



McMaster Divinity
College

MS 3P1270

Crisis Intervention

Specializations: CS/PS

Fall 2026

Brent Moore, PhD, LCPC

brent.moore2@indwes.edu

September 14th - December 14, 2026

Synchronous Class Sessions: Sept. 25th, Oct. 2nd, Oct. 9th, Oct. 23rd, 9:30am - 3:45pm

COURSE SYLLABUS

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Any direct service ministerial role will at some point usually involve helping people deal with life crises. We have also been in the midst of a prolonged global pandemic that has created a multitude of other crises. This course will equip pastors, lay leaders, and pastoral counselors with basic level skills in crisis intervention with individuals, couples, families, and organizations. General crisis intervention theory and principles will be reviewed along with approaches to specific situations such as acute depression with suicidal intention, violent and aggressive behavior, psychotic decompensation, developmental crises, spiritual crises, catastrophic life events, and natural/technological disasters. In the process of the course, students will formulate a summary for one special focus crisis area of interest, including a concrete plan of assessment, intervention and follow-up, which is informed by current theory and research. Upon satisfactory completion of the course, students will exchange their work and collect a library of summaries on the most commonly encountered crisis situations, as ready reference to principles, resources and referrals for these topics.

Prerequisites: While previous coursework or experience in general counselling skills is preferred, it is not mandatory to benefit from this training. However, if no previous coursework or experience, students must read Chapters 1 through 3 inclusive of the textbook by Norman H. Wright prior to the first class, in addition to the course readings below due before the first class.

Core/Required Course for: MACSC, MDiv Specialization in Counseling and Spiritual Care

Elective for: Students outside the above programs

Advanced Research and Doctoral Students: 5- or 6-unit students needing to enroll in the course must obtain a separate set of course requirements from the instructor.

2. COURSE FORMAT

This intensive course is offered in live, synchronous, online videoconference format, scheduled on 3 full days of instruction. Class sessions will include didactic instruction, video presentations, group presentations, role play, and class discussion. Since this is a skills-development course, full participation in each of the three class days is required, and because of the intensive format of this course, readings must be completed before class, including the first day of class. Group presentations will require students to videochat and collaborate during the 4 weeks between the 2nd and 3rd class. Group presentations during the 3rd class will be made online. By the end of the course, each student will have summaries from the instructor and fellow students on a variety of specific crisis situations to build their own “Crisis Intervention” handbook and reference library.

3. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Since this is a skills-development course, the learning objectives for each student are the same.

Knowing

- To describe the goals, phases, and techniques of crisis intervention in general
- To explain how these goals, phases, and techniques are adapted uniquely to specific types of crises, including suicide, violent or potentially violent incidents, developmental crises, and other adventitious crises, such as natural or man-made disasters and the current pandemic crisis, as well as how these are adapted to specific populations
- To recognize and list the symptoms and adaptations commonly experienced in response to trauma
- To differentiate the unique opportunity and dangers in providing crisis intervention in a pastoral role
- To differentiate the unique challenges and adaptations involved in doing crisis counselling online or over the phone
- To explore and describe the unique role of the church in providing early intervention during crises

Being

- To identify the life crises which we have survived, and the adaptations to these crises that have affected our lives
- To increase tolerance in hearing others' pain and being open to the experience of one's own pain.
- To increasingly practice empathic listening skills, effective responses, and appropriate support in all our relationships, especially when these have been affected by crisis and trauma

Doing

- To observe and identify helpful versus non helpful responses in crisis situations

- To demonstrate skills in assessing, intervening, and follow-up in different types of crises, with different populations, and in different contexts
- To demonstrate skills in identifying the need for and facilitating referrals for further psychological and medical help when necessary
- To identify and list resources within our communities to provide support, education, and further help for individuals in crisis
- To develop an action plan for facilitating early intervention in crises and/or providing crisis intervention resources within our ministry context or community

4. COURSE TEXTS

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.

A. **Required Textbooks – All Students:**

Wright, H. Norman. *The Complete Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling: What To Do and Say When It Matters Most*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2011. (449 pp)

Mason, Karen. *Preventing Suicide: A Handbook for Pastors, Chaplains, and Pastoral Counselors*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014. (232 pp)

Jackson-Cherry, Lisa & Erford, Bradley. *Crisis Assessment, Intervention and Prevention* (4th Ed.) Pearson: New York City, NY.: Pearson, 2024. (528 pp)

This is an online textbook available at:

<https://www.pearson.com/en-ca/subject-catalog/p/crisis-assessment-intervention-andprevention/P200000009794/9780137871872>

B. **Additional articles:**

To supplement lectures, additional *required* articles are provided on the class website on A2L (See schedule below). An extensive bibliography is also provided to help students prepare for their class projects.

5. INSTRUCTOR

Biography: Dr. Brent Moore is a Licensed Professional Counselor & Supervisor in Missouri and a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor & Supervisor in Kansas. He is a Registered Play Therapist & Supervisor. He holds a PhD in health psychology, MA in clinical psychology, MA in biblical and theological studies, MBA, and EdS in educational diagnostics. In Dr. Moore's full-time work, he is the Chair of Behavioral and Health Sciences and Professor of Psychology at Indiana Wesleyan University

(National & Global). In 2021, he founded Neural Pathways Learning Center, a clinic in Liberty, Missouri, specializing in diagnosing specific learning disorders and ADHD. In 2024, he was a Visiting Scholar at the University of London's Centre for Online and Distance Education (CODE).

Contact and Availability: Dr. Moore is available for one-on-one consultation briefly after class and during breaks on the day the class is scheduled. Otherwise, students may contact him at brent.moore2@indwes.edu. *Please make sure you put "Crisis Intervention course" in the subject line of any email to rapidly identify your communication.*

6. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Class Participation - 10% of grade

Attendance and participation in class discussions, activities, and roleplays.

B. Personal Reflection Paper: Due October 3rd, Midnight – 10% of grade

- 2 to 5 pages double-spaced (no cover page required)
- Supports the "Being" goals of this course, encouraging self-reflection and growth in the person of the counselor or minister.
- Choose a crisis that has happened in your life that you feel comfortable disclosing, identify what "type" of crisis that it was, and compare the trajectory of your experience, your response to the crisis, the coping skills you used, and possible long-term consequences with the material presented in this course. In what ways does your experience fit (or not) with the theory, research, and practical coping skills reviewed in the course? Looking back, are there any suggested interventions or perspectives from the course that were or would have been helpful/ appropriate at that time?

C. Online Chapter Tests on Jackson-Cherry & Erford - 25% of Grade

Based on the chapters in the principal textbook by Jackson-Cherry & Erford, quizzes through A2L will provide accountability and test student learning. Quizzes can be completed on each chapter, at the student's own pace, but must be finished by the last official date of the course, July 31st. This gives extra weeks to finish reading this valuable resource. However, recommended chapters for each intensive day will be provided, and the text is a resource to begin developing group projects.

D. Group Presentation and Written Resource Handout - 25% of grade, Handouts due: Thursday, October 22nd, Presentations will take place Friday, October 23rd

The **purposes** of this assignment are:

- 1) To increase your understanding (Knowing) and Skills Practice (Doing) in depth in one specific area of Crisis Intervention,

- 2) To practice good communication, empathy, cooperation and leadership skills (Being) in your group, and
- 2) To broaden your familiarity with diverse areas of Crisis Intervention through listening to others' presentations, and
- 3) To develop a "Crisis Handbook" for future reference in counseling and ministry by mutually exchanging your group's intervention outline and other materials with classmates. You will be asked for permission to share your group's work, and everyone will get a copy of each group's work. Together with the materials from the course, this will contribute to your own reference "Crisis Handbook."

- Students will form **groups** of three to five (depending on class size) to produce an online presentation on a unique topic from the list below. This assignment is due during the third/last class (Presentation length will depend on class size).
- The **presentation** will be conducted online and must include some interactive material and/or a demonstration: role-play, video, class activity, case study for discussion, etc. A partial bibliography is available online, with introductory reference materials for some topics. At least 5 journal articles, chapters, or book references are required. Make sure you focus on the *specific* information and interventions that are *unique* to this crisis.
- Groups will prepare a **written handout** for fellow students. This handout and all other written supplementary materials that are part of the presentation must be submitted online through A2L by the day before the last class/ Friday at 9 AM to allow time to upload to A2L for access for all class members.
- The handout will summarize an understanding of the *specific* crisis and outline the *specific* intervention strategies for this crisis, using these section headings (as has been demonstrated by other handouts given in class by the professor):
 - A. Introduction – definition of crisis, statistics, demographics, relevance to Christian or other target community, etc.
 - B. Assessment
 - C. Interventions
 - D. Follow-up
 - E. Resources
 - F. Bibliography and Other Recommended Reading

- **Possible Crisis Topics for Group Presentations:**

<u>Abuse and Violence</u>	Physical Abuse of a
Sexual Assault	Child/Adolescent
Sexual Abuse of a Child/Adolescent	
Domestic Violence	

Catastrophic Life Events

Accidental Injury/ Chronic Illness/
Terminal Illness
Arrest/Incarceration
Sudden Death/ Suicide/ Homicide

Families

Children and Adolescents
Refugees
Military
First Responders
Prison Population

Special Populations and Settings

Marital Separation/Divorce
Unexpected Pregnancy/ Abortion/ Miscarriage

Developmental/Transitional Crises

Bereavement/ Natural Death
Dementia/ Care of Elderly
Aging/ Retirement
Immigration

E. Individual Paper – MINISTRY APPLICATION- 30% of grade: Due December 7th, midnight ET

- The purpose of this assignment is to develop a practical application of this course to your current or future ministry role. This fulfills the final objective of the course (Doing) by developing an action plan to facilitate early intervention for a particular type of crisis and/or to provide crisis intervention resources within your ministry context or community.
- If you do not have a specific ministerial role or community currently, you may use a hypothetical or anticipated one. Please note this in the introduction to your proposal.
- The focus of the application should be on *psychological* crisis intervention (rather than social services crisis intervention, such as providing for physical needs, etc.). You should choose from the range of topics and types of crises surveyed in this course. You can use your group topic or a different one.
- You should consult sources specific to your problem focus or population in addition to the course texts. You must substantiate your argument/rationale for your program with evidence from the literature and from Scripture as appropriate.
- You can use the material you researched for your group project, or other materials you collected during the course, including from other groups, (so long as authorship is clearly cited for original work by another person, and primary references are included in your bibliography as well).
- The paper is due approximately one week after the last class, as specified in the course schedule.

Assignment Description:

Imagine that you are submitting a proposal to a Church Board or a non-profit organization to obtain funding or other support (you don't need to provide a budget, however). The content can be organized in bullet points/ outline form, but must include all relevant content, and should be at least 5-8 pages in length (single-spaced within paragraphs, double-spaced between paragraphs) NOT including Bibliography, Resource list, and other Appendices as necessary. The assignment's rationale is persuasive, and it provides sufficient detail so the Board can decide whether to approve the project. Do not assume the Board members know anything about the problem in focus. Support your statements with footnotes that reference your research. However, be concise enough that they will read the whole thing and get a good sense of what you want to do.

Your paper should include (use these subheadings):

- **Introduction:** Do NOT use an assignment cover page. Consider your audience. Who are you addressing this proposal to? Give a brief description or overview of the proposal to orient your reader as to what you will be discussing.
- **Ministry or Community Context:** Description of ministerial or community organization involved, the characteristics of the community/ church involved (including demographics of the population served, location, purpose or mission, etc.), and your role/association with the organization, as well as your prospective role in your proposal.
- **Problem Identification:** This should be one of the most developed sections of your paper (along with "Action Plan"), integrating the psychological research as well as the theological rationale for addressing the problem. This section should give background to the issue/type of crisis you will be addressing, so the reader can have some understanding of the problem and empathy for the participants. Describe the need for crisis services and/or how you will identify these needs (the WHY). Clearly link the needs of the church/organization/community with the problem in focus. Why do we need to address this problem in this community, and why now? (Use footnotes to reference your bibliographic sources)
- **Participant Identification:** What is the target population? Who will be the recipients of the services or program? Why these people? How will you find them and identify them?
- **Action Plan:** Description of program elements to address the identified needs. This should also include a rationale for the interventions or approach taken. Is there research supporting this approach? How does it address the specific aspects of the problem or challenges as you have identified them? Provide a brief introduction/overview, then be sure to include:
 - WHO – will provide or facilitate each part of the program
 - WHERE – will it happen
 - WHEN – beginning, frequency, duration, etc.

WHAT are the goals and elements of the program, and what is the content of the program?

You can include a class/course outline or counseling outline as an appendix, as well as any participant handouts developed as part of your group project, or developed new for this topic. **(Use footnotes as necessary to reference sources. Give FULL information so that someone can find the primary source on their own. Use MDC Style.)**

HOW will it be delivered? e.g., in person, virtual, Sunday School series, etc.? How will it be funded? (no need for a budget, but a general idea of who pays for it and how)

- **Evaluation Plan:** Description of HOW you will evaluate outcomes. How will you know your program was successful? What measure(s) will you use?
- **Referral and Resources List (as Appendix):** List of resources in your specific community and geographical area to which you could refer those in this kind of crisis, in addition to resources for the needs you have addressed in your proposal. What if they need a “next step” or “further help?” Where can the participants get more information?
- **Bibliography:** Sources you consulted in formulating your plan, and which will be informative and relevant in carrying it out. **You must use MDC style for both footnotes and Bibliography.**

7. COURSE ADMINISTRATION

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresenting the authorship or ownership of written work through deception or other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include copying or using unauthorized aids during tests or examinations; plagiarism, that is, presenting another person’s (or generative AI’s) words, ideas, data, or creative work as one’s own without appropriate acknowledgement and citation; or submitting work for credit in more than one course without instructor permission.

A special note about Generative AI: Students are expected to do their own thinking and write their own papers and assignments. Generative AI is not to be used to do this work. The use of AI to produce content that is then submitted as though it were the student's own work constitutes plagiarism and is a violation of the Academic Honesty Policy. While AI tools may be used to correct errors in English grammar, usage, and mechanics, Generative AI must not be used to translate assignments from a student's native language into English. All degree programs at MDC are taught in the English language. Students are expected to be sufficiently proficient in English to engage fully in academic discourse in these programs.

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), McMaster Divinity College (MDC) is committed to supporting a learning environment that is inclusive and accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. Students who require academic accommodations to participate fully in this course must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) (<https://sas.mcmaster.ca/>) of McMaster University. SAS will work directly with the MDC Registrar to ensure reasonably appropriate accommodations are in place. Students with accommodations must use the SAS portal to activate the accommodations relevant to each course at the start of each term in which they are enrolled. Please note that accommodations must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation. Accommodations are not retroactive and will not be applied to coursework or activities that have already concluded.

Contact Information:

- **Student Accessibility Services General Inquiries:** sas@mcmaster.ca
- **Roksana Sobota (SAS Representative for MDC):** sobotar@mcmaster.ca
- **MDC Registrar:** mdcreg@mcmaster.ca

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 student will use inclusive language in all MDC assignments. When referencing biblical texts, students should preserve the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God while using gender-inclusive language when referring to human beings. Biblical quotations should be taken from a gender-inclusive translation such as: NRSVue (2022), NIV (2011), CEB (2011), NLT (1996), or CEV (1995).

Hurlburt Family 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, students 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.

College Style for Submission of Written Work

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the **McMaster Divinity College Press Style Guide** <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

Presence and Meaningful Participation

Presence and participation in this course are expected and a student's level of presence and participation in the course will impact how well they will score in the course. Low levels of presence and participation tend to translate to low grades; mediocre presence and participation tend to translate to mediocre grades; and high levels of presence and participation tend to translate to higher grades.

Students must establish a record of participation in academically related activities to meet the expected level of attendance and meaningful participation. Merely logging into the online class is not, by itself, sufficient as a demonstration of attendance and participation by the student. Students are expected to engage with the course content/materials throughout the week both within and outside of the learning management system (Avenue to Learn).

Online Etiquette

It is critical in any MDC class that students show respect for both classmates and the instructor. This is even more important in the online environment because many of the non-verbal cues that people use to interpret communication are largely absent. Therefore, students should be especially mindful of how their words may be interpreted by those who read them. Course instructors will monitor communications to ensure that all students feel comfortable expressing their views in a respectful manner. This applies to individual and group communications involving the instructor and the others enrolled in the course.

Online Synchronous Course Policy

Technology Requirements

- A reliable internet connection (tested before class time),
- A device with audio and video capability
- The correct video conferencing platform installed (e.g., Zoom, Teams).

Webcam & Environment

- Students must keep their microphones muted except when speaking to minimize background noise.
- Students must keep their webcams on throughout the class session.
- Students must dress appropriately.

- Students must ensure their surroundings are free from unnecessary distractions. Professional virtual backgrounds are permitted.

Copyright: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

Bibliography for Crisis Intervention MS 3P1270

FA2026

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