



MASTER OF SCIENCE in
MARRIAGE and FAMILY THERAPY
CHAMINADE UNIVERSITY of HONOLULU

School of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Masters of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy

MFT603 Microskills, Principles and Practices in MFT

Kieffer 8; Wednesday 5:30 PM - 8:20 PM

Credits: 3 Section: 01 Term: Winter, 2026

Instructor Information



Instructor: Melanie Van der Tuin

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Office Location: Behavioral Sciences, Room 112

Office Hours: By Appointment

Communication

Primary communication method is email and I will respond between 24 to 48 hours.

School & Department Information

School of Education and Behavioral Sciences

Office Location: Behavioral Science, 118

Phone: (808) 739-4652

If you have questions regarding the MS-MFT program, reach out to your Instructor or the School of Education and Behavioral Sciences.

Course Description & Materials

Catalog Course Description

This course prepares students for beginning clinical practice by increasing their practical knowledge, clinical microskills, and clinical judgment. Throughout the semester students demonstrate competencies in clinical practice including the process of informed consent, initial systemic assessment of a client system, joining and developing therapeutic alliance, embodying therapeutic presence, treatment planning, clinical documentation and administration, and treatment termination.

Mission Statement for Masters of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy

The Chaminade MFT Masters program has been developed on a firm foundation in the Marianist Educational Values of a formation in faith; quality education; family spirit; service, justice and peace; and adaptation and change. Each of these five core values are incorporated throughout the program to help graduates develop as not only practitioners but also as whole individuals who are ready to serve families and communities. The aim of the program is to prepare practitioners who think systemically, promote cultural humility and socially just-informed practices and programs, practice evidence-informed couple and family therapy approaches and actively contribute to the ongoing development of the profession in Hawaii. Special attention is given in this program to the honoring of groups including Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, in addition to other diverse populations.

Time Allocation

The unit of semester credit is defined as university-level credit that is awarded for the completion of coursework. One credit hour reflects the amount of work represented in the intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement for those learning outcomes. Each credit hour earned at Chaminade University should result in a minimum of 45 hours of engagement, regardless of varying credits, duration, modality, or degree level. This equates to one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester. Terms that have alternative lengths, such as 10-week terms, should have an equivalent amount of faculty instruction and out-of-class student work to meet each credit hour. Direct instructor engagement and out-of-class work result in a total student engagement time of 45 hours for one credit. The number of engagement hours may be higher, as needed to meet specific learning outcomes.

Masters students are expected to perform work of higher quality and quantity, however typically a minimum of forty-five hours of student engagement for each student credit hour is required, although instructors may require roughly a third more work than this minimum undergraduate credit hour requirement. Therefore, a 3-credit masters+ course would typically require engagement of approximately 135 hours for the average student for whom the course is designed. The minimum 45 hours of engagement per credit hour can be satisfied in fully online, internship, or other specialized courses through several means, including (a) regular online instruction or interaction with the faculty member and fellow students and (b) academic engagement through extensive reading, research, online discussion, online quizzes or exams; instruction, collaborative group work, internships, laboratory work, practica, studio work, and preparation of papers, presentations, or other forms of assessment. This policy is in accordance with federal regulations and regional accrediting agencies.

Number of hours per class activity:

Educational activity	Expected hours of Student Engagement:	Details (if any):
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Course attendance/Lecture	15	Synchronous class meetings
Assigned readings	70	
Discussions/Role-plays	15	
Written assignments	10	
Preparing for Final Paper & Presentation	25	
Total	135	

Required Materials

Patterson, J., Williams, L., Edwards, T. M., Chamow, L., & Grauf-Grounds, C. (2018). Essential skills in family therapy: From the first interview to termination. Guilford Publications.

Recommended Text

Minuchin, S., Reiter, M. D., & Borda, C. (2021). The craft of family therapy: Challenging certainties. Routledge.

Rivett, M., & Buchmüller, J. (2017). Family therapy skills and techniques in action. Routledge.

Canvas (<https://chaminade.instructure.com>)

Canvas will be used as the primary learning management system for this course. The course content will be posted on Canvas, where students will be able to access the syllabus, any additional readings, assignments, quizzes, and announcements.

Hardware Requirements: Canvas is accessible from both PC and Mac computers with a reliable internet connection. You will also need to be able to access audio and video files.

Subsequently, you should have access to speakers or headphones that allow you to hear the audio.

Software Requirements: You will need to have some ability to listen to audio in an mp3 format, watch videos in mp4 format, stream online videos, and read .pdf files. There are a number of free software online that can be downloaded for free. If you need assistance with locating software please feel free to contact me or Chaminade Help Desk at helpdesk@chaminade.edu or (808) 735-4855.

Learning Outcomes

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Upon completion of the MS-MFT, the student will be able to:

1. Students will develop a coherent personal theoretical framework founded in relational/systemic practice, theories, models and philosophy in MFT.
(Addresses FCA 1 COAMFTE)
2. Students will apply systemic/relational theoretical and evidence-based approaches in assessment, diagnosis, case conceptualization, and intervention to meet the diverse needs of individuals, couples, and families.

(Addresses FCA 2 & 7 COAMFTE)

3. Students will employ ethical, professional and legal guidelines consistent with the standards and identity of marriage and family therapy.

(Addresses FCA 5 COAMFTE)

4. Students will utilize current trends and research methods in the field to conduct and critically evaluate research within the practice of marriage and family therapy.

(Addresses FCA 4 COAMFTE)

5. Students will cultivate a socially just and culturally responsive therapeutic practice with a critical self awareness of intersections of identities within a developmental and family life cycle framework.

(Addresses FCA 3 & 6 COAMFTE)

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon completion of MFT553 the student will be able to:

1. Apply psychotherapy skills to clients in role-play scenarios and demonstrate competencies in clinical practice (PLO2)
2. Implement skills to create clinical documentation, electronic health records, transfer and terminate clients, and relevant applications for teletherapy practice (PLO2, PLO3)

Marianist Values

This class represents one component of your education at Chaminade University of Honolulu. An education in the Marianist Tradition is marked by five principles and you should take every opportunity possible to reflect upon the role of these characteristics in your education and development:

1. Education for formation in faith.
2. Provide an integral, quality education.
3. Educate in family spirit.
4. Educate for service, justice and peace, and integrity of creation.
5. Educate for adaptation and change.

Native Hawaiian Values

Education is an integral value in both Marianist and Native Hawaiian culture. Both recognize the transformative effect of a well-rounded, value-centered education on society, particularly in seeking justice for the marginalized, the forgotten, and the oppressed, always with an eye toward God (Ke Akua). This is reflected in the 'Olelo No'eau (Hawaiian proverbs) and Marianist core beliefs:

1. Educate for Formation in Faith (Mana) E ola au i ke akua ('Olelo No'eau 364) May I live by God.

2. Provide an Integral, Quality Education (Na'auao) Lawe i ka ma'alea a kū'ono'ono ('Ōlelo No'eau 1957) Acquire skill and make it deep.
3. Educate in Family Spirit ('Ohana) 'Ike aku, 'ike mai, kōkua aku kōkua mai; pela iho la ka nohana 'ohana ('Ōlelo No'eau 1200) Recognize others, be recognized, help others, be helped; such is a family relationship.
4. Educate for Service, Justice and Peace (Aloha) Ka lama kū o ka no'eau ('Ōlelo No'eau 1430) Education is the standing torch of wisdom.
5. Educate for Adaptation and Change (Aina) 'A'ohe pau ka 'ike i ka hālau ho'okahi ('Ōlelo No'eau 203) All knowledge is not taught in the same school

Alignment of Course Learning Outcomes

	CLO 1	CLO 2	CLO 3	CLO 4
Marianist Values	4	4,5	5	3,5
PLOs	3	2,3	3	3,4
Native Hawaiian Values	4	4,5	5	3,5

Course Activities

Course Learning Outcomes(CLO)	Assessment & Description	Contribution (%) to Final Grade
1. Apply psychotherapy skills to clients in role-play scenarios and demonstrate competencies in clinical practice (PLO2)	<p>Role-play Counseling Sessions</p> <p>Students will be grouped with other students and conduct on-going mock couple/family sessions throughout the term utilizing assessment and intervention skills in an initial intake session, a treatment planning session, and a regular ending session. Students will have to record these sessions and review them. All students will play both therapists and client roles using made-up vignettes and scenarios.</p>	20%
	<p>Case Consultation Paper & Presentation</p> <p>At the end of the term, students will construct a client conceptualization paper using a specific format. Students will present the case in a formal case consultation format, along with recorded clips from the role-play sessions, with consultation questions.</p>	30%
	<p>Self-assessment</p>	10%

	Students will complete a self-assessment using the MFT Competencies scale twice during the term and be ready to identify clinical development goals.	
2. Implement skills to create clinical documentation, electronic health records, transfer and terminate clients, and relevant applications for teletherapy practice (PLO2, PLO3)	<p>Mock client file</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Client Contact log ● Wellness Assessment & Other Instruments ● Treatment Plan ● Progress Note (1) ● Termination Summary <p>Students will create a mock client file complete with information derived from the role-play counseling sessions.</p>	30%
	<p>Teletherapy practice policies</p> <p>Students will choose a specific teletherapy topic. They will review information about the topic, deliberate and develop a practice policy regarding the topic that they will share in an informal class presentation.</p>	10%

Course Policies

Attendance

Since this is a graduate course requiring students to engage fully, it is important to attend every class. You are responsible to inform the instructor prior to the start of class should an emergency prevent you from attending.

Please note that regardless of reason, more than one (1) missed class will result in a failing grade.

If you miss more than one class, you will be given a “C” and you must retake the class.

(Graduate programs policy) In addition, instructors have the option to penalize for tardiness or leaving early.

Late Work

Assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Late assignments will be penalized 10% of the grade earned per day late. Unexcused absences on exam days and in-class assignments cannot be made up and will result in a score of zero (0) for the exam or assignment. Students must provide documented evidence of an approved excused absence.

Changes to the Syllabus

While the provisions of this syllabus are as accurate and complete as possible, your instructor reserves the right to change any provision herein at any time. Every effort will be made to keep you advised of such changes, and information about such changes will be available from your instructor.

Grades of Incomplete

Incomplete grades are not automatically issued without prior correspondence with the instructor. An Incomplete grade may be provided to a student when most of the course requirements have been completed and the remaining assignments was not able to be submitted due to extenuating circumstances. With early correspondence, a valid reason, and submitted documentation, the instructor may grant an incomplete.

Final Grades

Final grades are submitted to [Self-Service](#):

A = 90% and above

B = 80-89%

C = Fail and will need to retake the course

MS-MFT Program Information

MS-MFT Student Disposition Expectations

As a therapist in training, you are constantly being evaluated for your fitness for this profession in every class. This evaluation is subjective and based on your class participation, evaluation of other assignments, interpersonal interactions with other students and clients, if appropriate, etc. Students who do not meet the following criteria may have their grade reduced in the course, be administratively dropped or “red flagged” for a discussion by the faculty as a whole. The following criteria are used in this evaluation: 1) being empathic; 2) being genuine; 3) being accepting; 4) being open minded and non-dogmatic; 5) being self-reflective and having an internal locus of control; 6) being mentally healthy; 7) being capable of building alliances; 8) being competent in knowledge and skills (Neukrug, 1999).

Neukrug, E. (1999). *The world of the counselor*. Pacific Grove, CA.: Brook/Cole.

Ethical Behavior of MS-MFT Students

Students will abide by the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) Code of Ethics. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the guidelines. Ethical violations are serious and may lead to disciplinary action, which could lead to separation from the MS-MFT program.

Expectations for online classes

If any or all of your class meetings are held online, these are the expectations:

1. Please find a space to log in on your video conferencing enables device, that is quiet and private, preferably within a room with the door closed. Often classroom discussions involve private or confidential information such as when discussing examples of client cases or consulting on real clients, and thus the need for privacy.
2. While in class, you should have your video turned on and be muted to minimize background noise unless you are speaking, asking or answering questions. At different times during the class such as during discussions (before or after the lecture), role-plays, presentations, and when you are engaging with peers and the instructor, the instructor and your classmates should be able to see and hear you.

Writing Policy

All papers should be written in APA format unless stated otherwise. APA format includes 1-inch margins, double-spaced, 12-point serif font, in-text citations, and a reference page. Please refer to the syllabus for paper submissions, over Canvas or hard copy/printed in class.

Plagiarism

Any submitted assignments containing a portion of someone else's work i.e. full sentences, sections, or paragraphs that are copied verbatim AND is not cited and referenced correctly, is plagiarism. Students will automatically receive a grade of 0 for that assignment and possible department and college-level consequences.

Any assignment content composed by any resource other than you, regardless of whether that resource is human or digital, must be attributed to the source through proper citation.

Unattributed use of online learning support platforms and unauthorized sharing of instructional property are forms of scholastic dishonesty and will be treated as such.

Artificial intelligence (AI) language models, such as ChatGPT, and online assignment help tools, such as Chegg®, are examples of online learning support platforms: they can not be used for course assignments except as explicitly authorized by the instructor. The following actions are prohibited in this course:

- Incorporating any part of an AI generated response in an assignment or online discussion
- Using AI to brainstorm, formulate arguments, or template ideas for assignments
- Using AI to summarize or contextualize source materials
- Submitting your own work for this class to an online learning support platform for iteration or improvement
- Using AI programs to input quiz/exam questions to retrieve answers to be submitted
- If you are in doubt as to whether you are using an online learning support platform appropriately in this course, I encourage you to discuss your situation with me. You are prohibited from using generative AI to write any part of the Final Theory paper in this course. The consequences may be and are not limited to a zero grade for the Final paper, possible failing grade for the course, and notification to the program/university.

General expectations and requirements

Students are expected to:

1. Attend class consistently and punctually. If you know you are going to be absent, please inform the instructor at your earliest opportunity. You are responsible for obtaining all material when you miss a class. Missing class time will have a negative effect on your learning and likely your grade.
2. Complete assigned readings prior to the date of discussion in class and be prepared to participate respectfully in class discussions with questions and comments from the readings, the information presented in class, and your own ideas.
3. Complete assignments by the beginning of class on the date they are due. All assignments must follow the writing policy.
4. At the graduate level, learning is primarily student-generated and is supplemented by course instruction. Therefore, the responsibility rests upon the student to master the material.

Readings

The readings have been intentionally selected to contribute substantive material to the course. That is, the readings are not supplemental to the course, they are central. Therefore, prior to each class, significant preparation and reading is necessary. Please be able to access the readings when you are in class.

Citations and References

Proper citation is required in all written work. Every time you copy a phrase, quote, or paraphrase someone else's words or ideas, you must cite the source.

3. **Guide to APA format:** [APA Library Guide](#)
4. **Purdue OWL APA Guide:** <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> (helpful for examples and quick checks)
5. **Direct Quote:** Place quotation marks around the borrowed text and include the author's last name, year of publication, and page number in parentheses.
 - Example: Past research has indicated that "becoming parents heightens couples' awareness of their identity intersections and they turn towards mutually supporting each other" (Hawkins, 2016, p. 121).
 - Use direct quotes sparingly. In graduate-level writing, the majority of your work should be paraphrased and synthesized in your own words. A general guideline is to keep direct quotations to no more than 10-15% of your paper.
 - Reserve direct quotations for instances when the exact wording is essential. For example, when the author's phrasing is uniquely powerful, cannot be more clearly expressed in other words, or when the significance lies in the quoted language itself.

- For quotations of 40 words or more, format as a block quote (indented 0.5 inches from the left margin, double-spaced, no quotation marks). Place the citation after the punctuation.
6. **Paraphrasing:** When you restate information in your own words, you must still cite the source. Page number are not required for paraphrases.
 - Example: There is evidence that couples become more aware of their identity, such as race and religion, after becoming parents (Hawkins, 2016).
 7. **Format:** Always use the (Author, Year) format and follow APA 7th edition guidelines.
 8. **AI Sources:** If you use an AI tool (e.g., ChatGPT) in ways permitted by this course, you must acknowledge it in your writing. For example, APA 7th edition recommends citing AI-generated text as a reference entry with the author as the AI tool, the year, and a retrieval link (see APA Style Blog for current guidance).
 9. **Reference List:** At the end of your paper, include a reference page listing all sources cited in the text in proper APA format. Every source that appears in your reference list must also appear as an in-text citation in your paper. Likewise, every in-text citation must have a full reference entry on the reference page.

Important Information

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is an essential aspect of all learning, scholarship, and research. It is one of the values regarded most highly by academic communities throughout the world. Violations of the principle of academic honesty are extremely serious and will not be tolerated.

Students are responsible for promoting academic honesty at Chaminade by not participating in any act of dishonesty and by reporting any incidence of academic dishonesty to an instructor or to a University official. Academic dishonesty may include theft of records or examinations, alteration of grades, and plagiarism, in addition to more obvious dishonesty.

Questions of academic dishonesty in a particular class are first reviewed by the instructor, who must make a report with recommendations to the Dean of the Academic Division. Punishment for academic dishonesty will be determined by the instructor and the Dean of Academic Division and may include an “F” grade for the work in question, an “F” grade for the course, suspension, or dismissal from the University.

For the most up to date information, please refer to the [Academic Honesty Policy](#) on the Chaminade University Catalog website.

Title IX and Nondiscrimination Statement

Chaminade University of Honolulu is committed to providing a learning, working and living environment that promotes the dignity of all people, inclusivity and mutual respect and is free of all forms of sex discrimination and gender-based violence, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. As a member of the University faculty, I am required to immediately report any incident of sex discrimination or gender-based violence to the campus Title IX Coordinator.

Nondiscrimination Policy & Notice of Nondiscrimination

Chaminade University of Honolulu does not discriminate on the basis of sex and prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or activity that it operates, as required by Title IX and its regulations, including in admission and employment. Inquiries about Title IX may be referred to the University's Title IX Coordinator, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, or both and contact information may be found at the [Chaminade University Title IX Office Contact Information and Confidential Resources website](#). On-campus Confidential Resources may also be found here at [CAMPUS CONFIDENTIAL RESOURCES](#).

The University's Nondiscrimination Policy and Grievance Procedures can be located on the University webpage at:

<https://chaminade.edu/compliance/title-ix-nondiscrimination-policies-procedures/>.

To report information about conduct that may constitute sex discrimination or make a complaint of sex discrimination under Title IX, please refer to the [Campus Incident Report form](#). Chaminade University of Honolulu prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or activity that it operates. The NOTICE of NONDISCRIMINATION can be found here: [Notice of Nondiscrimination](#).

CUH Alert Emergency Notification

To get the latest emergency communication from Chaminade University, students' cell numbers will be connected to Chaminade's emergency notification text system. When you log in to the Chaminade portal, you will be asked to provide some emergency contact information. If you provide a cellphone number, you will receive a text from our emergency notification system asking you to confirm your number. You must respond to that message to complete your registration and get emergency notifications on your phone.

Assessment for Student Work

With the goal of continuing to improve the quality of educational services offered to students, Chaminade University conducts assessments of student achievement of course, program, and institutional learning outcomes. Student work is used anonymously as the basis of these assessments, and the work you do in this course may be used in these assessment efforts.

Student with Disabilities Statement

Chaminade University of Honolulu offers accommodations for all actively enrolled students with disabilities in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act (2008).

Students are responsible for contacting Kokua Ike: Center for Student Learning to schedule an appointment. Verification of their disability will be requested through appropriate documentation and once received it will take up to approximately 2–3 weeks to review them. Appropriate paperwork will be completed by the student before notification will be sent out to their instructors. Accommodation paperwork will not be automatically sent out to instructors each semester, as the student is responsible to notify Kokua Ike via email at ada@chaminade.edu each semester if changes or notifications are needed.

Kōkua 'Ike: Tutoring & Learning Services

Chaminade is proud to offer free, one-on-one tutoring and writing assistance to all students. Tutoring and writing help is available on campus at Kōkua 'Ike: Center for Student Learning in a variety of subjects (including, but are not limited to biology, chemistry, math, nursing, English, etc.) from trained Peer and Professional Tutors. Please check [Kōkua 'Ike's](#) website for the latest times, list of drop-in hours, and information on scheduling an appointment. Free online tutoring is also available via TutorMe. Tutor Me can be accessed 24/7 from your Canvas account. Simply click on Account > TutorMe. For more information, please contact Kōkua 'Ike at tutoring@chaminade.edu or 808-739-8305.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings & Tasks	Assignments Due
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introductions, Syllabus review ▪ Prep, Overview of role-play counseling sessions ▪ Empathy, Joining, Alliance Building, and Being Competent ▪ Active listening skills, Attending, Empathy, Observation skills ▪ Verbal & Nonverbal communication 	Patterson, et al. Ch. 1 & 2	Self-Assessment Due
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessment Interviewing ▪ How to write an <i>Intake Assessment</i> ▪ Structuring the Intake Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Informed Consent; Confidentiality; Beneficial Services Agreement; No-secrets Policy ▪ ADDRESSING Framework ▪ Genograms & Timelines 	Patterson, et al. Ch. 3 & 4 & Appendix Role-play Counseling Sessions (Intake pt. 1)	Submit Recording of Intake Session (IND) Psychosocial Assessment Paper Due
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Treatment Planning ▪ How to construct a <i>Treatment Plan</i> ▪ Information Gathering (Direct, Open and Closed questions) ▪ Fee Agreement 	Patterson, et al. Ch. 5 & 6 Role-play Counseling Sessions (Intake pt. 2)	Submit Recording of Intake Session 2 (FAM)
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How to write a <i>Progress Note</i> ▪ Role of therapist, Ethics, Boundaries, Setting the stage for a healthy therapeutic relationship ▪ Silence ▪ Using questions ▪ Reflections ▪ Diagnosis ▪ Review DSM-V-TR 	Patterson, et al. Ch. 7-9 Role-play Counseling Sessions (Treatment Planning)	Submit Recording of Treatment Planning session (IND) Treatment Plan Assignment Due
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mid-Term Counseling Skills Assessment 	Patterson, et al. Ch. 10 & 11	Submit recording of Regular session (FAM) Progress Note Assignment Due
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Empathetic Confrontation ▪ Reframing ▪ Normalizing, Circular Questions ▪ Pacing, Self-Disclosure ▪ Building Resilience 	Role-play Counseling Sessions (Regular/Closing session)	Submit recording of Termination session (IND)
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How to write a <i>Case Summary/Termination</i> ▪ Termination (when, how, then what) ▪ Providing Referrals ▪ Providing After Care 	Patterson, et al. Ch. 12	Teletherapy Practice Policies discussion due Termination summary due
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ethics Case Study ▪ Advanced Relational Microskills 		Ethics Discussion Fishbowl Activity Feedback due

Week	Topic	Readings & Tasks	Assignments Due
Week 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Final Project check-in 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Examination Case Consultation Presentations • Self-Assessment Due
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Presentation • Final Counseling Skills Assessment 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Examination Case Consultation Presentations • Final Papers Due • Client Mock File due

Instructor reserves the right to modify the course schedule based on class needs and dynamics of current events.