

**17433 PSYC 326-002**  
**Therapeutic Communication Skills**  
**Spring Semester 2012**

**Instructor:** Marcella Marcey, Ph.D.

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**Emergency contact:** [703-505-9104](tel:703-505-9104) (I prefer you send an text message if you can)

**Class Location:** Inovation 136

**Meeting time:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00-10:15 AM

**Office Location:** Aquia Building, Room 337

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30 to 11:30 AM

**Course Description and Objectives:**

The major goal of this course is to provide students with an opportunity to develop basic verbal and nonverbal listening skills that enhance constructive interpersonal communication. A special emphasis will be placed on the use of these skills in therapeutic situations.

**Required Text:** Young, M.E. (2009). *Learning the Art of Helping: Building Blocks and Techniques* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall

Yalom, I. D. (2003). *The Gift of Therapy: An Open Letter to a New Generation of Therapists and Their Patients*. New York: HarperCollins.

**Required Equipment:** Recordable DVDs

**Use of Technology** Students will be expected to videotape role-played therapy sessions outside of class time in the STAR lab (JC Room 229, 703-993-8990). More information about the video equipment will be provided in class. Some course material will be posted on [mymason.gmu.edu](http://mymason.gmu.edu).

**Course Expectations** An effective counselor or therapist listens and responds to clients with empathy, thoughtfulness and precision. To do this, a counselor must practice and refine certain basic communication skills. In this course, you will learn the fundamentals of being an effective “helper.” In addition to lectures, this course involves extensive class participation and discussion, including in-class workshops in small feedback groups, and two videotaped role-plays. You will receive hands-on practice in honing your therapeutic communication skills.

Some of you may have experience in therapeutic communication prior to taking this class. In order to succeed in this course, you must expect to learn skills that differ from what you already know, and you must challenge yourself to sharpen skills you may consider well-developed. Sometimes these skills will seem like second nature to you and will draw on your common sense. Other times the skills will feel awkward and artificial until you have practiced and gotten a solid grasp of them. It is important to have an open mind to the different skills.

**Important Dates:** Last day to add class: January 31, 2012  
Last day to drop: February 24, 2012  
Spring Break: March 12-18  
Last Day of class: May 5, 2012  
Final exam: May14, 2012 from 1:30-4:15pm

**Course requirements:**

Video Role Play 1	100 Points
Video Role Play 2	200 Points
Workshops/Class Participation	75 points
Presentation	50 Points
Writing Assignments	75 Points (3 x 25 each)

**Workshops/Class Participation (75 points)** Class discussions and exercises are an essential part of your learning experience in this course, and of your grade. Therefore class attendance is critically important. If you miss class, you are responsible for all notes and exercises completed that day. Active participation is strongly encouraged. This means asking questions, offering topics for discussion and responding to your peers. At times, we may discuss sensitive topics. We will discuss a confidentiality policy during our first class in order for everyone to feel comfortable fully participating. During many classes, you will participate in workshop groups of 3 to 4 students. In each group, one student will play a counselor role, one student will play a client role, and one or two students will provide feedback to the counselor. Students will rotate among the roles. Workshop time is vital to practicing your skills, and it's also just plain fun. Participation in workshops counts toward your participation grade.

**Two Videotaped Role Plays (100 & 200 points)** You will each create two videotaped role-plays with another member of the class. These videos will be used to evaluate your mastery of lecture, workshop and reading material. In these role-plays, each of you will take turns acting as the counselor and demonstrating the skills discussed in class. In order to preserve continuity and to best simulate true therapy sessions, students are to role-play as the same client, discussing the same ongoing topic, for both of tapes due during the semester.

Videotapes will be graded for the skills you exhibit during the session. You will each receive written feedback on your skills. In addition, you will submit a transcript of a self-selected 10 continuous minutes of the first tape, and a self-selected 15 continuous minutes of the second tape. See Blackboard for more details on the role-play requirements and grading criteria.

**Role Play #1 – 20 min Due: 2/28/12**  
Nonverbal/Invitational Skills Paraphrasing

**Role Play #2 – 30 min Due: 4/17/12**  
Skills used in previous taping  
Reflecting Feelings and Meaning Challenging Skills, Goal-Setting Skills  
Solution skills

**Presentation (50 points)** Students will play a portion (5-7 minutes) of their first videotape in the role of the counselor and present on this video clip to the class. The entire presentation, including playing the video clip, should be about 15 minutes. Presentations will take place during class on 3/6, 3/22, 3/29, 4/10 and 4/12. Presentation days will be assigned after the semester begins. In each presentation, students will give an introduction to their client, offer insight into the therapeutic approach they chose, comment on their own strengths and weaknesses during the segment, and ask questions of their peers about different directions they could have taken. In addition, a 1-page outline should be emailed to the instructor by 9 a.m. on the day of the presentation. Students are expected to show mastery of the material presented in class and in the textbook in this presentation. See Blackboard for more detail on the presentation.

**Written assignments (3 x 25 points each = 75 points total)**

To help you process your thoughts and experiences about the skills we are learning, you will write three reflection papers during the semester. These papers will focus on your reactions to the material we have covered. See Blackboard for assignment descriptions.

**It is the responsibility of the student to retain an electronic copy of all work that has been handed in to the professor. It is also the responsibility of the student to retain returned materials in case the student wishes to appeal or correct a grade.**

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:**

If you are a student with disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at [709-993-2474](tel:709-993-2474). All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office, and must be initiated immediately, prior to any anticipated need.

**Honor Code**

Students in this course are expected to behave at all times in a manner consistent with the GMU Honor System and Code; pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. Students are encouraged to collaborate and study together as much as possible throughout the course, however, no assistance, sharing of information, or discussion of particular exam questions or answers between students may take place. Violations of the honor code will not be tolerated in this course and immediate reporting of any violations will take place according to the University procedures. **The instructor for this course reserves the right to enter a failing grade to any student found guilty of an honor code violation.**

**Schedule**

Important Note: Please keep in mind that this is a tentative schedule and topics and assignments may be changed at any time at the discretion of the instructor.

<b>Class</b>	<b>Topic and Workshop Schedule</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Assignments due at Beginning of Class</b>
Jan. 26	Syllabus review, Introduction to Helping	Ch. 1	
Jan. 31	Basic Foundations of Helping Skills and the Therapeutic Relationship	Ch. 2 &3	
Feb. 2	(Basic Foundations, continued)		Writing Assignment #1
Feb. 7	Non-Verbal and Invitational Skills	Ch. 5	
Feb. 9	Non-Verbal and Invitational Skills, continued		
Feb. 14	Workshop 1		
Feb. 16	Reflecting Skills—Paraphrasing	Ch. 6	
Feb. 21	Reflecting Skills—Reflecting Meaning and Summarizing	Ch. 7	
Feb. 23	Workshop 3		
Feb. 28	Workshop 4		Video Role-Play #1 and Transcript
March 1	Challenging Skills: Giving Feedback and Confronting the Client	Ch. 9	Writing Assignment #2
March 6	Workshop 5		Presentation Week #1
March 8	Review of skills so far		
March 20	Discussion of Yalom’s Gift of Therapy	Finish Yalom by today.	Bring at least one written comment or question about Gift of Therapy to class.
March 22	Goal-Setting Skills—Where to Go with the Client	Ch. 11	Presentation Week #2
March 27	Workshop 6		
March 29	Solution Skills: Helping the Client Find Solutions	Ch. 12	Presentation Week #3
April 3	Workshop 7		
April 5	Assessment of Clients and Making a Diagnosis		
April 10	Assessment of Clients and Making a Diagnosis	Ch. 10	Presentation Week #4
April 12	Evaluating Client’s Progress and Termination of Therapy	Ch. 13	Presentation Week #5
April 17	Workshop 8		Video Role-Play #2 and Transcript
April 19	Advanced Skills: Part I	Ch. 14	
April 24	Advanced Skills: Part II	Ch. 15	
April 26	Workshop 9		
May 1	Collecting our thoughts... (or catch-up day)		Writing Assignment #3
May 5	Open discussion of careers in helping professions		
	<b>NO FINAL EXAM</b>		