College of Education- Department Counseling and Higher Education Counseling Program

COUN 2600: Culture-Centered Social and Emotional Learning in the Schools

Fall, 2026, 8wk 1

Course Syllabus

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Office hours: Thursdays 12PM - 1PM, Fridays 11AM - 12PM. By appointment. Available online.

Class Meetings: Mondays, 6:20PM - 8:10PM
Class Location: Matt 113

Welcome to COUN 2600! My name is Lilliesha Grandberry and I am excited to be your instructor this semester. You can call me Professor Grandberry or Ms. Lilliesha 🙂

Social Emotional Learning is a key foundation for personal growth, emotional well-being, and success both in and outside the classroom. Throughout the course, you will engage in various activities and discussions that encourage self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, relationship-building, and responsible decision-making.

By the end of this course, you will not only have a deeper understanding of your own emotions but also gain valuable tools to help the students you work with build empathy, resolve conflicts, and contribute positively to their community. These skills are vital not only for academic success but also for navigating the complexities of daily life, both personally and professionally.

I look forward to us working together to create a supportive and open environment where we can all learn, grow, and thrive emotionally and socially.

Catalog Description

This course will focus on the inclusion of social emotional learning (SEL) in school environments, including relevance to cultural factors and individual mental health. Students will be encouraged to consider how educational professionals assess and cultivate healthy identities, emotional expressions, supportive relationships, and personal/collective goals in students from pre-K through 12th grade. Course content will include how educators can utilize SEL practices that support students' mental health to foster equity and excellence in schools.

Objectives of the Course

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

1. Demonstrate understanding of culture-centered SEL in school environments and apply strategies for facilitating culture-centered SEL practices;

2. Demonstrate assessment and intervention strategies to support pre-K-12 students' mental health, not limited to issues pertaining to substance abuse, suicidality, and general social and mental wellness; and

3. Demonstrate knowledge and skills necessary to create equity and excellence through authentic school-family partnerships.

Educator Standards

Teaching certificates are granted by the Texas Education Agency upon recommendation by UNT. In order to recommend a candidate to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the UNT Educator Preparation Program curriculum is aligned to required standards for teachers identified by the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC). These standards are assessed throughout your preparation and assessed through the TExES Certification exams required for your teaching certificate. Additionally, the Commissioner of TEA has adopted rules pertaining to Texas teaching standards. This course addresses the following standards:

Texas Teaching Standards

Note: Standards required for all Texas beginning teachers fall into six (6) broad categories

Standard 2--Knowledge of Students and Student Learning

Standard 5--Data-Driven Practice

Full description of the Texas Teaching Standards and competencies can be accessed here: Texas Teaching Standards Adopted in Chapter 149

Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities EC-12

Note: PPR Standards required for all Texas beginning teachers fall into four (4) domains

Domain I, Competency 001

A. Knows the typical stages of cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development of students in early childhood through grade 12.

D. Demonstrates an understanding of physical changes that occur in early childhood through adolescence, factors that affect students' physical growth and health (e.g., nutrition, sleep, prenatal exposure to drugs, abuse) and ways in which physical development impacts development in other domains (i.e., cognitive, social, emotional).

E. Recognizes factors affecting the social and emotional development of students in early childhood through adolescence (e.g., lack of affection and attention, parental divorce, homelessness) and knows that students' social and emotional development impacts their development in other domains (i.e., cognitive, physical).

K. Recognizes that positive and productive learning environments involve creating a culture of high academic expectations, equity throughout the learning community and developmental responsiveness.

L. Recognizes the importance of helping students in early childhood through grade 12 learn and apply life skills (e.g., decision-making skills, organizational skills, goal-setting skills, self-direction, workplace skills).

N. Recognizes typical challenges for students during later childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood (e.g., self-image, physical appearance, eating disorders, feelings of rebelliousness, identity formation, educational and career decisions) and effective ways to help students address these challenges.

O. Understands ways in which student involvement in risky behaviors (e.g., drug and alcohol use, gang involvement) impacts development and learning.

P. Demonstrates knowledge of the importance of peers, peer acceptance and conformity to peer group norms and expectations for adolescents and understands the significance of peer-related issues for teaching and learning.

Full description of the PPR Standards can be accessed here:
http://www.tx.nesinc.com/Content/StudyGuide/TX_SG_obj_160.htm

Educator Preparation Programs (EPP) Resources

Effective September 1, 2015, TEC, §21.044(c-1) requires a person seeking a certificate that includes a bachelor's degree as part of the minimum academic qualifications to receive instruction regarding mental health, substance abuse, and youth suicide as part of the training required to obtain that certificate. The mental health instruction must include effective strategies for teaching and intervening with students with mental or emotional disorders, including de-escalation techniques and positive behavioral interventions and supports.

Knowledge and Skills Outcomes	Standard	Curriculum/Evaluation
1) Effective strategies, including positive behavioral interventions, for teaching & intervening with students with mental health conditions, suicide ideation, and/or who engage in substance abuse.	TAC §228.30(c)(3) TEC, §21.044(c-1)	B) Brochure

Methods of Instruction

My goal is to facilitate a safe, encouraging environment wherein you feel comfortable to explore your own learning. This course will provide content in the form of assigned readings, discussions, experiential activities, peer engagement and group work, demonstrations, direct observation, and student presentations. Though it is my responsibility to help foster this rich environment, your responsibility is to add to the environment with your own authentic values, thoughts, and participation.

Please notify me as soon as possible if you have additional 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 make this a positive experience for you.

Sharing and 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 and psychologically 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. **This experience may push you out of your comfort zone, and there will be times that you must navigate difficult emotions, but your safety is the top priority.** 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. Please check the FAQ page for more information. If you would like additional resources, please speak to me individually so that we can find the best fit for you.

Required Texts

Abramson, A. (2022, January 1). Children's mental health is in crisis. *American Psychological Association.* https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/01/special-childrens-mental-health

Jennings, P. A. (2019). *The mindful school: Transforming school culture through mindfulness and compassion.* The Guilford Press

Rogers, J. E. (2019). *Leading for change through whole-school social-emotional learning: Strategies to build a positive school culture*. Corwin Press.

Sprenger, M. (2020). *Social emotional learning and the brain.* ASCD.

Walker, T. (2018, September 13). Are schools ready to tackle the mental health crisis? *National Education Association News.* https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/are-schools-ready-tackle-mental-health-crisis

**Additional weekly readings will be posted on the Canvas site affiliated with the course.*

Attendance Policy

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 me prior to being absent** so we can (a) discuss the impact of the absence on your course learning goals and (b) discuss how to best help you learn and integrate the material you will be missing. Please inform me if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill or due to an unforeseen circumstance. Classes will not be available through live or recorded streaming platforms.

Course Assignments

Assignment	Points	Due Date
A. Attendance, Professional, Preparation, & Participation	10 points	Ongoing
B. Mindfulness Activity & Reflection Paper	25 points	
C. SEL Curriculum 40 points		
D. Community and Family Brochure	25 points	
Total:	100 points	

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

A. Class Attendance & Participation (10 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 points are determined by attendance, punctuality, engagement of in class discussions, and participation during in-class activities.

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.

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.

Please note: You are encouraged to speak with the instructor throughout this course about your level of participation and attendance in this class, in order for you to be fully informed of your course grade. Students will be respectful of the opinions and experiences of their peers.

Assessment is ongoing and will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- **Excellent (10-8 points) –** Student attends at least 90% of the classes and proactively participates in class (e.g. contributes original ideas/insight, discusses topics in a way that reflects in-depth study, thought, and analysis of the topic under consideration).

- **Satisfactory (7-5 points)** – Student attends at least 70% of classes. Student participates occasionally during class. Student contributes to discussions in relevant ways.

- **Minimally Acceptable (4-2 points)** – Student attends at least 40% of classes. Student is present, but not involved in class discussions.

- **Unsatisfactory (1-0 points)** – Student misses more than 90% of the classes. Student is uninvolved or detracts from the learning environment.

Due Dates and Late Work: Assignments must be turned in by 11:59pm on their due date unless otherwise stated by the instructor. Late assignments will result in a 10% deduction for each day they are late. No late assignments will be accepted one week after their due date. For the last assignment of the semester, absolutely no late work will be accepted as this will interfere with the submission of final grades.

B. Mindfulness Activity + Reflection Paper (25 points):

Throughout the semester, engage in at least five (5) mindfulness activities on your own time (the activities we complete in class do not count). Students are heavily encouraged to use the Healthy Minds app on your phone, however, you may use other forms of mindfulness, including mindfulness activities on YouTube, mindfulness resources posted on Canvas, etc. If you are unsure if your activity meets the requirements of the assignment, please check in with your instructor prior to completing the assignment.

After you complete your five (5) mindfulness activities, write a three (3) to four (4) page reflection paper (double spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman font) discussing your experience. You must include which activities you completed as part of your assignment (for example, include the names of the Healthy Minds sessions or attach the link to the guided YouTube video) as well as when you completed each one. **Do not wait until the last minute to complete all five activities.**

Remember, this reflection paper should be well-written (college level, appropriate grammar, spelling, edited, etc.) as writing quality is a part of your grade (see rubric on Canvas). Be sure to reflect on the following questions throughout your paper:

a. How familiar were you with mindfulness prior to this experience? What were your prior experiences with mindfulness like?
b. Describe your experience with mindfulness. What did you enjoy? Were there things you did not enjoy?
c. How would you describe mindfulness to someone who has never experienced it themselves?
d. How likely are you to continue this practice after this course and why?
e. How may mindfulness practices benefit you as you begin teaching?
f. How may you implement this practice into your classroom? (Be specific about what you would like to implement in your classroom and how).

C. **SEL Curriculum (40 points)**:

Consistent with course objective number one, students will construct a document of five (5) or more pages pertaining to how they might implement culture-centered SEL practices in a school. If you would like feedback prior to submitting your final assignment, you must submit it by the deadline to receive feedback. Otherwise, I may be unable to provide you accurate and/or timely feedback. The SEL Curriculum document should include each of the following components:

i. Identify activities that you will do personally to continue to develop each competency area within yourself. These activities should be things that support your own wellness within each domain. Describe how this skill will impact your role as an instructor (10 points);
ii. Identify activities, classroom culture, assignments, etc. that best demonstrate each competency area for your classroom while considering developmental and cultural factors within your hypothetical school environment. (These should look like lesson plans so if you are having your students complete a worksheet, include the worksheet you will give them) (10 points);
iii. Identify activities, homework assignments, after school events, etc. to help families/caregivers continue modeling SEL at home with your students. Provide a description for each competency area (10 points);
iv. Consider how culturally responsive your classroom activity/assignment is. In this section, include how you may modify your activity to make sure it is culturally responsive or describe how the activity considers cultural responsiveness. Provide modifications for alternative circumstances (10 points). An outline and an example will be provided on Canvas.

D. **Community and Family Brochure with In-Class Presentation (25 points):**

Consistent with course objective number three, students will create a brochure designed to provide educators, family stakeholders, and community members with information and

strategies in promoting SEL both through the school system and at home. Your brochure should include:

i. A definition of culture-centered SEL in the schools including a brief description of each competency area and how SEL helps lead to prevention in mental health concerns, as well as how culture is relevant in each piece (4 points)
ii. Research regarding the efficacy of SEL in schools (4 points)
iii. Discussion regarding how SEL can benefit your specific school and district (in your hypothetical setting) (4 points)
iv. Developmentally appropriate strategies stakeholders may use to promote SEL (4 points)
v. An appendix at the end of the brochure where you will include information about your assessment and referral procedures should students demonstrate mental health concerns (4 points).
vi. In class presentation (5 points)

There are sample brochures on Canvas as an example for you to follow. Your brochure can be completed in other formats as well (PowerPoint, Canva, Prezi, etc.). Just make sure that you are completing ALL components of the assignment including the Appendix. Please refer to the rubric posted on Canvas for more information. References and citations should be incorporated throughout to avoid plagiarism. Students must be present to complete the in-class presentation (5 points).

SYLLABUS ADDENDUM

Succeed at UNT:

Show Up	Be Prepared
Find Support	Get Involved
Take Control	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.

A Note on AI (Artificial Intelligence): As a community of learners committed to personal and academic growth, we believe in the power of technology and artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance our educational journey. In maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity, we ask students to uphold these principles:

1. AI-Assisted Original Work: While students are encouraged to utilize AI tools for studying, homework, and researching, any work submitted must reflect the student's own understanding and knowledge. Students should not use AI-generated content as their own without appropriate understanding and processing information. This includes AI-created essays, solutions to problems, or any other assignments that are not the result of the student's own intellectual efforts.

2. Responsible Use of AI: Students should not allow other students to copy or use their original work that has been AI-assisted. Sharing AI-generated answers or enabling others to pass off AI- assisted work as solely their own is against our policy.

3. AI and Plagiarism: Just as copying information from websites or other resources without giving proper credit is plagiarism, using AI-generated content without acknowledgement or understanding is also plagiarism. Students should not represent AI-generated content as them own original work.

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 www.deanofstudents.unt.edu

Disability Accommodation

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (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 Accommodation website at http://www.unt.edu/oda. 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.

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 Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course materials.

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 Blackboard 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 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. Due to Texas SB 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 . UNT's Student Advocate can be reached through e-mail at 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 13 and 14 of the long semesters 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) 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 or email spot@unt.edu.

Campus Carry Notification

The class meets in a UNT facility in which the legal carrying of a concealed firearm by an LTC permit holder is prohibited. Please refer to campuscarry.unt.edu for more information.

COURSE SCHEDULE*

Week	Date	Topic & Activities	Assignments
1	8/17/26	Syllabus and Introductions Mental Health in Schools, *History and Overview of SEL*	**Required Before Week 2:** • "Children's Mental Health is in Crisis" *(All readings are uploaded to Canvas)* • Walker, T. (2018, September 13). Are schools ready to tackle the mental health crisis? *National Education Association News.* https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/are-schools-ready-tackle-mental-health-crisis **Optional Readings:** • Rogers (2019) Chapter 1 and 2
2	8/24/26	Culture-centered SEL The Systemic Approach The Domains of Wellness	Required Reading: ● Jennings, P. A. (2019)
3	8/31/26	Promoting Self-Awareness, *Reflection of Feeling*	**Required:** Sprenger (2020) Chapter 3
4	9/7/26	Promoting Self-Management, *Open Ended Questions and Emotional Regulation*	**Required:** • Sprenger (2020) Chapter 4 • **Mindfulness Activity + Reflection Paper** due **Sunday, 9/6/26** @ 11:59pm via Canvas.

5	9/14/26	Promoting Social-Awareness, *Connecting goals and choices to others in class* Promoting Relationship Skills, *Connecting with Others*	**Required:** • Sprenger (2020) Chapter 5 and 6 **Optional Draft Due:** • SEL Curriculum draft due after class via email in order to receive feedback.
6	9/21/26	Promoting Responsible Decision Making, *Reflecting appropriate choices with students*	**Required:** • Sprenger (2020) Chapter 7 **Assignment due:** • **SEL Curriculum + Reflection Paper** due **Sunday 9/20/26** @ 11:59pm via Canvas.
7	9/28/26	Assessing and Deescalating students' mental health concerns, *Suicidality, Substance-use, and Bullying* Supporting Teacher Mental Health	*See canvas for additional readings
8	10/5/26	Class Presentations of SEL curriculum	**Assignment due:** • **Community and Family Brochure** due **Friday, 10/4/26** @ 11:59pm via Canvas. • SEL Curriculum In class Presentations

*Course content and schedule subject to change

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Welcome! If you are here because you have a question, then you're in the right place! Some questions are hyperlinked, so click the question to be redirected. If you have a question that you do not see listed, please reach out to me in class or via email for further assistance.

Q: I want to talk to you privately. What are "office hours"?

Q: I already went to office hours. Now, where can I get extra academic support?

- Academic Resource Center
- Academic Success Center
- Writing Lab
- Textbook Rental: Bookstore
  - UNT Library
  - Denton Library

Q: This class is bringing up a lot for me. How can I take care of myself?

- Student Health and Wellness Center
- Counseling and Testing Services
  - Individual Counseling
- UNT Care Team
- UNT Psychiatric Services
- Self-Care
  - Mindfulness/Meditation
  - Sleep Hygiene

Q: I need other support (e.g., financial, legal, registration, etc.). Where do I start?

- Registrar
- Financial Aid
  - Scholarships
  - Loans
  - Food Pantry
  - Housing
- Student Legal Services
- Career Center