**PSYC 326-001, Therapeutic Communication Skills**

**Fall 2019**

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Office Hours: T 10:30-11:30 or by appointment

Class Time & Location: TR 9:00-10:15, Aquia 219

**Course Overview**

The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to communication skills helpful in a variety of personal and professional settings, including but not limited to therapy. This course will provide students with an understanding of and basic competency in those skills, in addition to overviewing professional issues related to helping careers, and introducing students to broader contexts in which therapeutic communication skills are useful and important.

**Teaching Philosophy and Course Expectations**

This class embraces the idea that learning is most powerful when it occurs through a combination of information and experience. Both class time and assignments will be interactive, and will guide students in learning from the instructor, from peers, and from their own experiences. Workshops and homework exercises will allow us to practice the course skills, and will provide opportunities for structured feedback. All students will build their competence and confidence, regardless of previous skill level, if they have an open mind, are willing to make mistakes, and fully participate in the course assignments and in-class activities.

**Goals**

Over the course of the semester, students will:

1) Develop skills in active listening and non-judgmental empathy.

2) Develop a foundation of skills for identifying emotions, conflicts, and patterns in others’ behaviors.

3) Develop awareness of how their own perspectives and biases affect therapeutic communication, and develop strategies for managing that impact.

4) Understand the meaning of and increase their multicultural competence and cultural humility.

5) Develop the ability to present briefly and give and receive feedback in a group supervision setting.

6) Learn a brief intervention as a way of applying their new skill set.

7) Understand the relevance of therapeutic communication skills in contexts outside of therapy.

**Required Texts**

Young, M.E. (2017). *Learning the Art of Helping: Building Blocks and Techniques* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle

River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall. ***On reserve at library***

**Course Requirements and Grading Procedures:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Attendance and participation | 100 | A (93-100%); A- (90-92%);B+ (87-89%); B (83-86%); B- (80-82%);C+ (77-79%); C (73-76%); C- (70-72%)D (60-69%);F (59% & below) |
| Workshops (8\*25 pts) | 200 |
| Quizzes | 100 |
| Video Role Play 1 | 100 |
| Video 1 Group Supervision Presentation (20pts) and Feedback (30pts) | 50 |
| Video Role Play 2  | 150 |
| Exercises (6\*50 pts) | 300 |
| **TOTAL** | **1000** |  |

**Attendance and Participation on non-workshop days (10%):** Class lectures will cover significant information beyond what is in the readings, and in-class videos and activities will be critical to learning. Your participation grade will be based on your attendance for the **full** class, along with your active participation in class activities. If you must miss class for a medical reason, please inform the instructor as soon as possible.

**Workshops (20%):** During specified classes, you will participate in “workshops” where you will have a chance to practice and receive peer feedback on skills. Often, you will work in groups of 3 to 4 students, where 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, and will complete feedback forms so that the instructor can assess participation. **Attendance at workshops is a required part of the course.** If students miss a workshop for reasons beyond their control, they may make up one workshop over the course of the semester, but must arrange this makeup themselves with classmates who would like extra practice with skills. Any missed workshops must be made up before the due date for Video 2, and students must notify the instructor about their plans and document the workshop’s completion.

**Quizzes (10%):** Four quizzes will be administered on Blackboard, assessing your knowledge of assigned material. Questions come directly from the readings/material, and are meant to incentivize you to complete those assignments. Missed quizzes cannot be made up.

**Videotaped Role Plays (25%):** Each student will pair with a classmate to create two videotaped role-plays. These videos will be used to evaluate your mastery of the skills learned in class. 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, and written feedback will be provided. *See Blackboard for further details on requirements and grading.*

**Role Play #1 – 12 to 15 minutes Role Play #2 – 18 to 20 minutes**

**Due: 10/18/17 10% grade Due: 12/11/17 15% grade**

Nonverbal/Invitational Skills Skills used in previous role play, plus BNI skills (details TBA)

Paraphrasing, Reflecting Feelings

**Group Supervision Presentation (2%) and Feedback (3%)**: Students will play a self-selected portion (5 minutes) of their first videotape in the role of the counselor and **present on this video clip to the class**. We will spend about 10 additional minutes 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. A brief outline (1 page maximum) highlighting these points should be brought to class on the day of the presentation. Each person will be assigned to **take the lead in providing feedback** for one other students’ video 1 presentation. *See Blackboard for more detail*.

**Exercises (30%):** To help you practice skills, integrate information, and process your experience related to the class, you will complete 7 exercises during the semester, each of which will require the submission of a short written product. Your lowest score will be dropped. *See Blackboard for more detail.*

**Additional Course and University Policies**

Late Assignments

All assignments are due by the start of class on the day they are due. Assignments handed in after the start of class up to 24 hours past the deadline will be downgraded by 25%; up to 48 hours they will be downgraded by 50%; after 48 hours they will not be accepted. Please keep in mind that per university policy, you must provide documentation of any 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.

Use of Technology

All students are expected to use Blackboard in order to obtain course information and hand in assignments. Further, 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). You will upload your video files to the Blackboard Media Gallery (located under “Course Tools”), or you may give the file to the instructor on a flash drive. More information about video equipment and file uploading will be provided in class.

Laptops and/or cell phones are not needed during class, and should be stowed away.

GMU Honor Code

The Honor Code of George Mason University deals specifically with cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. Students should be familiar with the code and connected policies (see http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies). This course will be conducted in accordance with those policies.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All accommodations must be arranged through that office, and must be initiated immediately, prior to any anticipated need.

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>). All students are entitled to 12 free sessions at the Counseling Center.

Official Communications via GMU E-mail

Mason uses e-mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices form 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.

Important Dates

1. Last day to add class: September 3
2. Last day to drop without tuition charge: September 9
3. Last day to drop with 50% tuition charge: September 17

Class Cancellation

In the event that class is canceled, I will notify you via email; this email will include information about making up the missed class, and about any changes to the syllabus related to the cancellation.

**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. Changes will be communicated in class or by e-mail.

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| **Date** | **Topic and Workshop Schedule** | **Reading** | **Assignments Due Today** |
| 8/27 | NO CLASS |  | Make sure you have textbook; read through syllabus |
| 8/29 | Syllabus review, Introduction to Helping | Ch. 1 p.1-5; p.21-26 |  |
| 9/3 | Introduction, continued |  | Exercise #1: Self Assessment |
| 9/5 | Basic Foundations of Helping Skills | Listen to “Silver Dollar” (link on Blackboard)  |  |
| 9/10 | The Therapeutic Relationship | Ch. 2 | Exercise #2: Silver Dollar |
| 9/12 | Non-Verbal and Invitational Skills | Ch. 3 | Quiz 1 |
| 9/17 | *Workshop 1* |  |  |
| 9/19 | Reflecting Skills—Paraphrasing | Ch. 4 |  |
| 9/24 | *Workshop 2* |  | Exercise #3: Using Silence |
| 9/26 | Reflecting Skills—Reflecting Feelings | Ch. 5 |  |
| 10/1 | *Workshop 3* |  | Quiz 2 |
| 10/3 | Reflecting Skills—Reflecting Meaning and Summarizing | Ch. 6 |  |
| 10/8 | *Workshop 4* |  | Exercise #4: Reflections |
| 10/10 | Reflection Practice |  |  |
| 10/15 | NO CLASS – MONDAY CLASSES MEET ON TUESDAY |  |  |
| 10/17 | Multicultural Competence/Cultural Humility | Tatum |  |
| 10/22 | *Workshop 5* |  | Video #1 |
| 10/24 | *Workshop 6* |  |  |
| 10/29 | Group supervision 1 |  |  |
| 10/31 | Group supervision 2 |  |  |
| 11/5 | Group supervision 3 |  |  |
| 11/7 | Group supervision 4 |  |  |
| 11/12 | Group supervision 5 |  |  |
| 11/14 | Challenging Skills 1: Discrepancies | Ch. 7 | Exercise #5: Cheat Sheet |
| 11/19 | Theories of Change and Motivational Interviewing | Ch. 9-10 pp. 209-255 | Quiz 3 |
| 11/21 | Applying our Skills: The Brief Negotiated Interview (*guest instructor*) |  | Exercise #6: Discrepancies |
| 11/26 | *Workshop 7 (guest facilitator)* |  |  |
| 11/28 | NO CLASS – HAPPY THANKSGIVING |  |  |
| 12/3 | *Workshop 8 (guest facilitator)* |  | Quiz 4 |
| 12/5 | Summing it all up; discussion of careers in helping **Last class – no Final Exam** |  | Exercise #7: Self-Assessment |
| 12/12 | Video Role-Play #2 due |