

**THERAPEUTIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS – PSYC 326-002**  
**Course Syllabus – Fall 2006**  
**Jennifer A. Sinkule, M.A.**

**Class Location:** Robinson Hall B 204

**Class Time:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30 pm – 2:45 pm

**Office Hours:** Tuesday 3:00 pm – 4:15 pm or by appointment

**Office Location:** Northeast Module 107

**Telephone:** 703-993-4649 (I share this phone with others. Choose the mailbox for the “Improvement of the Year Award”.)

**E-mail:** [jsinkule@gmu.edu](mailto:jsinkule@gmu.edu) (\*\*Email is the best way to reach me\*\*)

**TEXT:** Learning the Art of Helping: Building Blocks and Techniques (Third Edition).

Mark E. Young. Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall (2005).

**WORKBOOK:** Exercises in the Art of Helping (Third Edition).

Mark E. Young & Samantha Chromy. Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall (2005).

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:**

This course will introduce you to the basic skills used in therapeutic encounters. You will have the opportunity to develop basic verbal and nonverbal listening skills that contribute to constructive interpersonal communication and constitute the fundamentals of being an effective “helper.” This will entail learning skills that may be quite different from any you have learned thus far in your coursework in psychology. Sometimes these skills may come very easily to you and seem like common sense; sometimes they will feel awkward and artificial until you have had the chance to practice them. The lecture portion of the course will introduce you to basic therapeutic skills, and will also briefly explore various modalities of psychotherapy as a way of understanding how these basic skills are used in various therapeutic settings. In order to enhance your facility with basic therapeutic skills, a major component of the course, in addition to lecture, will be participatory. You will have the opportunity to participate in workshops during class and to complete videotaped role plays in which you will demonstrate your grasp of the helping skills learned in class.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

Class Attendance and Participation: Class attendance and participation is critically important to your learning in this course and your grade. Should you miss class, it is your responsibility to make sure you catch up on all notes and exercises completed in class. **A word of caution:** Students are often juggling many responsibilities in addition to taking classes. If your current situation does not allow you to attend class consistently, I would encourage you to carefully consider whether or not this course is appropriate for you at this time. I cannot accommodate students who are unable to regularly attend class because of family conflicts, work conflicts, etc.

Workshops: Students will participate in in-class Workshop groups of 3-4 people. In each group, one student will play a counselor role, one student will play a “client” role, and one or two students will provide feedback to the counselor. Students will rotate among the roles. Feedback-providers will fill out feedback forms for their “counselor” classmates. These feedback forms will be handed in for a grade as well as to show that you were there to participate in the workshop that week. Workshop time is extremely important to help students practice their helping skills. *Workshop assignments absolutely cannot be made up should you not be present in class that day.*

Videotaped Role Plays: You will be required to create four videotaped role plays with another member of the class. Students are not required to choose the same partner for all four videos, though it is recommended for your own experience of continuity and comfort. These four videos will be used to evaluate your mastery of class, book, and lecture material. There will be no paper-and-pencil exams. Prior to the due date of each video, I will distribute a more detailed grading sheet detailing the specific skills you will need to demonstrate in that video. In these role plays, each student will act as the counselor and demonstrate the skills discussed in class. First, one student will serve as the counselor while one acts as the client. Then, the students will reverse roles so that each person has a videotape of herself/himself as counselor. In order to preserve continuity among the tapes and to best simulate true therapy sessions, students are to role play using the same ongoing therapy topic for all four tapes. In other words, when each student plays the client, he/she should discuss the same ongoing issue in all four tapes. The first two role plays will be 10 minutes long **per student**. The second and third role plays will be 15 minutes long **per student**. Tapes may occasionally be shown to the class to demonstrate a variety of points (but never to showcase a student's mistakes). These role plays will be graded based on the skills the student exhibits in the tape, and all students will be given written feedback on their skills. In addition, for **all videotapes** the student should make a written transcript of the tape (a transcript is a verbatim script of what each person said in the session, like the script of a play). Points will be taken off a student's grade if the written transcripts are not turned in at the time the videos are due. This is not meant to torture you! Sometimes video tapes fail, or have poor audio. The written transcript ensures that I am able to fairly evaluate your work and avoids students having to redo role play tapes.

Writing Assignments: In order to facilitate the processing of your thoughts and experiences while learning helping and communication techniques, four short reaction papers will be due during the semester. These papers should focus on your thoughts and experiences about the material learned so far in the semester. The general topic for each paper is outlined in the "Assignments Due" section of the syllabus schedule. Each paper should be typed in double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-pt. font. The papers should be more than one page but no longer than three pages.

### **GRADING SYSTEM:**

Video Role Play 1	100 points
Video Role Play 2	100 points
Video Role Play 3	100 points
Video Role Play 4	100 points
Workshops	160 points (20 points each)
Reaction Papers	40 points (10 points each)
<b><u>Total:</u></b>	<b>600 points</b>

If you are interested in knowing what your grade is in the class, simply add your total number of points you have earned on each of your assignments, divide the total by 600 and multiply by 100. This will provide you with your grade in percentage form.

Grading Scale: A+ = 97-100; A = 93-96; A- = 90-92; B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B- = 80-82; C+ = 77-79; C = 73-76; C- = 70-72; D+ = 67-69; D = 63-66; D- = 60-62; F = 59 or less.

**The GMU Honor system and Code will be adhered to in this course.**

Make-up Policy: As stated previously, class attendance and participation is essential to success in this course. Should you miss class, lecture notes may be obtained from a fellow student in the class.

Workshops cannot be made up. If you miss an in-class workshop, you will only be permitted to make up the 20 points missed if you can provide documentation of incarceration, hospitalization or severe illness, jury duty, disability or death of an immediate family member. In order to make up points missed, you will be required to write a 5 to 7 page paper on a topic of the instructor's discretion pertaining to the course material covered by the workshop which was missed.

**Late Assignments:** Late assignments will loose 10% for each day that they are late. If an emergency situation arises (see examples above) that prevents you from completing your work on time, these situations will be dealt with on an individual basis when you can provide documentation of the emergency.

**Extra Credit:** You may earn up to 10 extra credit points for participating in a psychology or related discipline research project if you are willing to provide me with a verification slip which will be provided to you at the time of participation and a write-up regarding your participation. The write-up should be 1-3 paragraphs in length and should include the hypothesis of the research project and a brief statement of what your participation entailed. PARTICIPATION ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH TO EARN YOU EXTRA CREDIT. YOU MUST ALSO SUBMIT A WRITE-UP!!! You can locate studies through the Experimentrix web page on the GMU website ([www.experimentrix.com/gmu](http://www.experimentrix.com/gmu)). You may also participate in outside activities that relate to the course provided that you can demonstrate its relevance to the course in your write-up.

### **RESOURCES:**

This course will utilize WebCT to post lecture outlines, study guides and instructions for writing assignments and videotaped role plays. It is your responsibility to retrieve these materials from the website as they are needed for class. Visit <http://webCT41.gmu.edu> and logon using your email address (minus the @gmu.edu). Your password is the same as your email password. If you have difficulty logging on to WebCT, please contact the ITU Support Center at (703) 993-8870, or visit their office in Innovation Hall 233. I, sadly, am not a computer guru. ☹

### **SENSITIVE TOPICS:**

It is possible that sensitive topics of a personal nature may be discussed among students in our class during in-class workshops. We will discuss a confidentiality policy during our first class so that everyone can feel comfortable fully participating in class. It is expected that class discussions will remain mature and respectful of all opinions and perspectives, including those which differ from your own. If you find yourself experiencing negative feelings associated with the class activities or discussions, be aware that free counseling services are available to all students through the **George Mason University Counseling Center** (SUB I, Room 364; (703) 993-2380). I also more than happy to discuss with students any difficulties they are having and assist them in obtaining help if necessary.

### **DISABILITY RESOURCES:**

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 academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

### **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF CLASS TOPICS AND EXAMS:**

This schedule may change as a result of inclement weather or pace of the class. Students will be notified of changes by the instructor.

Aug 29 – **Topic:** Introduction to Helping **Reading:** Chapter 1

Aug 31 – **Topic:** Introduction to Helping, cont.

Sept 5 – **Topic:** Basic Foundations of Helping Skills **Reading:** Chapter 2

Sept 7 – **Topic:** The Therapeutic Relationship **Reading:** Chapter 3

Sept 12 – **Topic:** Introduction to Client-Helper Differences **Reading:** Chapter 4 **Assignment Due:** Reaction Paper #1 **Topic:** Therapy video viewed in class

**\*\*Last day to add/drop without tuition penalty\*\***

Sept 14 – **Topic:** Introduction to Client-Helper Differences, cont.

Sept 19 – **Topic:** Nonverbal and Invitational Skills **Reading:** Chapter 5

Sept 21 – **Topic:** Nonverbal and Invitational Skills, cont.

- Workshop 1

Sept 26 – **Topic:** Reflecting Skills - Paraphrasing **Reading:** Chapter 6

Sept 28 – **Topic:** Reflecting Skills – Paraphrasing, cont.

- Workshop 2

**\*\*Last day to drop without academic penalty – Sept 29\*\***

Oct 3 – **Topic:** Reflecting Skills – Reflecting Feelings **Reading:** Chapter 7 **Assignment Due:** Reaction Paper 2 **Topic:** Your experience in the in-class workshops

Oct 5 – **Topic:** Reflecting Skills – Reflecting Feelings, cont.

- Workshop 3

Oct 10 – **NO CLASS – COLUMBUS DAY RECESS**

Oct 12 – **Topic:** Reflecting Skills – Reflecting Meaning and Summarizing **Reading:** Chapter 8 **Assignment Due:** Videotaped Role Play #1 (10 min). **Topic:** Nonverbal/Invitational Skills; Reflecting Content

Oct 17 – **Topic:** Reflecting Skills – Reflecting Meaning and Summarizing

- Workshop 4

Oct 19 – **Topic:** Challenging Skills: Giving Feedback and Confronting the Client **Reading:** Chapter 9 **Assignment Due:** Reaction Paper 3 **Topic:** Your experience making the role play videos

Oct 24 – **Topic:** Challenging Skills: Giving Feedback and Confronting the Client, cont.

- Workshop 5

Oct 26 – **Topic:** Assessment of Clients and Making a Diagnosis **Reading:** Chapter 10 **Assignment Due:** Videotaped Role Play #2 (10 min). **Topic:** Reflecting Feelings; Reflecting Meaning and Summarizing

Oct 31 – **Topic:** Assessment of Clients and Making a Diagnosis, cont.

- Workshop 6

Nov 2 – **Topic:** Goal Setting Skills: Where to Go with the Client **Reading:** Chapter 11

Nov 7 – **Topic:** Goal Setting Skills, cont.

- Workshop 7

Nov 9 – Extra supervision preparing for Videotaped Role Play 3

Nov 14 – **Topic:** Solution Skills: Helping the Client Find Solutions **Reading:** Chapter 12 **Assignment Due:** Videotaped Role Play #3 (15 min). **Topic:** Challenging Skills, Goal Setting Skills

Nov 16 – **Topic:** Solution Skills, cont.

- Workshop 8

Nov 21 – Extra help preparing for Videotaped Role Play 4

Nov 23 – **Topic:** Evaluating Client’s Progress and Termination of Therapy **Reading:** Chapter 13

Nov 28 – **Topic:** Evaluation and Termination, cont.

Nov 30 – **Topic:** Curative Factors and Advanced Skills: Part I **Reading:** Chapter 14 **Assignment Due:** Videotaped Role Play #4 (15 minutes). **Topic:** Solution Skills, All previous skills practiced

Dec 5 – **Topic:** Curative Factors and Advanced Skills: Part I , cont.

Dec 7 – **Topic:** Curative Factors and Advanced Skills: Part II **Reading:** Chapter 15 **Assignment Due:** Reaction Paper 4 **Topic:** How your skills/perspectives have changed this semester