



McMaster Divinity College

Cross-Cultural Counselling
Fall 2025

Ruth Baah-Gyebi

Mondays 11:00 – 12:50 am
Sept 8 to Dec 12, 2025

In-person: Camelford / Livestream:
<https://mcmaster.zoom.us/my/camelford>
Password: z00m

The mission of McMaster Divinity College is to develop effective evangelical Christian leaders for the Church, academy, and society through graduate-level education, spiritual development, and vocational formation.

1. Course Description:

Cross-cultural counselling is a therapeutic approach that recognizes and responds to the cultural, ethnic, religious, and social diversity clients bring into the counselling relationship. It emphasizes cultural humility, empathy, and adaptability, acknowledging that every person's worldview is shaped by their cultural background, which in turn influences how they understand mental health, relationships, and healing. Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model, cross-cultural counselling invites the therapist to reflect on their own cultural assumptions and adjust their interventions to better serve the client's values, identity, and lived experience.

In this course, amongst others, students will examine their own cultural identity, biases, and assumptions. Cultivate the virtues and inner posture necessary for intercultural therapeutic presence (e.g., humility, curiosity, empathy). Explore how to engage clients across differences with cultural sensitivity, ethical awareness, and spiritual care competence. Through reflection, discussion, role playing and case-based learning, students will develop foundational skills to assess, communicate, and intervene effectively with clients from diverse backgrounds while being mindful of power, privilege, systemic oppression, and the importance of faith and community in many cultures. Cross-cultural counselling is not just a method; it is a posture of respect, openness, and readiness to learn from the client's unique story.

COURSE FORMAT: The course objectives will be met through a combination of lecture, in-class learning activities (e.g., case studies, experiential exercises), research, and personal reflection.

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Specializations: Counselling and Spiritual Care

2. Reading

2.1. Required Reading: Texts & Excerpts

Sue, D. W., Sue, D., Neville, H. A., & Smith, L. (2022). *Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice* (9th ed.). Wiley.

Hays, P. A. (2016). *Addressing Cultural Complexities in Practice: Assessment, Diagnosis, and Therapy* (3rd ed.). American Psychological Association.

Elmer, D. (2006). *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility*. IVP Books.

Nouwen, H. J. M. (1972). *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*. New York: Image Books. (Excerpts Ch.1, 2 & 4)

Beaulieu, T., Reeves, A. (2022). *Integrating Indigenous Healing and Western Counseling: Clinical Cases in Culturally Safe Practice*. In: Danto, D., Zangeneh, M. (eds) *Indigenous Knowledge and Mental Health*. Springer, Cham.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-71346-1_15

Hook, J. N., Davis, D. E., Owen, J., Worthington Jr., E. L., & Utsey, S. O. (2013). *Cultural humility: Measuring openness to culturally diverse clients*. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 60(3), 353–366. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032595>

2.2. Recommended Resources

American Psychological Association. *Multicultural Guidelines: An Ecological Approach to Context, Identity, and Intersectionality*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2017.
Online: <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/multicultural-guidelines.pdf>

Archer, D. (2021). *Anti-Racist Psychotherapy: Confronting Systemic Racism and Healing Racial Trauma*. Cognella Academic Publishing.

Boyd-Franklin, N. *Black Families in Therapy: Understanding the African American Experience*, 2nd Edition. New York: The Guilford Press, 2006

Gordon, T., Edwards, S., & Briggs, Q. A. (2023). *Canadian Mental Health and Well-being Handbook: An Introduction to an Africentric Approach to Black Mental Health and Racial Trauma*. Mississauga, ON: Black Mental Health Canada.

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2.3 Course Objectives:

Note: These learning objectives are co-ordinated with the expected competencies for CASC/ACSS certified professionals (revised June 19, 2019) and the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO competencies 1.4, 1.5, 4.2.3, 4.2.10, 4.5.5; CASC/ACSS competencies 2.1.1–2.1.4, 2.2.9, 3.4, 4.2.10, 4.3.1, 4.3.3).

Through required and optional reading, lectures, class discussion and exercises, and the completion of assignments, the student will work to achieve the following course objectives:

Knowing (MSJCC Domains: II. Client Worldview, IV. Counseling and Advocacy Interventions)

- Acquire knowledge of cultural traditions through experiential and conceptual learning (CASC/ACSS).
- Integrate knowledge of human and cultural diversity in relation to psychotherapy practice (CRPO, CASC/ACSS).
- Identify how clients' cultural beliefs and values may inform treatment choices (CASC/ACSS).
- Recognize the impact of power dynamics within the therapeutic relationship (CRPO).
- Recognize how oppression, power and social injustice may affect the client and also the therapeutic process. Recognize barriers that may affect access to therapeutic services (CRPO).

Being (MSJCC Domains: I. Counselor Self-Awareness, II. Client Worldview, IV. Counseling and Advocacy Interventions)

- Employ effective skills in observation of self, the client and the therapeutic process (CRPO).
- Identify one's own beliefs and cultural traditions and their influence on personhood and practice (CRPO, CASC/ACSS).
- Develop cultural humility and competency through learning about the diversity of social location, cultural safety and human rights (CASC/ACSS).
- Develop cultural humility and competency through learning about Indigenous peoples' experience of colonization in Canada (CASC/ACSS).

Doing (MSJCC Domains: III. Counseling Relationship, IV. Counseling and Advocacy Interventions)

- Demonstrate awareness of the impact of the client's context on the therapeutic process (CRPO).
- Communicate in a manner appropriate to client's developmental level and sociocultural identity (CRPO).
- Demonstrate and promote inclusive behaviour and advocate for diverse cultural needs and practices (CASC/ACSS).
- Collaboratively adapt the therapist's approach when working with culturally diverse clients, using culturally-relevant resources (CRPO, CASC/ACSS).
- Utilize reflection from cultural perspectives for the purpose of meaning-making with clients (CASC/ACSS).

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Adjunct Professor:

Biography: Ruth Baah-Gyebi is a Registered Psychotherapist (RP) with the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO) and an Adjunct Professor of Counselling and Spiritual Care (part-time) at McMaster Divinity College. She specializes in traumatology and couples counselling and is both a CRPO-approved clinical supervisor and an approved supervisor in Marriage and Family Therapy with the Canadian Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (CAMFT).

With over 26 years of clinical experience across the UK/Europe, Canada, and Africa, Ruth offers psychotherapy to individuals, couples, and families from diverse cultural and spiritual backgrounds. Ruth is the co-founder and Practice Director of *Elpizo Counselling Services*, a private group practice in Ontario that currently supports over 20 practitioners. In this role, she manages the practice and provides clinical supervision, mentorship, and practice development support to practicum students in Master of Social Work and Psychotherapy programs, as well as to seasoned clinicians. She also offers consultation to faith leaders, academic institutions, and business professionals on individual and organizational well-being.

Ruth is a seasoned trainer and educator with extensive experience delivering clinical and spiritual care training. She has previously taught counselling skills, and Practicum at Seneca College and regularly facilitates workshops and seminars for mental health professionals, churches, and community groups. Her passion lies in equipping emerging therapists and Christian leaders with the knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding needed for competent and compassionate practice in multicultural and spiritually integrated care settings.

She holds a Master of Counselling Studies from the University of Edinburgh and is currently completing her PhD in Guidance and Counselling. Ruth has been joyfully married for over 32 years to her husband, affectionately known as "Dr. Love", who is also a psychotherapist and co-founder of Elpizo. Together, they are blessed with three adult children.

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Weekly Schedule

Sept 8 – Week 1: Who Am I in the Room?

Focus: Cultural identity and personal narrative in the counselling relationship

Reading: Sue et al., Ch. 1; Hays, Ch. 1

Sept 15 – Week 2: The Posture of Humility – Virtual Guest Presenter

Focus: Cultural humility vs. cultural competence

Reading: Elmer, Ch. 2; supplementary article on cultural humility

Sept 22 – Week 3: Listening Across Cultures

Focus: Ethical presence and deep listening

Reading: Elmer, Ch. 4; Sue et al., Ch. 3

Activity: Role-play: Listening without fixing & Listening reflection worksheet

Sept 29 – Week 4: Context and Worldview

Focus: Understanding cultural frameworks and worldviews

Reading: Hays, Ch. 2; DSM-5 Cultural Formulation Interview (CFI)

Activity: Applying CFI to cases

Oct 6 – Week 5: Justice-Oriented Therapy

Focus: Racism, privilege, and systemic oppression

Reading: Sue et al., Ch. 6; supplemental article (Archer, recommended)

Oct 13 – **No Class – Thanksgiving & Reading Week**

Oct 20 – Week 6: Diagnosis and Diversity

Focus: Cultural influence on diagnosis and pathology

Reading: Hays, Ch. 5; Kleinman's explanatory model (article)

Activity: Cultural assessment role-play

Oct 27 – Week 7: Character and Presence

Focus: Vulnerability, compassion, and the wounded healer

Reading: Nouwen, Ch. 1–2; Sue et al., Ch. 5

Activity: Discussion on the 'Wounded Healer in the Practice'

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Nov 3 – Week 8: Working with Families

Focus: Collectivism and intergenerational dynamics

Reading: Hays, Ch. 7; McGoldrick (excerpt)

Activity: Cultural family tree and genogram

Nov 10 – Week 9: Cultural Rupture and Repair

Focus: Microaggressions and relational rupture in therapy

Reading: Sue et al., Ch. 10; supplementary case study

Activity: Case study: Addressing therapeutic missteps

Nov 17 – Week 10: Traditional and Spiritual Counselling

Focus: Exploring culturally rooted and spiritually integrated models of counselling beyond the Western paradigm. Examine how traditional and faith-based practices across cultures serve therapeutic roles and offer meaning-making pathways for individuals and communities.

Reading: Journal of Pastoral Care article; Archer, Anti-Racist Psychotherapy, Ch. 7 (other research, readings to support your chosen “non-western modality”

Activity: Group Presentations

Nov 24 – Week 11: Grief and Ritual

Focus: Cultural rituals of mourning and lament

Reading: Nouwen, Ch. 4; Neimeyer (excerpts)

Activity: Comparative analysis: Christian grief vs. cultural ritual

Dec 1 – Week 12: Integration and Identity

Focus: Aligning personal, cultural, and professional identity

Reading: Schreiter (excerpt); Pargament (excerpt)

Dec 8 – Week 13: Who Am I Becoming?

Focus: Final synthesis

Reading: Review selected readings

Activity: Personal framework discussions

Dec 12 – Week 14: Closing the Circle

Focus: Course closure, integrative reflection

Reading: None assigned

Activity: Final sharing circle, affirmations, course feedback

Assignments

Assignment 1: Cultural self-reflection journal (500 words) – 10% due Sept 22

This assignment invites you to begin your journey of self-awareness by reflecting on your own cultural

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identity, values, and personal narrative. As a future psychotherapist or spiritual care provider, understanding who you are and the cultural factors that have shaped you is essential for building ethical, empathetic, and effective therapeutic relationships. Respond to the following in a reflective journal format:

- How has your cultural context shaped your values, worldview, and assumptions about people, relationships, health, or healing?
- What cultural strengths and insights do you bring to your practice as a future psychotherapist or spiritual care provider?
- What blind spots or biases do you think you might need to work on?

Assignment 2: 1000-word paper on power and cultural identity in the therapy room – 20% due Oct 20

This assignment is to critically examine how power, cultural identity, and positionality show up in the counselling process. It aims for you to cultivate awareness of how your own identity (e.g., ethnicity, gender, religion, class, ability) impacts therapeutic dynamics; how power operates both interpersonally and systemically within the therapy room, and how to engage clients with cultural humility.

Write a critical reflection paper (1000 words) addressing the following questions:

1. Self-Examination

- What are the key elements of your own cultural identity?
- How have your experiences of privilege or marginalization shaped how you see others?

2. Power in the Therapy Room

- How does power show up between therapist and client?
- What unspoken power dynamics may emerge across lines of cultural difference?
How might your cultural identity complicate or strengthen your therapeutic alliance with clients?

3. Response as a Culturally Humble Therapist

- What does it look like for you to “make room” for the client’s cultural worldview?
- How will you remain open to correction, feedback, or rupture related to culture or identity?
- What commitments or practices will you adopt to foster inclusive and ethical counselling?

Weighting

Criteria	Weight
Depth of reflection and insight	30%
Engagement with reading and theory	25%
Analysis of power and positionality	25%
Structure, clarity, formatting	20%

Activity/Assignment 3: In-class Presentation – 40%

Group Presentations: Counselling Models Across Cultures

Each group presents a non-Western approach to counselling or guidance (e.g., Ubuntu, Indigenous circle dialogue, Spiritual, Ayurvedic Psychology, etc.).

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The presentations should include:

- Cultural and spiritual foundations
- How “counselling” is understood and practiced
- How trust, guidance, emotion, and healing are framed
- Application to modern mental health contexts
- Include an interactive element in your presentation (discussion prompt, demo, or short reflection).
- Submit your group’s slides and handout on the day of the presentation.

Weighting

Criteria	Weight
Content Accuracy and Relevance	30%
Cultural Sensitivity and Depth of Understanding	30%
Presentation Design and Clarity	15%
Team Collaboration and Delivery	15%
Handout Quality	10%

Assignment 4: Final integrative reflection paper (1500 words) – 30% due Dec 8

This culminating assignment invites you to reflect on your personal and professional journey throughout the Cross-Cultural Counselling course. You began the term exploring the question, 'Who Am I in the Room?' and will now close the course by answering the deeper question: 'Who Am I Becoming?' This is a chance to integrate your growth in cultural humility, ethical care, theoretical knowledge, and intercultural insight.

Assignment Instructions

Write a 1500-word reflective essay addressing the following prompts:

1. Revisit your first journal. How would you now describe your cultural self-awareness and presence?
2. What key insights have changed your posture or practice toward culturally different clients?
3. Identify one theoretical framework or model that has reshaped how you approach counselling (e.g., Sue, Hays, DSM-5 CFI, traditional models, spiritual care).
4. Describe a significant ‘aha moment’ or learning that challenged your assumptions or deepened your empathy.
5. How have your professional ethics, faith perspective, and therapeutic character grown because of this course?
6. Conclude with your ongoing commitments: What kind of culturally responsive therapist or caregiver are you striving to become?

Learning Integration

Your reflection should demonstrate thoughtful integration of course readings and experiences, including but not limited to:

- Sue et al. (cultural competence, systemic awareness)
- Hays (ADDRESSING framework, clinical application)

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- Elmer (servanthood and humility)
- Nouwen (presence, wounded healer)
- Schreiter, Pargament (spiritual identity and care)
- Traditional and Indigenous frameworks

Weighting

Criteria	Weight
Depth of reflection and insight	30%
Engagement with reading, theory & experience	50%
Structure, clarity, formatting	20%

1.1. Course Expectations and Readings

Students are expected to:

Complete all assigned readings before class

Engage actively in discussions and activities

Submit assignments on time and in APA 7th format

Practice cultural humility and confidentiality in all case discussions

Course readings must be completed prior to each class session. Active participation, respectful engagement, and critical reflection are expected throughout the term.

Note: Weekly topics and readings may be adjusted throughout the term in response to student needs, class discussions, or relevant current events.

2. Course Administration

College Style for Submission of Written Work: All written work—unless informed otherwise by the course instructor—is to be submitted in accordance with the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guide for Essays and Theses*, available on the McMaster Divinity College web-site <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production, including AI) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

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A special note about AI: You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or to help you “tidy up” your English grammar, usage, and mechanics, especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting that content as if you created it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one’s own as if it is one’s own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy.

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

Bookstore

All required and recommended books for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

Absence Due to Illness

If you must miss class due to an illness, you must contact me (via email) as soon as possible to let me know. Likewise, if I should become ill, I will communicate with you via A2L about how we will make up

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class sessions.

Although much of the course content will be made available via A2L, it would still be a good idea to have a friend take notes for you, if possible.

Inclement Weather

If on a class meeting day MDC closes due to inclement weather, I reserve the right to move the lessons and, where possible, class activities for the week to A2L (asynchronous format). This will help to ensure that we stay on target in the course.

Submission of Written Work

All assignments are due on the day indicated (by email before 5 p.m. of the day due). ***Late submission of assignments will be deducted one grade point for every late day.*** All written work is to be submitted by email in either MSWord format, "Rich Text Format" (i.e., *.rtf), or as an Open Office document. Graded papers will be returned to the student with comments in pdf format.

Length

Students are expected to adhere to the word count.

Cell Phone/Computer Policy

Students are to refrain from texting or conducting cell phone conversations while class is in session. Should you need to maintain contact with family members and/or your employment, please turn off the ringer to avoid disturbing others; upon receipt of an urgent call, you may discretely excuse yourself from the classroom. The same policy applies to all computer-generated sound schemes, pagers, or other electronic annunciation systems.

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