



# McMaster Divinity College

**MS 5X15/ 6X16**

## Counselling Skills and Interventions (Advanced Students)

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Winter 2022  
 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 is primarily designed to train the student in the microskills leading to empathic listening and effective growth-producing communication which is applicable in any ministry specialization. While supporting the effective skills required 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”, “counsellee”, and observer. All students are expected to take turns in all roles. Class assignments will focus on analyzing transcripts of the students’ own “sessions” with volunteers both inside and outside of class. Grading of these assignments 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 a survey of other basic intervention skills for specific situations most likely to be encountered during therapeutic dialogues.

The advanced student’s reading is designed to explore in further depth the context, background and basic principles of pastoral counselling, specifically including the history of soul care and the relevance for integrating psychology and theology in pastoral counselling. The final written project and presentation will allow the student to focus on one specific Christian practice intervention, and evaluate it from research, integrative, and ethical perspectives.

### 2. COURSE FORMAT

**This is a virtual, synchronous, live online course which** meets on campus weekly for the duration of the semester, except for Family Day (Feb 21) and Hybrid week (Feb 28). Class sessions will include didactic instruction, video presentations, and structured dialogue exercises in class, some of which will be videotaped. Assigned readings for class sessions 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. Additional required reading and development of the final project is the responsibility of the advanced student (see below). Doctoral seminar time will be available on a restricted

basis with the professor in order facilitate this project. **\*\* Because we lose a week of instruction due to Family Day, there is assigned reading due by the first day of class. See class schedule below.**

### **3. LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

#### ***Knowing***

- To understand the goals and phases of pastoral counselling, and the microskills needed for the most effective pastoral therapeutic relationship
- To understand the history of soul care and the relevance of integrating psychology and theology in pastoral counselling
- To understand the different types of responses and interventions which might occur in pastoral counselling, including unique Christian practices that can also serve as clinical interventions
- To understand what kinds of responses and interventions are helpful or not helpful in promoting growth and change, in specific situations in the therapeutic relationship, and the ethical boundaries and guidelines for using specific Christian practices in counselling
- To know the evidence supporting the clinical use of Christian practices in counselling

#### ***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 empathetic 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
- To become familiar with the professional literature and research on Christian practices in counseling, and conduct a literature review and appropriate analysis and evaluation of one specific Christian practice
- To present a 20-minute lecture/presentation on your research to a graduate level class in counselling

### **4. REQUIRED 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.

Benner, D.G. (1998) Soul Care: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books. (238 pp)

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).

Tan, Siang-Yan. (2011) Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Christian Perspective. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Books. (496 pp)

## 5. INSTRUCTOR

**Biography:** Cathryn Harris, Ph.D. C.Psych. is an Assistant 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 and Paper Presentation- 10% 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. This portion of the grade also includes the presentation at the end of term on the advanced Christian practices paper (see below).

### B. Assignments

#### i. Small Group Role Play Exercises and Transcript Analysis - 25% 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:

Chs 5,7, 9 = 15 points each; Chs 10,12 = 25 points each  
Total points will be converted to reflect 35% of total grade.

**ii. Final Interview Project - 40% of grade: Due March 28<sup>th</sup>**

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 uploaded to the instructor with the written paper. The session can be conducted any time after Chapter 12 is completed in class. 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 that class. 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 second to last class. ***Late submissions cannot be accepted.***

**iii. Advanced Students' Written Project – 25% of Grade**

Tan (2011) has suggested that there are four distinct areas unique to pastoral or Christian counselling, one of which is "unique methods that go beyond standard counselling skills and techniques" (p.16). Imagine that you are being interviewed by the CRPO to give justification for using a spiritual intervention in your counseling approach. Your advanced project for this course is to develop a bibliography, paper, and 20 minute presentation describing one specific and unique Christian practice in pastoral counselling, highlighting the research evidence base for the practice, discussing how it can be seen integratively as a clinical intervention not just a spiritual intervention, and providing guidelines for its effective use, including consideration of ethical issues. The specific practice you choose and your bibliography must be approved by the instructor to avoid duplication between students. Details of the assignment will be provided in the first day of class. The presentation will be made on the second to last or last lecture day of the course, depending on the number of advanced students enrolled.

**A. Bibliography and Reading: Due Feb 21<sup>st</sup>**

The required texts will provide context and background for evaluating your review of one selected Christian practice from an integrative pastoral counselling perspective, and can be included in your project. You will additionally research and construct a bibliography of additional sources on your chosen practice specifically, according to the requirements of your degree (see below). A selected bibliography is provided on A2L as a starting point and gives some examples of specific practices you can choose from, as well as their analysis, but this list is purposely not exhaustive and will need to be updated for your project in terms of most recent research and perspectives. References can include books and/or professional articles. The following journals are recommended but not exhaustive: *Journal of Christianity and Psychology*, *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, *Journal of Pastoral Care*, *Pastoral Psychology*, *Journal of Religion and Health*, *Journal of Pastoral Theology*.

**DPT Students (MS 5X15)** – Minimum of additional 15 references

**MA/PhD Students (MS 6X16)** – Minimum of additional 20 references

**B. Advanced Students' Paper: Due March 14<sup>th</sup>**

- a. Choose an appropriate title for your project, and include a brief introduction as to its relevance for ministry.
- b. Describe the specific Christian practice to be used in counselling, its history of development and biblical foundation as relevant.
- c. What research supports the use (or contraindicates the use) of this practice in counselling? Review the literature relevant supporting it as an “evidence-based” practice. If there is no research, or no empirical support for this practice, are there other reasons it might still be justifiably included in counselling?
- d. How can this spiritual intervention been seen from an integrative psychological perspective? Egs. What aspects of effective counselling does it parallel or incorporate? In what ways would it advance the more general goals of counselling? Does it address psychological themes relevant to counselling and human growth?
- e. What guidelines are suggested to use this intervention most effectively? Egs. When and how should be introduced in the counselling process? What are the indications and counter-indications for its use? Are there any ethical considerations in its use, and how should these be navigated?
- f. Include an appropriate conclusion section, summarizing your findings.

**DPT Students (MS 5X15)** – Minimum 20 pages

**MA/PhD Students (MS 6XI6)** – Minimum 25 pages

## 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, answers should be typed into a separate document, and submitted to A2L. **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. **Docked 50% for late submission.**

**3. Final Written Project and Presentation:** The written paper and outline for the class presentation (Power Point slides for the class are preferable) are due one week before the presentation is scheduled.

**4. Final Interview 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 the second to last day of class.***

**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 annunciation 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 and uploaded before class\*\***

##### **Week 1 - Monday, Jan 10<sup>th</sup> -**

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

Goals and Expectations of the Course

The Healing Relationship: Self as Instrument

Understanding and Communicating Empathy:

The Basics of Good Communication

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

##### **Week 2 - Monday, Jan 17<sup>th</sup>**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:** Microskills: ***Noticing While Being Present in the Room***

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

**Reading Assignment:** Chs. 3, 4 & 5 (pp.55-110) (54 pgs)

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

##### **Week 3 - Monday, Jan 24<sup>th</sup>**

**Lecture and Discussion Topic:** Microskills: ***Validating Emotion***

Microskills: ***Connecting Empathically***

**Reading Assignment:** Chs. 6 & 7 (pp.111-150) (48 pgs)

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

**Small Group Role Play:** Ch. 7 Basic Level Empathy (pp.396-399)

**Week 4 - Monday, Jan 31st**

**Lecture and Discussion Topic:** Microskills: *Zeroing In (Clarifying)*  
Microskills: *Connecting Deeply (Intuitive Empathy)*  
**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 & Intuitive Empathy (pp.412-417)

**Week 5 - Monday, Feb 7th**

**Lecture and Discussion Topic:** Microskills: *Metaphor*  
**Reading Assignment:** Ch. 10 (pp.191-210) (19 pgs)  
**Role Play Worksheet Due:** Ch. 9 Clarifying & Intuitive Empathy (pp.412-417)  
**Small Group Role Play:** Ch. 10 Clarifying, Intuitive Empathy & Metaphor (pp.412-417)

**Week 6 - Monday, Feb 14<sup>th</sup>**

**Lecture and Discussion Topic:** Microskills: *Confrontation*  
Microskills: *Using the Here and Now*  
**Reading Assignment:** Chs. 11 & 12 (pp.211-252) (41 pgs)  
**Role Play Worksheet Due:** Ch. 10 (pp. 412-416)  
**Small Group Role Play:** Ch. 12 Assignment, include Confrontation practice (pp. 416-425)

**Week 7 - Monday, Feb 21st: FAMILY DAY HOLIDAY – NO CLASS**

**\*\*ADVANCED STUDENT BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

**\*\* FRIDAY Feb 25<sup>th</sup>: Role Play Worksheet Due:** Ch. 12 Assignment, include Confrontation practice

**Week 8 - Monday, Feb 28<sup>th</sup>: HYBRID WEEK – NO CLASS**

**Week 9 - Monday, March 7th:**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:**  
Microskills: *Strategies for Growth/ Implementing Change*  
Intervention: Increasing Coping and Emotional Regulation Skills Part 1  
**Reading Assignment:** Ch. 13 (pp.253-274) (21 pgs)

**Week 10 - Monday, March 14<sup>th</sup> \*\* ADVANCED STUDENTS PAPER DUE**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:**  
Microskills: *Strategies for Growth/ Implementing Change*  
Intervention: Increasing Coping and Emotional Regulation Skills Part 2

**Week 11 - Monday, March 21st**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:**  
Microskills: *Thinking Systemically and Using the Relational System*  
**Reading Assignment:** Ch. 14 (pp.275-296) (21 pgs)

**Week 12 - Monday, March 28<sup>th</sup> : \*\* FINAL INTERVIEW PAPER DUE**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:** Microskills: *Appreciating the Sacred*

Intervention: Spiritual Practices as Clinical Intervention  
**Advanced Students' Presentations**

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

**Week 13 - Monday, April 4<sup>th</sup>:**

**Lecture and Discussion Topics:**

Microskills: *Wrapping up: Endings and New Beginnings*

Interventions: Bringing Closure, When and How to Make Referrals

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

Course Evaluation