

Course Syllabus
KNP3507 – Internal Family Systems: Theory and Practice
Knox College
Toronto School of Theology
Winter 2027

Instructor Information

Instructor: Rev. Glenn McCullough, PhD, RP, Assistant Professor
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Course Identification

Course Number: KNP3507HS
Course Format: *In-class*
Course Name: Internal Family Systems: Theory and Practice
Course Location: Knox College, Room TBD
Class Times: Tuesdays 2:00-5:00pm
Prerequisites: KNP1512 or EMP1513 Intro to Counselling; KNP3521 Psychotherapeutic Theories; or the permission of the instructor.

Course Description

The Internal Family Systems (IFS) model, developed by Richard Schwartz, is a psychotherapeutic modality that has proven useful not only for trauma work, but for a wide variety of mental health issues. While IFS is relatively new, it builds on a model of the psyche/soul with deep roots in the history of psychotherapy. The idea that the psyche is composed of an internal family of autonomous parts, many of them unconscious, goes back to C.G. Jung and the French schools of hypnosis that came before him. It also has resonances with Freudian object relations. But Schwartz's method of identifying and working with these internal parts sets his modality apart as innovative, elegant, and transformative. This course offers a comprehensive overview of Schwartz's basic theoretical orientation with a heavy emphasis on clinical practice through case studies, personal exploration, and role playing. We will pay particular attention to the spiritual dimensions of IFS and their potential use in spiritual care and spiritually integrated therapy.

Course Resources

Required Course Texts

Schwartz, Richard. 2021. *No Bad Parts: Healing Trauma and Restoring Wholeness with the Internal Family Systems Model*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.

Schwartz, Richard. 2023. *Introduction to Internal Family Systems*, 2nd ed. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.

These books are available for purchase from Caversham Booksellers on Harbord St. west of Spadina Av., from online booksellers, and likely from your local bookstore.

Select Bibliography

Anderson, Frank G., Martha Sweezy, and Richard C. Schwartz. *Internal Family Systems Skills Training Manual: Trauma-Informed Treatment for Anxiety, Depression, PTSD and Substance Abuse*. Eau Claire, WI: PESI, 2017.

Brenne, Elizabeth, Richard Schwartz, and Carol Becker. 2023. "Development of the Internal Family Systems Model: Honoring Contributions from Family Systems Therapies." *Family Process* 62(4): 1290-1306.

Ellenberger, Henri F. 1970. *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry*. New York: Basic Books.

Redfern, Emma E. 2023. *Internal Family Systems Therapy: Supervision and Consultation*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003044864>.

Schwartz, Richard C. 2010. *Couples Counseling*. S.l: Psychotherapy.net. Available online from U of T Libraries: https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/k9bh95/alma991106893074106196.

Schwartz, Richard. 2013. "Moving from Acceptance Toward Transformation with Internal Family Systems Therapy (IFS)." *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 69(8): 805–16. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22016>.

Schwartz, Richard. 2023. *You Are the One You've Been Waiting For: Applying Internal Family Systems to Intimate Relationships*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.

Schwartz, Richard, and Thomas Hübl. 2025. *Releasing our Burdens: A Guide to Healing Individual, Ancestral, and Collective Trauma*. St. Martin's Essentials/ Sounds True.

Schwartz, Richard, and Martha Sweezy. 2020. *Internal Family Systems Therapy*. 2nd ed. New York: Guilford Press.

Spiegel, Lisa. *Internal Family Systems Therapy with Children*. 1st ed. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315545394>.

Sweezy, Martha, and Richard C. Schwartz. 2023. *Internal Family Systems Therapy for Shame and Guilt*. 1st edition. Guilford Publications.

Sweezy, Martha, and Ellen Ziskind, eds. 2017. *Innovations and Elaborations in Internal Family Systems Therapy*. New York: Routledge.

Ziskind, Ellen L., and Martha Sweezy. 2013. *Internal Family Systems Therapy: New Dimensions*. Routledge.

Course Website

Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT Quercus login page at <https://q.utoronto.ca/> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to Quercus using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Quercus-based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the course website in Quercus.) Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>. Students experiencing difficulties accessing Quercus should contact the registrar's office of their college.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1

January 12

Introduction: A History of the Inner World

Reading: Ellenberger, Ch 3 The First Dynamic Psychiatry

Week 2

January 19

Part I: Understanding the Internal System

Introduction and Overview

Reading: *No Bad Parts* Introduction, Ch. 1 We're All Multiple

Week 3

January 26

Blended Parts and Unblending

Reading: *No Bad Parts* Ch. 2 Why Parts Blend

Recommended: *Intro to IFS* Ch. 1 The IFS Model

Week 4

February 2

The Self as God-Image and Sacred Centre

Reading: *No Bad Parts* Ch. 3 This Changes Everything

Recommended: *Intro to IFS* Ch. 2 The Self

Week 5

February 9

Systems Thinking

Reading: *No Bad Parts* Ch.4 More on Systems

Recommended: *Intro to IFS* Ch. 3 Parts

Reading Week

February 15 – 19

Week 6

February 23

Exiles, Managers, and Firefighters

Reading: *No Bad Parts* Ch. 5 Mapping our Inner Systems

Recommended: *Intro to IFS* Ch. 4 Exiles, Managers, and Firefighters

Week 7

March 2

Part II: Self-Leadership

Freeing Parts from their Roles

Reading: *No Bad Parts* Ch. 6 Healing and Transformation

Recommended: *Intro to IFS* Ch. 5 IFS as a Therapeutic Model

Week 8

March 9

Achieving Self-Leadership

Reading: *No Bad Parts* Ch. 7 The Self in Action

Week 9

March 16

Reharmonizing the Inner System

Reading: *No Bad Parts* Ch. 8 Developing Vision and Purpose

Week 10

March 23

(Purim)

Part III: Self in the Body, Self in the World

Advanced Parts Mapping

Reading: *No Bad Parts* Ch. 9 Life Lessons and Tor-Mentors

Week 11

March 30

Getting Close to Exiles

Reading: *No Bad Parts* Ch. 10 The Laws of Inner Physics

Week 12

April 6

Embodiment

Reading: *No Bad Parts* Ch. 11 Embodiment

Exam Week

April 12 - 16

Final Paper Due Monday April 12

Evaluation

Requirements

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in the following areas:

(1) Participation (15%) – It is essential to the success of the course that students carefully read the required texts in advance of the class, listen actively during lectures and discussion, contribute to class discussion with thoughtful questions (quality is preferred over quantity of sharing), and conduct themselves with a degree of professionalism appropriate to the vocation they will be entering. Class attendance is mandatory and more than two absences will put students in jeopardy of failing the course. Habitual lateness will be counted as absence. (Please see the Knox College attendance policy.) If you are going to be absent for a class please email the professor in advance and describe the reason for the absence. A determination will be made as to whether documentation is required (e.g. doctor's note).

(2) Weekly Reflections (25%) – Students will submit on Quercus a brief reflection on the assigned reading, 250-300 wds in length, on the readings for week 3 to week 10. The reflection should be handed in before the beginning of class on the week in question. The reflection can summarize certain parts of the readings, but the main focus should be on one or two key themes that sparked your interest. Describe why these themes interested you and why you think they are significant, either for you personally, or for the therapeutic practice of IFS. Grading will be based on the quality of writing, with preference given to clear, concise, and evocative prose. Citations can simply cite the date and page number of the text in question, e.g. (Schwartz, 2023, p. 23), or, simply (2023, p. 23). No title page or reference list is necessary.

(3) Small Group Work (20%) – In groups of 3, students will discuss and at times role play the concepts and techniques we have explored in each class. Grading for the group work and role plays will be based on attentiveness and sensitivity to fellow group members, listening skills, willingness to learn, a teachable spirit, willingness to try new things (and making mistakes), maintenance of a safe therapeutic container, and general demonstration of therapeutic skills and sensitivity.

(3) Final Praxis Paper (40%) – Due Monday April 6. The final paper should demonstrate an integration of theory and practice. Integrate the theories of IFS therapy learned in the class with your growing awareness of your own internal family system. Include a description of your internal parts and, if possible, your process of uncovering their presence. Describe avenues for future work with these parts. Please include appropriate citations from the course readings, and any other research you have pursued. Format: 8-10 pages, double spaced, not including title page and bibliography, Times New Roman font, Chicago style (either author-date or footnotes), indented paragraphs, no extra space between paragraphs, and please make use of subheadings.

Grading System - Basic Degree Students

1000, 2000 and 3000 level courses use the following numerical grading scale:

90-100 (A+)	Exceptional
85-89 (A)	Outstanding
80-84 (A-)	Excellent
77-79 (B+)	Very Good
73-76 (B)	Good

70-72 (B-)	Acceptable
0-69 (FZ)	Failure

Please see the appropriate Conjoint Degree handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc.).

Policies

Class attendance. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner congruent with the vocation they are seeking to enter and in which they desire to give leadership. To that end, it is a regulation of Knox College that a minimum of approximately 80% attendance at courses (10 of 12 weeks) is required for credit; 100% attendance is expected at seminar courses. Habitual lateness for class will be counted as absence.

Teaching and learning are interactive, not passive, activities. Therefore, students may not “attend” an in-person class through unauthorized audio or video streaming or by watching or listening to a recording; instructors are not obligated to record or permitted to stream their in-person classes. Online classes that include a synchronous video component require the same level of attendance as an in-person course, and students may not “attend” by watching or listening to a recording. Online classes that include an asynchronous component require participation in all the activities for each week or module to meet the attendance requirement. Students requiring accommodations to attend class must present medical and/or Accessibility Services documentation that outlines the type and duration of accommodation(s) required.

Class recording. Much of the learning that goes on in the virtual or in-person classroom is founded upon mutual disclosure that takes place between instructor and student, and between students. Parties outside of this learning community have not committed themselves to this relationship of trust. A student without an approved accommodation who wishes to make an audio recording of an in-person class must secure the agreement of the instructor and all classmates; livestreaming and video recordings are not permitted. Online video-streamed classes may be recorded at the discretion of the instructor. Personal recordings may be used only by the student who made the recording; no recording may be reproduced, posted, or distributed without the written permission of the instructor.

Late work (BD). Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. Late work will be penalized at a rate of one number grade per day. The absolute deadline for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course or the last day of exam week for the semester in which the course is taught, whichever is sooner.

This penalty is not applied to students with documented medical or compassionate difficulties or exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness); students facing such difficulties are kindly requested to consult with their faculty adviser or basic degree director, who should make a recommendation on the matter to the instructor and request an SDF. The absolute deadline for obtaining an SDF for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course or the last day of examination week, whichever is sooner. An SDF must be requested from the registrar’s office in the student’s college of registration no later than the last day of exam week in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. If a student has not completed work but has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be submitted calculating a zero for work not submitted.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor's college before being posted to ACORN. Grades are not official until they are posted to ACORN. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy found at <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/grading-practices-policy-university-assessment-and-january-26-2012>, policies found in the TST conjoint program handbooks, or college grading policy.

Inclusive Language. Knox College has an inclusive language policy, available at https://knox.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Knox-College-Policy_Use-of-Language-Policy-and-Glossary_221003.pdf.

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to their head of college or delegate according to the Graduate program Handbook linked from <http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks> and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>. A student who plagiarizes in this course will be assumed to have read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges: <https://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/library/research/theology/avoiding-plagiarism-in-theological-writing/>

Use of Generative AI, e.g., ChatGPT. Students may use artificial intelligence tools to assist with research for their assignments, but the actual writing of the assignment must be done entirely on your own, using your own words. The final submitted assignment must be original work produced by the individual student alone.

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>.

Back-up copies. Please make back-up copies of assignments before handing them in.

Obligation to check email. At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at www.utorid.utoronto.ca. The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer

questions you may have about your UTORid and password. Students should check utoronto email regularly for messages about the course. **Forwarding** your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from me may end up in your spam or junk mail folder. Students in non-conjoint programs should contact the Registrar of their college of registration.

Email communication with the course instructor. The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. All email communications from students in conjoint programs must be sent from a utoronto email address. Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs. Students in non-conjoint programs should only use the email address they have provided to their college of registration.

A note about “trigger warnings.” You are preparing for vocations (congregational ministry, spiritual care, psychotherapy, teaching, research, etc.) that by their nature will present you with difficult situations, including domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, addictions, and other traumatic situations. Your vocational preparation anticipates that you will meet such situations in the real world, that you will not be warned about the nature of the stimulus, and that you will have to protect persons in your care from your own reactions to these situations. In your studies, you may encounter descriptions of traumatic or triggering events without warning. Students who feel undue stress from these descriptions are urged to process their feelings with a therapist. The Ecumenical Chaplains, the staff of the Registrar’s Office, and your faculty advisor are also available for consultation. Students are advised to take responsibility for their own emotional health and wellbeing.

Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Basic Degrees – Knox and TST

<i>This course has the following course-level learning outcomes</i>	
Outcome	Evaluation
1. Demonstrate a level of professionalism appropriate to the student's future vocation.	Participation
2. Demonstrate comprehension of readings.	Weekly reflection papers
3. Demonstrate the ability to put IFS theory into practice	Small group role playing
4. Demonstrate the ability to describe major IFS theories and integrate them with practical examples.	Final praxis paper

<i>A student successfully completing this course has made progress towards the following Knox College degree program learning outcomes:</i>		
MDiv	MTS	MPS
☒ Interprets Scripture and Christian tradition (Reformed), using a variety of methods, sources, and norms, to preach, teach, write, and to provide care and witness. <i>Evaluation:</i> All evaluations	☒ Demonstrates knowledge at a basic level in various theological disciplines. <i>Evaluation:</i> All evaluations	☒ Demonstrates knowledge at a basic level in various theological disciplines, in the Reformed or another tradition. [* the student may come from another tradition] <i>Evaluation:</i> All evaluations
☒ Demonstrates skills in creative, faith-centred, adaptive, and innovative leadership for current and emerging communities of faith. <i>Evaluation:</i> All evaluations	☒ Finds, selects, reads, and appropriately integrates theological information. <i>Evaluation:</i> All evaluations	☒ Demonstrates knowledge and skills in spiritual care and therapy, grounded in appropriate theories, for professional practice and leadership in community and institutional settings. <i>Evaluation:</i> All evaluations
☒ Enhances the vocational and spiritual development, practices, and well-being of self and others. (See Professional and Critical Competencies.) <i>Evaluation:</i> All evaluations	☒ Engages respectfully and constructively in a theological community of scholarship. <i>Evaluation:</i> All evaluations	☒ Demonstrates an appropriate spiritual and professional identity formation in relation to specialized practice. <i>Evaluation:</i> All evaluations
☒ Analyzes and evaluates social, cultural, and community contexts to enable communities of faith to participate in God's work and justice in a diverse and changing world.	☒ Writes and speaks in English sufficiently well to engage in theological discourse. <i>Evaluation:</i> All evaluations	☒ Writes and speaks in English sufficiently well to engage in professional practice. <i>Evaluation:</i> All evaluations

<i>Evaluation:</i> All evaluations		
TST BASIC "DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS"	CORRESPONDING COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES (see college outcomes above)	CORRESPONDING COURSE ELEMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS
EXPECTATIONS: <i>In this course students are expected to demonstrate the following:</i>		
1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge	2, 3, 4	<i>Weekly reflection papers, Small group role playing, Final praxis paper</i>
2. Knowledge of methodologies	2, 3, 4	<i>Weekly reflection papers, Small group role playing, Final praxis paper</i>
3. Application of Knowledge	2, 3, 4	<i>Weekly reflection papers, Small group role playing, Final praxis paper</i>
4. Communication Skills	1, 2, 3, 4	<i>Participation, Weekly reflection papers, Small group role playing, Final praxis paper</i>
5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge	1, 2, 3, 4	<i>Participation, Weekly reflection papers, Small group role playing, Final praxis paper</i>
6. Autonomy and Professional Capacity	1, 2, 3, 4	<i>Participation, Weekly reflection papers, Small group role playing, Final praxis paper</i>