

Sam Houston State University
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Psychology & Philosophy
Doctoral Clinical Practicum I (PSY 882-01)
Fall 2008

Instructor: Jorge G. Varela, Ph.D.
Classroom: Psychological Services Center
Time: Wednesdays, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.
Office: Academic Building IV, Room 319 (AB IV 319)
Phone: 936-294-1174 (Department)
936-294-4161 (Office)
Email: jgv002@shsu.edu
Office Hours: Mondays, 1:00 to 3:00 pm
Wednesdays, 9:00 to 11:00 am
(or by appointment)

Required Texts/Readings

There are no assigned textbooks for this class. Readings pertaining to weekly topics and client issues, however, will be assigned throughout the semester. Materials supplementing student case presentations (described below) are considered required reading for this course.

Course Description

In this practicum, students are assigned to the Psychological Services Center (PSC) operated by the program faculty or a related practicum site. Students attend a didactic course that emphasizes clinical assessment and integrated report writing. Students also participate in the practicum component that allows them to practice assessment skills under supervision from a licensed psychologist in the program.

Course Objectives

Essential Goal: Develop specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by psychologists

- Provide students with a systematic approach to the development of psychological assessment and treatment skills
- Refine diagnostic skills
- Develop skills in gathering client data and presenting these data in an effective manner to other mental health professionals

Important Goal: Learn to apply course material (improve thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making) to the practice of psychology

- Review ethical standards and further develop ethical reasoning skills as they pertain to the practice of psychology
- Further develop students' awareness of diversity issues (e.g., cultural, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation) that influence the practice of professional psychology

Important Goal: Gain factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends) related to the delivery of psychological services

- Review current research pertaining to clinical issues arising in the context of service delivery

Course Requirements/Expectations

Practice: Students are required to work at least eight hours per week at their assigned practicum site. Deviations from this schedule should be arranged in advance with the course instructor and the on-site supervisor. Students are expected to maintain a log documenting their client contacts and summarizing their assessment activities.

Supervision: Students will, *at a minimum*, attend weekly one-hour individual supervision sessions with the instructor or their on-site supervisor. Some students may require more than one hour of supervision depending on the demands of their practicum site, client presenting problems, and student experience/skill level. Students working outside the PSC must provide their supervision schedule and supervision log to the course instructor on a weekly basis. Thorough preparation for supervision is essential to the development of clinical skills. Students are expected to present for class meetings with their supervision and client logs, and prepared to discuss new cases as well as progress with existing clients.

Professionalism and Compliance with the Ethical Code: Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times while delivering psychological services. This begins with professional demeanor toward clients and extends to interactions with other professionals/students and includes manner of dress. Students will deliver all services in an ethical manner consistent with the Code of Ethics of the American Psychological Association. Ethical dilemmas and ethical ambiguities will be discussed with the on-site supervisor and, if needed, the course instructor. Discussion and resolution of ethical dilemmas is a particularly valuable learning experience for practicum students.

Documentation: Students are expected to complete clinical documentation in a timely manner and, without exception, on the day services were delivered. Similarly, reports of psychological evaluations must be completed within 24 hours of completion of all

evaluative procedures. Documentation of contacts with evaluation clients will be throughout the evaluation process on the day of service delivery.

Case Presentation: Students will each deliver one formal case presentation during the semester. This presentation will consist of a detailed description of all relevant aspects of the case. A complete history (e.g., family of origin, upbringing, educational background, employment history, criminal history, military history, mental health treatment history, medical history, etc.) is expected. Students must also be prepared to discuss their client's mental status, presenting problems, and referral information. Any psycholegal issues/questions will also be presented. Treatment modalities employed must be discussed, including rationale for treatment decisions. Progress in treatment will be discussed as well as final disposition, if pertinent. To supplement the case presentation, students will provide the class two to three readings (e.g., journal articles, book chapters) pertaining to the issues involved in the case at least one week in advance. Readings must be reviewed with the course instructor for approval prior to distribution. Case-specific guidance regarding this requirement will be provided later in the semester.

Grading Plan

Grades will be officially assigned by the faculty course instructor. However, strong consideration will be given to feedback and evaluations from the on-site supervisor. Grades also will be determined by the student's level of professional behavior, clinical skills, and class participation. Improvement will be considered one relevant factor. Of the factors considered in assigning a grade, relatively high weighting will be given to the quality of the documentation and case presentations. Presentations will be judged on the comprehensive consideration of all of the relevant factors in the case, the proper weighting of those factors in case formulation, the support of the relative weightings using the available empirical and theoretical literature, and the choice of interventions or recommendations that follow. Students will be expected to integrate contextual factors and symptom presentation and derive a diagnostic impression and/or treatment plan that follows logically from the available data. Special consideration should be given to documenting empirical support for a given diagnosis, recommendation, or intervention.

Attendance Policy

Regular and punctual attendance is expected. SHSU policy is that no student will be penalized for three or fewer hours of absence. However, a student may be penalized for more than three hours of absence. Students may miss one class without penalty to their grade. *Missing two classes, however, may result in a failing grade for the class.* The three hours of absence provided by university policy should be used carefully for serious illness and emergencies. If a student has a conflict with a scheduled class, he or she must meet with the instructor to determine an appropriate plan of action. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor regarding make-up work, and arrangements must be arranged with the instructor *prior* to the absence or *as soon as possible* after the absence, in the case of an emergency.

Academic Dishonesty

The university expects all students 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, acting in accordance with Subsection 5.32, may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

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. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for the 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. *Religious Holy Day* means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

Visitors in the Classroom

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the instructor, although consideration will necessarily be given to ensuring client confidentiality. 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.

Americans with Disabilities Act

It is the policy of SHSU 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 disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center (294-1720). 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 a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this

class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and talk with the instructor about how best deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential.

Note: No accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center, and there are *no retroactive* accommodations.

Classroom Code of Conduct

Students should review, and adhere to, the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline at <https://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>. 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.

Instructor Evaluation

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