

Ethical and Legal Issues in Professional Counseling

MHC 532-01

Fall Semester, 2014

Instructors:

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We meet:

Mondays, 5:30 to 8:30 pm

Catalogue Description:

“The consideration of the applicable ethical and legal issues for mental health settings.”

Course credit:

2 semester hours

Textbook required:

Ethics in Counseling and Psychotherapy: Standards, Research, and Emerging Issues, 5th Edition,
Elizabeth Reynolds Welfel
(2013)

Overview:

This course is designed to develop a wide knowledge base, critical thinking and ethical decision-making skills for your professional counseling practice. In our class, you will learn about specific ethical and legal issues and ways of thinking that enhance your professional development. You will be challenged to increase awareness, sensitivity, and understanding of the ethical principles of counseling, and to developing skills in ethical decision-making. The goals for this class are to instill both a desire and diligence on your part as practicing counselors and to develop a high level of personal and professional ethics for your future counseling work.

Course Objectives:

- Knowledge of state and federal laws and regulations that apply to the practice of counseling and marriage & family therapy.
- Knowledge of professional ethics and standards of practice that apply to counseling and the practice of marriage & family therapy.

- Knowledge of policies and procedures of the practice setting.
- Understanding of the process of making ethical decisions.
- Ability to recognize ethical dilemmas in practice settings.
- Ability to recognize when a legal consultation is necessary.
- Ability to recognize when clinical supervision or legal consultation is necessary.
- Ability to recognize when and how to effectively utilize consultation.
- Ability to recognize issues related to ethics, laws, regulations, and professional standards.
- Understand the limitations to confidentiality and parameters of mandatory reporting.
- Understanding the need for and how to create a safety plan for clients who present with potential self-harm, suicide, abuse, or violence.
- Understand how to take action when ethical and legal dilemmas emerge.
- Know how to report information to appropriate authorities as required by law.
- Understand how to practice within your defined scope of practice and competence and how to obtain knowledge of advances and theory regarding effective clinical practice.
- How to obtain license(s) and specialty credentials.
- Understand the necessity of self-care, and monitoring personal issues and problems to insure they do not impact the therapy process adversely or create vulnerability for misconduct.
- Understand how to maintain client records with timely and accurate notes.
- When (and how) to consult with peers and/or supervisors if personal issues threaten to adversely impact clinical work.
- The importance of pursuing professional development through self-supervision, collegial consultation, professional reading, and continuing educational activities.

Readings:

Our class discussions and assignments will mainly come from readings in our textbook. This book offers a wide scope and broad understanding of ethical thinking as illustrated in the assigned chapters. As soon-to-be professionals entering a complex, highly ambiguous field, recognizing and understanding the ethical dimensions of your work is critically important. Strong ethics are the foundation for competent counseling services. This class will help develop your professional ethics and thereby enhance your competence and help insure the safety of your future clients. In this course, you are expected to keep up with the assigned readings and to actively contribute to our class discussions each evening.

Class assignments:

Discussion Questions: Each week, you will write two (2) discussion questions. These questions, written on 3 X 5 inch index cards (provided by your instructors), are due at the beginning of the next class period, and will come from your assigned chapters. Your questions and their answers will be the foundation of our class discussions. You may (or may not) receive credit for late cards at the discretion of the instructors. The cards will be worth up to 2 points each (maximum of 4 points per class), for a total of 16 cards (up to 32 points) in the semester.

Participation in weekly class discussions: Learning Ethics is participatory in nature. It is our expectation that every student will discuss a question or idea in each class session. Since there are only 10 class meetings, every class session counts! We want you to find your voice! Students may earn 1 point per class and a semester total of 10 points.

“Important Others” exercise: Everyone is inspired and influenced by ‘important others’ in our lives. You will create a presentation, from a variety of formats, showing some of your most important influences. Students can earn up to 10 points for the construction and presentation of this exercise. Your class presentations will be limited to a maximum of 10 minutes per student.

Quizzes: For selected chapters, we will have a brief quiz at the end of our class discussions. Each quiz will be worth 5 points, for a total of 45 points during the semester.

Quiz questions: Once for each student, you will be asked to write suitable quiz questions. You will have one (1) chapter from which to write your five (5) questions. You will be asked to submit your questions a week prior to the actual quiz (so, read ahead!). These questions will be worth 3 points (plus, you’ll already know those answers, and yes, questions can be ‘recycled’).

Final examination: There will be no Final examination for this class.

Grading: For a total of up to 100 points on your final grade, scoring will proceed as follows:

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| A = 100 to 93 points | A - = 92 to 90 points | |
| B + = 89 to 87 points | B = 86 to 83 points | B - = 82 to 80 points |
| C + = 79 to 77 points | C = 76 to 73 points | C - = 72 to 70 points |

Please note: A score of 69 points or below is registered as a failing grade for this class.

Attendance and courtesy: Class attendance is expected and required. If you are going to miss a class, you will be given a make-up assignment. Please inform us as soon as possible if you anticipate missing any classes. More than one missed class (3.5 hours) will be considered by the Counseling Psychology Department as a failure to complete our class.

Of course, as a professional courtesy to your classmates and instructors, please restrict the use of computers and any other electronic devices in our class. We can make exceptions if you have informed us of a pending critical incoming communication. If you require any educational accommodation based on ADA standards, please provide your instructors with evidence of written approval by the Counseling Psychology Department as early in the semester as possible.

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| Date | Topic | Readings | Pages | Assignments & expectations |
|---------------------------|---|------------------|--|---|
| September 8, 2014 | Class Introductions | Chapters 1 and 2 | Pages 2 to 26 And Pages 27 to 57 | Attendance (every class) |
| September 15, 2014 | Ethical Practice in a Multicultural Society | Chapter 3 | Pages 58 to 82 | Discussion cards Quiz 1 (5 points) |
| September 22, 2014 | Competence to Practice | Chapter 4 | Pages 84 to 109 | Discussion cards Quiz 2 (5 points) |
| September 29, 2014 | Confidentiality | Chapter 5 | Pages 110 to 161 | Discussion cards Quiz 3 (5 points) |
| October 6, 2014 | Informed Consent | Chapter 6 | Pages 162 to 187 | Discussion cards Quiz 4 (5 points) |
| October 13, 2014 | Multiple relationships | Chapter 7 | Pages 188 to 221 | Discussion cards Quiz 5 (5 points) |
| October 20, 2014 | Boundary Issues | Chapter 8 | Pages 222 to 253 | Discussion cards Presentations for group 1 (10 points) Quiz 6 (5 points) |
| October 27, 2014 | Group and Family Interventions | Chapter 9 | Pages 254 to 280 | Discussion cards Presentations for Group 2 (10 points) Quiz 7 (5 points) |
| November 3, 2014 | Responsibilities for Self and Colleagues | Chapter 11 | Pages 316 to 337 | Discussion cards Presentations for Group 3 (10 points) Quiz 8 (5 points) |
| November 10, 2014 | The Ethics of Supervision | Chapter 14 | Pages 412 to 441 | Discussion cards Presentations for Group 4 (10 points) Quiz 9 (5 points) |

Textbook: Ethics in Counseling and Psychotherapy: Standards, Research and Emerging Issues, 5th Edition, Welfel, 2013.