

WURZWEILER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK. OF YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Internal Family Systems (IFS) & Social Work

SWK 6147/8147 MSW & PhD (3 Credits)

Spring 2024

Rabbi Dr. Alexander Glassman
alexander.glassman@yu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course builds on the successful content and experiential pedagogy of prior WSSW courses, such as, "Grounding the Strengths Perspective," "Spiritual Therapy," and "Jewish Meditation & Psychotherapy," that have all included fundamental material from *Internal Family Systems* (IFS) therapy. These courses have been original in their curriculum and assignment design, insofar as they fit within the academic format the teaching methods of therapy trainings (e.g., IFS); these are noted for their effective imparting of clinical knowledge and skills for the developing therapist, since they feature real clinical demos and break out therapy dyads and triads, in order to focus on actual clinical practice, as opposed to purely conceptual learning (that does not improve therapeutic ability). This course is unique in its focus, however, in making the cutting edge IFS, Internal Family Systems, model, formulated by Dr. Richard Schwartz, and developed by others, such as Dr. Jay Earley, the central topic of the course, thereby enabling students to study this one outstanding, "Social-Work True," Humanistic, Strengths-Based, therapeutic modality and framework, in relative depth, with particular emphasis on acquiring rudimentary proficiency in its clinical applications.

To be sure, this single semester, fourteen session course, is not meant as a replacement for an actual IFS therapy training, that would include many more hours, and feature expert trainers and support staff, and a large training cohort. Yet, the course *will* serve as a rich experiential and conceptual introduction to the model that will be valuable in and of itself, as well as serving as an excellent primer for those students who choose formally to train in IFS (or any related modalities and systems). Moreover, the course will have a distinct advantage and supply what cannot be derived in any other setting, namely, a comprehensive integrative intellectual framework, as well as a set of supplementary clinical tools and interventions derived from other models (e.g., *Hakomi*, Mindfulness-Based Somatic Psychotherapy from Dr. Ron Kurtz from which IFS is indebted, the Humanistic tradition, *Mindfulness* and other types of meditation practices, and spirituality more broadly, etc.). This will allow students to benefit from the reflective atmosphere of learning and discourse in the academic setting that transcends the single institute/modality learning paradigm, and present an "Enhanced IFS." That is, by making the IFS model itself, and its experiential grounding and application, into an object of awareness for scientific study in the humanistic/phenomenological tradition, students will acquire the ability to cross reference and combine and enhance and

deepen IFS through its synergy with other approaches as they continue their learning and development as clinical social workers.

Topics in the course span the full gamut of basic IFS, such as learning to access and identify "Self" and "Self Energy," while distinguishing it from different types of *parts* within the internal family system -- such as "protectors" and "exiles" -- IFS and the Body, polarizations, IFS and spirituality, etc. Students will be guided in their own experiential journey of discovery with the model as a springboard to its clinical use. And special emphasis will be placed on showing the unique compatibility and synergy between IFS and the social work profession (and the Jewish tradition), whose core values deeply and profoundly align with each other.

(IMPORTANT: See also the third to the last page of this syllabus below for an outline of some of the basic tenets of the IFS Model.)

WSSW SCHOOL POLICIES:

See below on the last page of this syllabus regarding "PLAGIARISM," "HIPAA ALERT," and "STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES."

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF THE COURSE:

As in its above cited companion courses, a threefold guiding principle will govern all of the content in this course, and in particular, the various forms of clinical interventions learned in it; this principle has been loosely termed:

"The Person-Centered Empowerment Practice Principle," and defined, as follows:

Each experiential exercise, principle of well-being & healthy living, meditation practice, wisdom teaching, and clinical technique, has a triad of application, such that it can be:

- 1.) Applied to one's own life for awareness, personal growth, and for the sake of what is termed "self-care";
- 2.) Utilized with a client (or a group of clients) in a therapeutic session or in another direct practice context; and also:
- 3.) Taught to a client (or a group of clients), so that the client (or group of clients) can be empowered to use it outside of the practice setting in real life situations, etc.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

This course has a series of interrelated learning objectives, delineated in three categories (*awareness, relational, and conceptual*), as follows:

1.) Awareness (framed in reference to oneself, though fostered in the other):

A.) The cultivation of the student's own sensitivity to spirituality and self-awareness, or in IFS terminology, to "Self" and "Self Energy."

B.) The ability to identify all the different types of "parts" within one's internal family system (as well as the related ability to identify these within others).

C.) The awakening of the student's sense of mindfulness and mindful awareness, conscience, integrity, freedom & responsibility, with special reference to the IFS model.

D.) The concrete development of empathy, compassion, and emotional intelligence, with special reference to the IFS model.

E.) The acquisition of a series of specific self-care tools & principles of well-being, (designed, for example, to provide the resources in professional life to avoid "burn out," cynicism, and "compassion fatigue"), and with special reference to the IFS model. etc.

2.) Relational (in reference to others, to use with/teach to clients, and oneself):

F.) The thoroughgoing use of spirituality, and "Self" and "Self Energy," as a core therapeutic principle and clinical tool, that applies to, and underlies, all therapeutic work, etc.

G.) The acquisition of several meditation practices, experiential tools, and interventions, within and beyond the IFS model.

H.) The learning of a number of strengths-based, assessment principles and protocols.

I.) The development of the capacity for culturally sensitive practice through the conscious use of self and the recognition of the shared humanity and intrinsic capabilities of all people; this is deeply enhanced by the perspective of spirituality learned in the course, and especially the understanding of "Self" and "Self Energy" from IFS.

3.) Conceptual (articulation of the intellectual principles and background):

J.) Learn a comprehensive model of the person & macro/integration framework that forms the foundation of humanistic, strength-based, social work practice, thereby anchoring the profession's core values, and empowering the central tenets of IFS.

K.) Gain a simple proficiency and orientation to the intellectual and textual background of the IFS model, in conjunction with some parallel tools and frameworks.

L.) Identify the most common forms of reductionism that contradict the core values of the social work profession and human reason, and the IFS model, while developing the means to negotiate the value conflicts that result from this problem.

M.) Develop the ability to cross reference the IFS model with other parallel and overlapping models, as well as other types of therapeutic approaches.

LEARNING METHODS:

The official course requirements and grading procedures have been designed to facilitate the integration and internalization of *practice knowledge, wisdom, and skills*; they thus include three main components, as follows:

1.) **Regular attendance**, and **active class participation**, with a curiosity and openness to experiential learning, and a willingness to engage in such exercises and activities with the whole class, etc. This includes, in particular, learning and practicing together the IFS model that is the core of the course.

2.) Short written assignments after each session that are linked to in-class learning, and are designed primarily to foster the development and acquisition of clinical skills and self-awareness; (these include, primarily, practicing the experiential activities learned in class and writing reports of them as directed). These weekly written assignments added together, in conjunction with number one above, and number three below, will substitute for any midterm and final paper requirements that could have been formulated for the course.

3.) Short readings (and/or videos) that are composed of primary source texts and/or supplementary material compiled by the instructor (that combine excerpts from such works with commentary and analysis, etc.). (These will be included periodically as part of the assignments after each class, as listed in number two above.) In this course, this will include, in particular, the main required course text, "Self-Therapy," by noted IFS author, trainer, and theorist, Dr. Earley; one of our class goals will be the completion of this text during the course of the semester, and the use of its experiential activities.

[Additional notes: Students must finish all the assignments to complete the course. And see below on the penultimate page of this syllabus for required formal grading rubric.]

REQUIRED COURSE TEXT:

Self Therapy: A Step-By-Step Guide to Creating Wholeness and Healing Your Inner Child Using IFS, A New, Cutting-Edge Psychotherapy. Jay Earley, PhD.

(Third Edition, 2022 -- Students Must Get This Newest Version of "Self-Therapy" for the Course.)

Recommended Course Texts:

Internal Family Systems Therapy; Richard C. Schwartz. (First Edition, 1995.)

Internal Family Systems Therapy; Richard C. Schwartz & Martha Sweezy. (Second Edition, 2020.). [Really a new text that differs significantly from the first edition.]

No Bad Parts: Healing Trauma & Restoring Wholeness with The Internal Family Systems Model. Richard C. Schwartz, PhD.

SOME BASIC TENETS OF THE *INTERNAL FAMILY SYSTEMS* (“IFS”) MODEL:

- 1.) Every individual has a core Self that cannot be represented with any image, or be confined to any form -- it is simply the irreducible person himself in his intrinsic humanity and subjectivity.
- 2.) Basic qualities of this Self are openness, curiosity, love, compassion, acceptance, and inclusiveness, and it is through access to this inward personal nucleus with all its qualities that psychological healing is possible.
- 3.) Although the Self is the true essence of a human being, it can be displaced and removed from awareness. For a person also has multiple *parts*, or *sub-personalities*, that can occupy the *seat of consciousness* in an exclusionary way, obscuring the individual's inner core. (By contrast, when one is “in Self,” one can identify, relate to, and characterize the different sub-personalities within through the use of various forms and images, etc.)
- 4.) The parts that together make up a person's psyche do not exist discretely, with each one emerging into consciousness at different instants, but rather they are intertwined or interrelated -- that is, they form an internal system like a family, and hence the name “IFS.”
- 5.) Just as the structure of organization within a family may contain *polarizations*, i.e., relationships between its members that are defined by their competitive or directly opposing roles, so too, the sub-personalities of one's inner world can exhibit this dysfunctional pattern. (Dr. Richard Schwartz emphasizes that conflicts in one's internal and external families are often a mirror of each other, as the former have been shaped heavily by the latter).
- 6.) In an ideal state of health, the Self will be in the seat of consciousness, relating to all the parts that emerge into awareness in different situations with its trademark curiosity, love, compassion, openness, acceptance, and the like; together, all the elements of an individual will form one integrated, inclusive, internal family system, led and guided by the Self, with each part smoothly playing its proper role and thereby making its own distinct contribution within the whole person.

REQUIRED FORMAL GRADING RUBRIC:

Assignment	Grade percentage	Due Date
Assignment 1 Unit 1	5%	2 nd session
Assignment 2 Unit 1	5%	3 rd session
Assignment 3 Unit 1	5%	4 th session
Assignment 4 Unit 1	5%	5 th session
Assignment 5 Unit 2	5%	6 th session
Assignment 6 Unit 2	5%	7 th session
Assignment 7 Unit 2	5%	8 th session
Assignment 8 Unit 2	5%	9 th session
Assignment 9 Unit 3	5%	10 th session
Assignment 10 Unit 3	5%	11 th session
Assignment 11 Unit 3	5%	12 th session
Assignment 12 Unit 3	5%	13 th session
Assignment 13 Unit 3	5%	14 th session
Course participation rubric	35%	

INTERNAL FAMILY SYSTEMS (IFS) & SOCIAL WORK

GRADING RUBRIC

PLAGIARISM

Students should remember that the school will not condone plagiarism in any form and will sanction acts of plagiarism. A student who presents someone else's work as his or her own work is stealing from the authors or persons who did the original thinking and writing. Plagiarism occurs when a student directly copies another's work without citation; and when a student paraphrases major aspects of another's work without citation; and when a student combines the work of different authors into a new statement without reference to those authors. It is also plagiarism to use the ideas and/or work of another student and present them as your own. It is not plagiarism to formulate your own presentation of an idea or concept as a reaction to someone else's work; however, the work to which you are reacting should be discussed and appropriately cited. Any student who can be shown to have plagiarized any part of any assignment in this course will automatically FAIL the course and will be referred to the Associate Dean for disciplinary action that may include expulsion.

HIPAA ALERT

In line with the new HIPAA regulations concerning protected health information, it is important that you understand that any case information you present from your work, will need to be de-identified. What this means is that any information that would allow another to identify the person needs to be changed or eliminated. This includes obvious things like names and birth dates but may also contain other information that is so unique to the person that it will allow for identification, including diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender. If diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender is directly related to the case presentation it can be included if it will not allow for identification.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations are asked to make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, Rochelle Kohn, Beren Campus, 917-326-4828, rkohn1@yu.edu, Abby Kelsen, Wilf Campus, 646-685-0118, akelsen@yu.edu, during the first week of class. After approval for accommodations is granted, please submit your accommodations letter to Disability Services Office immediately.