

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PCP 623 Ethical, Legal, and Professional Issues

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Spring 2003

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the ethical, legal, and professional issues involved in the practice of professional counseling and/or marital and family therapy.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- (1) Ethical Objectives: By the end of the course the student will be familiar with major ethical issues confronting all counselors and therapists. The student will become more familiar with the AAMFT and ACA "Code of Ethical Principles" along with the ethical codes of other professional associations. Other major topics of instruction will include the therapist's competence, privacy, confidentiality, privileged communication, and informed consent.
- (2) Legal Understanding: As part of the course, the student will be expected to become more familiar with the relevant legal issues in the practice of therapy. These issues will include: The therapist's responsibilities to clients and other interested parties (e.g. duty to warn), the nature of the legal system and procedures relative to MFT, family law, child custody issues, the therapist as "expert witness", malpractice and legal liability, and therapy records. Students will learn that laws affecting the practice of professional counseling and MFT vary from state to state. Students will learn the necessity of consulting text, laws, and professional organizations within the state one chooses to practice.
- (3) Professional Issues: As part of the course, the student will become more familiar with some of the professional issues in mental health. The student will become familiar with the current graduate education requirements for professional mental health practice, the therapists continued education and development, supervision; the professionalization process; relationships with colleagues; professional publications; how the therapist's orientation, values, and philosophy of life impact clients; licensure; the legislative process; and therapy research.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be expected to:

1. Understand the major ethical issues confronting all therapists (e.g. privacy, confidentiality,

privileged communication); the special concerns endemic to systemically oriented MFT, and develop a rationale for competent, ethical therapeutic behavior.

2. Examine the nature of the legal system and legal requirements for the professional practice of counseling and therapy.

3. Understand the professionalization process for professional counselors and family therapists, including graduate and continuing education, participation in professional organizations, and identity as a therapist.

TEXTBOOK

Gerald Corey. (2003). Issues and Ethics in the helping professions (6th ed.). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishers.

BASIC OUTLINE

1. Introduction to Professional Ethics
2. The Counselor as Person and Professional
3. Values and the Helping Relationship
4. Client Rights and Counselor Responsibilities
5. Confidentiality: Ethical and Legal Issues
6. Issues in Theory, Practice and Research
7. Managing Boundaries and Multiple Relationships
8. Professional Competence and Training
9. Issues in Supervision and Consultation
10. Multicultural Perspectives and Diversity
11. The Counselor in the Community
12. Ethical Issues in Marital and Family Therapy
13. Ethical Issues in Group Work

METHODOLOGY

The conduct of this course is based on the assumption that students should be actively involved in the learning process. Therefore, you will be expected to assume a high level of responsibility for your own learning by: Reading all assigned readings, conduct an in-depth study of selected topics, and presenting your findings to the class. Class time will be devoted to informal lectures and a limited number of student research reports.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Read all assigned material.
2. Attendance and meaningful class participation.
3. A final exam covering all assigned readings, lectures and class discussions.
4. A. Conduct extensive library research on one major topic and write a scholarly term paper on that topic. This paper should be 25-30 pages and include at least 20-30 professional press/scholarly references.

OR

- B. Complete two Ethical Issues Interaction Papers (approximately 10 pages each).

All papers should be typed, double-spaced, and carefully referenced, including citing all references used. Select research topics from the attached list. Other topics may be selected, with professor approval. Selected research papers of general interest will be presented to the class, as time permits.

GRADING PROCEDURE

It is expected that all class work will be completed as scheduled. Late work will be penalized up to one letter grade per day.

Participation, Quiz & Research Projects	50%
Final Exam	50%

POSSIBLE RESEARCH & PRESENTATION TOPICS

1. Client right to privacy
2. Confidentiality
3. Privileged communication
4. Informed consent
5. Code of ethics
6. Dual relationships
7. Child custody issues
8. Issues in supervision
9. Repressed memory issues
10. Therapist's competence
11. Therapist as "expert witness"
12. Therapist's personality and personal and family life

13. Therapist's responsibilities

- Duty to report
- Duty to warn

14. Therapist's values, philosophy of life and theoretical orientation

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Everstine, L., et. al. (1980). Privacy and confidentiality in psychotherapy. American Psychologist, 9, 828-840.
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- Wendorf, D. & Wendorf, R. (1985). A systemic view of family therapy ethics. Family Process, 24, 443-452.

SPECIFIC DATA

Syllabus prepared by Mark Bradford, January 2003