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PSYX 634.01: Advanced Applications of Clinical Methods

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Psychology 634 – Clinical Assessment

Fall 2022

Course Location and Time

CPC 121

Mondays 1:00 – 2:50pm

Instructor Information

Instructor: Laura Kirsch, Ph.D.

Office: Skaggs 364

Phone: 406-243-6817 (office), 520-245-4881 (cell)

Email: laura.kirsch@umt.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-3pm, and by appointment

Course Objectives

The primary objective of this class is to provide you with the opportunity to develop and refine your clinical assessment and report writing 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, reviewing collateral information, 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, there may be opportunities for you to learn to generate individually-tailored recommendations for clients and 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.
4. Students will gain experience working with a variety of clients in an ethical and professional manner.

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 me prior to the class. **Two or more** unexcused absences will negatively impact your grade. If you are unable to attend class in person due to COVID-related issues, please contact me to arrange remote attendance.

Clinical Assessments

We will be conducting assessments based on referrals to the CPC. Referral sources vary, and cases will be selected for students based on their interests and experience, as well as their availability. Given that assessment appointments tend to be fairly lengthy, please identify several large blocks of time each week that you are available to conduct evaluations. You (and your partner) will be responsible for scheduling appointments with your clients. You are also responsible for notifying me about upcoming appointments. After each assessment, you are required to draft a formal report and to make recommended revisions in a timely manner.

Group Supervision/Didactic Seminar

Class meetings will combine group supervision with an occasional brief informal didactic series. The format of our meetings will be as follows:

1. Check-in regarding all active and upcoming cases.
2. Informal discussion of new referral questions. Each student will present his/her new referral questions (including primary concerns, etc.) to the group. As a group we will discuss the nature of the referral questions and consider appropriate approaches to the assessment.
3. Case presentation provided by students who have most recently completed an evaluation
 - Referral question
 - Brief history/patient profile
 - Test results
 - Clinical impressions
4. Occasionally, if referrals slow down or we have difficulty scheduling new evaluations we will read 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.

Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this class. Instead, book chapters and journal articles will constitute required reading and will be available on Moodle.

Required readings:

- [APA's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct](#)
- Clinical Psychology Center Policy and Procedure manual (link on Moodle)
- American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed., text revision). <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425787>

Recommended readings (available as e-books at UM library):

- Groth-Marnat, G. (2009). *Handbook of psychological assessment* (5th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Schneider, W.J., Lichtenberger, E.O., Mather, N., & Kaufman, N.L. (2018). *Essentials of assessment report writing* (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Student Evaluation

Grades will be based on class attendance and participation (including preparation for article discussions), the quality of your evaluations and reports, your professionalism*, and your ability to incorporate feedback and show improvement over the course of the semester.

*Professionalism includes your ability to work both independently and with a partner, reliability in scheduling initial and follow-up appointments with your clients, being well-prepared for client interactions, providing draft assessment reports in a timely manner, editing reports in a timely manner, and seeking out and responding to supervision appropriately. It also encompasses abiding by all CPC policies and procedures.

Important Dates

September 5: Labor Day Holiday, no classes

December 12th – 16th: Finals week

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 [Office For Disability Equity](#). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with ODE, please contact them to discuss your concerns. I will work you and ODE to provide an appropriate modification.

Add/Drop Deadline

Please take note of important registration dates listed in the academic calendar. September 19th is the last day to add/drop classes on Cyberbear. After that date, instructor and advisor approval is required.

COVID-19 Policies

This course abides by all University of Montana COVID-19 Guidelines, including the following:

- Stay home if you feel sick and/or if exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, and please contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330
- Up-to-Date COVID-19 Information from the University of Montana
 - UM Coronavirus Website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus>

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.