



McMaster Divinity  
College

**MS 3X13**

**Counselling Skills and Interventions**

Cathryn Harris, Ph.D. C.Psych.  
[drcathrynharris@gmail.com](mailto:drcathrynharris@gmail.com)

Winter 2020  
Mon 9:00am to 10:50am

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**1. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Regardless of our specific calling, in any position in ministry we will find ourselves in a potentially therapeutic dialogue with others. Accurate and empathic listening coupled with effective communication is a requisite in encouraging growth or development within any of our relationships. This course will train the student in the microskills leading to empathic listening and effective growth-producing communication which is applicable in any specialization. While laying the foundation for a ministry in pastoral counselling, it will also enhance for all students our dialogues within the church, and between the church and the world. This course will require a certain level of self-disclosure, at a level of comfort of the student, and will rely heavily on practicing these microskills in class in the roles of “counselor”, “counselee”, and observer. All students are expected to take turns in all roles. Assignments will focus on analyzing transcripts of the students own “sessions” with volunteers both inside and outside of class. Grading will be based not on providing the “perfect response”, but on the ability to observe and analyze your own skills, receive and apply feedback, and be able to reflect on how to improve your own communication further. Communicating compassion for ourselves and others, is the overarching goal. Lectures will also include other basic intervention skills for specific situations most likely to be encountered during therapeutic dialogues.

**SPECIALIZATIONS:** Counseling and Spiritual Care, Church and Culture, Christian World View,

Doctor of Practical Theology students who wish to apply for this course as an Advanced Elective for their degree program must consult with the Program Director of the DPT and the course instructor in order to develop an Advanced Elective approach to the course that fulfills the specific elements required by the DPT program. Once the elements of the Advanced Elective have been agreed upon by the student, the Program Director, and the instructor, a formal application can be made for an Advanced Elective in connection with this course. Once the application is accepted, DPT students can proceed with the course as part of their degree program.

## 2. COURSE FORMAT

Class sessions will include didactic instruction, video presentations, and structured dialogue exercises in class, some of which will be audiotaped or videotaped. Assigned readings will include interactive questions and practice responses in workbook format that must be completed before each class. Since this is a skills-development course, full participation in class exercises is required.

## 3. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

### ***Knowing***

- To understand the goals and phases a therapeutic dialogue, the roles of “counselor” and “counselee”, and the language of microskills
- To understand the different types of responses and interventions which might occur in dyadic communication or dialogue
- To understand what kinds of responses and interventions are helpful or not helpful in promoting growth and change, and in specific situations in the therapeutic relationship

### ***Being***

- To increase comfort with self-disclosure, within one’s own sense of safety and boundaries, and as appropriate to the assignments
- To increasingly practice empathic listening skills and effective responses in all our relationships
- To increase tolerance in hearing others’ pain and being open to the experience of one’s own pain.

### ***Doing***

- To observe and identify helpful versus non helpful responses in therapeutic dialogue
- To develop microskills in noticing, reflecting, and validating both content and feelings in a dialogue, in order to establish relationship, encourage deeper exploration and growth, and consolidate learnings
- To develop microskills in clarifying, confronting, using metaphors, and using authenticity, self-disclosure and immediacy to encourage growth and change

#### 4. COURSE TEXTS

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

- A. *Required Textbook:*** Sbanotto, E.A.N., Gingrich, H.D., and Gingrich, F.C. (2016) Skills for Effective Counseling: A Faith-Based Integration. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. (450pp).

#### 5. INSTRUCTOR

**Biography:** Cathryn Harris, Ph.D. C.Psych. is an Adjunct Professor (part time) at McMaster Divinity College. She is a Registered Psychologist (CPO) with competencies in both Clinical and Counselling Psychology, a Registered Marriage and Family Therapist, and Approved Supervisor in Marriage and Family Therapy with AAMFT and CAMFT, and a Certified EMDR Therapist. For 35 years, and currently fulltime, she has provided psychotherapy and psychological assessments to individuals, couples, families, children and adolescents in outpatient private practice. She has also worked in inpatient and day treatment programs, and provided consultation to pastors, teachers, and business professionals on individual and organizational issues. She has been continuously involved in the training and supervision of Christian mental health professionals for over 30 years, beginning as Adjunct Professor at Rosemead School of Psychology, and at Fuller Graduate Seminary for a short while, and for the longest time as Clinical Supervisor for a Christian counselling ministry that placed counselling interns in churches throughout Southern California. It has also been her privilege on a few occasions to provide counselling skills training specifically to Pastors, and looks forward to being able to do more of this at MDC. Dr. Harris has been married for over 30 years to another psychologist, and has one adult daughter who has managed to survive that experience.

**Contact and Availability:** Dr. Harris is available for one-on-one consultation briefly after class and during breaks on the day class is scheduled. Otherwise, students may contact her at [drcathrynharris@gmail.com](mailto:drcathrynharris@gmail.com). *Please make sure you put "Counselling Skills course" in the subject line of any email to rapidly identify your communication.*

#### 6. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

##### A. Class Participation - 25% of grade

Attendance, participation in class discussions, exercises and roleplays, and completion of assigned written response pages ("workbook" pages) for each chapter in the course text **before** class, are absolutely crucial to the successful completion of this course. Completion of workbook assignments will not be graded, but will be recorded at the beginning of each class.

## B. Assignments

### i. **Small Group Role Play Exercises and Transcript Analysis - 35% of grade:**

Eight small group exercises, to be completed in class, are delineated on pages 389-425 of the text to correspond with Chapters 4 through 12 according to the class schedule below. These involve audio or video recording (preferable) of the role plays, therefore access to a smart phone or other equipment with recording capabilities is required. Each student must supply their own recording equipment. For each roleplay, each student will transcribe their responses as “counselor” and analyze them. This written assignment is due the week after the role play, according to the class schedule below. A template for the roleplay analysis is given in the text, and a fillable pdf document will also be available through *Avenue to Learn*. (Note: You must not be in a small group with someone with whom you are in a romantic relationship. All-male groups are to be avoided. You must also counsel and be counseled by both of your other group members at various points in the semester.) Assignments will grow in their point value as the semester progresses: Ch 4, 5, 6 = 10 points each; Chs. 7, 9, 10 = 15 points; Chs 11,12 = 25 points each. Total points will be converted to reflect 35% of total grade.

### ii. **Final Project - 40% of grade:**

In this summative project, the student will conduct a 45-60 minute therapeutic dialogue or helping session with a volunteer from outside the class who serves in the role of counselee. The format will be similar, but more extensive than the roleplay assignments above. The session is recorded and transcribed and the digital recording will be handed in to the instructor with the written paper. The session can be conducted any time after Chapter 12 is completed in class on March 9<sup>th</sup>. It is best to have your volunteer scheduled and your equipment prepared beforehand, so that you can do your session as soon as possible after March 9<sup>th</sup>. Full details of the project are given on pages 425-439 of the text. The student’s analysis and critique of their counselor behaviors will review all the microskills used as taught in the course, as well as observations of their personal responses in the session, and reflection on their growth challenges. A template for the session analysis is given in the text and will also be available through *Avenue to Learn*. The project is due on the day of the last class, April 6<sup>th</sup>. *Late submissions will not be accepted.*

## 7. COURSE ADMINISTRATION

**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 Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <http://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/mdcstyleguide.pdf>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

**Statement On Academic Honesty:** Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one’s own or for

which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>

**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 the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

**Submission of Written Work:** This course is uniquely structured so that the book assignments prepare the student for what will be practiced in class. Therefore, the following will be strictly observed:

**1. Chapter assignments:** Due at the beginning of each class, can be completed in your book, and shown as completed to the GA or copied and submitted. **Docked 50% for late submission.**

**2. In-Class Role Play assignments:** Due at the beginning of each class, they must be submitted online through Avenue to Learn. A fillable .pdf is provided which can be downloaded, filled out, and uploaded. If a student is unavoidably absent for a class in which a small group assignment is given, he/she is expected to practice the targeted skill in the counselor role with at least one other student in his/her group outside class time and still submit the written assignment on the date due. If a group member is missing, the remaining two group members should go ahead with the small group during class time unless it is certain that the entire group can get together to complete the assignment on time. **Late submissions will be docked 50% credit for the assignment.**

**3. Final Project:** Must be handed in on Avenue to Learn, with digital audio/video recording uploaded as well (digital format to be explained in class). ***Because of the grading time involved, late submissions will not be accepted after midnight on the last day of this class, which is April 6<sup>th</sup>.***

**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 church or ministry, please turn off the ringer so as 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 or other electronic announcement systems.

**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.***

**8. COURSE OUTLINE : READINGS AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE (Due on class date indicated)**

**\*\* All assigned questions in each chapter are to be answered in written form before class\*\***

**Monday, Jan 6<sup>th</sup> -**

**Lecture 1 Topic: *Foundations for Therapeutic Dialogue***

Goals and Expectations of the Course

The Healing Relationship: Self as Instrument

Understanding and Communicating Empathy:

Basics of Good Communication

**Reading Assignment:** Sbanotto et al, Introduction and Chapters 1&2 (pp.1-54) (54 pgs)

**Monday, Jan 13<sup>th</sup>**

**Lecture 2 and Discussion Topics:**

Intervention: Introduction to Crisis Intervention Theory

Microskills: ***Noticing While Being Present in the Room***

**Reading Assignment:** Chs. 3 & 4 (pp.55-98) (43 pgs)

**Small Group Role Play:** Ch. 4 Attending Behavior (pp.389-391)

**Monday, Jan 20<sup>th</sup>**

**Lecture 3 and Discussion Topics:**

Intervention: General Crisis Intervention Principles

Microskills: ***Identifying the Pieces of the Story***

**Reading Assignment:** Ch. 5 (pp.99-110) (11 pgs)

**Role Play Worksheet Due:** Ch.4 Attending Behavior (pp.391-392)

**Small Group Role Play:** Ch. 5 Reflecting Content (pp.392-393)

**Monday, Jan 27<sup>th</sup>**

**Lecture 4 and Discussion Topics:**

Intervention: Understanding Suicide and the Suicidal Person

Microskills: ***Validating Emotion***

**Reading Assignment:** Ch. 6 (pp.111-124) (23 pgs)

**Role Play Worksheet Due:** Ch.5 Reflecting Content (pp.393-395)

**Small Group Role Play:** Ch. 6 Reflecting Content and Feeling (pp.395-396)

**Monday, Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> :**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:**

Intervention: Risk Assessment with the Suicidal Person

Microskills: ***Connecting Empathically***

**Reading Assignment:** Ch. 7 (pp.125-150) (25 pgs)

**Role Play Worksheet Due:** Ch. 6 Reflecting Content and Feeling (pp.396-399)

**Small Group Role Play:** Ch. 7 Basic Level Empathy (pp.399-400)

**Monday, Feb 10<sup>th</sup>**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:**

Intervention: Responding to the Suicidal Person and “Third Parties”

Microskills: ***Zeroing In, Connecting Deeply***

**Reading Assignment:** Chs. 8 & 9 (pp.151-190) (39 pgs)

**Role Play Worksheet Due:** Ch. 7 Basic Level Empathy (pp.400-403)

**Small Group Role Play:** Ch. 9 Clarifying and Intuitive Empathy (pp.407)

**Monday, Feb 17<sup>th</sup>: FAMILY DAY HOLIDAY – NO CLASS**

**Monday, Feb 24<sup>th</sup>:**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:**

Intervention: Understanding the Assaultive or Homicidal Person

Microskills: ***Expanding Interventions: Metaphor***

**Reading Assignment:** Ch. 10 (pp.191-210) (19 pgs)

**Role Play Worksheet Due:** Ch. 9 Basic Level Empathy (pp.408-411)

**Small Group Role Play:** Ch. 10 Use of Metaphor (pp. 411-12)

**Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>:**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:**

Intervention: Risk Assessment with a potentially Assaultive Person

Microskills: ***Expanding Interventions: Confrontation***

**Reading Assignment:** Ch. 11 (pp. 211-234) (23 pgs)

**Role Play Worksheet Due:** Ch. 10 Use of Metaphor (pp.412-415)

**Small Group Role Play:** Ch. 11 Confrontation (pp.416-417)

**Monday, March 9<sup>th</sup> (\*\*Do Final Project session any time after this class!)**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:**

Intervention: Responding to the potentially Assaultive Person

Microskills: ***Expanding Interventions: Using the Here and Now***

**Reading Assignment:** Ch. 12 (pp. 235-252) (17 pgs)

**Role Play Worksheet Due:** Ch. 11 Confrontation (pp.417-421)

**Small Group Role Play:** Ch. 12 Developing Your Individual Style (pp.421)

**Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup>**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:**

Intervention: Managing your response to crises: Understanding Arousal

Microskills: ***Strategies for Growth***

**Reading Assignment:** Ch. 13 (pp.253-274) (21 pgs)

**Role Play Worksheet Due:** Ch. 12 Developing Your Individual Style (pp.422-425)

**Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:**

Intervention: Increasing Coping and Emotional Regulation Skills Part 1

Microskills: ***Expanding the Counseling System***

**Reading Assignment:** Ch. 14 (pp.275-296) (21 pgs)

**Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:**

Intervention: Increasing Coping and Emotional Regulation Skills Part 2

Microskills: ***Appreciating the Sacred***

**Reading Assignment:** Ch. 15 (pp.297-320) and Appendix D (pp.441-450) (31 pgs)

**Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>: FINAL PROJECT DUE!**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:**

Intervention: Your Role after the Crisis and How to make Referrals “Stick”

Microskills: ***Wrapping up: Endings and New Beginnings***

**Reading Assignment:** Ch. 16 (pp. 321-346) (25pp)

Course Evaluation