

MFT 567: Sexual Issues for the Helping Professional¹
Tuesdays 5:30pm to 7:30pm (EST)

Course Description²

Welcome! I am excited you are here and looking forward to our semester together! I believe that this course can benefit everyone on their journey to becoming a therapist, my goal is for us all to learn, grow, and support one another. This course is designed to inform future clinicians whose work brings them into conversation with human sexuality from an educational and therapeutic standpoint. Our classroom is an inclusive space where we will consider the ways in which our own identities and experiences influence the therapeutic system. Class sessions will explore topics including sexual history, intersectionality, sexual development, gender identity, erotic diversity, relationships, sexual expression, challenges to sexual functioning, sexual trauma, commercialization of sex, and contemporary sexuality. We will focus on building this knowledge base while further developing professional competence, techniques, and interventions.

Learning Objectives³

After taking this course, students will be able to⁴:

1. Analyze human sexuality through intersecting dimensions of identity and diversity.
2. Evaluate self-of-the-therapist issues related to various dimensions of sexuality and the impact on the therapeutic process.
3. Discuss the biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors that shape sexuality and their relationship to personal sexual development.
4. Apply effective clinical strategies, communication skills, and interventions for addressing sexuality within therapeutic contexts.

Instructor⁵

Tristan Martin, PhD, LMFT, CST

Email: Tkmartin@syr.edu

Student Support Time⁶: Tuesdays 7:30-8:00pm (after class and by appointment)

¹ I revised the beginning of the document to be more reader friendly with the focus on clear and warm language (CRI, day 2). Changes made- added class name, instructor, and semester summer 2026 as a header on the first page, removed excessive wording on modality of class, reduced bolding of words, and added day and time of class with time zone. Also, removed a bottom boarding line after the course title. The syllabus will be posted on Blackboard and will be using a welcome intro sheet the first class. Additionally, including a pre-class survey to get to know my students, why they are taking this course and any life hardships related to their learning and experience.

² I changed the format of this entire section leading with a welcome section and warming up the syllabus which was informed by Day 1 and Day 2 of the CRI fostering student engagement. I removed 'additional' description which created a more concise, clear, and readable course description. Updated language to be more inclusive- we instead of the students, us instead of you, etc. Also created a pre-class survey- <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WQ2RG9H>

³ The course map I created on Day 1 of the CRI fostered learning outcomes that helped me revise the syllabus and instruction of course overall. Using the CALMS acronym and backwards course design, I adjusted language to be more clear, attainable, learning focused, measurable, and specific. I also removed excessive punctuation. The objectives clearly tie into teaching and learning activities and assessment. With creating backward course design, learning outcomes are clarified, to determine assessments and activities student to student.

⁴ In revamping and removed some of the course objectives, I used Bloom's Taxonomy from Day 1 to revamp my learning objectives, using the prompt, what will students be able to do at the end of the class?

⁵ Created this section for instructor to highlight welcoming space and student support time. Changed to student support instead of office hours, moved this section after the welcome and course description.

⁶ Created student support time right after class, since it is online and also by appointment.

Credits: 3

Course Text⁷

- Flemons, D., & Green, S. (2018). *Quickies: The handbook of brief sex therapy*. WW Norton & Company.

Recommended Texts⁸

- Chen, A. (2020). *Ace: What asexuality reveals about desire, society, and the meaning of sex*. Beacon Press.
- Constantinides, D., Sennott, S., & Chandler, D. (2019). *Sex therapy with erotically marginalized clients: Nine principles of clinical support*. Routledge.
- Fern, J. (2020). *Polysecure: Attachment, trauma and consensual nonmonogamy*. Thornapple Press.
- Fern, J., & Cooley, D. (2023). *Polywise: A deeper dive into navigating open relationships*. Thornapple Press.
- Fielding, L. (2021). *Trans sex: Clinical approaches to trans sexualities and erotic embodiments*. Routledge.
- Goerlich, S. (2022). *Kink-affirming practice: Culturally competent therapy from the leather chair*. Routledge.
- Nagoski, E. (2015). *Come as you are: The surprising new science that will transform your sex life*. Simon and Schuster.
- Nagoski, E. (2025). *Come together: The science (and art!) of creating lasting sexual connections*. Random House.
- Vaughan, M. D., & Burnes, T. R. (Eds.). (2022). *The handbook of consensual non-monogamy: Affirming mental health practice*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.

Your Course Engagement Matters⁹

- Professionalism is essential in this class. As future therapists, we are developing the skills, habits, and ethical responsibilities that support effective clinical practice. Arriving on time, communicating respectfully, and completing assignments on time are all part of professional conduct.¹⁰
- Participation is also an important part of the learning process. Consistent attendance and thoughtful engagement in class discussions and activities contribute not only to your own

⁷ Updated the verbiage to include course text instead of required book, acknowledging that the book might not be financially accessible for all students, then might need to rent it or use an e-book, added proper APA citation, following APA formatting. Later in the syllabus I will reference the book chapters according to the weekly topics discussed. This section was moved up, policies moved to the end, putting the information for my class first then SU policies later.

⁸ Added these recommended texts which I often reference, students would sometimes say ‘what’s the name of that book?’ so thought to include a list with proper APA citations for easy navigation and also in alphabetical order. This will continue to evolve and change in future semesters.

⁹ I added this section separate from the assignments; I reframed this verbiage to speak directly to the ways in which I respect and value students. Taken from Day 2 of the CRI, emphasizing student engagement (Day 1), and create a student-centered classroom environment.

¹⁰ In previous semesters, I had a strong attendance policy with mandated attendance, revising this I added that instead this is a part of professionalism. Making class/myself more approachable and empathetic.

growth, but also to the learning community we build together. I value your contributions and lived experiences brought to class.¹¹

- At times course material or discussions may feel emotionally challenging. These reactions are a natural part of learning and growth. If you find yourself experiencing significant distress, please know that you are welcome to reach out to me for support. In this role as your professor, I am happy to help connect you with appropriate resources¹²

Assignments¹³

1. Sexuality Self-Reflection Journal¹⁴

This assignment is an unstructured, reflective journal entry exploring your own sexual development. This assignment invites honest self-reflection on experiences that arise with consideration of how they have shaped your current attitudes and feelings about sexuality. Conclude by reflecting on how these experiences and attitudes may intersect clinically.

2. Sexuality Intake Exercise¹⁵

Students (as therapist) will conduct a sexual history interview with a peer (client). The goal is to build confidence and comfort using therapeutic skills. After the interview, students will submit a brief reflection on their experience and how it translates to clinical practice.

Part A: Sexual History Interview Questions

Create interview questions in the following areas¹⁶:

1. Background: early experiences of sexuality across childhood, adolescence, and adulthood including developmental, familial, and/or sociocultural influences.
2. Current perspectives: present attitudes, beliefs, and meanings related to sexuality.

¹¹ Participation is also my new attendance policy; I value the contributions that students bring to class so highlighting this here. This redesign is more student centered for graduate students and less instructor focused. I will also add that we will be drafting our own attendance policy which was discussed on Day 2 of the CRI.

¹² I added this statement to acknowledge at times the material (such as discussing sexual violence) could be difficult for some students because of their lived experiences, offering space to connect, however noting that I am not their therapist.

¹³ Created a new section, had a shift in assessment and assignment ideas during the CRI, I realized that my assignments do not directly line up with the course objectives. This came from doing the mapping of my course on Day 1. The learning outcomes and objectives were also deeply revised to then inform how I think about planning my assignments from a student-centered perspective. The first major change was removing attendance and participation as a graded item.

¹⁴ This assignment was significantly changed, originally it was a structured official APA paper, my thoughts were, how can a student that may have experienced sexual trauma, expect to write a narrative about this? As a therapist, this didn't make sense to me, so I reframed it as more of a journal entry, that the students complete in a way that fits for them. I also am aiming to reduced content, so by having an assignment like this we can talk about our course objective more in depth. I used scaffolding (Day 2) to then create assignments that are low stake. These assignments will tie into reducing content with more to discuss through conversation in classes where lectures are interactive through both in-class practice and activities. Based on student feedback I will continue to review and assess these assignments in future semesters since they are new ideas going into this semester.

¹⁵ This assignment originally was very unclear and extensive with multiple steps. I wanted to create an assignment that allowed students with more opportunities to engage with one another in the form of in-class practice (Day 2 of CRI). Interactive and reducing content, more learning activities. Additionally, this is a high-impact activity to increase engagement, with discussion to follow around student-centered classes (Day 2 of CRI).

¹⁶ Added in this statement to help students understand that they create the questions.

Part B: Self-Reflection (2 pages APA format)¹⁷

1. What was your experience of the interview? Preparation? Feelings?
2. How does this translate clinically for you? Self-of-therapist?

3. Book Spotlight Presentation¹⁸

Choose a sexuality-related book to read over the course of the semester (you may select from the recommended texts). During the final two weeks of class, you will give a 5–10-minute presentation summarizing your chosen book:

Slide 1- Title and image of book

Slide 2- Why you chose this book

Slide 3- Key context or background you want to share with the class

Slide 4- Personal reflections on the book

Slide 5- Brief clinical connections or takeaways

Assessment Policy for the Course¹⁹

Assignments	Possible Points
Sexuality Self-Reflection Journal	25 points
Sexuality Intake Exercise	35 points
Book Spotlight Presentation	40 points
Total	100 points

Letter Grade	Points
A	94 – 100
A-	90 – 93
B+	87 – 89
B	84 – 86
B-	80 – 83
C+	77 – 79
C	74 – 76
C-	73 – 70

Course Schedule²⁰

¹⁷ This section was created to be clearer and also reduce the role of therapist having to remember facts about their client but sharing their reflection of the process instead of content. Will continue to evolve based on student feedback.

¹⁸ This is a new assignment thought, since some students like to read and often will give book recommendations in class, I wanted to propose the idea of reading a book they can then share with the class with succinct and clear objectives and instructions (informed by Day 1 and 2 of the CRI). I feel like this is a more personal and connected assignment versus the dreaded final presentations in groups.

¹⁹ This assessment policy was added with a point system and also an easy-to-read assignment point value system which was missing in the old syllabus. In prior syllabus, percentages were used, in this revamping using points to be more congruent. I also edited the tables to make them clearer to read, less bold and reduced the strong outline.

²⁰ I revised my approach to creating the topics, assignments, and readings. I was reflecting on the importance in the CRI to get to know the students and feel like that is a big part of our program because we are training students how to become therapists, it is important to spend a day talking about the course and getting to know them- self of the

Date	Topic	Required Readings²¹ & Assignments
May 12	No Class²²	N/A
May 19	Course Overview Self-of-the-Therapist	Watter (2024) ²³
May 26	Exploring Human Sexuality	N/A
June 2	Intersectionality & Communication	Green & Flemons Ch. 1 Iasenza & Mathews (2024)
June 9	Sexuality through the Lifespan	Sexuality Self-Reflection²⁴ Journal- Due June 13
June 16	Relational Sex Therapy	Emond et al. (2024) Green & Flemons Ch. 3 & 4 Johnson et al. (2018) McCarthy et al. (2024) Nagoski (2024)
June 23	Sexual Expression, Pregnancy, Infertility, Disability, & Neurodivergence	Mayo Clinic (2024) Moran (2024)
June 30	Vulva Sexual Issues Penis Sexual Issues	Krasnow & Asa-Sophia Maglio (2021) Wyatt & de Jong (2020) Skrzypczak et al (2026)
July 7	LGBTQ Clients	Sexuality Intake Exercise- Due July 11 Martin & Coolhart (2019) Pipkin et al. (2024)
July 14	CNM & Kink	Fosse (2024) Green & Flemons Ch. 6 & 9
July 21	Sexual Trauma	Green & Flemons Ch. 11 & 12 Maltz (2024)
July 28	Sex Work & Pornography	Green & Flemons Ch. 7 Pederson et al. (2024) Spencer et al. (2024)

therapist is what we often refer to as this in our field. (CRI Day 1). Overall, there is a goal to create more productive class time, in the past I just felt like I was lecturing for hours with minimal time for discussion, I think allowing more time for student conversation and investments through discussion and activities will be more helpful. I will also be utilizing peer to peer connections (CRI Day 1) in order to create a system that blends into our goals as a class, keeping track of their own learning and application skills through the in-class practice activities.

²¹ I removed extra book chapters I had listed here that were not a part of the required text, unsure why they were here. Feel like this just offered confusion for the students (Constantinides text).

²² Just to note- The course technically started during the CRI Day 1, so I was unable to hold class during this time, will not always cancel the first class.

²³ I revised the readings section to include the articles that were listed on blackboard but were not noted in the syllabus, before it was just noted 'articles on blackboard.'

²⁴ Added these assignments with due dates in the syllabus.

Date	Topic	Required Readings²¹ & Assignments
May 12	No Class²²	N/A
August 4	Presentations	Book Spotlight Presentation
August 11	Presentations	Book Spotlight Presentation
August 18	No Class²⁵	

AAMFT Core Competencies Addressed²⁶

The Syracuse University Marriage and Family Therapy program course objectives are based on the core competency model established in 2004 by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). The AAMFT Core Competencies define six domains of knowledge and five requisite skills that comprise the practice of marriage and family therapy. The following objectives, taken from the [AAMFT Core Competencies](#), apply to MFT 567. After completing this course students will be expected to:

1. Recognize contextual and systemic dynamics (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, spirituality, religion, larger systems, social context) (1.2.1)
2. Understand principles of human development; human sexuality; gender development; psychopathology; psychopharmacology; couple processes; and family development and processes (e.g., family, relational, and system dynamics) (2.1.1)
3. Consider physical/organic problems that can cause or exacerbate emotional/interpersonal symptoms (2.2.5)
4. Assess family history and dynamics using a sexual genogram or other assessment instruments (2.3.6)
5. Know which models, modalities, and/or techniques are most effective for presenting problems (3.1.1)
6. Monitor personal reactions to clients and treatment process, especially in terms of therapeutic behavior, relationship with clients, process for explaining procedures, and outcomes (3.4.5)
7. Comprehend a variety of individual and systemic therapeutic models and their application, including evidence-based therapies and culturally sensitive approaches (4.1.1)
8. Deliver interventions in a way that is sensitive to special needs of clients (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture/race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, personal history, larger systems issues of the client) (4.3.2)
9. Obtain knowledge of advances and theory regarding effective clinical practice (5.3.8)

²⁵ Last day of class we formally do not have class, but I make this an option open forum class discussion day for those that want to attend. Also noting, not sure why the first day of class repeats on this page, removing footnotes should also remove that repeat. Will assess the attendance policy in related to class dates, SU holidays, sometimes I think a day or two off during the semester helps students recharge.

²⁶ I updated the language in the opening paragraph to reflect current practices, I then confirmed via the AAMFT website which competencies are directly addressed in this course, deleted the repetitive competencies and embedded a hyperlink instead of long URL.

10. Monitor attitudes, personal well-being, personal issues, and personal problems to insure they do not impact the therapy process adversely or create vulnerability for misconduct (5.4.2)

11. Use current MFT and other research to inform clinical practice (6.3.2)

SU MFT Student Learning Outcomes Addressed²⁷

- S.L.O.#1: Students will demonstrate awareness and regulation of self in system.
- S.L.O.#2: Students will demonstrate engagement with cultural and contextual differences.
- S.L.O.#3: Students will demonstrate M.F.T. clinical competency skills across a variety of contexts.

Syracuse University Policies²⁸

Academic Integrity

As a pre-eminent and inclusive student-focused research institution, Syracuse University considers academic integrity at the forefront of learning, serving as a core value and guiding pillar of education. Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy provides students with the necessary guidelines to complete academic work with integrity throughout their studies. Students are required to uphold both course-specific and university-wide academic integrity expectations such as crediting your sources, doing your own work, communicating honestly, and supporting academic integrity. The full Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy can be found by visiting teachingexcellence.syr.edu/academic-integrity and selecting, "Expectations and Policy." Upholding Academic Integrity includes the protection of faculty's intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or share instructors' course materials, including presentations, assignments, exams, or other evaluative materials without permission. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero) to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others, which are then presented as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation. All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person assignments, quizzes, and exams also apply online.

Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered. Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

Artificial Intelligence

All generative-AI tools are prohibited in this course because their use inhibits achievement of the course learning objectives. This policy applies to all stages of project and writing processes

²⁷ Referenced the SU MFT masters student handbook to align SLOs that connect to MFT 567. Updated these SLOs according to the most recent handbook 2025-2026, which had not yet been updated, and added another SLO.

²⁸ Moved the SU policies to the end of the document. I found that moving the policies to the end of the syllabus encouraged engagement with the course and the design improved. As mentioned on Day 2, warmth is created by making the syllabus more of an invitation, not a contract or list of rules. Recreating the policies also required obtaining the appropriate policies from the SU website which included updates in verbiage. Note- corrected hyperlinks to make sure they work, corrected typos, extra spaces, and any grammatical errors.

including researching, brainstorming, outlining, organizing, and polishing. Do not use Generative-AI tools to create any content (i.e., images and video, audio, text, code, etc.). If you have any questions about a feature and whether it is considered Generative-AI, ask your instructor.

Attendance Policy

Attendance in classes is expected in all courses at Syracuse University. It is a federal requirement that faculty promptly notify the university of students who do not attend or cease to attend any class. Faculty will use Early-Semester Progress Reports and Mid-Semester Progress Reports in Orange SUESS to alert the Registrar and Financial Aid Office on non-attendance. For more information visit: [Information for Students: Non-attendance or Stopped Attending](#)

If a student is unable to participate in-person or virtually for an extended period of time (48 hours or more), the student may request an absence notification from their home school/college Dean's Office or through Student Outreach and Support office. Instructors will be notified via the "Absence Notification" flag in Orange SUESS. Additional information may be found at [Student Outreach and Support: Absence Notifications](#).

Disability Accommodations

Syracuse University values access and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to contact me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be necessary to ensure equitable access, and to collaborate with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR) in this process.

If you would like to discuss disability-related accommodations or register with CDR, please visit [Center for Disability Resources](#). Please call 315.443.4498 or email CDRspecialist@syr.edu for more detailed information. CDR is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic accommodations and will work with the student to develop an access plan. Since academic accommodations are generally not provided retroactively, please contact CDR as soon as possible to initiate this process.

Discrimination or Harassment

Federal and state law, and University policy prohibit discrimination and harassment based on sex or gender (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation). If a student has been impacted by any prohibited behavior based on sex or gender, they can obtain confidential counseling support, 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, from the [Sexual and Relationship Violence Response Team](#) at the Counseling Center (315-443-8000, Barnes Center at The Arch, 150 Sims Drive, Syracuse, New York 13244). Incidents of sexual or relationship violence or harassment can be reported to the University's Title IX Coordinators (Sheila Johnson Willis, Chief Equal Opportunity Officer and Title IX Officer for Faculty and Staff, 315-443-4018, equalopp@syr.edu or Pamela Peter, Director/Coordinator of Student Title IX Case Management, 315-443-0211, titleix@syr.edu). Reports to law enforcement can be made to the University's Department of Public Safety (315-443-2224, 005 Sims Hall), the Syracuse Police Department (511 South State Street, Syracuse, New York, 911 in case of emergency or 315-435-3016 to speak with the Abused Persons Unit), or the State Police (Campus Sexual

Assault Victims Unit, 844-845-7269). I will seek to keep information you share with me private to the greatest extent possible, but as a professor I have mandatory reporting responsibilities to share information regarding sexual misconduct, relationship violence, stalking, harassment, and crimes I learn about with the University's Title IX Officer to help make our campus a safer place for all and to ensure you have access to available resources.

Faith Tradition Observances

Syracuse University's Religious Observances Policy recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their traditions. Under the policy, students are given an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance, provided they notify their instructors no later than the academic drop deadline. For observances occurring before the drop deadline, notification is required at least two academic days in advance. Students may enter their observances in MySlice under Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances/Add a Notification.

Health & Wellness Considerations

Well-being and mental health are significant predictors of academic success. It is critical to take care of yourself physically and emotionally and to effectively navigate stress, anxiety, and depression. Please familiarize yourself with the range of resources the Barnes Center provides (<https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/>) and seek out support for mental health concerns as needed. Counseling services are available 24/7, 365 days, at 315-443-8000.