

(1) COURSE SYLLABUS: Systemic Thinking and Family Systems

SCHOOL	School of Social Sciences		
ACADEMIC UNIT	Department of Psychology		
LEVEL OF STUDIES	Undergraduate		
COURSE CODE	ΨΧ-4506	SEMESTER	
COURSE TITLE	Systemic Thinking and Family Systems		
INDEPENDENT TEACHING ACTIVITIES <i>if credits are awarded for separate components of the course, e.g. lectures, laboratory exercises, etc. If the credits are awarded for the whole of the course, give the weekly teaching hours and the total credits</i>		WEEKLY TEACHING HOURS	CREDITS
Lectures and Experiential Exercises		39	1.56
Readings and Critical Reflection Diary		20	0.80
Community Research Project: Problem Analysis and Research Plan		40	1.60
<i>Add rows if necessary. The organisation of teaching and the teaching methods used are described in detail at (d).</i>		99	3.96
COURSE TYPE <i>general background, special background, specialised general knowledge, skills development</i>	Special background		
PREREQUISITE COURSES:			
LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION and EXAMINATIONS:	Greek		
IS THE COURSE OFFERED TO ERASMUS STUDENTS	Yes		
COURSE WEBSITE (URL)	https://elearn.uoc.gr/course/view.php?id=6370		

(2) LEARNING OUTCOMES

<p>Learning outcomes</p> <p><i>The course learning outcomes, specific knowledge, skills and competences of an appropriate level, which the students will acquire with the successful completion of the course are described.</i></p> <p><i>Consult Appendix A</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of the level of learning outcomes for each qualifications cycle, according to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area • Descriptors for Levels 6, 7 & 8 of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and Appendix B • Guidelines for writing Learning Outcomes <p>Systemic thinking represents a significant theoretical and methodological shift, moving away from reductionist approaches that focus solely on the individual, their problems, or linear causality. Instead, it embraces a holistic and relational perspective, viewing individuals as deeply embedded in and shaped by their systemic contexts. This course will introduce the foundational concepts of systemic thinking and family systems theories, focusing on their application in therapeutic practice. We will explore how family life influences the individual, drawing on relevant theories, research, and the effects of social institutions and cultural contexts. The course will also address ethical considerations in family systems counseling and invite you to examine your own family of origin.</p> <p>Upon completion of the course, students are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a foundational understanding of systemic thinking and family systems theories. • Grasp the shift from individual-focused to systemic and holistic perspectives when considering families, organizations, and networks.

- Identify the components, interdependencies, and dynamics within family systems.
- Apply basic systemic thinking concepts to analyze family dynamics.
- Understand the relevance of family systems research to clinical practice.
- Acquire and use knowledge about individuals' identities and roles in a multicultural society.
- Enhance their abilities for critical reflection, self-awareness, and understanding of their own family life and history.

General Competences

Taking into consideration the general competences that the degree-holder must acquire (as these appear in the Diploma Supplement and appear below), at which of the following does the course aim?

<i>Search for, analysis and synthesis of data and information, with the use of the necessary technology</i>	<i>Project planning and management</i>
<i>Adapting to new situations</i>	<i>Respect for difference and multiculturalism</i>
<i>Decision-making</i>	<i>Respect for the natural environment</i>
<i>Working independently</i>	<i>Showing social, professional and ethical responsibility and sensitivity to gender issues</i>
<i>Team work</i>	<i>Criticism and self-criticism</i>
<i>Working in an international environment</i>	<i>Production of free, creative and inductive thinking</i>
<i>Working in an interdisciplinary environment</i>	<i>.....</i>
<i>Production of new research ideas</i>	<i>Others...</i>
	<i>.....</i>

Students will gain skills in:

- Researching, analyzing, and synthesizing systemic theoretical data and information
- Encouraging free, creative, and inductive thinking
- Working independently
- Critically reflecting on texts and experiential exercises: students will develop the conceptual tools and experience needed to examine their own assumptions and prior experiences, particularly as these relate to their understanding of families, systems, and the challenges they encounter
- Developing professional qualities such as modesty, sensitivity, receptivity, cultural competence, and humility
- Demonstrating social, professional, and ethical responsibility, with sensitivity to diversity issues.

(3) COURSE OUTLINE

The course content aligns with to the five core areas of the curriculum:

(Scientific Foundations [1], Scientific Research and Critical Thinking [2], Ethics and Social Responsibility [3], Communication Skills [4], Basic Preparation for Career Decisions and Professional Rehabilitation [5])

This course introduces students to systemic thinking theories and their applications through lectures, exercises, and focused experiential learning. It aims to broaden students' perceptions by providing alternative perspectives on family and social relationships and dynamics.

Week 1 - 2: Introduction to Systems Thinking

- Introduction to systems thinking and its fundamental principles.

- Understanding systemic concepts and examples.
- Distinguishing linear from circular causality.
- Exploring concepts such as feedback loops, homeostasis, and isotropy. [1, 2]

Week 3 - 4: Fundamental Concepts of Family Systems

- Cyclical and feedback loops: The reciprocal influence of actions and reactions within a system
- Family life cycle: the predictable yet complex stages of development that families experience
- Environmental influences: the impact of culture, ethnicity, race, and social class on family functioning
- Interdependence: understanding how changes in one family member affects the entire family [1, 2, 4, 5]

Week 5-8: Classic systemic theories of family therapy

- Murray Bowen's Family Systems Therapy
- Structural Family Therapy
- Empirical Family Therapy
- Psychoanalytic Family Therapy [1,2,3,4,5]

Weeks 9-12: Social Constructivism and Family Therapy Approaches

- Solution-Focused Therapy
- Narrative Therapy
- Collaborative-Dialogical Approaches [1,2,3,4,5]

Week 13: Personal and Collective Reflection, Feedback

Synthesis and discussion on the future applications of systemic thinking in professional and personal life. [2,3,4,5]

(4) TEACHING and LEARNING METHODS - EVALUATION

<p style="text-align: center;">DELIVERY <i>Face-to-face, Distance learning, etc.</i></p>	Face to Face	
<p style="text-align: center;">USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY <i>Use of ICT in teaching, laboratory education, communication with students</i></p>	Use of ICT in teaching, eLearn and video analysis	
<p style="text-align: center;">TEACHING METHODS <i>The manner and methods of teaching are described in detail.</i> <i>Lectures, seminars, laboratory practice, fieldwork, study and analysis of bibliography, tutorials, placements, clinical practice, art workshop, interactive teaching, educational visits, project, essay writing, artistic creativity, etc.</i></p> <p><i>The student's study hours for each learning activity are given as well as the hours of non-directed study according to the principles of the ECTS</i></p>	Activity	Semester workload
	Lectures and experiential exercises	1.56
	Readings and Weekly Critical Reflection Diary	0.80
	Genogram and Personal Family History Analysis Applying a Systemic Theory	1.60
	Course total	3.96
<p style="text-align: center;">STUDENT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION <i>Description of the evaluation procedure</i></p> <p><i>Language of evaluation, methods of evaluation, summative or conclusive, multiple choice questionnaires, short-answer questions, open-ended questions, problem solving, written work, essay/report, oral examination, public presentation, laboratory work, clinical examination of patient, art interpretation, other</i></p> <p><i>Specifically-defined evaluation criteria are given, and if and where they are accessible to students.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Critical Reflection Diary: For each lesson, your journal should include 4-5 reflective paragraphs. These reflections aim to ensure you read the texts (accountability), grasp the material (assimilation), critically analyze our readings and discussions (critical thinking), and prepare effectively for class discussions (presentation/communication). Your journal will be graded on how well you understand and process each week's discussions and readings. Participation and journal entries collectively make up 40% of your final grade. 2. Genogram and Personal Family History Analysis Using a Systemic Theory: This assignment centers on your thoughts, feelings, and perceptions regarding your family of origin and how these experiences influence your life. You will explore your personal identity, interpersonal relationships, and worldview through a systemic lens. Your grade will be based on how well you apply the chosen theory, demonstrate clarity, and incorporate principles of systemic thinking and family theory to describe your family's dynamics. This assignment constitutes 60% of your final grade. 	

(5) ATTACHED BIBLIOGRAPHY

<p><i>- Bibliography</i></p> <p>English Language books Hoffman, L. (2002). Family Therapy: An Intimate History. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company. Nichols, M. P., & Davis, S. D. (2021). Family Therapy: Concepts and Methods (12th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.</p> <p>Relevant books Boscolo, L., Cecchin, G., Hoffman, L., & Penn, P. (2007). Η Συστημική Οικογενειακή Θεραπεία του Μιλάνου (Επιμέλεια: Β. Καφταντζή). Θεσσαλονίκη: University Studio Press.</p> <p>Carter, B., & McGoldrick, M. (1989). The Changing Family Life Cycle. A Framework for Family Therapy. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.</p>
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McGoldrick, M., & Gerson, R. (1985). *Genograms in Family Assessment*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
McGoldrick, M., Anderson, C.M., & Walsh, F. (1989). *Women in Families*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

White, M., & Epston, D. (1990). *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*. Adelaide, South Australia: W.W. Norton.

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Anderson, H. (2012). Collaborative relationships and dialogic conversations: Ideas for a relationally responsive practice. *Family Process*, 51(1), 8–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2012.01385.x>

Chege, C. N., Fu, M., Bustrum, J. M., & Jenks, E. H. (2023). The worldview genogram: A process model for enhancing diversity responsiveness and competence in education, training, and clinical supervision. *Psychological Services*, 20(2), 219–226. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ser0000719>

Mellado, A., del Río, M. T., Andreucci-Annunziata, P., & Molina, M. E. (2024). Psychotherapy focusing on dialogical and narrative perspectives: A systematic review from qualitative and mixed-methods studies. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1308131. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1308131>

Papero, D., Frost, R., Havstad, L., & Noone, R. (2018). Natural systems thinking and the human family. *Systems*, 6(2), 19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/systems6020019>

Sidis, A. E., Moore, A. R., Pickard, J., & Deane, F. P. (2022). "Always opening and never closing": How dialogical therapists understand and create reflective conversations in network meetings. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 992785. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.992785>

Todd, E., Pond, R., & Coomber, K. (2025). Client perspectives of family therapy: A qualitative systematic review. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 51(3), e70024. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jmft.70024>

Žak, A. M., & Pełkala, K. (2025). Effectiveness of solution-focused brief therapy: An umbrella review of systematic reviews and meta-analyses. *Psychotherapy Research*, 35(7), 1043–1055. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2024.2406540>

- Relevant Journal Articles :

American Journal of Family Therapy
Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy
Contemporary Family Therapy
Family Process
Family Relations
Family Therapy News
Journal of Child and Family Studies
Journal of Child Maltreatment
Journal of Collaborative Therapies
Journal of Family Counselling
Journal of Family Psychology
Journal of Family Psychotherapy
Journal of Family Therapy
Journal of Feminist Family Therapy
Journal of Systemic Therapies
Progress: Family Systems Research and Therapy