PSY 762
ETHICS IN CLINICAL PRACTICE
3 CREDIT HOURS
SPRING, 2008
Psychological Services Center (PSC) – Room 109
Tuesdays 1:00 p.m. – 3:50 p.m.

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Office Hours: Mondays 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Tuesdays 12 noon – 12:50 p.m.
Wednesdays 9:00 a.m. – 9:50 a.m.
And by appointment
(Faculty/committee meetings are sometimes scheduled during these times, so it is best to call or e-mail and confirm appointment; however, you are always welcome to drop by any time to see if I am in.)

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:


Other readings will be assigned to address particular topics. The mechanisms of distribution for the additional readings will be discussed on an ongoing basis. It is expected some will be available through the electronic reserve system at Newton Gresham Library; access codes will be shared as these become available.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course studies the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (Ethics Code) as well as various specialty guidelines and recommendations and their applications to practice, research, and consultation. The literature on ethics is critically examined and readings include a variety of original sources. Students examine case material that features ethical conflicts and controversies, and students practice processes to resolve ethical dilemmas. The relevance to risk management in clinical practice will also be considered.
A guiding theme of the course is that learning to be ethical as a psychologist involves an active, ongoing “acculturation process.” It is expected that students will be at different stages integrating their personal values with the culture of psychology and its ethical values and traditions. We will deal far more with the complexities of ethical decision making than acquiring a set of rules and regulations to follow. The overriding goal is to further facilitate each student’s development as an effective, ethical, caring professional. Of necessity, this will be done within the context of an enhanced awareness of one’s own personal ethics, sense of morality, and other attributes, and stage of professional acculturation, and how these may impact on the ethical reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving process.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Explore one’s own personal ethics, morality, and related personal characteristics in particular as they impact on acculturation to the profession of psychology and in terms of ethical reasoning, decision making, and problem solving.

Review the current APA Ethics Code, associated rules and procedures for enforcement, and other special guidelines for content and applications.

Develop and practice ethical reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving processes and other means to address ethical issues (including conflicts, controversies, dilemmas, etc.) in clinical psychology, incorporating specific attention to individual difference and multicultural issues.

Develop an understanding of the implications of variations in the ethical practice of psychology for risk management in clinical practice.

COURSE (STUDENT) EVALUATION/GRADING PLAN:

Overview:

Class Participation  
First Written Exam  
15% closed book 
10% vignette analysis, open book 
Final Written Exam  
25% vignette analysis, take home 24-hour time limit 
25% closed book

TOTAL  
100%
Class Participation:

This class involves relatively little formal lecture. Rather, we will primarily explore the readings together. Doing so requires you to do the readings, think about them, actively digest, question, and synthesize the material on your own, and come prepared to actively participate during class sessions. You should come prepared with the following (approximately 1-2 double-spaced, typed pages) each session: 1) one or more questions about some aspect of the readings that interests you and which you could use to lead a class discussion; 2) a quotation from the readings that particularly impacted on you; and 3) talking points based on the readings that you could use to lead a class discussion if asked to do so. Your questions and talking points should reflect more than just a simple recitation of the key points of the readings. Instead, they should reflect a higher level of analysis, integration, questioning, and/or synthesis of the material. Occasionally, you may be asked to do a little extra reading or research on a particular topic and share your findings or reflections with the class. You may also be asked, at times, to write a specific reaction paper on some topic. You should be prepared to turn in a printed copy of your responses each class session. In addition, since your ability to think on your feet and express yourself orally is sometimes an important professional activity (e.g., some licensing or professional board exams), each student will have the opportunity on one or more occasions to serve as an examinee in a mock licensing/board exam format.

Grading of student class participation is inherently subjective, but not necessarily arbitrary or capricious. I will ask myself some of the following types of questions in evaluating your performance: Does it seem like the student has read the assigned material? Does the student move beyond simple recitation of key points to more active exploration of ideas? How does the student grapple with new ways of looking at her/his experiences and/or the perspectives offered by others? Are the student’s comments helpful to others? Is the student respecting what other students (and I) are contributing? Is the student participating in a variety of ways?

You may be asked what you want to talk about in class today. I encourage you to bring your own experiences to the classroom discussions. Does something confuse or excite you, or shake your core beliefs or understandings, or remind you of some other material you have studied? Share what stimulates your thinking and what might stimulate the rest of us to explore the material further in class. While the nature of the discussion may at times lend itself to the exploration of personal or sensitive matters (e.g., personal beliefs and values, personal theory of morality), it is up to you as to how much to self-disclose. You are encouraged to NOT share particularly intimate aspects of your personal history. All class members should treat information shared in a totally respectful manner.

In terms of the mock oral exam format, this will be discussed as the class proceeds. It is meant to be a significant, but relatively low key, part of the classroom experience. It will give you an opportunity to think on your feet like you might be required to do in some similar future professional experiences. I understand that this, along with the other oral requirements of participation in class, may not be your preference or comfort zone, but it is necessary for this course.
**Exams:**

There will be two scheduled exams. Each will include a closed book portion that requires you to write on topics that we have covered. At least one week before each exam, you will be provided with a list of potential questions. The actual questions included on the exam will be selected from the list. Because of the nature of ethical reasoning, the material covered on the final exam will be cumulative.

Each exam will also include a vignette for you to analyze from a professional ethical perspective. The vignette for the first exam, conducted about mid-term, will be done in a scheduled class period but will be open book. You will have 24 hours to work on the final vignette as a take home exercise. For this final vignette analysis, I will need to have a hard copy of a typewritten response by the 24-hour deadline. You may send your response via e-mail, but you will have full responsibility to see that I receive a copy that I can download by the 24-hour deadline. If you have any concerns about transmission, then be sure to drop off a printed copy by the deadline. This should be type-written/word-processed, approximately 5-10 double-spaced pages. Succinctness with clarity of expression will be valued far more than length. We will discuss more details about this in class.

**Grades:**

Students who receive an “A” will demonstrate creativity as well as very clear mastery of the material and a high level of ability to integrate their thinking and experience. This level of performance indicates an ability to grasp and communicate the intricacies and subtleties involved in ethical reasoning; demonstrates the ability to be self-reflective (able to appreciate, consider, and weigh alternatives); manifests tolerance of ambiguity in reasoning; conveys understanding of strengths and weaknesses of various perspectives on particular issues or situations; is conveyed orally and in written formats with well-developed and well-formulated ideas; and shows attention to proper mechanics (e.g., good grammar and spelling, minimal typos) in writing and expressing ideas.

Students who receive a “B” will show good mastery of the material, and the ability to think about it; sometimes make substantial contributions to the class discussion; write reasonably clearly and correctly; but less consistently evidence attention to the complexities and subtleties of ethical reasoning, have less consistent classroom discussion participation, and less consistently communicate their ideas effectively in oral or written format. They do not make fatal errors in judgment or on points of rules and regulations but may be less effective in demonstrating a higher level of analysis and integration.

Lower grades would be indicative of very significant problems in thinking from an ethical reasoning standpoint, major factual errors, failure to grasp basic ideas, more extreme rigidity in approaching and thinking about ethical issues in psychology, great difficulty expressing ideas orally or on paper, and/or inadequate demonstration of the ability to incorporate new ideas and ways of thinking.
ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students are expected to attend all scheduled class times. SHSU policy is that no student will be penalized for three or fewer hours of absences. However, a student may be penalized for more than three hours of absences. My perspective: It is difficult to understand why any student enrolled in a doctoral-level course such as this would consider elective absence(s) a viable option. Excuses for absences should be cleared as much in advance as possible or soon thereafter. Attendance and participation will strongly influence your final course grade.

If emergencies occur during scheduled exam times, the student MUST contact the instructor within 24 hours in order to qualify for a make-up. It is extremely bad form to miss a class and then contact the instructor afterwards regarding these matters (except in very unusual circumstances). No make-up tests will be administered during class time. IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTACT THE INSTRUCTOR REGARDING ANY MAKE-UP WORK.

A number of students will be interviewing for internship in the early part of the semester and these absences are, of course, excused. There will be readings and written responses to some questions based on the readings required for these absences. These should be turned in within a reasonable period of time following the missed day of class; please discuss/communicate with me to clarify and we will work out a reasonable timetable.

Please do not hesitate to request any additional individual time that you feel is needed for your professional development.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing work offered for credit), the abuse of resource materials, and misrepresentation of credentials or accomplishments as a member of the college. Academic dishonesty in this course will likely result in a grade of F.

Please also note that required papers may be submitted to review by a plagiarism prevention/detection service, such as turnitin.com.

The University’s policy on academic honesty and appeal procedures can be found in the manual entitled Student Guidelines, distributed by Division of Student Services. (Reference Section 5.3 of the SHSU Student Guidelines)
AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT:

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disability that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may adversely affect your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS:

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911(a)(2) defines religious holy days as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code. . . .” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will notify the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examination are to be completed.

VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM:

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the instructor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

CLASSROOM RULES OF CONDUCT:

According to University guidelines and general sense of decency, students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Mutual respect and courtesy are the expected standards.
Any disorderly classroom conduct that obstructs, interferes with, inhibits, and/or disrupts teaching and/or related classroom activities is prohibited. Persons in the classroom engaging in such conduct will be asked to leave. Failure to leave the classroom will result in University Police being requested to come to the classroom to assist with the removal of the person.

In addition, please turn off ALL electronic devices, including cell phones, and keep them in a case and/or totally out of view, unless special arrangements have been made ahead of time with the instructor. NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES MAY BE USED IN THE CLASSROOM WITHOUT PRE-APPROVAL BY THE INSTRUCTOR. THAT INCLUDES LAPTOPS, CELL PHONES, BLUETOOTH DEVICES, ANYTHING ELECTRONIC. I RESERVE THE PREROGATIVE TO ANSWER ANY CELL PHONE THAT RINGS IN THE CLASSROOM.

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION:

You will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

SPECIAL NOTE:

I am indebted to Handelsman (2005, 2007, and online 2008) for a number of ideas and some of the wording adapted in this syllabus.
COURSE OUTLINE/SCHEDULE (APPROXIMATE):

By the very nature of ethical realities, the topics, somewhat artificially separated here, will be interwoven throughout the course regardless of assigned sequence. Continuous integration with previously discussed material is expected as the course progresses. This outline/schedule is subject to change depending on how discussion evolves over the semester.

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<td>February</td>
<td>5 APA Ethics Code and Rules and Procedures for Enforcement; how ethics are applied; philosophies of ethics; models of ethical reasoning and decision making; remedial vs. positive ethics; resolving ethical issues</td>
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<td>March</td>
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COURSE READINGS (TENTATIVE):

Readings are required unless otherwise indicated. There may be additions or subtractions to this list.

**Week 1 – January 22**

*Introduction and overview; model of ethical acculturation*


**Week 2 – January 29**

*Morality, theories of morality and moral development, character strengths and virtues, and implications for professional ethics*


Preface, pp. iv-x
Introduction, pp. 3-17
Part I The moral system, pp. 19-29
The two-step procedure for justifying violations of the moral rules, the first step … , pp. 58-59; the second step … , pp. 74-75; summary and test, pp. 78-79; the consequences of morality not always providing a unique correct answer, pp. 145-148; a complete moral theory, pp. 148-149; conclusion, p. 149

Letters to Readers, 1993, pp. ix-xxvii
Introduction, pp. 1-4
Chapter 1 Woman’s place in man’s life cycle, pp. 5-23


Chapter 1 Introduction to a “manual of the sanities,” pp. 3-32
Chapter 2 Universal virtues?—Lessons from history, pp. 33-52
Chapter 3 Previous classifications of character strengths, pp. 53-89

Also recommended:


**Week 3 – February 5**

*APA Ethics Code and Rules and Procedures for Enforcement; how ethics are applied; philosophies of ethics; models of ethical reasoning and decision making; remedial vs. positive ethics; resolving ethical issues*


Chapter 1 Ethics codes and how they are enforced, pp. 1-74 (pp. 28-73 includes the APA Ethics Code and Rules and Procedures for enforcement with which you are already familiar)

Chapter 2 How ethics are applied, pp. 75-122

Chapter 3 Learning ethics, pp. 123-153


Chapter 1, The interface of law and psychology, pp. 9-35.


Chapter 1 Remedial and positive ethics, pp. 3-14

Chapter 2 Foundations of ethical behavior, pp. 15-29

Chapter 3 Applying ethical theories to professional standards of conduct, pp. 31-38

Chapter 4 Ethical decision making, pp. 39-49

**Week 4 – February 12**

*Risk management in psychological practice; competence*


Preface, pp. 5-9

Section 1: Calculations of risk, pp. 11-29

Section 2: Key elements of risk management, pp. 31-59

Section 3: Applications of risk management, Chapter 1: Competence, pp. 61-74


**Week 5 – February 19**

**Confidentiality, privilege and privacy**

Bersoff (2003)
Chapter 4 Confidentiality, privilege, and privacy, pp. 155-205

Bennett et al. (2006)
Section 3: Applications of the risk management model, Chapter 4: Privacy, confidentiality, and privileged communications, pp. 105-127
Section 3: Applications of the risk management model, Chapter 7: Assessing and treating patients who are potentially suicidal or dangerous to others, pp. 155-177


**Week 6 – February 26**

**Human relations; multiple relationships and professional boundaries**

Bersoff (2003)
Chapter 5 Multiple Relationships, pp. 207-260

Bennett et al. (2006)
Section 3: Applications of the risk management model, Chapter 2: Multiple relationships and boundaries, pp. 75-87
Section 3: Applications of the risk management model, Chapter 3: Working with couples, families, and children, pp. 89-103.
Chapter 3 Current concerns in small communities, pp. 33-74

*Week 7 – March 4*

*First written exam (mixed closed/open book; open for vignette analysis)*

**SPRING BREAK**

*Week 8 – March 18*

*Psychological assessment*

Bersoff (2003)
Chapter 6 Psychological Assessment, pp. 261-314

Bennett et al. (2006)
Section 3: Applications of the risk management model, Chapter 6: Psychological assessment and testing, pp. 143-154


*Week 9 – March 25*

*Therapy and other forms of intervention*

Bersoff (2003)
Chapter 7, Therapy and Other Forms of Intervention, pp. 315-375

Bennett et al. (2006)
Section 3: Applications of the risk management model, Chapter 8: …termination and abandonment…, pp. 190-199

*Week 10 – April 1*

*Small communities; more on individual difference and cultural issues*

Chapter 3 Current concerns in small communities, pp. 33-74 (review, previously assigned)
Chapter 4 Rural practice: Illuminating dilemmas in one kind of small community, pp. 75-115
Chapter 5 Other small communities, pp. 117-173


APA guidelines for providers of psychological services to ethnic, linguistic, and culturally diverse populations. (available online at http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/guide.html)


Week 11 – April 8

Forensic settings

Bersoff (2003)
Chapter 9, Forensic settings, pp. 443-514

Bennett et al. (2006).
Section 3: Applications of the risk management model, Chapter 5: Court testimony, pp. 129-141

Chapter 1, The interface of law and psychology, pp. 9-35 (review, previously assigned)
Chapter 2, The referral; Chapter 3, Collection and review of information; Chapter 4, The evaluation; Chapter 5, Documentation of findings and opinions; Chapter 6, Testimony and termination; and Chapter 7, Addressing ethical misconduct will each be read and summarized by a separate volunteer student from the class; other students do not actually have to read these chapters.

See also second official draft – released January 11, 2006 – of the draft revision of these specialty guidelines prepared by the Committee on the Revision of the Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychology, Division 41, American Psychological Association and American Board of Forensic Psychology (available online).


*Week 12 – April 15*

**Business of psychology**

Bersoff (2003)
Chapter 10, The Business of Psychology, pp. 515-562

Bennett et al. (2006)
Section 3: Applications of the risk management model, Chapter 9: The reluctant business person, pp. 201-210
Section 3: Applications of the risk management model, Chapter 10, Closing a practice and retirement, pp. 211-222
Section 3: Applications of the risk management model, Chapter 11: Professional liability insurance—don’t practice without it, pp. 223-235


Week 13 – April 22

Teaching, research, publications, and supervision

Bersoff (2003)
Chapter 8, Academia: Research, teaching, and supervision, pp. 337-441


Week 14 – April 29

Miscellaneous topics and review

Bennett et al. (2006)
Section 3: Applications of the risk management model, Chapter 8: Consultant or supervisor, diversity issues, conflicts in institutional settings, and termination and abandonment, pp. 179-199
Afterword, pp. 237-238


**Week 15 – May 6**

*Final vignette assigned (take home due within 24 hours)*

**Finals Week**

*Final written exam (closed book)*