



College of Education • Department of Counseling
and Higher Education Counseling Program

COUN 3600 Therapeutic Play (Section 002)

Course Syllabus

Fall 2026

Tuesday & Thursday 12:45 PM – 2:05 PM

Location: Gateway Center, Rm. 049

801 North Texas Blvd, Denton, TX 76201

Instructor: Marita Bailey, LPC-S (Alaska), ECMH®, ERS®
Pronouns: She, Her, Hers
Email: MaritaBailey@my.unt.edu
Office Hours: T/Th 2:05-3:30 by appointment only (in-person or virtual); & available to schedule alternative times per student need

Supervising Instructor: Dr. Leslie Jones PhD, RPT-S, LPC-S

Clinical Professor

Doctoral Program Coordinator

Department of Counseling and Higher Education

Office: Welch Street Complex 2

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Welcome to Therapeutic Play!

The purpose of this course is to provide you with a meaningful opportunity to explore your understanding of the child's world and working with children. This will be a highly experiential course with weekly opportunities to learn through hands-on activities including, but not limited to, role plays, small group and whole class discussions, expressive arts, case conceptualizations,

and activities designed to help you explore inter- and intra-personal dynamics related to working with children. Throughout the semester, you will be observing, practicing, presenting, and reflecting on your various experiences. I will work to nurture an environment that helps you to feel safe to express your ideas and beliefs and engage in your own process of learning. The degree to which you become involved will be a function of your own goals for this experience and the responsibility and initiative you assume for implementing those goals.

Due to the fluid nature of experiential learning, 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).

Catalog Description

Credit Hour(s): 3

Prerequisite(s): None

Didactic and experiential course 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. 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
9. Observe, explore, and facilitate greater play experiences with children in their environment
10. 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. 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

Association for Play Therapy. (n.d.). Play Therapy Credentials. The Association for Play Therapy. Retrieved January 6, 2026, from <https://www.a4pt.org/page/CredentialsInfo>

Axline, V. (1967). *Dibs: In search of self*. Ballentine Books.

Giordano, M., Landreth, G. L., & Jones, L. (2005). *A practical handbook for building the play therapy relationship*. Jason Aronson.

Recommended/Supplemental Text

Bratton, S. C., Ray, D., & Landreth, G. (2008). Play therapy. In M. Hersen, & A. M. Gross, *HandBook of clinical psychology: Volume 2 children and adolescents* (pp. 577-625). Wiley.
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Christine-Wekerle/publication/232542343_Child_maltreatment/links/59ee5eac4585154350e80ef1/Child-maltreatment.pdf#page=595)

Koukourikos, K., Tsaloglidou, A., Tzeha, L., Iliadis, C., Frantzana, A., Katsimbeli, A., & Kourkouta, L. (2021). An Overview of Play Therapy. *Materia socio-medica*, 33(4), 293–297.
<https://doi.org/10.5455/msm.2021.33.293-297>

Landreth, G. L. (2012). *Play therapy: The art of the relationship* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
(E-Book available at the UNT library - <https://discover.library.unt.edu/catalog/b6356883>)

Oaklander, V. (1978). *Windows to our children*. The Gestalt Journal Press.

Ray, D. C., Ogawa, Y., & Cheng, Y. J. (Eds.). (2022). *Multicultural Play Therapy: Making the Most of Cultural Opportunities with Children*. Routledge. (Recommended)

Attendance & Class Participation

This class will be highly experiential, therefore active engagement is critical for success in this course. My hope is that you are able to develop a sense of openness and curiosity related to the material presented in this course and to your own personal growth; this class is intentionally designed to help you develop those qualities. As such, 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.**

Class participation points are determined by attendance, punctuality, engagement of in-class discussions, and participation during in-class exercises. **Students are allowed four excused**

absences before grade point deductions. Absence from more than four class meetings will result in a grade reduction. 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.

Absences Accrued	Percentage Deduction from Attendance Grade
4	0
5	-2 on attendance grade
6	-4 on attendance grade
7	-6 on attendance grade
8	-8 on attendance grade
9	-10 on attendance grade
10	-12 on attendance grade
	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. Mid-Term Case Conceptualization	18 points
C. Final Assessment	20 points
D. Multicultural Play Kit and Reflection Paper	10 points
E. Group Project	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. Mid-Term Case Conceptualization (18 points):

For this project, you will select a TV or movie character that is a child between 3-10 years old. ***students must get approval for show/character by September 1st.*** After watching the TV show or movie, you will complete a case conceptualization of this character as though they were your client, addressing developmental, interpersonal, multicultural, and theoretical knowledge of therapeutic play.

The case conceptualization should be 2-3 pages, following APA 7 guidelines. Below is an outline and questions to address in your conceptualization. This is not an exhaustive list. Use your best judgment to provide the information that would help me learn about your client. Please use headings for each main bullet point and create a separate reference page.

- Identify and describe the client you would be working with as a play therapist.
 - o Age
 - o Gender
 - o Ethnicity/race
 - o Living situation
 - o Presenting problem
 - o Relevant history (family, school, social)
- What would be your play therapy approach in working with this child? Why?
 - o What skills would you emphasize within your approach?
- What are your cultural concerns/considerations?
 - o Racial identity development/Level of acculturation
- Considerations for social justice advocacy (school, community, family, social, etc.)
- Consideration of any ACEs
- Select one developmental theory (Piaget, Gesell, or Erikson) and write a 1-2 paragraph conceptualize the child from this theory.

C. Final Exam (20 points):

At the end of semester, students will complete a final examination, which will consist of content from readings, lectures, and understanding of therapeutic play and relational dynamics. Students must address developmental, interpersonal, multicultural, and theoretical knowledge of therapeutic play. The exam will be: completed outside of class via CANVAS, open book, collaborative if desired, and could include multiple-choice, true/false, short answer, and long answer questions (the latter two should be individual work).

D. Multicultural Play Therapy Kit & Reflection Paper (10 points)

Based on the readings, play therapy videos, and virtual tour of the playrooms, students will design a multicultural play therapy kit. The kit can be physically collected or demonstrated via slide presentation including text and pictures. The kit must incorporate the **required categories of toys** and should be developmentally and culturally appropriate. Student can create a kit with appropriate toys for a specific identified population or a diverse population. See example on CANVAS.

Students will also submit an individual/personal 1–2-page paper focused on their experience with developing the play therapy kit, its relevance, and cultural/developmental considerations.

E. Group Project (30 points):

Students will establish a group of five students to plan, develop, and create a project that demonstrates their learning and understanding of a specific area of play therapy. The projects should be research-based with a focus on ***multicultural 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. Students must submit their group names and population/plan on the date indicated in course schedule.

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 rules, overall plan, etc.) and gain approval from the instructor by WEEK 5.** Students will have the opportunity for two allotted in-class working days.

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 multiculturalism
8. Conclude with what you took away from learning more about the population/concern
9. Include in-text citations and references. Have 4 references, minimum.

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 9-year-old child**, other than your own, at your home, a kindergarten room, or other settings with toys. Students must 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. **Parent/caregiver consent form must be signed and submitted through CANVAS prior to conducting your play session (Appendix A).**

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.

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>

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>. 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 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) 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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Instructor holds discretion to modify course schedule, as applicable)

Week	Class Content	Readings/Assignments Due
Week 1		
8/18	Introduction, Syllabus Overview, & Classroom Norms & Agreements Group Exercise	
8/20	History of Play Sign up for Group Assignment	Axline, Ch. 1-2
Week 2		
8/25	Theories of Play	Axline, Ch. 3-4
8/27	Play- Meaning and Rationale	Axline, Ch. 5
Week 3		
9/1	Neuroscience and Play	Axline, Ch. 6-9 Due: Character approval for Mid-term
9/3	Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)	Axline, Ch. 10-12
Week 4		
9/8	Developmental Theories	Axline, Ch. 13-15 Giordano, Ch. 17-18
9/10	GUEST LECTURE- Sloane Sivek Topic subject to change Developmental Play: Infants & Toddlers	Axline, Ch. 16-19
Week 5		
9/15	Developmental Play: Preschool Years	Axline, Ch. 20-21 Giordano, Ch. 13 Due: Parent Permission Form
9/17	GUEST LECTURE- Topic subject to change Developmental Play: School Age Years Dibs Discussion	Axline, Ch.22-24; Epilogue Due: Group Assignment Plan: topic, roles, plan, & email professor list of group
Week 6		
9/22	Introduction to Play	
9/24	Child-Centered Play Therapy	Giordano, Ch. 1
Week 7		
9/29	Toy Materials and Play Environment	Giordano, Ch. 2
10/1	The Play Therapist Be-With- 4 Healing Messages Structing Session	Giordano, Ch. 3-5
Week 8		
10/6	CCPT Skills and Responses Mid-Semester Check-In	Giordano, Ch. 6-9; 20 Questions, Thoughts, Feedback on class

		Due: Mid-Term Case Conceptualization
10/8	Limit Setting and Choice Giving	Giordano, Ch. 10
Week 9		
10/13	GUEST LECTURE- Topic subject to change Understanding Play Behaviors, Facilitating Healing, and Termination	Giordano, Ch. 11
10/15	NO CLASS- Independent Group Project Work Day	Group Project Work Day <i>Email instructor progress of project</i>
Week 10		
10/20	Gender and Culture in Play Therapy	
10/22	In-Class Group Work Day	Due: Recorded Play Session
Week 11		
10/27	Parent Consultations/ Stakeholders	
10/29	Play and Disability/ Technology in Play Therapy	Due: MC Kit and Reflection Paper
Week 12		
11/3	Training and Supervision	Giordano, Ch. 12-14
11/5	Licensure and Certification in Play Therapy	Giordano, Ch. 15-18 Have read: APT Credentials **Last Day to drop a course with a W is 11/6**
Week 13		
11/10	Play Therapy Advocacy (APT & ACA)	
11/12	Special Topic TBD	Due: Group Projects
Week 14		
11/17	Group Presentations 1 & 2	All group projects due 11/12 prior to presentation
11/19	Group Presentations 3 & 4	All group projects due 11/12 prior to presentation
Week 15	THANKSGIVING BREAK	
11/24	HOLIDAY- NO CLASS	
11/26	HOLIDAY- NO CLASS	
Week 16		
12/1	Group Presentation 5 & 6	All group projects due 11/12 prior to presentation
12/3	Final Exam Review End of Class Activity	Final Exam opens on Canvas at the end of class
Week 17	FINALS WEEK	
12/8	**Instructors' discretion**	Due: Final Exam submitted to CANVAS

12/10	<i>**Instructors' discretion**</i>	
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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 Sloane Sivek at MaritaBailey@my.unt.edu.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Student Signature

Date