EDCP 310: Peer Counseling Theory and Skills  
Spring 2011

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Meeting Time & Place: Tuesday & Thursday, 2.00pm – 3.15pm  
Benjamin Building 2102

Office: Office hours: Thursday 1-2pm or by appointment  
Office: Cole Field House B100K


Required Readings: SELECTIONS from the following – Available in class, electronically or through the library reserve. Instructor will announce availability prior to due date.


Additional readings may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Required Equipment: You are responsible for bringing a functional audio recorder and an audio tape (if you are not using a digital recorder) to class on 5/3/11. Any type of recorder that allows for transferring of recordings on portable devices* (such as USB, CD, cassette, etc.) is acceptable as long as the instructor will be able to check the recording. Alternatively, you may use your laptop to record as long as the quality of sound is adequate and you submit your recording on a portable device. *Not all digital recorders will allow you to transfer recordings onto a USB or CD.

Please check your recorder before class on 5/3/11 to ensure that voices are audible and play back at normal speed. If the instructor determines a tape to be inaudible, the assignment will have to be repeated outside of class. Keep recordings in a secure location to safeguard confidentiality!
Course Description and Objectives
This course explores various counseling theories and skills of peer helping relationships. Theories and skills will be taught at a level appropriate for students seeking basic level training for use in peer counseling settings. Students should work toward the following course objectives:

- Understand multiple theoretical frameworks of counseling, including their similarities and differences
- Learn to apply specific counseling skills
- Think critically about counseling theories and skills, including the interaction of individual problems and relationships with larger context/society
- Develop your own beliefs, opinions, and preferences of counseling theories and strategies

Please note that while counseling theories and strategies will be reviewed in this course, completion of this course does not qualify students to practice counseling as counselors or therapists without additional training and supervision from a qualified professional.

Course Structure and Course Participant Responsibilities
This course is designed with active student engagement, collaboration, and participation in mind. Classes have been structured to include small-group and large-group discussions, interactive exercises, lectures, in-class videos, case examples, and clinical vignettes. Your responsibilities in this class will include:

- Completing assigned readings before class
- Turning in papers/projects on-time
- Acting with integrity
- Raising questions, offering comments, and responding to me and your classmates with openness, respect, and intellectual curiosity
  - You are very much encouraged to explore and express your opinions inspired by course materials.
  - In this classroom, there is no such thing as a dumb question or a wrong way to believe, think, or feel. I expect all of us to treat each other with respect and to be open to hearing viewpoints different from our own.
  - If you are uncomfortable regarding some issue between you and another classmate, I encourage you to work it out with that person; if you are still having trouble, please come speak with me. I can’t make the environment better if I don’t know what’s happening and, while I try to be aware of classroom dynamics, there are a lot of you.
- Providing constructive feedback about the course
  - I am very committed to making this a good learning experience for each of you. I encourage you to talk with me at any point if you have questions or concerns about the course content, assignments, or your experience in this classroom. I will ask you to provide more formal evaluations of the course at the mid-point and end of the semester.
Course Expectations and Policies

Attendance. This course relies heavily on critical thinking and discussion and on learning through in-class exercises. It is imperative that each class member attend and participate in every class session. As such, attendance and in-class participation are ongoing requirements and are an integral part of the work of the course, and unexcused absences and excessive tardiness will negatively affect your grade. In addition to consistent attendance and participation in in-class discussions and activities, this includes having all readings completed prior to class, and coming to class with questions or points of interest from the readings for our discussion. **If you feel unable to attend class regularly and/or feel that you cannot be on time for class, please drop the course.**

University policy excuses the absences of students for illness, religious observances, participation in university activities at the request of university authorities, and circumstances beyond the student’s control. Students must request the excuse in writing and supply appropriate documentation.

Class cancellation: Official delays and/or closures are announced on [www.umd.edu](http://www.umd.edu) and 301-405-SNOW. If a personal emergency forces the instructor to cancel class, an attempt will be made to send an email to students and to post information on the classroom door.

Participation in role plays. In order to have realistic helping sessions in which students can practice peer helping skills, all students are expected to participate as clients during practice exercises. In the client role, **you have two participation options:**

1. You may choose to disclose personal concerns. You are not expected to share very intimate details or problems, but rather to talk about some minor issues or problems in your life. Examples of appropriate topics are listed in the required text on page 22.
2. You may assume the role of a client (i.e., adopt a persona). In this way you are not disclosing your own personal information, but are acting as if you were a client. You should think about your character and consider the issues of the person, and how this character might react cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally in a helping situation.

Differences in opinion, values, and attitudes are to be expected, and the expression of these differences is encouraged. Any student who experiences difficulty in participating for any reason is encouraged to speak with the instructor immediately.

**Students will never be required to disclose personal information nor will they be evaluated on this dimension, but students often choose to disclose personal concerns during participation in the practice of peer counseling skills. Moreover, students are not ever required to disclose to anyone which participation option was chosen at any given time.**

Confidentiality & respect. Students are expected to respect their classmates at all times, particularly when practicing peer counseling skills. Acting professionally includes keeping everything you hear confidential, treating others with respect, and paying attention.
Confidentiality with regard to client/peer material heard in class is an absolute requirement, regardless of whether or not the material is known or assumed to be personal or fictional. Disregard of this confidentiality policy will result in failure of this course.

For the sake of students’ safety, there are three circumstances in which students should inform the instructor about peers’ personal disclosures and under which the instructor must break student confidentiality:
1) Student intent to harm self or other(s)
2) Student report of victim or perpetrator of any type of abuse
3) Report of student information has been mandated by court order

Handling of personal concerns. Practice sessions in this course should not be used as a substitute for therapy. The purpose of self-disclosure is to offer learning opportunities to your peers. Students who are experiencing personal distress may consult with the instructor and/or contact the University of Maryland Counseling Center at 301-314-7651 (x47651).

Accommodations for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities should inform the instructor within the first week of the semester of any needed accommodations. The instructor will consult with the Department Chair and the Disability Support Service (x47682) and arrangements will be made to determine and implement appropriate academic accommodations.

Statement on religious observances: The University System of Maryland provides that students should not be penalized because of the observance of their religious beliefs; students shall be given an opportunity, whenever feasible, to make up within a reasonable time, any academic assignment that is missed due to individual participation in religious observances. Please notify me in writing within the first three weeks of the semester regarding any anticipated absences for religious observances.

Come to class with an open mind and a willingness to take risks. This course is designed as a beginning course in peer counseling. You are not expected to have counseling experience. Don’t allow yourself to become intimidated. Hopefully you will challenge your fears and push yourself to become an active and involved participant.

Requirements Regarding Course Assignments
1. Assignments are due in hard copy at the beginning of class (9:30am) on which date they are due. Papers will not be accepted via email.
2. Late assignments will be penalized by 5% per business day (e.g., 95% A to 90% A-etc.). You may place late papers in the instructors’ mailbox if you have someone in the CAPS department sign, date, and time-stamp your paper. Without this verification of the time/date, I will assume it was turned in on the day I pick it up and make deductions accordingly.
3. Absences are not a valid excuse for late or incomplete work. If you know in advance that you will not be able to attend class, it is your responsibility to turn assignments in to the instructor before the class time during which they are due.
4. **More than 4 absences (excused or unexcused) will result in your automatically failing the class.**
5. **Each unexcused absence will lower your participation grade by 10%.**
6. When a student is absent (excused or unexcused), he or she is responsible for the information missed in class, including but not limited to assignments, change in due dates, content of discussion and/or lecture, and handouts.
7. All assignments should be typed and double-spaced, with 1 inch margins and Times New Roman 12-pt. font. Cover pages are not necessary.
9. Papers will be evaluated using the following criteria: (a) how well the specific goals of the assignment are addressed, (b) citing of course material/other sources to support your ideas, (c) writing quality (i.e., grammar, spelling), and (d) attention to page length and formatting requirements.

**NOTE:** The grade you earn on written work will be based on the quality of the material you produce. In other words, you do not earn points just by turning something in. I believe you will continue to be judged by your ability to communicate orally and in writing at every stage of your future educational/career life. To the degree that I can in a peer counseling course, I am invested in helping you improve these skills. The Writing Center ([http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter](http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter)) also provides excellent and free resources for improving student writing.

**Course Assignments**

**Attendance and Participation (20% of final grade)**
The ability to learn to be an effective peer counselor depends on your presence for class lecture, discussion, and experiential activities. Additionally, it disrupts class dynamics if one or more students attend class on an irregular basis, arrive late, or leave class early. As such, attendance and in-class participation are ongoing requirements and are an integral part of the work of the course, and unexcused absences and excessive tardiness will negatively affect your grade. More than one unexcused absence will significantly lower your participation grade, as will late arrivals to or early departure from class. In addition to consistent attendance and participation in in-class discussions and activities, this includes having all readings completed prior to class, and coming to class with questions or points of interest from the readings for our discussion. **Again, if you feel unable to attend class regularly and/or feel that you cannot be on time for class, please drop the course.**

In accordance with University policy, absences will be considered “excused” for the following reasons: “illness of the student, or illness of a dependent as defined by Board of Regents policy on family and medical leave; religious observance (where the nature of the observance prevents the student from being present during the class period); participation in university activities at the request of University authorities; and compelling circumstance beyond the student’s control.” Additionally, “Students claiming excused
absence must apply in writing and furnish documentary support for their assertion that absence resulted from one of these causes.”

Attendance and participation will be counted as a check, a check plus, or a check minus. No check will be awarded for unexcused absences. Typical participation will earn you a check. Those who are late, leave early, or have less-than-expected participation will likely earn a check minus. Those that go above and beyond in their class participation will earn a check plus. This includes behavior such as above average participation rates, having particularly insightful comments, full and enthusiastic small group participation, etc. A check roughly aligns with a mid-ranged B. Average level class participation earns you an average (meets but does not exceed expectation) grade. Please note that just showing up to class does not automatically earn you an A in class participation. A check plus is equivalent to an A+ and a check minus is equivalent to a C-. For example, if you receive checks about half of the time and check pluses about half of the time, you will likely end with an A- in class participation. Every missed class will drag down that average. Tardiness, being unprepared for class, and/or not participating in class discussions, activities, and assignments will result in a loss of part or all of the attendance and participation points for that class period. Your lowest score will be thrown out of the average at the end of the semester. Attendance will be taken during each class.

In addition, short, unannounced, in-class “writing assignments” (quizzes) may be given, which will also be graded on a check, check plus, check minus scale. These grades will be incorporated into your total class participation grade. Only students who have an excused absence, will be allowed to make up the points for these assignments.

Case Analysis—60% – 3 (20% each)
Case Analysis #1: Person-centered Theory
Case Analysis #2: Psychoanalytic/dynamic Theory
Case Analysis #3: Cognitive Behavioral Theory

The instructor will provide a fictional description of an individual’s background and current difficulties. For each case analysis apply the appropriate theory listed above. Your case must include the sections described below. I suggest you use these section names as headings to label each section of your analysis.

1. **Origins of client personality/problems/symptoms.** Describe this theory’s view of human nature. From this theoretical perspective how does one develop symptoms and problems? Ask yourself how this theoretical approach helps you to understand the client presented in the case (e.g. client’s personality, patterns of behavior). All the theories we cover in the course have their own perspective on the nature, meaning, and etiology of psychological problems and symptoms.

2. **Focus and course of counseling.** According to this theoretical perspective, what are the goals of counseling? What kinds of things would you focus on? What techniques or strategies would you use?

3. **Role of the counselor and the counseling relationship.** When working from this theoretical orientation, what would your relationship with your client look like? What is
your role as the counselor? The client’s role? Your responsibilities? The client’s responsibilities?

4. **Cultural factors.** Please discuss how any cultural or social issue within the case might be relevant to the concerns that the individual in the case has presented (based on your own thoughts/opinions, and readings on multicultural therapy) AND whether/how the theory under analysis might conceive these issues. (Overlap with the other sections is permissible as long as this issue is covered adequately.) Include the adequacy of the theory in dealing with social/cultural issues in your discussion of the theory’s strengths and limitations.

5. **Strengths and limitations** of the particular theoretical approach in working with this particular case. What are the benefits of using this particular approach with this specific client? Discuss several strengths and multiple limitations. Note: this section is not your critique of this theory in general but rather your critique of its utility with the specified case.

Some guidelines:

- Make your case analysis brief & succinct, approximately 3-4 double-spaced pages.
- All discussion should be rooted in the case AND the assigned theory. Show knowledge of the theory you are using. Your task is to identify concepts from the therapeutic approach and apply them to show an understanding of the case and how that therapy approach might be used beneficially.
- Remember to cite information from the case when making a claim. Each time you use a concept from a theory, you must specify what details from the case supports your drawing such a conclusion. If you simply say something from the theory is true without saying what information from the case supports your claim, then you are not writing the case properly and you will not get credit for your use of that part of the theory.
- Demonstrate good writing skills. Write directly in standard English used in academic writing. Use complete sentences, develop your paragraphs, check your spelling, and put together a paper that reflects quality.
- Develop your thoughts fully, concretely, and logically. Don’t ramble, be vague, or unnecessarily wordy.
- In terms of form and organization, your paper should flow well and your points should relate to one another. The reader should not have to struggle to understand your intended meaning.
- Please include transitions between the sections of the paper and conclude with an overall summary/conclusion, not simply with the last section I described above. Paper writing offers an opportunity to work on writing skills as well as to focus on the content.

**Audio taped Session and Reflection Paper (20%)**

During class on 5/3/11, students will participate in two audio taped (see Required Materials, above) peer counseling sessions, once as the peer counselor and once as the peer presenting a personal concern (see Course Expectations and Policies, above). The goals are to experience counseling from both perspectives and to practice integrating the skills learned during the course of the semester. Please note that the instructor will collect the materials only to check for assignment completion and to maintain the confidentiality of
Please bring any concerns about your peer clients to the instructor as soon as your sessions are completed.

The audio taped session and reflection paper will be during finals week. The reflection paper will be 5-7 typed pages. To protect your helpee’s confidentiality, please use only his/her initials (do not use names). There are two separate components to the paper: 1) reflections on your audio taped sessions, 2) reflections on you as a peer counselor (not specific to these sessions). Paper will include discussion of the following topics:

1. Your session:
   - Your experience as the client. How did it feel? Was the session helpful? What made it helpful? What did your peer counselor do (or not do) that was not helpful?
   - Your experience of being a peer counselor. How did it feel? How did the role fit for you? What did you do that was helpful? What did you do that was not helpful?
   - What personal strengths did you encounter, generally or with regard to specific skills?
   - What personal difficulties did you encounter, generally or with regard to the specific skills? Any personal challenges/weaknesses related to being a peer counselor?
   - What feelings/reactions did you have that may have influenced your use of the skill(s)?
   - Any biases evident in the sessions?
   - What did you learn about yourself?

Note: when discussing the peer counseling sessions, the focus is not on the content of the sessions but rather on the process. Instead of focusing on your client’s presenting issue, discuss what you did as a peer counselor and how you felt in the role. It is a chance for you to reflect on the experience and critique yourself as a peer counselor.

2. You as a peer counselor (not specific to session)
   - Your personal definition of peer counseling. How did you develop this definition? How does it fit for you?
   - Your view of human nature, your values and personality.
   - What have you learned about yourself this semester?
   - How do you plan to further develop your peer counseling skills after this course? What are your goals for improvement? How do envision working on these goals?

Evaluation

1. In accordance with the undergraduate catalog, a grade of I (Incomplete) is assigned only for work which has been of passing quality through the academic term but which, for good reason and with approval of the instructor, cannot be completed with in the time frame of the semester. Students for whom special circumstances may warrant an Incomplete must discuss this matter with the instructor before the last day of class.
2. Grading disputes: After the instructor returns an assignment, you have two weeks in which to review or check over your grade with the instructor. No concerns about grades will be discussed after this two-week time period.

3. Academic integrity is the foundation of learning. The university has approved a Code of Academic Integrity available on the web: [http://www.studenthonor council.umd.edu/code.html](http://www.studenthonor council.umd.edu/code.html). The code outlines prohibitions on cheating on the exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. Students who engage in academic dishonesty on an assignment for this class will receive an F (0 points) for that assignment and may receive an F in the course. There will be no warnings. All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Honor Council of the Office of Judicial Programs for further action. The standard sanction for such a violation is an XF on your transcript, which stands for “failure due to academic dishonesty.

Grading Scale:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<td>A+</td>
<td>100 – 98</td>
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<td>A</td>
<td>97 – 93</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>92 – 90</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>89 – 87</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>86 – 83</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>1/25</td>
<td>Overview of course, Introductions</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/27</td>
<td>Intro to counseling and the 3-stage model</td>
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<td>2/1</td>
<td>Counselor values &amp; ethics</td>
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<td>2/3</td>
<td>Person-centered counseling</td>
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<td>2/8</td>
<td>Video: Carl Rogers</td>
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<td>2/10</td>
<td>Overview of exploration stage; Attending, listening &amp; observing</td>
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<td>2/15</td>
<td>Multicultural counseling</td>
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<td>2/17</td>
<td>In-class case analysis</td>
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<td>2/22</td>
<td>Multicultural counseling (cntd.)</td>
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<td>2/24</td>
<td>Exploring thoughts</td>
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<td>3/1</td>
<td>Exploring feelings</td>
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<td>3/3</td>
<td>Exploring feelings (cntd.)</td>
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<td>3/8</td>
<td>Video: Clara Hill, exploration</td>
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<td>3/10</td>
<td>Integrating skills of exploration</td>
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<td>3/15</td>
<td>Psychodynamic counseling</td>
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<td>3/17</td>
<td>Video: Laura Brown</td>
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<td>3/29</td>
<td>Overview of insight stage &amp; challenges</td>
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<td>3/31</td>
<td>Video: Clara Hill, insight</td>
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<td>4/5</td>
<td>Insight &amp; Immediacy</td>
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<td>Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy</td>
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<td>4/12</td>
<td>Video: A. Beck/A. Ellis</td>
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<td>Overview of action stage</td>
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<td>4/26</td>
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<td>4/28</td>
<td>Integration of skills</td>
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<td>5/3</td>
<td>Audio tape sessions</td>
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<td>5/5</td>
<td>Review</td>
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<td>Wrap-up</td>
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TBD  Audio-taped session & final paper due

Note: Instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus as needed.