

PSYCHOLOGY 326: THERAPEUTIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS
SPRING 2006, SECTION 001, ENTERPRISE HALL RM. 174
TUESDAY & THURSDAY 9:00 AM – 10:15 AM

Instructor: Christine Sylvest, M.A. **Email:** csylves1@gmu.edu
Office: Thompson Hall 131 ****E-mail is the best way to reach me****
Office Hours: Thursdays 10:30 am – 11:30 am (or by appointment)
TA Office Phone: 703-993-1349
Instructor Mailbox: Graduate student mailboxes (in the hallway of David King Hall)

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The major goal of this course will be to provide students with an opportunity to develop basic verbal and nonverbal listening skills that enhance constructive interpersonal communication. A special emphasis will be placed on the use of these skills in therapeutic situations. We will additionally briefly explore various modalities of psychotherapy as a way to understand how these basic skills are used.

COURSE MATERIALS:

Young, M.E. (2005). *Learning the Art of Helping: Building Blocks and Techniques (3rd ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

There are certain basic skills that are essential for a counselor or a therapist. In this course, you will learn the fundamentals of being an effective “helper.” In addition to the lecture component, this course involves extensive class participation, including three videotaped role-plays. Rather than learning only theory, you will get hands-on practice in refining your skills. During class time set aside called “Workshop,” students will be broken up into feedback groups made up of three or four students and practice their counseling skills.

I expect and hope that many students will have experience in therapeutic communication prior to taking this class. In order to succeed in this course, you must expect to be learning skills that are different from what you already know. Sometimes these skills will seem like second nature to you and incorporate a lot of common sense. Other times the skills will feel awkward and artificial until you have practiced them and gotten a solid grasp of them. It is important to have an open mind to the different skills.

Important Note: Please keep in mind that the following is a tentative syllabus and topics and assignments can be changed, added, or deleted at any time at the discretion of the instructor to improve the quality of the course. I will do my best to announce such changes ahead of time in class.

| Class Dates | Lecture Topics | Reading Due | Assignments Due |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------------|--|
| Tues, 1/24 | Introduction to Helping | Chapter 1 | |
| Thurs, 1/26 | NO CLASS | | |
| Tues, 1/31 & Thurs, 2/2 | Basic Foundations of Helping Skills and The Therapeutic Relationship | Chapter 2 & Chapter 3 | 2/2 – Writing Assignment #1 due. Topic: therapy video viewed in class |
| Tues, 2/7 & Thurs 2/9 | Intro to Client-Helper Differences | Chapter 4 | |

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|-------------------------------|---|------------|---|
| Tues, 2/14 ♥ & Thurs, 2/16 | Nonverbal and Invitational Skills Workshop #1 | Chapter 5 | |
| Tues, 2/21 & Thurs, 2/23 | Reflecting Skills – Paraphrasing Workshop #2 | Chapter 6 | |
| Tues, 2/28 & Thurs, 3/2 | Reflecting Skills: Reflecting Feelings Workshop #3 | Chapter 7 | 2/28: Writing Assignment #2 due. Topic: your experience of the in-class workshops |
| Tues, 3/7 & Thurs, 3/9 | Reflecting Skills: Reflecting Meaning and Summarizing Workshop #4 – Reflecting Meaning and Summarizing | Chapter 8 | 3/9: Video Role Play #1 due |
| Tues, 3/14 & Thurs, 3/16 | ☀ Spring Break | | |
| Tues, 3/21 & Thurs, 3/23 | Challenging Skills: Giving Feedback and Confronting the Client Workshop #5 | Chapter 9 | |
| Tues, 3/28 & Thurs, 3/30 | Goal Setting Skills: Where to Go with the Client Workshop #6 | Chapter 11 | 3/28: Video Role Play #2 due 3/30: Writing Assignment #3 due. Topic: your experience making the role play videos |
| Tues, 4/4 & Thurs, 4/6 | Solution Skills: Helping the Client Find Solutions Workshop #7 | Chapter 12 | |
| Tues, 4/11 & Thurs, 4/13 | Evaluating Client’s Progress and Termination of Therapy | Chapter 13 | 4/13: Video Role Play #3 due |
| Tues, 4/18 & Thurs, 4/20 | Assessment of Clients and Making a Diagnosis | Chapter 10 | |
| Tues, 4/25 & Thurs, 4/27 | Curative Factors and Advanced Skills: Part I | Chapter 14 | |
| Tues, 5/2 & Thurs, 5/4 | Curative Factors and Advanced Skills: Part II | Chapter 15 | 5/2: Video Role Play #4 due 5/4: Writing Assignment #4 due. Topic: how your skills/perspectives have changed this semester |

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING PROCEDURES:

1. Class Attendance and Participation

Because class discussions and exercises are an essential part of your learning experience in this course, as well as your grade, class attendance is critically important. Active participation in class is strongly encouraged, including asking questions and offering topics for discussion. Your presence in class is essential in order to complete all the requirements of this course. If you miss class, you are responsible for all notes and exercises completed in class.

At times during class discussion or Workshop, sensitive topics of a personal nature are likely to be discussed among the students in our class. We will discuss a confidentiality policy during our first class in order for everyone to feel comfortable fully participating in class.

2. Workshop

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 miss a Workshop class.*

3. Videotaped Role Plays

You will be required to create four videotaped role plays with another member of the class. Students will choose the same partner for all four videos. These four videos will be used to evaluate your mastery of class, book, and lecture material. There will be no paper-and-pencil exams. There is no final exam in this course. Prior to the due date of each video, I will distribute a more detailed grading sheet so that you know what 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. The following is a brief description of each role play video:

Role Play #1 – 10 min

Due: 3/9/06

Nonverbal/Invitational Skills
Reflecting Content

Role Play #2 – 10 min

Due: 3/28/06

Reflecting Feeling
Reflecting Meaning & Summarizing

Role Play #3 – 15 min

Due: 4/13/06

Challenging Skills
Goal Setting Skills

Role Play #4 – 15 min

Due: 5/2/06

Solution Skills
All previous skills practiced

4. Written 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.

POINTS FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT IN PSYC 326

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Video Role Play 1 | 100 points |
| Video Role Play 2 | 100 points |
| Video Role Play 3 | 100 points |
| Video Role Play 4 | 100 points |
| Workshop | 140 points (20 points each) |
| Reaction Papers | 40 points (10 points each) |
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| TOTAL | 580 points |

GMU's plus/minus grading scale will be used in determining your final average:

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)

A FEW IMPORTANT POLICIES:

- All students are expected to be familiar with and to comply with the George Mason University Honor Code as found in your Student Handbook. The Honor Code prohibits any mode of cheating, plagiarism, or lying. The following two websites further define plagiarism and explain how the Honor System at GMU operates:
 - <http://mason.gmu.edu/%7Emontecin/plagiarism.htm>
 - <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/unilife/honorcode.html>
- **Late assignments will be docked 10% for each class 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; however, keep in mind that each student **MUST** provide documentation of all emergencies (car accidents, illness, funerals, etc.) in order to be excused from the late penalty. The most important steps a student can take in such a situation are to alert the instructor as soon as the situation that will interfere with your ability to complete the classwork arises (or before, if possible).
- Oftentimes students are juggling many responsibilities in addition to taking classes. Please note that this class requires you to be able to attend consistently in order to gain the most benefit from the course. If your current situation does not allow you to attend class regularly, I would encourage you to carefully consider whether or not this course is appropriate for you at this time.
- 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.
- Last day to drop classes without tuition liability: February 7, 2006
- Last day to add classes: February 7, 2006
- Last day to drop classes with no academic liability: February 24, 2006