



McMaster Divinity College

MS 3XA3/5XA5

Crisis Intervention

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Spring 2024
May 11th, May 25th, June 8th
9:30am to 4:30pm

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.

MS 3XA3 - SPECIALIZATIONS: Counseling and Spiritual Care, Church and Culture, Christian World View,
MS 5XA5 – ADVANCED STUDENTS: MA and Doctoral Students will have extra reading (approx 1000 pages) and an extended individual paper for this course (see below).

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 the 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)

B. **Additional Required Textbooks – Advanced Students:**

Jackson-Cherry, Lisa & Erford, Bradley. *Crisis Assessment, Intervention and Prevention (3rd Ed.)* Pearson: New York City, NY.: Pearson, 2017. (528 pp)

C. **Additional articles:**

To supplement lectures, additional articles are provided on the class website on A2L. (approx. 50 pages minimum required). An extensive bibliography is also provided to aid students in preparing for their class projects.

5. INSTRUCTOR

Biography: Cathryn Harris, Ph.D. C.Psych. is an Associate Professor 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 35 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 enjoys being able to do more of this at MDC. Dr. Harris has been married for over 35 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 drcathryn.harris@gmail.com. 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, and includes -

Personal Reflection Paper: 2 to 5 pages double spaced (no cover page required)

Due August 1st, Midnight

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?

B. Assignments

i. ALL STUDENTS - Group Presentation and Written Resource Handout - 40% of grade

Students will form groups of two or three (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 on June 8th (Presentation length will depend on class size). The **presentation** will be conducted online, and must include some interactive material and/or demonstration: role play, video, class activity, case study for discussion, etc. A partial bibliography is provided online with beginning reference materials for some topics. At least 5 journal articles, chapters, or book references are required.

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 Friday June 7th at 9am to allow time to upload to A2L for access for all class members. The handout will summarize (use these section headings):

- 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**

Also prepare a **Handout for Counselees** and/or **Outline of a Community Presentation** for bonus points!!

You will be asked for permission to share your group's work and class handouts with your classmates. 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" for future reference in your pastoral or counselling ministry.

Possible Crisis Topics for Group Presentations:

Abuse and Violence

Sexual Assault
Sexual Abuse of a
 Child/Adolescent
Domestic Violence
Physical Abuse of a
 Child/Adolescent

Catastrophic Life Events

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

Special Populations and Settings

Families
Children and Adolescents
Refugees
Military
First Responders
Prison Population

Developmental/Transitional Crises

Bereavement/ Natural Death
Marital Separation/Divorce
Unexpected Pregnancy/ Abortion/
Miscarriage
Dementia/ Care of Elderly
Aging/ Retirement
Immigration

ii. Individual Paper – 50% of grade

SPECIALIZATION STUDENTS: MINISTRY APPLICATION PAPER

This paper represents the practical application of this course to your current or future ministry role, and fulfills the final objective of the course to develop an action plan for facilitating early intervention for crises and/or providing crisis intervention resources within your ministry context or community for a particular type of crisis. If you do not have currently a specific ministerial role or community, you may use a hypothetical or anticipated one. 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).

Assignment: Imagine that you are submitting a proposal to a Church Board or 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) plus appendices as necessary. The paper is due approximately three weeks after the last class (Thursday June 27th at midnight).

Your paper should include (use these subheadings):

- A. **Participant Identification:** What is the target population, and description of ministerial context (your role, and the characteristics of the community involved).
- B. **Problem Identification:** Description of need for crisis services and/or identification of how you will identify these needs. (the WHY)
- C. **Action Plan:** Description of program elements to address the identified needs (WHO, WHERE, WHEN, WHAT, HOW) - (You can include the Participant Handout and/or Presentation outline developed as part of your group project, or develop new ones for this topic)
- D. **Evaluation Plan:** Description of HOW you will evaluate outcomes. How will you know your program was successful?
- E. **Referral and Resources List:** 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.
- F. **Bibliography:** Sources you consulted in formulating your plan, and which will be informative and relevant in carrying it out.

ADVANCED STUDENTS: COMBINED RESEARCH PAPER and MINISTRY APPLICATION

Choose a specific topic related to crisis intervention in a ministry context. You should limit your focus to a particular type of crisis with a particular population. Your topic can overlap with your group project, but should represent a more in-depth exploration of the topic and not simply repeat the same work. The topic, thesis and your bibliography must be submitted by the second class on May 25th for approval by the professor. The final paper is due Thursday, June 27th at midnight.

- A. **Bibliography:** Your bibliography must represent an additional approximately 400 pages of reading in addition to course texts to fulfill the doctoral requirements of this course. This paper should include approximately 15-20 references in addition to your course texts (and in addition to any sources included in your group project if related), preferably journal articles or book chapters, and include both research on the crisis and population of your topic, as well as *specific* crisis intervention strategies for this kind of crisis.
- B. **Literature Review (15-20 pages):** Summarize the current information on this topic from your research, including background, relevant epidemiology, relevance to ministry, current research findings and issues, specific crisis intervention approaches, techniques, or concerns. Do not simply repeat general crisis intervention principles, although you should discuss specific interventions in the context of general principles.

- C. Ministry Application (8-10 pages): This portion is exactly as described above for specialization students, and should be the application of your literature review to your chosen ministry context for this assignment.

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 <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>.

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

Statement On 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) 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.

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).

Submission of Written Work:

1. Group Assignment: A digital copy of all written materials must be submitted online through Avenue to Learn by Friday June 7th, 9am, to allow time to upload A2L for access by other class members.

2. Individual Paper: Submit online through Avenue to Learn on class page. Due three weeks after last class, on Thursday, June 27th, by midnight. Points will be deducted for late submission.

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 : LECTURES, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE
(Due on class date indicated)

DAY ONE: Saturday May 11th

Reading Assignment: Wright, Chapters 7-9, 14-15 (98pp); Mason (184pp)
(**For those with no previous training in counseling, please also read Wright, Chs 1-3)

Schedule:	Lecture Topics:
9:30am BEGIN	Introduction to Course & Assignments Your Role as Crisis Counselor The Centrality of Relationship and Empathy Crisis Intervention Theory
10:45	(15 min break)
11:00	General Crisis Intervention Principles
12:15 LUNCH – 45 mins	
1:00	Suicide and Acute Depression
2:30	(15 min break)
2:45	Suicide Intervention/Prevention
3:25	(5 min break)
3:30	Suicidal Crisis Role Play Prep
3:50	Suicidal Crisis Role Play!
4:10	Debrief, Wrap up, Questions
4:30 END	

CRISIS INTERVENTION

DAY TWO: Saturday May 25th

Reading Assignment: Wright Chapters 4-6, 10-13 (192pp)

Dulmus, C. N., & Hilarski, C. (2003). *“When stress constitutes trauma and trauma constitutes crisis: The stress-trauma-crisis continuum”*. (9 pp, on A2L)

Hiltner (1972), *“The Dynamics of Life Crises and Pastoral Care”* (7pp, on A2L)

Schedule:

Lecture Topics:

9:30 BEGIN

Homicidal Ideation and Assaultive Behavior
Psychotic Decompensation

10:45 (15 min break)

11:00

Introduction to Life Event Crises and Bereavement
Eg. Special Focus - Unemployment

12:15 LUNCH – 45 mins

1:00

Trauma and the “Danger- Danger” System of the Brain
Disaster Response and Emergency First Aid
Eg. Anxiety and Panic Episodes

2:30 (15 min break)

2:45

Principles and Guidelines for Online and Phone Counselling
Helping Organizations and Groups:
Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

4:10

Debrief, Wrap up, Questions

4:30 END

Friday June 7th 9am: WRITTEN MATERIALS FOR GROUP PROJECTS DUE

DAY THREE: Saturday June 8th GROUP PROJECTS DUE

Reading Assignments:

Wright, Conclusion (pp. 415-432, 18pp.)

Dykstra, Robert C. (1990). *"Intimate Strangers: The Role of the Hospital Chaplain in Situations of Sudden Traumatic Loss."* (18pp, on A2L)

van Deusen Hunsinger, Deborah. (2011) *"Bearing the Unbearable: Trauma, Gospel and Pastoral Care."* (18pp, on A2L)

Other articles possibly to be announced, depending on Class interest and trajectory.

Schedule:

Lecture Topics:

9:30 am BEGIN Group 1 Presentation:
10:10 (5 min break)
10:15 Group 2 Presentation:
10:55 (5 min break)
11:00 Group 3 Presentation:
11:40 (5 min break)
11:45 Group 4 Presentation:

12:25-1:15 LUNCH – 50 mins

1:15 Group 5 Presentation
1:55 (5 min break)
2:00 Spiritual Crises & Using Spiritual Interventions
2:40 (5 min break)
2:45 Termination and Follow Up
 When Hospitalization is Necessary
 How to Make Referrals Successful
3:40 (5 min break)
3:45 Debrief, Wrap up, Questions

4:30 END

Thursday July 4th Midnight: WRITTEN PAPER DUE

Thursday August 1st Midnight: PERSONAL REFLECTION PAPER DUE