Welcome to Therapeutic Play!

I look forward to getting to know each of you throughout our semester! This course is intended to provide you with a meaningful opportunity to explore your understanding of the child’s world and working with children. Throughout the semester, we will collaborate on how to make our class experience informative, but more importantly, transformative for you. The degree to which you experience personal and professional growth will largely be a function of your own goals for this experience. I am hopeful to create a safe space for you to provide thoughts and experiences related to the content of the course. I believe we all have a teacher and a learner within us—which means we all have the opportunity to teach and learn from one another. Let’s play!

Because my intent is to create a meaningful course environment, the structure and design of this class is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Therefore, this syllabus is subject to changes as agreed upon between students and me (see course assignment details and schedule).
Land Acknowledgement

Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory we reside on, and a way of honoring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to understand the long existing history that has brought us to reside on the land, and to seek to understand our place within that history. Land acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation. It is also worth noting that acknowledging the land is Indigenous protocol. I would like to open our semester by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the occupied/unceded/seized territory of the Wichita, Caddo, Comanche, and Cherokee tribes. These tribes have stewarded this land throughout the generations, and I would like to pay our respects to elders, both past and present.

Catalog Description

Credit Hour(s): 3  
Prerequisite(s): None

Didactic experience in how to be a therapeutic agent in children’s lives. Students are introduced to the fundamental concepts and models of therapeutic play and building therapeutic relationships with children. Students are also introduced to basic child-centered play therapy principles and training requirements.

The purpose of this course is to familiarize students with the theory and practice of therapeutic play and the benefits of play throughout the developmental lifespan. Additionally, students will gain an understanding of child development and how to integrate such considerations into working with children.

Objectives of the Course

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of play in early childhood and its influence on physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development
2. Discuss influential theorists, and organizations that shaped the history of child development and therapeutic play
3. Compare and contrast between major theories of play therapy
4. Differentiate between the developmental stages of children and children’s play
5. Identify developmentally appropriate play therapy toys and materials
6. Analyze issues of cultural diversity and how that affects play therapy and therapeutic relationship
7. Summarize rationale for play therapy
8. Demonstrate effective skills for working with children including reflection of feeling and content, limit setting, choice-giving, esteem building responses, and encouragement

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8. Observe, explore, and facilitate greater play experiences with children in their environment
9. Conduct research of literature to advance knowledge of play therapy

Methods of Instruction

This integrative, discussion-based course is designed to be highly interactive and experiential. Students will be invited to participate in numerous ways such as role-plays, discussions, and experiential activities. Class readings will be supplemented with classroom lectures, experiential activities, discussions, videos, guest speakers, and student presentations. Please see the instructor as soon as possible if you have unique needs or concerns with any aspect of this course. If at any time, you find it difficult to utilize our time together for your benefit, I invite you to discuss it with me so that we can improve the experience and make it worth our effort and time.

Sharing & Confidentiality

In this course, each student is required to reflect on one’s own developmental journey. This reflection will involve self-examination and sharing of personal information with the class. It is important that students strive to be appropriate in personal sharing. To promote an emotionally safe learning environment, each student will be asked to maintain confidentiality of others’ personal material shared in class; however, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, each student should be mindful of what one chooses to share. Each student is encouraged to take risks and to challenge oneself while maintaining personal boundaries that are important to one’s continued wellbeing and development as a professional in training and a person.

Discussions, exercises, activities, and presentations in this course may elicit unexpected emotions and memories or uncover previously hidden psychological processes that students may find unsettling. If at any time you feel that you are overwhelmed, please feel free to leave the room, pass from the current activity, and/or talk with the instructor. If you would like counseling to address personal concerns, you may contact UNT’s Counseling & Testing at (940) 565-2741 or seek personal counseling at your own expense.

Required Texts


Recommended Text


Attendance & Class Participation

Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. It is important that you communicate with the instructor prior to being absent, so you and the instructor can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Please inform the instructor if you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community. The instructor will review attendance options, including participation via zoom, or being excused from attending class.

Students are allowed four excused absences before grade point deductions. Absence from more than four class meetings will result in a grade reduction. The above policy is intended to allow for reasonable accommodation in case of illness, family emergencies, or transportation problems. Individuals who choose to use non-penalized absences for other situations risk not having allowable absences available when needed. Accommodation will only be made in situations when all absences are severe, extenuating, and documented. Students are responsible for ALL material and assignments covered on days they are absent. In the event of an absence, please contact a classmate to get pertinent class notes, handouts, etc. Please refrain from texting, emailing, or communicating on the internet during class time. Should you need to make an important phone call or respond to an emergency please step out of class quietly.

Class participation points are determined by attendance, punctuality, engagement of in-class discussions, and participation during in-class exercises. This class will be highly experiential, therefore active engagement is critical for success in this course. The counseling profession is one requiring skill to stay open and engaged with clients, and class participation will be designed to help students identify and strengthen these skills.

Students will gain the most from this class by being present and participating fully in all classes, discussions, and activities. Students are expected to come to class prepared and having completed readings in advance. Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes during this semester. However, circumstances may arise, and absences are sometimes unavoidable. Please notify the instructor of absences in advance, if possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absences Accrued</th>
<th>Percentage Deduction from Attendance Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-2 on attendance grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-4 on attendance grade</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>-11 on attendance grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>-12 on attendance grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*Absences should be due to medical issues or emergencies and must be communicated to instructor prior to class and a day in advance.*

**Students with over 50% of absences will earn an overall course grade F at the instructor’s discretion.**

**Lateness/leaving early:** Class will begin promptly at the scheduled time and end at the scheduled time. The instructor may choose to document late arrivals and early departures as 1/2 absences.

**Observation of Religious Holy Days:** If you plan to observe a religious holy day that coincides with a class day, please notify me as soon as possible.

**Course Assignments/Assessments**

(Assignments will also be posted on Canvas)

| A. Class Attendance & Participation | 12 points |
| B. Case Study | 18 points |
| C. Individual Project | 20 points |
| D. Reflection Papers | 10 points |
| E. Group Project & Presentation | 30 points |
| F. Recorded Play Session | 10 points |

**Total** 100 points

**Final Grade:**
- A = 100-90
- B = 89-80
- C = 79-70
- D = 69-60
- F = 59 and below

**A. Class Attendance & Participation (12 points):**

Class will take place in-person, and students are expected to show up to class on time and be present during the whole class period. Students are expected to come prepared by having read and reflected on the reading assignments, timely submission of course assignments, and active engagement with instructors and peers. Additional reading assignments not included on the syllabus may be assigned throughout the semester and provided by the instructor. Class participation is determined by attendance, punctuality, engagement of in-class discussions, and participation during in-class activities. **In addition to attendance, participation will be evaluated accordingly:**

- **Excellent**– Student proactively participates in class by initiation, original ideas/insight, informing, challenging contributions that reflect in-depth study, thought, and analysis of the topic under consideration (This does NOT mean dominating discussion – or using a lot of words that say a little).
- **Satisfactory**– Reactive participation: Supportive and follow-up contributions that are relevant and of value, but rely on the leadership and study of others, or reflect opinion rather than in-depth thought.
- **Minimally Acceptable**– Passive participation: Present and awake but not involved and invested.
- **Unsatisfactory**– Uninvolved or detracts from the learning environment.
B. Case Study (18 points):
At the mid-term of the semester, students will demonstrate understanding of course content through a case study analysis that consists of existing knowledge of course content, readings, lectures, and understanding of therapeutic play, and relational dynamics. Students must address developmental, interpersonal, multicultural, and theoretical knowledge of therapeutic play. The case study analysis must be 2-3 pages and include citations and references from the text. A rubric will be provided on Canvas.

For the case study, you will select a TV or movie character that is a child between 3-10 years old. After watching the TV show or movie, you will complete the case study analysis of this character. Below is an outline and questions to address in your analysis:

- Identify and describe the client you would be working with as a play therapist.
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Ethnicity/race
  - Living situation
  - Presenting problem
  - Relevant history (family, school, social)
- What would be your approach in working with this family? Why?
  - Play therapist attitude
  - 4 healing messages
  - CCPT skills
- What considerations from a multicultural perspective must be taken?
  - Racial identity development
- Considerations for social justice advocacy (school, community, family, social, etc.)
- Consideration of any ACEs
- Select one developmental theory (Piaget, Gesell, or Erikson) and conceptualize the child from this theory.

C. Personal Play Project & Presentation (20 points)
I am providing you with the opportunity to further your understanding and application of the importance of play or play therapy in whatever way you prefer. You may create your own project based on what would be the most meaningful to you. Examples include creating an art project, brochure, small PowerPoint presentation, video, flyer, or even reflection paper on a book of your choosing. You may be as creative as you’d like. However, all self-directed activities must be approved by the instructor no later than July 3. This may not be an assignment for another course.

You will share your experience or creation with other members of your class. This presentation should be approximately 15 minutes long. Students will sign up during class for presentation times between.

D. Reflections (5 points each, 10 points total)
Reflection papers provide students the opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings and experiences related to course content. Students are encouraged to use reflections as a way to promote self-exploration and self-understanding. You will write and submit a total of two reflection papers.
reflection papers throughout the semester (see schedule below for due dates). The required number of pages is 2 pages for each reflection paper.

E. Group Project (30 points):
Students will establish a group to plan, develop, and create a project that demonstrates their learning and understanding of a specific area of play therapy. The project should be research-based with a focus on **multicultural and social justice issues in play therapy**. Students will read available research articles related to play therapy, filial therapy, Child-Parent-Relationship Therapy, and any other empirically validated intervention for the selected population/concern.

Each group will create a presentation for 20-30 minutes discussing the points given below. **This project may not be an assignment from another course. Students must submit their group decisions (selected topic, group members) and gain approval from the instructor by July 5.** Students will have the opportunity for two allotted in-class working days. Only one person from the group needs to submit the project on Canvas. A rubric will be provided on Canvas.

**Format for Presentation:**
1. Begin with why the group selected the population/concern
2. Discuss brief history of population/concern
3. Current statistics related to the population/concern (if applicable)
4. Interventions utilized with selected population/concern
5. Important play concepts that are relevant to the population/concern
6. Selection of toys based on cultural considerations for the population
   a. Necessary adaptations to toys or playrooms based on population/concern
7. Include aspects of Social Justice and how you will advocate for the population
8. Conclude with what you took away from learning more about the population/concern
9. Include in-text citations and references

F. Recorded Play Session (10 points):
Students will arrange one 15–20-minute recorded play session demonstrating the skills and techniques learned in class. Your play session should be held with a 3 to 8-year-old child, other than your own, at your home, a kindergarten room, or other settings with toys. **Please obtain approval and written consent from the child’s parent/legal guardian prior to conducting your play session (Appendix A).** Students must also consult with the instructor to determine their plans for this assignment. Recorded sessions will be submitted through protected OneDrive to the instructor to receive a grade and written feedback. Please submit a copy of the signed parent permission form for your selected child through Canvas.

**NOTE:** If you do not have the opportunity to conduct a play session with a child, please email the course instructor in advance for alternative options. This is the student’s responsibility to contact the course instructor with adequate notice (at least 2-weeks) before the assignment due date to arrange an alternate plan or assignment.
**Other Requirements and Special Note of Instruction**

**Expectations**
Students are expected to submit assignments to Canvas no later than the due date assigned (11:59 PM) or unless stated otherwise. Extensions will be granted at the discretion of the instructor PRIOR to the due date of the assignment. No extensions will be granted the day an assignment is due or after the due date. Late assignments will be penalized .5 points for each day they are late. Assignments turned in more than 1 week past the due date will not be accepted for credit.

Cell phones and other electronic devices must be silenced during class for the respectful learning of all, unless otherwise requested/approved. Students who need to respond to an emergency call may leave the class with minimal disruption.

**SYLLABUS ADDENDUM**

**Succeed at UNT:**
- Show Up
- Find Support
- Take Control
- Be Prepared
- Get Involved
- Be Persistent

**Academic Integrity and Academic Dishonesty**

Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Academic Dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and sabotage. Any suspected case of Academic Dishonesty will be handled in accordance with university policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of “F” in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. The policy and procedures are available at: http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm.

**Acceptable Student Behavior**

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/dean-of-students

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Disability Access

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Access website at https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

EagleConnect

All UNT students should activate and regularly check their EagleConnect (e-mail) account. EagleConnect is used for official communication from the University to students. Many important announcements for the University and College are sent to students via EagleConnect. For information about EagleConnect, including how to activate an account and how to have EagleConnect forwarded to another e-mail address, visit https://eagleconnect.unt.edu. This is the main electronic contact for all course-related information and/or material. I will answer emails within 24-48 hours from/to the university’s official email account, EagleConnect. Emails sent after 5:00 PM on Saturdays will be responded to on the following business day (Monday).

Emergency Notifications and Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Observation of Religious Holy Days

If you plan to observe a religious holy day that coincides with a class day, please notify your instructor as soon as possible.

Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to
view their individual record; however, information about students’ records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University’s policy.

**Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, & Assault**

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. Because of Texas Senate Bill 212, as a UNT employee, I am required by law to report sexual misconduct, relationship violence, stalking, and crimes. I cannot keep those things confidential if you reveal any of those to me. If you need a confidential resource available on campus or in the local community then I can refer you. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT’s Dean of Students’ website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: [https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/survivor-advocate](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/survivor-advocate). UNT’s Student Advocate can be reached through e-mail at [SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu](mailto:SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu) or by calling the Dean of Students’ office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help.

**Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT)**

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 8 and 9 of the semester to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" ([no-reply@iasystem.org](mailto:no-reply@iasystem.org)) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the spot website at [www.spot.unt.edu](http://www.spot.unt.edu) or email [spot@unt.edu](mailto:spot@unt.edu).
# COURSE SCHEDULE
(Instructor holds discretion to modify course schedule, as applicable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Class Content</th>
<th>Readings/Assignments Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week #1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6/26</td>
<td>Introduction, Syllabus Overview</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6/27</td>
<td>Review APA 7th Edition &amp; Library Resources History of Play Theories of Play</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/28</td>
<td>Play—Meaning and Rationale</td>
<td>Giordano, Ch. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/29</td>
<td>Neuroscience, Neurodevelopment, and Play Developmental Play Adverse Childhood Experiences</td>
<td><strong>Due: Reflection #1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week #2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7/3</td>
<td>Introduction to Play/Child-Centered Play Therapy</td>
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<td>7/4</td>
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| 7/5  | Structuring the Play Therapy Session The Play Therapist Be-With- 4 Healing Messages | Giordano, Ch. 3
**Due: Self-Directed Project Approval** |
| 7/6  | Toy Materials and Play Environment | Canvas Readings
**Due: Group Project Approval** |
| **Week #3**                          |                          |
| 7/10 | CCPT Skills and Responses | Giordano, Ch. 6-9       |
| 7/11 | Limit Setting and Choice Giving | Giordano, Ch. 10       |
| 7/12 | Understanding Play Behaviors, Facilitating Healing, and Termination | Giordano, Ch. 11       |
| 7/13 | Gender and Culture in Play Therapy Play and Disability/Technology in Play Therapy | **Due: Case Study; Reflection #2** |
| **Week #4**                          |                          |
| 7/17 | Training and Supervision, Licensure, and Certification in Play Therapy |                          |
| 7/18 | Parent Consultations | Giordano, Ch. 12
**Due: Recorded Play Session** |
| 7/19 | Advocacy in Play Therapy | **Due: Individual Project Presentations** |
| 7/20 | Working Day (Group Projects) |                          |
| **Week #5**                          |                          |
| 7/24 | Group Presentations |                          |
| 7/25 | Group Presentations |                          |
| 7/26 | Life as a Play Therapist |                          |
| 7/27 | End of Class Activity |                          |
Appendix A

Play Session Parent Request Form

Dear parent/guardian,

Your child is being asked to participate in one play session with ______________________________________ as part of a course requirement for COUN 3600-Therapeutic Play at the University of North Texas.

__________________________________ will NOT be conducting play therapy with your child. Rather, he/she will be practicing basic play language and skills learned during the semester. For supervision/grading purposes, the play session(s) will be video/audio recorded. Your child’s identity will not be revealed, and the recording will be destroyed at the end of the semester.

Please sign this form as an indication of your consent. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Tara Godhwani at tara.godhwani@unt.edu.

__________________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature

__________________________________
Date

__________________________________
Student Signature

__________________________________
Date