

**PSYC 326-001, Therapeutic Communication Skills
Fall 2014, Monday and Wednesday 9-10:15am**

Instructor: Mary Curby, MA
Class Location: Mason Hall D005
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Office Hours: Monday, 10:15-11:15am DKH 2046

Course Objectives

This course aims to provide students with a foundational knowledge of therapy as well as an opportunity to develop verbal and nonverbal skills that enhance constructive interpersonal communication, particularly in a therapeutic situation.

Required Text and Materials

- Young, M.E. (2009). *Learning the Art of Helping: Building Blocks and Techniques* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Yalom, I. D. (2003). *The Gift of Therapy: An Open Letter to a New Generation of Therapists and Their Patients*. New York: HarperCollins.

Course Expectations

An effective counselor or therapist listens and responds to clients with empathy, thoughtfulness, and precision. To do this, a therapist must practice and refine therapeutic communication skills. In this course, you will learn the fundamentals of being an effective "helper." A "helper" includes many different professions: teaching, guidance counseling, human resources, mentoring, social worker, nursing, and therapist. In addition to lectures, this course involves extensive class participation and discussion, including in-class workshops in small feedback groups, and two videotaped role-plays. You will receive hands-on practice in honing your therapeutic communication skills. Regardless of your previous skill level, it is important to have an open mind and fully participate in the activities in order to optimize your class experience.

Use of Technology

Students will be expected to videotape role-played therapy sessions outside of class time. You may find it helpful to use the resources in the STAR lab (JC Room 229, 703-993-8990). More information about the video equipment will be provided in class. Some course material will be posted on mymason.gmu.edu.

Grade Calculation

Attendance	10%	A+ (97%+); A (93-96%); A- (90-92%); B+ (87-89%); B (83-86%); B- (80-82%); C+ (77-79%); C (70-76%); D (60-69%); F (59% & below)
Workshops	20%	
Feedback Forms		
Target Skill Activity		
Target Skill Reflection Form		
Video Role Play 1	10%	
Presentation of Role Play 1	5%	
Group Supervision Feedback	5%	
Video Role Play 2	20%	
Writing Reflection Papers	30%	
TOTAL	100%	

Important Dates

- Last day to add class, or to drop without tuition penalty: September 2
- Last day to drop, with 33% tuition penalty: September 16
- Final drop deadline, with 67% tuition penalty: September 26

Schedule

Important Note: Please keep in mind that this is a tentative schedule and topics and assignments may be changed at the discretion of the instructor to improve the quality of the course. Students will be informed if any changes are made.

Date	Topic and Workshop Schedule	Reading	Assignments Due Today
8/25	Syllabus review, Introduction to Helping		
8/27	Introduction, continued	Ch. 1, Y12	
9/1	LABOR DAY – UNIVERSITY CLOSED		
9/3	Basic Foundations of Helping Skills	Ch. 2, Y3-7	Writing Reflection #1 and Client outline
9/8	The Therapeutic Relationship and self-disclosure	Ch. 3, Y29-36	Writing Reflection #2
9/10	Non-Verbal and Invitational Skills	Ch. 4	
9/15	<i>Workshop 1- Invitational Skills</i>		Writing Reflection #3
9/ 17	Reflecting Skills—Content/Paraphrasing	Ch. 5	
9/22	<i>Workshop 2 - Reflecting content</i>		Writing Reflection #4
9/24	Reflecting Skills—Reflecting Feelings; <i>Workshop 3 (abbreviated)</i>	Ch. 6, Y 20	
9/29	Reflecting Skills—Reflecting Meaning and Summarizing	Ch. 7	Writing Reflection #5
10/1	<i>Workshop 4 - Reflecting all and summarizing</i>		
10/6	Challenging Skills: Feedback and confrontation		Video #1 and printed transcript
10/8	Challenging Skills: Giving Feedback and Confronting the Client	Ch. 8, Y 18, 57	Writing Reflection #6
TUES, 10/14	Goal Setting Intro & Feedback <i>Workshop</i> <i>*This week class meets on Tues because of Columbus Day</i>	Ch. 10, Y38-40	Writing Reflection #7
10/15	Goal-Setting Skills—Where to Go with the Client	Ch. 11, Y 27	Supervision week #1
10/20	<i>Workshop 6 -- Goal Setting</i>		Supervision week #2, Writing Reflection #8
10/22	Solution Skills: Helping the Client Find Solutions	Ch. 12, Y46-51	
10/27	<i>Workshop 7: Solution skills</i>		Supervision week #3, Writing Reflection #9
10/29	Review of skills for 2nd videotape		
11/3	Full day of supervision	Ch. 10	Supervision week #4, Writing Reflection #10

11/5	<i>Workshop 8 -Therapeutic Listening Cycle</i>		
11/10	Full Day of Supervision		Supervision week #5
11/12	Assessment and Diagnosis Pt I	Ch. 9, Y2, 69-70	Writing Reflection #11
11/17	Assessment Pt 2		Video Role-Play #2 and Transcript
11/19	Advanced Skills: Part I	Ch. 13	Writing Reflection #12
11/24	Advanced Skills: Part II	Ch. 14	
11/26	Thanksgiving Recess (NO CLASS)		
12/1	<i>Workshop 9-Advanced skills (course evaluations)</i>		
12/3	Summing it all up; discussion of careers in helping Last class – no Final Exam		

Course Requirements and Grading Procedures:

Workshops and Class Activities (20% workshops, 10% attendance)

Class discussions and exercises are an essential part of your learning experience in this course, and of your grade. Therefore class attendance is critically important. If you miss class, you are responsible for all notes and exercises completed that day. Active participation is *strongly* encouraged. This means asking questions, offering topics for discussion and responding to your peers. At times, we may discuss sensitive topics. We will discuss a confidentiality policy during our first class in order for everyone to feel comfortable fully participating. During many classes, you will participate in “workshop” groups of 3 to 4 students. In each group, one student will play a counselor, one student will play a client, and one or two students will provide feedback to the counselor. Students will rotate among the roles. Workshop time is vital to practicing your skills, and it’s fun. Feedback forms will be collected as part of these activities. As workshop experiences cannot be replicated outside class, penalty for missing one is significant (as indicated in the grade percentages). * Attendance policy: Please provide advance notice of all absences, and provide documentation if possible. If you need to miss class more than twice (even if you can document a valid reason) or missing any workshop, it will affect your grade.

Note on this class: Students are often juggling many responsibilities in addition to coursework. This class requires you to attend consistently in order to benefit the most from the hands-on content. If your current situation does not allow you to attend class regularly, please carefully consider whether you can successfully complete the course.

Two Videotaped Role Plays

You will each create two videotaped role-plays with another member of the class. These videos will be used to evaluate your mastery of lecture, workshop, and reading material. In these role-plays, each of you will take turns acting as the counselor. Videotapes will be graded for the therapeutic communication skills you exhibit during the session. You will each receive written feedback. In addition, you will submit a transcript of a self-selected 5 continuous minutes of the first tape, and a self-selected 10 continuous minutes of the second tape. See *Blackboard* for more details on the role-play requirements and grading criteria.

Role Play #1 – 12 to 15 minutes

Due: 10/6/14 10% grade

Nonverbal/Invitational Skills
Paraphrasing

Role Play #2 – 18 to 20 minutes

Due: 11/17/14 20% grade

Skills used in previous taping
Reflecting Feelings and Meaning
Challenging Skills, Goal-Setting Skills, Solution Skills

Presentation on Role Play #1 for **Group supervision (5% of grade)**

Students will play a portion (5-7 minutes) of their first videotape in the role of the counselor and present on this video clip to the class. We will spend about 15 minutes (including the time watching the DVD) discussing the role-play and providing feedback to the student who is presenting. Supervision days will be assigned after the semester begins. In each presentation, students will give an introduction to the client, comment on their own strengths and weaknesses, and ask questions of their peers and instructor about different directions they could have taken. In addition, a brief outline (1 page

maximum) highlighting these points should be brought to class on the day of the presentation. *See Blackboard for more detail on supervision.*

Group Supervision Feedback (5% of grade)

Each person will be sign up to take lead in providing feedback to some presentations. You will fill out a feedback form on these videos in class and participate in the verbal discussion for those groups. *See Blackboard for more detail.*

Reflection writing assignments (30% of grade)

To help you process your thoughts, experiences, and the readings about the skills we are learning, you will write ten short (1.5 to 2 pages) reflection papers during the semester. You will complete 10 of 12 papers. *See Blackboard for assignment descriptions.*

Late assignments will be docked 10% for each day that they are late. If an emergency situation arises that prevents you from completing your work on time, this will be dealt with on an individual basis. Please keep in mind that per university policy, you must provide documentation of all emergencies (car accidents, illness, funerals, etc.) in order to be excused from the late penalty. The most important step you can take is to alert the instructor as soon as a situation arises that may interfere with your ability to complete the class work.

GMU Honor Code

Students are expected to abide by the GMU Honor Code. Violations of the GMU Honor Code can result in failure of an assignment or the course, depending on the severity of violation. All violations will be reported to the Honor Committee. Please review the honor code: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>

Accommodation of Disabilities

If you are a student with disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at [709-993-2474](tel:709-993-2474). All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Student Support Services

GMU offers services to support students' academic and emotional development. Learning Services offers workshops in academic skills and a tutor referral program. (<http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices>) The Counseling Center, located in SUB 1 Room 3129 (703-993-2380) offers stress management training, as well as individual and group counseling for students who would like help with social, emotional, or educational concerns (<http://caps.gmu.edu>)

Official Communications via GMU E-mail

Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.