

**WESTERN INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH
3220 Sacramento Street
Berkeley, CA 94702**

MASTER OF ARTS IN PSYCHOLOGY

**An option for meeting the State of California's academic requirements for the Marriage
and Family Therapy License.
Revised, January 2004**

The Western Institute for Social Research offers a combination of individualized study and classroom-based instruction based on information from the State of California's Board of Behavioral Science Examiners about the requirements of the Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) License, which was previously known as the Marriage, Family and Child Counseling (MFCC) License. WISR's M.A. in Psychology option leading toward the MFT license meets the requirements of California Business and Professions Code Sections 4980.37 and 4980.40. **All students entering WISR after September 30, 1998 are required to contact the Board of Behavioral Sciences Examiners and obtain their own copy of the "Laws and Regulations Relating to the Practice of Marriage, Family and Child Counseling. . . ." By their third month in the program, students will be expected to discuss and ask questions of faculty about the content of these laws and regulations. Students will not be approved for a practicum until faculty are satisfied that the student understands the essential material contained in this document. Students should contact:**

**BOARD OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE EXAMINERS
400 R STREET, SUITE 3150
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
(916) 445-4933**

Website Address: <http://www.bbs.ca.gov>

Keeping up to date with changes in laws: Since the laws and regulations are constantly changing, students are encouraged to keep up to date by joining the **California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT)**. The student membership rate is inexpensive, and CAMFT is an excellent source of information and will answer questions asked by members by phone and fax. CAMFT also publishes a bimonthly journal, *The California Therapist*, which provides a lot of information about legal and ethical issues, as well as practical matters pertaining to professional practice. Students may review back issues of this journal in WISR's library. You may contact CAMFT: 7901 Raytheon Road

San Diego, CA 92111-1606
(858) 29-CAMFT (292-2638)
<http://www.camft.org/>

Prerequisites for Licensing: The State has a number of important prerequisites for licensing, in addition to obtaining a Master's degree that meets the State's academic requirements. It is important for prospective students to understand these requirements before embarking on an MFT program. Each prospective student should review all of the State regulations, but here are highlights of the main requirements. WISR faculty will be happy to answer questions you may have about these, and if you enroll you will be expected

familiarize yourself with the laws during the first couple of months of enrollment. Before you can be approved as ready to begin a practicum (six months or more into the program), faculty will expect you to know the important details in State laws and regulations pertaining to MFT preparation and practice.

Here are highlights of licensing requirements:

1. 3,000 hours of supervised MFT experience are required, but no more than 750 hours may be obtained prior to receiving the Master's degree. No hours may be obtained until a student has completed 12 semester units and passed WISR's practicum readiness assessment by faculty.

2. Students may obtain credit toward the 3,000 hours as soon as they are enrolled in an approved program by engaging in their own personal therapy with a licensed MFT, LCSW, Clinical Psychologist or MD Psychiatrist. Students may get up to 100 hours of credit for personal therapy, and each hour counts triple toward the 3,000 hours. *Furthermore, WISR strongly encourages all MFT students to undergo individual, marital or conjoint family or group counseling, or psychotherapy.*

3. The State does a criminal background check on all applicants for the MFT license. "The Board shall not issue a registration or license to any person who has been convicted of any crime in the United States that involves the sexual abuse of children or who has been ordered to register as a mentally disordered sex offender . . ."

4. To obtain the license, one must pass an initial written exam and a subsequent written clinical vignette exam which has replaced the oral exam.

Prospective students who are considering moving to another state should investigate the licensing requirements of that state to determine whether or not that state has "reciprocity" with California. That is, if you obtain a California MFT license, will you be able to meet the licensing requirements of the state you move to with little difficulty, or will it involve doing a lot of additional work, schooling and/or training? CAMFT has information about the licensing requirements in other states.

Prospective students who are interested in learning about the performance of students who enroll at WISR, with the intention of obtaining the MFT license should read the "School Performance Fact Sheet for Alumni of the MFT Program," which accompanies this informational hand out on the WISR MFT Program.

WISR offers faculty and curriculum resources to help each student fulfill academic requirements toward MFT licensure, but each student is expected to take responsibility to monitor her or his own progress toward licensure and to be in compliance with State requirements. WISR faculty are eager to help students identify and clarify questions they may need to ask of the BBS.

The following is an overview of WISR's M.A. Program in Psychology with an emphasis in Marriage and Family Therapy (previously known as marriage, family and child counseling):

Combination of Individualized Study and Classroom Instruction

Each student's degree program is structured around her or his individual interests and around the core subject matter areas (see below) necessary to prepare for the MFT licensing examination and for competent, successful professional practice. Faculty members supervise student's work in individual meetings and classroom sessions.

There are about 10 hours of classroom instruction each month, usually composed of one all-day Saturday session, and one half-day session. There are other shorter sessions during weekday evenings on a variety of topics. Participation in the equivalent of 24 months of Saturday sessions is required of WISR MFT students. The sessions focus on theories and methods of marriage, family and child counseling, including discussions of articles and books or of ideas from faculty or student presentations; observations and analyses of books or of ideas from and role-playing therapeutic interventions. Among the topics included are human sexuality, professional faculty or student presentations; observations and analyses of videotapes of expert therapists; law and ethics, cross-cultural and community mental health methods and issues, child abuse assessment and reporting, alcoholism and substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and spousal/partner abuse. In addition to the classroom instruction, there is a clinical case seminar given one half day each month. Instructors and students will bring in cases in addition to students cases for discussion.

Students typically meet with a faculty advisor once every two weeks for one hour. Faculty help each student to work out topics and methods for research projects in specific subjects, help students to contact sources of data, give detailed verbal and written comments on student papers, discuss insights and problems encountered by students during their practica, and give students qualitative evaluations of their work. This process helps students to become more fully aware of their intellectual strengths, of what they already know and can do, as well as what they still need to learn to meet their own professional and personal goals.

To support this dynamically structured approach to learning, faculty make themselves very accessible to students. Students are encouraged to call faculty between face-to-face individual advising sessions, and to meet more than twice per month when necessary. WISR's approach to helping students meet MFT requirements is both flexible and more demanding than more conventional, pre-packaged programs. For example: (1) Students must be able and willing to write and re-write drafts of papers, and to discuss those drafts intensively with faculty members and fellow students, so as to become deeply engaged in the material they are studying. (2) WISR's small, specialized library contains books, journals, article reprints, video and audio tapes, and bibliographies in all of the core subject matter areas of MFT study, and faculty give students specific suggestions on how to use these materials. WISR's ongoing library acquisitions have created a special section of specific books on MFT related topics, most of which have been published in the last five years. These books are available for check out for seven days. WISR also has a reimbursement policy for those students who want to participate in the UC Berkeley library system. However, students must also be ready, with faculty help, to make use of the world-class research libraries available at local public universities, in identifying and seeking out relevant books and articles; (3) Students are expected to be in regular, open communication with

faculty advisors about their learning experiences; for example, making and discussing critical analyses of their practica experiences, so as to learn from their mistakes and the problems they encounter.

Core Subject Matter Areas

Through faculty assisted individualized study and through participation in classes, students are expected to demonstrate foundational knowledge in each of the areas listed below. In each area, the student is helped and expected to become familiar with the readings which provide a foundational understanding and overview of the field. Students are to investigate and write one major paper in each of the core areas. The investigations and the production of **a paper** in each area also afford each student opportunities to explore and develop an area or areas of specialization. Two papers are required as part of the student's practicum. In addition, two papers are required in Theories and Methods of Marriage and Family Therapy. In conjunction with participation in the required seminars, students are sometimes required to write short, but substantial, papers. Students will also present these papers periodically in class. Video and audio presentations are sometimes made and the students may be required to write reaction papers to seminar presentations.

Awarding of Academic Credit in Each of the Core Subject Matter Areas

WISR faculty award academic credit to students based on the quantity of seminar work and independent study performed by the student in each area. The amount of readings, investigation, writing and seminar participation in each area reflects the scope and depth of the area as interpreted by WISR faculty in enabling students both to meet Board of Behavioral Sciences requirements and to prepare for competent and skilled professional practice. Credit is assigned by the core faculty person who has supervised the student's work in the particular area. For each of the required areas of study, a minimum number of semester units is indicated, as well as the amount more typically achieved by WISR students in each area. **A total of 48 semester units are required for graduation, no more than six may be transfer units.**

Human Development	3 units minimum	4 or 5 units typically
Human Sexuality	2 units minimum	4 units typically
Theories and Methods of Marriage and Family Therapy	12 units minimum	12 units typically
Psychopathology	3 units minimum	4 units typically
Cross-Cultural Counseling	3 units minimum	4 units typically
Professional Ethics and Law	2 units minimum	3 or 4 units typically
Research Methodology	2 units minimum	4 units typically
Supervised Practicum	6 units minimum	sometimes more, for extra hours
Alcoholism and Substance Abuse	1 unit minimum	typically 1 unit
Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting--no units required, 7 hours of workshop required, sometimes students obtain one or more units for extra work, but it doesn't count toward the 48 hours required for graduation.		
Psychopharmacology	2 units minimum	new requirement
Psychological Testing	2 units minimum	new requirement
Theories of Social Analysis and Change	2 units minimum	typically 4 units
Thesis	6 units minimum	sometimes more

Human Biological, Psychological and Social Development

Study of developmental theories, events, and issues covering the entire life-span from infancy to old age, including parent-child relations, child development and adolescence, and various phases, crises, and transitions to adulthood. This includes a study of developmental influences on and consequences of individual circumstances, interpersonal relationships, and family dynamics, as well as the larger social context. Emphasis is on critical examination of a range of theories, such as those of Freud, Erikson, Piaget, Mahler, Kohlberg and others.

Human Sexuality

A study of personal and interpersonal dimensions of sexual experiences and behavior, including such topics as anatomy and physiology of human sexuality, normal and abnormal sexual behavior, sexual dysfunction and its causes and treatment, psychosexual development, sociocultural and family influences on sexuality, sexual orientation and identity, and sexual counseling. Includes a minimum of 10 contact hours of training or coursework in sexuality.

Theories and Methods of Marriage and Family Therapy

Study of major theories of marriage and family therapy, including methods of marriage, family and child counseling and a consideration of such varied schools of thought as psychodynamics, humanistic, behavioral, and system theories. Study of applications and limitations of different theoretical approaches for assessing and treating problems with couples, families, adults, children and groups. Also included is the study of contemporary family dynamics: the sociocultural context of the family; problems, issues, and circumstances affecting the family as a unit; relations among its members; and strategies for effectively intervening in family dynamics to build on strengths, solve problems, or minimize the problems' impact. Students also study spousal and partner abuse, methods of detection and treatment, and treatment methods and issues pertaining to HIV and AIDS. For students beginning MFT studies after January 1, 2004, includes a minimum of 15 contact hours in spousal or partner abuse, and a minimum of 10 contact hours of coursework in aging and long-term care, including the biological, social and psychological aspects of aging.

Psychopathology

This includes a study of the characteristics and dynamics associated with various pathologies, ranging from neurotic styles found among "normal," functioning adults to severe disorders--an examination of different systems of diagnosis, including the DSM-IV, and the strategies of treatment associated with these various diagnoses.

Cross-Cultural Counseling

Study of the importance of cultural, racial, ethnic, and subgroup values and beliefs, and how they affect individuals, interpersonal relations, family life, and the therapeutic process. An examination of the wide range of ethnic backgrounds common in California, including the general values and diversity within each of the following groups: African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Americans, whites of European ancestry, and people who identify themselves as bi-racial or bicultural.

Psychological Testing

Study of theories and applications of commonly used psychological tests for family and individual assessments. Covers cognitive and personality testing as well as looking at specific tests related to assessing for depression, anxiety and other DSM IV axis 1 and 2 disorders. Also, the study of how to determine statistical significance with psychological testing.

Professional Ethics and Law

Study of legal and ethical issues involved in the professional practice of marriage and family therapy in California, in particular, and in the field of mental health in general. This includes an examination of ethics and laws that delineate the profession's scope of practice; therapeutic and practical considerations involved in legal and ethical practice as a licensed MFT; study of the broader legal trends and ethical debates in the health, mental health, and human service professions; ethical and legal issues bearing on counselor-client relationships (e.g., confidentiality, treatment of minors, and when a client may be dangerous to self or others); and issues arising out of the counselor's sense of self and personal values, in relation to professional ethics and law.

Research Methodology

A study of research design and methods, including such topics as logic of design, scientific paradigms and epistemology, ethical issues in research, strategies for reviewing literature in psychology and related fields, and methods of data collection and analysis. Special emphasis is put on qualitative and action-oriented research methods, including participant observation, interviewing and program evaluation.

Supervised Practicum in Applied Psychotherapeutic Techniques

This involves supervised work by the student in the assessment, diagnosis, prognosis and treatment of premarital, couple, family, and child relationships, within the scope of practice of a marriage and family therapy trainee. Students also discuss and critically reflect on issues, challenges and insights arising out of their practica in seminars (some of which are specifically

designated as clinical case seminars), in individual advising sessions with WISR faculty, and in the papers they write on their practicum experience. Students are encouraged to seek out a practicum which will give them experience in working with low-income and multicultural populations (see also the section on “Practicum or Traineeship” below).

Alcoholism and other Chemical Substance Abuse and Dependency

Study of theories and research on addiction and abuse of a variety of substances, including alcohol, prescriptions and illegal drugs. Review of theories, problems, issues and strategies used in the treatment of alcoholism and other forms of chemical abuse and dependency.

Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting

Study of the following topics designed to meet requirements of AB 141, and to obtain and overview of clinical skills developed by practitioners who have treated abused children, offenders, and adult survivors who were abused as children; statutes, issues for professionals, indicators and assessment of child abuse, resources/agencies, prevention, statistics on incidence of abuse, publication about abuse, issues pertaining to reporting, developmental theories and issues, evaluation and treatment of offenders, and self-help efforts by adult survivors. Includes study of the *Child Abuse Prevention Handbook* of the Office of the California Attorney General. Involves a minimum of seven contact hours of training or coursework.

Psychopharmacology

Study of the use of psychotropic medications in the treatment of various psychological disorders. Examines the role of the psychotherapist and psychotherapy in the use of such medications. Study of specific medications that are used in the treatment of psychiatric disorders, including antidepressants, mood stabilizers, antiobsessional, antipsychotic and antianxiety drugs, and how they are used in conjunction with psychotherapy, as well as the abuses of drugs in each category.

Theories of Social Analysis and Change

Study of several theories/perspectives on social change, and analysis of the strengths and limitations of these ideas as they pertain to some of the issues and problems of special concern to the student in his or her planned areas of professional practice.

Thesis

An in-depth study of a topic of special interest to the student, and one which may have significance for others, involving a review of the literature and some original data collected by the student.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

All students are involved in a comprehensive evaluation process. These evaluation sessions will be given at three stages of the student's program. 1. After six months or the completion of 12 semester units (usually, 3 areas of study and 3 major papers), in order to assess the student's readiness for participation in the practicum. 2. Approximately at the mid point of the student's Master's program. 3. When the student has completed all the requirements except for the thesis. The evaluation session will be conducted by two core faculty, at least one of whom will be a licensed MFT and a peer. The evaluation will be constructive in nature and will serve to direct the student to strengthen weak areas and support growth in positive areas. The student will also be evaluated in his or her practicum as well (see practicum contract). Ongoing evaluation will be provided by faculty assessment of student performance through regular meetings and dialogue with students about their work in progress, participation in class (e.g., in clinical case seminars) and learning in their practicum. Students are expected to demonstrate their familiarity with and understanding of each of the core MFT subject matter areas by: (1) pursuing and discussing with a faculty advisor readings which cover both the student's major interests in that area and a balanced selection of topics important to learning about the area; and (2) writing a paper that demonstrates the student's ability to critically discuss some important theoretical and/or practical issues arising in that area, in relation to one of the student's special interests. Student learning in each practicum is also assessed by written evaluations submitted by a professional in the **field** who has supervised the student's work.

PRACTICUM OR TRAINEESHIP

Minimum Requirements for the Practicum

The practicum shall include a minimum of 306 hours of face-to-face experience counseling individuals, couples, families or groups. WISR requires this to get 6 semester units of practicum credit. Currently, State law provides that students can not get credit for more than 750 hours of counseling and supervision as pre-Master's trainees. One could, however, get credit for as much as 1300 hours by combining 750 hours of counseling experience and supervision, with 300 hours for personal psychotherapy received, and up to 250 hours for professional workshops, seminars and conferences. Under the State guidelines, WISR has developed a supervised fieldwork agreement that must be signed by student, the field work agency and a WISR faculty person, before the practicum begins. This contract spells out in detail the responsibilities of all parties, in accordance with Section 4980.42(b) of the California Business and Professions Code.

Practica

WISR faculty work with the training sites and the student in placement and evaluation. The law states that a "trainee" is a person who is unlicensed and is currently enrolled in a master's or doctor's degree program, as specified in Section 4980.40. This is also a person who has

completed the equivalent of one semester of graduate level (12 semester units) coursework in the field. (At WISR, this is defined as six months of seminar participation and the completion of 12 semester units of work in the core areas.) Students are also encouraged to seriously consider pursuing practica in two distinctly different settings, in order to enhance and broaden their experience. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to pursue their own personal therapy, to further develop those personal qualities and depth of self-awareness that will enable them to become effective therapists.

MFT students should also consult the general WISR catalog for information about: WISR's core requirement that all students study Theories of Social Analysis and Change, the requirement that all Master's students do a Master's thesis, and the evaluation process conducted by the Graduation Review Board.