

## **Ethical and Legal Issues in Professional Counseling**

**CPSY 580**

**Summer Semester, 2009**

### **Instructor:**

James Gurule, MA, LPC  
(503) 645-3581, ex. 2310 (office)  
[james@silentdragon.com](mailto:james@silentdragon.com) (home)

### **We meet:**

Wednesdays, 5:30 to 9:00 pm

### **Catalogue Description:**

“Consideration of the applicable ethical and legal issues for mental health and school settings. Students develop skills in writing reports, assignments, and treatment plans.”

### **Course credit:**

2 semester hours

### **Textbook required:**

The Ethical and Professional Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy,  
Len Sperry  
(2007)

### **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 to increase your professional development. You will be challenged to increase your awareness, sensitivity, and understanding of the ethical principles of counseling, and to developing skills in ethical decision-making. This class is designed to instill both a desire and diligence on your part as professional counselors and to develop a high degree of personal and professional ethics to enhance your clinical work in the coming years.

### **Course Objectives:**

- Knowledge of state, federal, and provincial laws and regulations that apply to the practice of counseling and marriage & family therapy. (CC: 1h, 5e)
- Knowledge of professional ethics and standards of practice that apply to counseling and the practice of marriage & family therapy. (CC: 1h, 5e)
- Knowledge of policies and procedures of the practice setting. (CC: 5g)

- Understanding of the process of making an ethical decisions (CC: all areas)
- Ability to recognize ethical dilemmas in practice setting. (CC: 5g)
- Ability to recognize when a legal consultation is necessary (CC: all areas)
- Ability to recognize when clinical supervision or legal consultation is necessary (CC: all areas)
- Ability to recognize consultation (CC: 5e)
- Ability to recognize issues related to ethics, laws, regulations, and professional standards. (CC: 1h)
- Understand the limitations to confidentiality and parameters of mandatory reporting. (CC: all areas)
- Understand the need and how to create a safety plan for clients who present with potential self-harm, suicide, abuse, or violence. (CC: 5g)
- Understand how to take action when ethical and legal dilemmas emerge. (CC: all areas)
- Know how to report information to appropriate authorities as required by law. (CC: all areas)
- Understand how to practice within defined scope of practice and competence and how to obtain knowledge of advances and theory regarding effective clinical practice. (CC: 1h)
- How to obtain license(s) and specialty credentials. (CC: 1e)
- Understand the necessity of monitoring personal issues and problems to insure they do not impact the therapy process adversely or create vulnerability for misconduct. (CC: 5g)
- Understand how to maintain client records with timely and accurate notes. (CC: 5g)
- When to (how to) consult with peers and/or supervisors if personal issues threaten to adversely impact clinical work. (CC: 5g)
- The importance of pursuing professional development through self supervision, collegial consultation, professional reading, and continuing educational activities. (CC: all areas)

### **Readings:**

Our class discussions and assignments will be drawn from readings in your textbook. Your text 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 arena, understanding and recognizing the ethical dimensions of your work is critically important to provide competent counseling services. This class will help develop your professional ethics and thereby enhance your competency and the safety of your future clients. Of course, you are expected to keep up with the assigned readings in order to actively contribute to our class discussions.



## Class assignments:

**Question / Discussion Cards:** Each week, you will write two (2) discussion questions. These questions, written on 3 X 5 inch index cards (provided by your instructor), are due at the beginning of each class period, and will come from your assigned chapters. Your discussion questions **and their answers** will be evaluated on their accuracy, insight, thoughtfulness and creativity. These cards will be the foundation of our class discussions and the Final exam. You may (or may not) receive credit for **late** cards at the discretion of this instructor. These two cards will be worth up to **2** points each (maximum of **4** points per class), with a total of **16** cards for up to **32 points** during the semester.

**Participation in class discussions:** In this class, learning Ethics is participatory in nature. It is my expectation that **every** student will discuss a question or idea in **each** class session. Since there are only **9** class meetings, every class counts! This will be for a maximum of **2** points per class and a semester total of **18 points**.

**Informed Consent Forms:** You will create your own Informed Consent forms. The expectations for these documents will be discussed in detail before your assignment. You will be evaluated on their completeness, readability, and informative content. They are expected to be **original** creations, not a copy of an existing form, and be developed as if you were going to present them to your counseling clients. These forms are due two weeks from assignment and will be eligible for a maximum of **25 points**.

**Ethical Genograms:** Each student will be asked to construct and present your own “ethical genogram,” described on pages 291 – 293 of our text. Each student can earn up to **10 points** for the construction and presentation of these genograms. Your in-class presentation will be limited to a maximum of 10 minutes.

**Final examination:** The Final examination for this class will be composed of selected questions from students from throughout the semester. The Final will be worth **15 points**.

**Grading:** These assignments will offer you the chance for a possible total of **100 points** toward your final grade. Class grading will proceed as follows:

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  
A grade of C minus (69 points or below) is considered failure 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 at the discretion of this instructor. Please inform me 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 courtesy to your classmates and instructor, all computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices are to be rendered non-disruptive. The only exceptions will be that if you've informed me of a pending critical incoming communication, or if you require an educational accommodation based on ADA standards and you provide evidence of written approval by the Counseling Psychology Department.