (1) MFT 541 or 2) Graduate coursework in a mental health field AND permission of instructor.

Time: Tuesdays, 4 pm to 9:30 pm., 5/29; 6/5,12,19,26 plus two weekend days, 9 am to 4 pm, TBD.

Description: In psychotherapy, action methods are *those techniques that have clients engage in purposeful physical activity at the direction of the therapist*. Action methods are impactful and promote significant lasting clinical change in relatively brief periods of time, making them particularly valuable in brief therapy.

This course (1) introduces students to a broad spectrum of action methods useful for both assessment and intervention in marital and family therapy, with an emphasis on those derived from theater; (2) examines their effectiveness in relation to other experiential and didactic methods; and (3) gives students hands-on experience with a representative sample of action methods. The course also addresses practical questions regarding the conditions for which action methods are appropriate and what uses of the self of the therapist are required for the successful employment of action methods.

By the nature of its subject, this course predominantly features learning-by-doing, rather than conceptual learning-about. Active participation in exercises during class is central to the learning experience.

Format: About two-thirds of class time is devoted to enacting clinical scenarios and experiential exercises using action methods and to critiquing these enactments. The remainder will be used for lectures, discussion of readings, guest presenters, and viewing videotapes illustrating the clinical use of action methods. Some use will also be made of in-class video feedback to assist students in improving their skills in leading enactments.

Learning Objectives: At the completion of this course, students will be able to: (1) classify clinical interventions as didactic, experiential, or action; (2) identify the requisite conditions for employing action methods across a diversity of clinical situations; (3) demonstrate a capacity for designing, adapting, and implementing action methods in designated broad categories of marital and family therapy situations; (4) understand which of their own personal characteristics are assets or deficits in employing certain action methods.

REQUIRED WORK AND GRADING:

50% - Class Participation –

Your grade is based on both quality and frequency; come prepared each class to discuss current assigned readings and to be involved with experiential exercises, either as participant or observer. Beginning with the second class meeting, three students are assigned to lead about 10 minutes each of class discussion on the readings. **Far more than in lecture classes, regular attendance is necessary for sufficient participation.**

20% - Class Presentation –

Each student will lead other volunteer students in the enactment of an action method that has been approved in advance by the instructor. These class presentations should be planned to last a total of 20 minutes for instructions, enactment, and discussion. Other students complete a feedback form immediately following the presentation and give it to the presenter for analysis. Presentations are videotaped; students bring their own videotape cassette in order to review their own presentation after class. Immediately following the presentation the instructor will provide a brief oral critique.

Your grade is based on: (1) your demonstrated skill in giving instructions; (2) your demonstrated skill in processing the enactment with participants immediately afterwards; and (3) a brief written summary of what you learned from the presentation experience, due at the class meeting immediately following the one at which you presented.

Class presentations should be planned to last a total of 20 minutes for instructions, enactment, and discussion; beginning the end of the first class meeting, time slots for class presentations will be chosen. Once scheduled, you are responsible for that time slot; if, for any reason, you are unable to present, it is your responsibility to arrange a substitute presentation for that slot.

20% - Course Project/Paper –

There are two options to meet this requirement. The **first** is a brief paper (under 10 pages) in which you first describe and then present a rationale for the use of a specific action method in MFT other than one demonstrated by the instructor or used in your own class presentation. Citing its source, present the action method in the context of a hypothetical case; describe the case in only enough detail to show how the action method was applied. Also include: (a) Population characteristics (e.g. age, level of functioning, problem area) for which the action method is generally indicated and/or contraindicated; (b) What specific goals or purposes are generally furthered by the action method; (c) what results are generally anticipated from its enactment.

The **second** option is a videotape clip showing you conducting a specific action method useful in MFT, other than the one used in your class presentation. Participants can be friends, other students, etc; the enactment occurs in a simulation of a therapy session of which you are the therapist. In addition to showing the enactment, include on the clip a critique your own performance as the therapist [by (a) narrative voice-over on the tape (b) as a post-session commentary, or (c) as an interview of you by someone else]. The entire edited clip should run a maximum of 15 minutes.

10% - Participation in Action Methods Research –

Each student will participate as a subject in up to five hours of research related to the learning of action method skills. The instructor will provide opportunities to fulfill this requirement outside of class time. Although there will be some choice of times, students may have to accommodate to research scheduling requirements to complete this requirement.

Grading: A = outstanding work
 B = acceptable work
 C = unacceptable work

NOTE: There will be a reduction of a half-letter grade (an A becomes an A-, etc.) for any work submitted beyond its due date in the syllabus, **for whatever reason**. Students whose work is incomplete as of the last class meeting will receive a grade of INC for the semester, to be changed upon its completion.

Required Texts:

Wiener, D. J., (1994). *Rehearsals for growth: Theater improvisation for psychotherapists*. New York: Norton. [RfG]

D. J. Wiener (Ed.), (1999). *Beyond talk therapy: Using movement and expressive techniques in clinical practice*. Washington, D.C.: APA Books. [BTT]

Gil, E. (1994). *Family Play Therapy*. New York: Guilford. [G]

There will also be a number of Handouts, which will be distributed in class [H].

Topics and Assignments: Note that these may vary, depending on the availability of guest presenters.

WEEK DATE TOPIC(S) / HOMEWORK / ASSIGNMENTS DUE

1	5/29	Introduction; Distinctions between Didactic, Experiential, and Action Methods; Non-Dramatic and Dramatic Enactments; Survey of Action Methods; Fictional Family work I: <i>Family formation</i> and <i>Fictional Family character sketch</i> ; Representation: Action Methods for Assessment. CLASS PRESENTATION TIMES CHOSEN.
2	6/5	Metaphors in Action [RfG: Intro & Ch. 1; BTT Ch. 4] Fictional Family work (II); Dramaturgy [RfG: Ch. 5] Family Sculpting & Choreography [RfG: Ch. 4; BTT Ch. 2]; Psychodramatic Methods I [BTT Chs.6 & 7]
3	6/12	Drama Therapy and Dramatic Enactment [RfG: Ch. 7; BTT Ch. 5; H-1] Scripted Enactment; Psychodrama II; Chasin and Roth's techniques [H-2; RfG Chs. 4, 5; BTT Ch.8; G Chs. 1 & 2] CLASS PRESENTATIONS BEGIN.
Weekend -I		Rehearsals for Growth [RfG Ch. 8, 9,10; H-3; <i>mask construction homework</i>]
4	6/19	Family Dynamic Play; Puppets and Sand Table work [G Ch. 4;] Mask Work [RfG: Ch.12;] ; Family Art Therapy [BTT Ch. 11]; [RfG: Ch. 13]; <i>Prepare food for next week's class</i>
Weekend- II		Rehearsals for Growth III; Storytelling & Narrative techniques [RfG Chs. 6,7, 11; G Chs. 6, 7]; Playback Theater [H-4]
5	6/26	Family Constellations (Hellinger) [H-5]; Family Reconstruction; Dance/ Movement Action Methods; Music Therapy Methods [BTT Chs. 12 & 13;] Therapeutic Rituals BTT Ch. 3] COURSE PAPER/PROJECT DUE.

Partial Bibliography/References to Drama Therapy and Psychodrama

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- Donaldson, O.H. (1993). *Playing by heart*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications.
- Duhl, B. S. (1983). *From the inside out and other metaphors: Creative and integrative approaches for training in systems thinking*. New York: Bruner/Mazel.
- Emunah, R. (1994). *Acting for real: Drama therapy process, technique, and performance*. New York: Bruner/Mazel.
- Chasin, R., Roth, S. and Bograd, M. (1989). Action methods in systemic therapy: dramatizing ideal futures and reformed pasts with couples. *Family Process*, 28, 1, pp. 121-136.
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- Harvey, S. A. (1994). Dynamic play therapy: expressive play intervention with families. In K. O'Connor and C. Schefer (Eds.) *Handbook of play therapy, Volume Two: Advances and innovations*. New York: Wiley.
- Hayden-Seman, J. A. (1998). *Action modality couples therapy*. Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson.
- Hellinger, B., Weber, G., & Beaumont, H. (1998). *Love's hidden symmetry*. Phoenix: Zeig, Tucker.
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- Meldrum, B. (1994). A role model of dramatherapy and its application with individuals and groups. In S. Jennings, A. Cattnach, S. Mitchell, A. Chesner, & B. Meldrum (Eds.) *Handbook of Dramatherapy*. London: Routledge.
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