

# MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY

Degree Type: MS

The Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy (MSMFT) is a terminal degree program that is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education. With this degree, following a period of post-graduate supervised practice, graduates can become licensed as marriage and family therapists. The program is designed for students drawn to the field of mental health who have a passion for understanding and treating relationships.

The program is offered through on-campus and online branches with differing admission schedules:

The on-campus branch, is offered as a full-time program with enrollment in the fall quarter only and is completed in two years, including the summer quarter following the first year.

The online branch is offered in both full-time and part-time modes, with enrollment available every quarter, and can be completed in as little as 21 months for full-time students and 36 months for part-time students. An exception to this applies to full-time students residing in the state of California, whose programs will be a minimum of 24 months long to account for state regulations on pre-internship curricula.

The program prepares students by using a 21st century approach to therapy developed over 25 years at The Family Institute. Known as Integrative Systemic Therapy, this approach is used to teach therapists to skillfully deliver family, couple, and individual therapy. The curriculum and clinical training are informed by multi-cultural and social justice perspectives.

The program also emphasizes research. Courses are research informed and students learn to apply research findings to their own cases. For students interested in pursuing a doctorate following graduation, research opportunities exist as does a thesis option.

The program includes a comprehensive curriculum of 20 academic courses and 6 quarters of an intensive clinical internship. During the internship on-campus students conduct therapy with clients in the clinic of The Family Institute at Northwestern University. Online students conduct therapy in clinical settings in their home state.

During their time in the program, students conduct 400 hours of therapy, at least 125 of which are conducted with couples and families. Students will also receive approximately 250 hours of group and individual supervision.

For students in the online branch of the program, participation in an on-campus immersion event during their program is required for graduation.

The program is a partnership between The Graduate School and The Family Institute at Northwestern University (<https://www.family-institute.org/>), a world-renowned center which has been providing teaching, and researching marriage and family therapy for over 50 years.

## Additional resources:

- Department Websites
  - *Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy: On-Campus Learning*

- Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy: Online Learning (<https://www.family-institute.org/graduate-education/master-science-marriage-family-therapy-online/>)
- Program handbook(s)

## Degree Offered

- Marriage and Family Therapy MS (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/marriage-family-therapy/marriage-family-therapy-ms/>)

Learning objective(s)/Students should be able to...

- Students will become knowledgeable of the core concepts, common factors and major schools of marriage and family therapy.
- Students will learn to utilize a systemic, integrative and empirically informed approach to planning and staging therapy.
- Students will learn to be critical consumers of research, incorporate research findings into their clinical practice, and utilize progress research data to make informed clinical decisions.
- Students will develop a strong beginning level professional competence in the conduct of systemically-oriented family, couple and individual therapy.
- Students clinical work will incorporate cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity across a range of cultural contexts including race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, and sexual orientation.
- Students will develop awareness of their own reactions to clients and clinical responsibilities and develop means of managing their reactions and using them, when appropriate, in context of therapy.
- Students will develop an understanding of legal and ethical standards and demonstrate the ability and commitment to apply them in the professional practice of Marriage and Family Therapy.
- Students will clearly identify themselves with the profession of Marriage and Family Therapy.
- Student will demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of Integrative Systemic Therapy capstone project.

## Marriage and Family Therapy Courses

### MS\_FT 400-0 Professional Identity Seminar (0 Unit)

This seminar is designed to introduce students to the personal and professional issues in becoming and developing marriage and family therapist, both during graduate training and beyond. This will include a focus on the development of self-awareness to define and differentiate themselves and their practice effectively. An optional research seminar is geared towards those interested in pursuing a PhD. The focus is on finding the right PhD program, how to make yourself competitive for PhD work. MSMFT On-Campus.

### MS\_FT 400-6 Professional Identity Seminar (0 Unit)

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### MS\_FT 401-0 Basic Concepts of Systems Therapy (1 Unit)

This course is an introduction to the central theoretical underpinnings of systemic family therapy, providing a basic framework for assessment of and intervention in the problems clients bring to therapy. Particular attention is paid to the assumptions, concepts, frameworks, and clinical

guidelines of the Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST) perspective. The course provides a set of constructs for planning and conducting therapy, a structure for organizing bodies of knowledge associated with the field of marriage and family therapy, and a foundation for lifelong, professional learning and growth. MSMFT On-Campus.

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**MS\_FT 402-0 Methods of Systems Therapy (1 Unit)**

This course introduces students to a range of methods used in systems therapy. The methods will be contextualized within the Integrative Systemic Therapy perspective and the course will prepare students to collaborate with clients in addressing their concerns. MSMFT On-Campus.

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**MS\_FT 403-0 Self and Other Systems: Theory and Interventions (1 Unit)**

This course's purpose is to deepen students' understanding of self and systems. Particular emphasis will be given to aspects of self-development and the therapist's understanding of self when working with systems. MSMFT On-Campus.

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**MS\_FT 410-0 Human Development and the Life Cycle (1 Unit)**

This course utilizes the development metaframework to understand individual, relational and family development across the life span and the dynamic interactions within families. Physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development will be presented at each age level, including issues regarding culture, gender and sexual orientation. Commonly presented problems and therapeutic interventions will be discussed for each age group. MSMFT On-Campus.

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**MS\_FT 411-0 Intimate Relations I (1 Unit)**

This course will elaborate on the Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST) approach for working with couples, which involves a focus on sequences of interaction, affective intensity and subtlety of communication. The most common problems that couples present, including communication issues, intense conflict, trust issues, sexual difficulties, and lifespan changes, will be addressed. Theoretical models, case conceptualization,

and intervention will be taught from a cultural perspective, considering the social positioning of both the client(s) and the therapist. MSMFT On-Campus.

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**MS\_FT 412-0 Special Problems and Populations (1 Unit)**

The purpose of this course is to provide the concepts and develop the skills necessary for working with particular client-lived experiences and problems. The course will address unique considerations presented in working with populations such as BIPOC community; chosen, divorced and blended families; LGBTQIA clients/families; client and families living with severe mental and/or physical disorders; and more. This course raises awareness of issues related to the systemic treatment of families navigating complex constraints. Participants will be challenged to integrate knowledge of these topics with the Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST) approach and with their own clinical experiences to develop an understanding of how to work systemically with these problems and populations. MSMFT On-Campus.

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**MS\_FT 413-0 Intimate Relations II (1 Unit)**

In this second course on intimate relations, students will increase their skill set for working with couples in therapy, building on what they have learned throughout first year courses, and most particularly in Intimate Relations I (MS\_FT 411-0).

Prerequisite: MS\_FT 411-0. This advanced course will provide the techniques and skill building derived from evidence-based models of couples therapy and focus on some of the more challenging kinds of couple problems including sexual issues, infidelity, individual problems, and cultural issues impacting therapy. MSMFT On-Campus.

**MS\_FT 413-6 Intimate Relations II (1 Unit)**

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Prerequisite: MS\_FT 411-6. This advanced course will provide the techniques and skill building derived from evidence-based models of couples therapy and focus on some of the more challenging kinds of couple problems including sexual issues, infidelity, individual problems, and cultural issues impacting therapy. MSMFT Online.

**MS\_FT 421-0 Systemic Assessment (1 Unit)**

Students will learn how to define the parameters of systemic assessment and how it differs from, and can be integrated with, individual assessment. Students will learn how systemic assessment operates within the current legal and medical context. Students will learn the DSM-5-TR diagnostic system and how to apply it systematically. Students will learn specific biopsychosocial systemic assessment guidelines, treatment planning that draws from their assessment, and the means to navigate, utilize and critique the research available to address diagnostic criterion. MSMFT On-Campus.

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#### **MS\_FT 422-0 Family Research (1 Unit)**

Students completing the course will develop skills to understand common MFT research methods, how research methods are applied, and how to critique research in the field of marriage and family therapy and mental health. Students will also be introduced to empirically based practices in MFT. MSMFT On-Campus.

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#### **MS\_FT 424-0 Group Therapy (1 Unit)**

In this course, trainees learn the theoretical basis of group therapy and develop a framework for group work. The course includes didactic, experiential, and clinical elements. Students will learn the fundamentals of group dynamics through lectures/readings, by participation as a member of a group, and by developing a proposal for a group. The course also addresses the business aspects of setting up and marketing a group. MSMFT On-Campus.

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#### **MS\_FT 427-0 Family of Origin: Systemic Perspectives on Risk and Resilience (1 Unit)**

This course will ask students to engage in an ongoing dialectical process to understand and integrate approaches that have been advanced to understand clients' families of origin. Approaches covered will include a strength-based, resilience framework, object relations theory, and intergenerational family therapy. The course will provide options for responding therapeutically to family of origin constraints and support students in their understanding of their own family of origin and its impact on their functioning as a therapist. MSMFT On-Campus.

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#### **MS\_FT 428-0 Legal, Ethical and Professional Issues in Marriage and Family Therapy (1 Unit)**

This course will explore legal issues and areas of family law in the practice of Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT). The course objectives include the demonstration of competence in handling legal issues such as confidentiality, duty to protect, malpractice, and expert testimony, and the understanding of the AAMFT Code of Ethics and state requirements regarding ethical practice. Additionally, students will learn how personal values and the "self of the therapist" impact clinical work, and will develop a professional identity as an MFT, and understand how to keep it current. Lastly, the course will pay special attention to underrepresented groups, and how this links to the topics of social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion in MFT practice. MSFT On-Campus.

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#### **MS\_FT 429-0 Sex Therapy (1 Unit)**

This course provides a multidimensional, biophysical approach to the diagnosis and treatment of sexual difficulty in individuals and couples. Sexual problems discussed include disorders of desire, aversion, arousal, orgasm, and pain. MSMFT On-Campus.

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#### **MS\_FT 430-0 Power, Privilege and Difference: Practicing Cultural Curiosity and Humility in a Multicultural World (1 Unit)**

The purpose of this course is to sensitize students to the influence of race, class, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, and ability on lived experience (generally) and on the practice of marriage and family therapy (specifically). This course will provide students with a theoretical knowledge base and an experiential learning experience to increase cultural humility, develop awareness of personal and institutional bias, and gain insight into the assumptions, values, and beliefs about both themselves and others as a means of working more effectively with diverse populations in the therapeutic process.

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**MS\_FT 436-0 Family Therapy Treatment Models (1 Unit)**

This course is an examination of the major treatment models that have emerged through the development and history of systemic therapy, including the respective philosophies, theories, assessments, and interventions nested within them. This course is designed to provide an overview of the major models of systemic therapy that have been developed and critiqued over time. Course content focuses on discussions of traditional and contemporary systemic therapy models, including these models' respective theoretical underpinnings, assumptions of systemic health versus pathology, goals, role of the therapist, and means of intervention. In addition, the course will explore how to use models to navigate the matrix of IST. MSMFT On-Campus.

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**MS\_FT 437-0 Family Therapy with Children and Adolescents (1 Unit)**

This course will provide the theoretical background and practical skills for working with families that present with children and adolescents. A systemic framework will be employed as the basis for understanding and intervening with families, children, and adolescents. Special consideration will be given to intersections of the development metaframework and sociocultural systems, with a focus on assessment and intervention. MSMFT On-Campus.

**MS\_FT 437-6 Family Therapy with Children and Adolescents (1 Unit)**

This course will provide the theoretical background and practical skills for working with families that present with children and adolescents. A systemic framework will be employed as the basis for understanding and intervening with families, children, and adolescents. Special consideration will be given to intersections of the development metaframework and sociocultural systems, with a focus on assessment and intervention. MSMFT Online.

**MS\_FT 440-0 Systemic Perspectives in the Treatment of Substance Use/Misuse and Addiction (1 Unit)**

This course reviews distinctions of disease model vs. systemic views of addiction and treatment, discusses the markers of abuse and dependence, illuminates various therapeutic approaches, and explores the efficacy of family therapy approaches. Students develop working theoretical and clinical knowledge of addiction treatment. Issues of substance use and addiction will be explored through a social justice lens, integrating knowledge of broad cultural systems that impact the prevalence, nature, and treatment of substance use. MSMFT On-Campus.

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**MS\_FT 480-0 Pre-Practicum in Marriage & Family Therapy (1 Unit)**

The purpose of this course is to introduce the basic administrative and clinical aspects of conducting systemic therapy, using the Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST) perspective. The course presumes no background as a therapist and aims to provide students with the essential skills needed to conduct the first phone call and the initial sessions with individuals, couples and families. In addition, the course will focus on the role of personal values, beliefs, and interpersonal style in the work of psychotherapy. Students will be encouraged to examine the ways in which their own culture and family background has shaped their perspective, and how to make use of personal experience as a professional marriage and family therapist through the ongoing reflection and development of the self of the therapist. MSMFT On-Campus.

**MS\_FT 480-6 Pre-Practicum in Marriage & Family Therapy (1 Unit)**

The purpose of this course is to introduce the basic administrative and clinical aspects of conducting systemic therapy, using the Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST) perspective. The course presumes no background as a therapist and aims to provide students with the essential skills needed to conduct the first phone call and the initial sessions with individuals, couples and families. In addition, the course will focus on the role of personal values, beliefs, and interpersonal style in the work of psychotherapy. Students will be encouraged to examine the ways in which their own culture and family background has shaped their perspective, and how to make use of personal experience as a professional marriage and family therapist through the ongoing reflection and development of the self of the therapist. MSMFT Online.

**MS\_FT 481-0 Internship in Marriage & Family Therapy (1 Unit)**

Clinical internship in the Bette D. Harris Family and Child Clinic under AAMFT approved supervision. Students build a caseload that will require 15 to 20 hours per week in the Clinic. They gain practical experience in providing systemic, integrative assessment and treatment for clients. Begins winter quarter of the first year and continues through the summer for 1 credit per quarter.

Prerequisite: MS\_FT 480-0 Pre-practicum in Family Therapy. MSMFT On-Campus.

**MS\_FT 481-6 Internship in Marriage & Family Therapy (1 Unit)**

Clinical internship, at program approved placement site for 15-20 hours per week under supervision of an experienced supervisor, and in group consultation with a program-based AAMFT approved supervisor. Students advance their skills in providing systemic assessment and treatment for clients. The internship begins in the second quarter for full time students or the third quarter for full time California students and continues for three quarters for 1 credit per quarter. Part-time students must work with advising faculty to determine when they can start this course.

Prerequisites: MS\_FT 480-0 Pre-practicum in Family Therapy. MSMFT Online.

**MS\_FT 482-0 Advanced Internship in Marriage & Family Therapy (1 Unit)**

Clinical internship in the Bette D. Harris Family and Child Clinic for 15 to 20 hours per week under AAMFT approved supervision. Students advance their skills in providing systemic, integrative assessment and

treatment for clients. Begins in Fall quarter of the second year and continues for the duration of the program for 1 credit per quarter. Prerequisites: MS\_FT 480-0; Pre-practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy; MS-FT 481-0 Internship in Marriage and Family Therapy MSMFT On-Campus.

**MS\_FT 482-6 Advanced Internship in Marriage & Family Therapy (1 Unit)**

Clinical internship, at program approved placement site for 15-20 hours per week under supervision of an experienced supervisor, and in group consultation with a program-based AAMFT approved supervisor. Students advance their skills in providing systemic assessment and treatment for clients. The advanced internship begins in the fifth quarter for full time students or the sixth quarter for full time California students and continues for three quarters for 1 credit per quarter. Part-time students must work with advising faculty to determine when they can start this course.

Prerequisites: MS\_FT 480-6 Pre-practicum, and MS\_FT 481-6 Internship in Marital & Family Therapy. MSMFT Online.

**MS\_FT 495-0 Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy Capstone Project (1 Unit)**

The MSMFT Capstone involves the completion of three components that demonstrate the student's acquisition of clinical competence, as well as the ability to integrate relevant knowledge and skill within the framework of Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST) and to apply this integration to their clinical work. The three components are a narrative case study paper, a formal case presentation, and the submission of a set of video clips that demonstrate competence in the operations of IST. The project demonstrates the student's ability to accomplish systemic integration in their practice and, thereby, their readiness to continue their professional growth through the integration of new learnings. MSMFT On-Campus.

**MS\_FT 495-6 Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy Capstone Project (1 Unit)**

The MSMFT Capstone involves the completion of three components that demonstrate the student's acquisition of clinical competence, as well as the ability to integrate relevant knowledge and skill within the framework of Integrative Systemic Therapy (IST) and to apply this integration to their clinical work. The three components are a narrative case study paper, a formal case presentation, and the submission of a set of video clips that demonstrate competence in the operations of IST. The project demonstrates the student's ability to accomplish systemic integration in their practice and, thereby, their readiness to continue their professional growth through the integration of new learnings. MSMFT Online.

**MS\_FT 499-0 Independent Study (1 Unit)**

SEE DEPT FOR SECTION AND PERMISSION NUMBERS-Permission of instructor and department required. Course may be repeated for credit.