

Program Description

NIU Specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy

Northern Illinois University offers an uncommon opportunity to earn a Master of Science (M.S.) degree in marriage and family therapy. The goal of the School of Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences' (FCNS) program is to prepare skilled and dedicated marriage and family therapists. The two year, 54 semester hour program features:

Accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education, an affiliate of the Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT).

Faculty who share a commitment to learning *with* their students in classes, during therapy, and in the hours between. Trained as *marriage and family therapists* or as child and family scholars, they are dedicated to maintaining a supportive context in which the development of marriage and family therapy skills is enjoyable.

Courses that are practical, intensive, and challenging. Focusing on the development of the thoughts and skills of the family therapist, the faculty teach the heart and soul of family therapy. Everything from family development to the latest therapy techniques is covered in a sequence of courses that promotes respectful treatment of human systems and includes courses necessary for the marriage and family therapy license in Illinois.

Practica that pull it all together. In a 19 month progression from team member to solo practitioner, students learn family therapy by doing it. Using live supervision and video technology in the **Family Center of NIU**, our full service therapy center, the faculty carefully guide students as they help families, couples, and individuals with a variety of troubles.

The faculty of the **NIU Specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy** seek mature individuals who wish to pursue careers specifically as marriage and family therapists. Above this essential commitment, the faculty considers self-awareness, self-confidence, curiosity, intelligence, warmth, humor, independent thinking, and creativity to be highly desirable. A variety of ages, undergraduate majors, work backgrounds, races and nationalities are sought in the quest to maintain a rich environment for learning.

A major strength of the **Specialization** is the quantity and quality of clinical experience and close faculty supervision that students receive while in the program. To ensure that each student receives the kind of supervision necessary to cultivate finely tuned clinical skills, enrollment in the program is kept small.

Prerequisite Courses are 9 semester hours of undergraduate courses in family and child studies or the equivalent including a course in family relations and one in child development. This requirement is assessed by the School of FCNS faculty at the time of admission; admission may be granted with the provision that prerequisites be made up by the end of the first semester of studies.

Transfer Credit from accredited universities may be acceptable according to the NIU Graduate School policy on transfer and student-at-large credit hours (see [Graduate Catalog](#)). Decisions about transfer hours are made based on the course description, syllabi, and bibliographies provided by the applicant.

Financial Aid is offered in the form of graduate assistantships, tuition waivers, fellowships and loans. Assistantships pay approximately \$450 per month for 10 hours of work per week. Additionally, students in the NIU Specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy are automatically granted a tuition waiver for both years. NIU also participates in a student loan program of the federal government and Illinois Guaranteed Student Loan Program. This information is available from the Student Financial Aids Office at NIU (815-753-1395). Prospective students may explore scholarships made available by the Graduate School (815-753-0395) and by various professional and service organizations. Please refer also to the separate, enclosed sheet on financial assistance in this packet.

PROGRAM CURRICULUM

The **Specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy** is a 54 semester hour program leading to a Master of Science (M.S.) degree in Applied Family and Child Studies with a Specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy. The program begins every autumn; most students maintain part-time jobs or 10 hour per week assistantships and graduate in under two years. The curriculum for the Specialization allows students some flexibility to pursue their particular interests. The required courses in the program ([2009-2010 Graduate Catalog](#)) are as follows:

FCNS 784 Theoretical Foundations of Family Therapy (3)

This course will provide an overview of the theories and paradigms that influenced, and continue to influence, the practice of marriage and family therapy. The major theories for assessment and treatment of individuals, couples, and families will be examined. Particular attention will be given to those theories that examine individual, couple, and family interaction from a systemic perspective.

FCNS 695 Approaches to Marriage and Family Therapy (3)

Building upon the theoretical foundations laid in FCNS 684, this course is an in-depth exploration of the application and procedures of specific family therapy approaches, particularly those developed and practiced by the NIU faculty. Emphasis is given to complementing theoretical understanding with clinical technique.

FCNS 691 Assessment in Marriage and Family Therapy (3)

This course focuses on assessment, diagnosis, and a comprehensive understanding of the presenting issues and contexts in marriage and family therapy.

FCNS 692 Professional Issues in Family Therapy (3)

This course allow students to explore topics of vital interest to all practicing family therapists. Legal issues such as malpractice, confidentiality and family law, ethical issues of special interest to family therapists, and work settings for family therapists are all covered here.

FCNS 693 Addiction and Substance Abuse in Marriage and Family Therapy (3)

This course enables students to understand the assessment and treatment of addiction and substance abuse from a family systems perspective.

FCNS 694 Advanced Marriage and Family Therapy Strategies: Treatment of Children and Adolescents (3)

This course extends the examination and application of advanced marriage and family clinical strategies and theories to the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of child & adolescent mental health issues.

FCNS 697 Advanced Marriage & Family Therapy Strategies: Treatment of Couples (3)

This course focuses on the examination and application of advanced marriage & family clinical strategies and theories for the assessment and treatment of couples from a relational/systemic perspective.

FCNS 639 Practicum in Family Therapy (12)

The practicum consists of approximately 250 hours of live supervised clinical experience with a variety of clients at the Family Center of NIU. In the program's first year, students serve as part of **Family Center** teams. By the time spring arrives, students have their own caseloads which they maintain for over a year.

FCNS 633 Internship in Marriage and Family Therapy (6)

This off-campus internship consists of approximately 250 hours of supervised clinical practice of marriage and family therapy in a community agency or private practice. Students typically begin this internship in the fall of their second year, and continue working in the community until graduation.

FCNS 604 Research Methods (3)

This course enables students to develop an understanding of the research process and the methods appropriate for conducting research. Students learn to write and evaluate research proposals and reports.

FCNS 601 Seminar in Human Development and Family Studies (3)

This course provides an overview of theory and research findings in family and individual development.

Two of the Following:

FCNS 588 Working with Ethnically Diverse Children and Families (3)

The functional and structural components of the four major groups of families of color in the U.S. are discussed as well as the historical, economic, political forces that affect these family systems. Personal assumptions and values are examined. PRQ: Same as 589C and 589D.

FCNS 589C Child Abuse & Neglect (3)

This course presents a thorough review of the theory and research related to the causes and consequences of child abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. Effective prevention and intervention strategies, and the social and legal context of abuse, are also discussed. PRQ: At least 6 undergraduate semester hours of family and child studies.

FCNS 589D The Family and Divorce and Remarriage (3)

The personal, relational, life cycle, societal, demographic, legal, and financial aspects of divorce and remarriage are explored in this course. Intervention strategies with divorced and remarried families are also discussed. PRQ: At least 6 undergraduate semester hours of family and child studies.

FCNS 685 Family Stress and Structural Diversity (3)

This course contains an analysis of the adjustments, crisis, possible problems and ways of strengthening the structurally diverse family. Specific types of diverse families and stressors are identified and discussed in relation to family theory, education, and intervention. PRQ: FCNS 601 or consent of department.

FCNS 684 The Family with Adolescents (3)

Discussed in this course are the developmental tasks of the family with adolescents, parental and adolescent roles, communication networks, adolescent identity and sexuality. No PRQ listed.

FCNS 538 Parent Education (3)

Basic principles in organization, formulation, and presentation of parent study programs are taught in this course. Students will gain experience in ways of working with parents of children from preschool through adolescence, using an analysis of group dynamics and mass media. PRQ: A course in child or adolescent development and consent of department.

FCNS 586 Aging and the Family (3)

This course focuses on the multidisciplinary study of aging: changing family functions and the consequences with reference to workforce participation, financial status, health status of the aged and its implications for the family, housing needs; leisure in contemporary and future society; the role of public and private agencies and institutions in the provision of services for the aged. PRQ: At least 6 semester hours in family and child studies or consent of school.

FCNS 637 The Child in the Family (3)

This course presents an analysis of the reciprocal influences between family and child in the context of other important socializing influences. The biological, cognitive, affective, and social-personal domains of development are examined. Relevant information is included from historical, philosophical, anthropological, cross-cultural, and psychological perspectives. PRQ: Consent of department.

One of the Following:

ETR 521 or 522 Educational Statistics (3)

BIOS 570 Biostatistical Analysis (3)

PSYC 504 Advanced Psychological Statistics (3)

OR a 3 semester hour course on social science research methodology approved by the student's advisor.

Some Specialization students complete this requirement with a course on qualitative research. Qualitative

methods appeal to many family therapy students, partly because they employ clinical interviewing skills and produce findings that have vivid relevance for clinicians.

Some students, particularly those who are bound for doctoral programs, wish to complete an original research project under the direction of the faculty. Thus the thesis (FCNS 599) is available as an elective beyond the required 54 semester hours.