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PSYX 625.01: Clinical Assessment

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Psychology 625 – Clinical Assessment

Spring 2017

Course Location and Time

CPC 121

Monday 2:00 – 3:50

Instructor Information

Instructor: Craig McFarland, Ph.D.

Office: Skaggs 202

Phone: 406.243.6845

Email: craig.mcfarland@umontana.edu

Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday 1:00-2:00; and by appointment

Course Objectives

The primary objective of this class is to provide you with the opportunity to develop and refine clinical assessment skills. Through this course, you will be able to put your knowledge to practical use, while gaining experience working with a variety of populations and learning how to address referral questions that may be unique to those populations. You will gain experience with all phases of clinical assessment, including conducting goal-directed interviews, creating and administering appropriate test batteries, interpreting test results, conceptualizing cases, and making differential diagnoses, when appropriate. Additionally, you will gain experience writing clinical reports, paying particular attention to presenting problems, the functional impact of those problems, behavioral observations, and the integration of test data with information gleaned from interviews. Finally, you will learn to generate individually-tailored recommendations for both patients and their referring providers.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate development of a variety of skills that are crucial to clinical assessment, including interviewing, administering test batteries, conceptualizing cases, and arriving at diagnostic conclusions, when appropriate.
2. Students will also refine their report-writing abilities, and become more proficient at considering the functional impact of a presenting problem.
3. Students will learn to think critically about the functional impairment that may result from a presenting problem, and learn to generate appropriate recommendations.

Course Requirements

Attendance

Due to the small, seminar style of this class, it is imperative that you attend class each week. Each of you possesses unique strengths and perspectives that will contribute to the learning experience of the entire group. Conversely, your absence will detract from the experience of others. If you are unable to attend class, please inform your partner and I prior to the class. **Two** or more unexcused absences will negatively impact your grade.

Clinical Assessments

Each of you will be paired with another student, with whom you will collaborate on assessments throughout the semester. You and your partner will take turns leading assessments, so that you will each act as “Lead Evaluator” and “Support Evaluator” on cases. Prior to each evaluation, I will meet with you and your partner to review the case and to consider appropriate test materials. We will meet again after you have completed the evaluation to discuss results and begin to conceptualize the case.

I will assign referrals to each of you, after which you will make an initial contact call to determine the suitability of the referral. It is your responsibility to find time in your schedule to complete evaluations. Occasionally, you may need to be flexible in order to accommodate a patient’s availability, but you should attempt to identify a single time (or at least a single day) that will work for each of your assessments throughout the semester. When scheduling, it will be very important that you keep in mind when you are to discuss the results of that evaluation with the class, so that you make sure to schedule the evaluation well in advance of that date. Also, before finalizing an appointment, please make sure that a testing room will be available at that time.

Group Supervision/Didactic Seminar

The early part of the semester (~ first 6 weeks) will be primarily didactic in nature. During the first few weeks we will focus on several key aspects of assessment, including conducting a mental status exam, approaches to interviewing and report writing, as well as an introduction to tests that we will use throughout the semester.

Following the first few weeks, class meetings will combine group supervision with an occasional brief informal didactic series. The format of our meetings will be as follows:

1. Brief check-in with all pairs to discuss progress/concerns, etc.
2. Informal discussion of new referral questions. Each pair will present their new referral questions (including referral source, primary concerns, etc.) to the group. As a group we will discuss the nature of the referral questions and begin to think about appropriate approaches to the assessment.
3. Case presentation provided by the pair that most recently completed an evaluation
 - Referral question
 - Brief history/patient profile
 - Test selection, with rationale
 - Test results
 - Clinical impressions
4. Occasionally, if referrals slow down or we have difficulty scheduling new evaluations we will read 2 articles on a particular topic and discuss them as a group. The readings will be posted to moodle at least 1 week prior to our discussing them in class. Prior to meeting to discuss the articles, each student should email two questions to me that can be used to stimulate discussion in class.

Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this class. Instead, journal articles will constitute required reading and will be posted to Moodle periodically throughout the semester. Additionally, recommended readings will be posted on occasion.

Student Evaluation

Grades will be based on class attendance and participation (including preparation for article discussions), the quality of your evaluations and reports, preparation for supervision, and your ability (and growth) to work effectively and professionally as a colleague. In addition, your grade will be impacted by your ability to incorporate feedback throughout the semester and to demonstrate improvement in the skills that are required to effectively conduct a clinical assessment.

Important Dates

February 20th: No Class (President’s Day)

March 20th: Spring break

Course Guidelines and Policies

Academic Integrity

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](#).

Disability Modifications

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and [Disability Services for Students](#). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or call 406.243.2243. I will work you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

Add/Drop Deadline

Please take note of important registration dates listed in the Fall academic calendar. November 2nd is the last day to drop classes with an add/drop form. After that date, no petitions to drop the course will be signed and no Incompletes will be given except in documentable emergency situations.

Student Feedback

As with any graduate level course, your feedback and constructive comments for improving the course are always welcome. Because each of you has unique interests and training goals, I will actively seek your feedback at various points throughout the semester, but want you to feel free to share any thoughts you may have at any time.