

PSY 364/Techniques in interviewing & casework

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Growth means change and change involves risk, stepping from the known to the unknown. --George Shinn

The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any. -- Alice Walker

The shoe that fits one person pinches another; there is no recipe for living that suits all cases. --Carl Gustav Jung

We find comfort among those who agree with us -- growth among those who don't. -- Frank A. Clark

Your previous Psychology classes have looked at the theory behind social problems and how to address them. This class is likely to be the most applied class other than an internship that you take in Psychology. Rather than only talking about listening, we will practice it. Rather than only discussing a person's background (in theory), we will begin to assess it in the course of our interviews and write-up of our findings.

This course will be especially useful for three kinds of students: (a) those people who plan to go to graduate school in one of the helping fields and want a head start relative to their classmates; (b) those who do not plan to immediately go to graduate school and want some preparation for entry level human services jobs; and (c) for people who plan to work outside of the helping fields, but know that listening skills are essential for their personal and professional success.

Objectives

Our objectives include:

- Learning an assessment model that will guide the helping interview;
- Using active verbal and nonverbal listening skills to increase the effectiveness of the helping interview;
- Writing our findings in an empathic, yet objective manner;
- Understanding the roles of race, culture, class, and other contextual factors that may influence the assessment and interview process, and using these effectively;
- Applying psychological theory to the interview situation.

As several of our objectives assume knowledge of psychopathology, PSY 354 is a prerequisite for this course. However, successful completion of some of the following courses (e.g., Cross-cultural Psychology, Developmental Psychology, and Social Psychology) may also be useful.

This course earns a W flag because of its writing and rewriting requirements as well as its emphasis on writing as a basis for learning the content of this course. It also meets the Applied Coursework requirement in the Sociology/Psychology major.

Steps to the Goal

How will you learn? Murphy and Dillon (2003) emphasize that learning to listen and work with others requires a variety of different strategies. I encourage you to use their REVIEW model:

Read about the skill

Explore and discuss the skill in class

View experienced clinicians employing the skill

Implement the skill in videotaped role plays

Evaluate your performance with classmates

Watch your videotapes with your classmates, giving and receiving feedback (p. xiv)

These ideas are the backbone for the assignments made in class.

Text. Murphy and Dillon's *Interviewing in action: Relationship, process and change* (2nd ed.) is a wonderful book and emphasizes a respectful, culturally-relevant approach that should be the foundation for all counseling. It is supplemented by a video tape that can be borrowed from Diana in the Psychology Office and watched outside of class. Slattery's *Counseling diverse clients: Bringing context into therapy* helps you identify the range of contexts that can help you assess your clients and intervene with them respectfully. If you have taken or are taking Theories of Counseling and Psychotherapy, you will want to

refer to Meier & Davis's Elements of counseling. This optional text is short and sweet.

Your texts, Murphy & Dillon and Slattery, are available bundled together in the bookstore. Their price bundled is about \$15 more than a single text new. They are about \$15 less than if you could buy both used if they were available used in the quantities needed for this class. I will be donating the royalties earned from this class to the department's University Foundation accounts, which directly or indirectly benefit you in supporting scholarships or travel money for psychology students at Clarion.

I am supplementing your texts with readings available on the web or through the e-Reserve feature on the university server. Go to <http://library.clarion.edu> and click on "Electronic Reserves and Course Materials." Then click on this course to find e-reserve materials. The direct url is <http://library.clarion.edu/coursepage.asp?cid=28> The password to access these readings is on your paper syllabus.

Role plays. It is one thing to talk about interviews, something we will do a lot, and another to do them. Watching other people perform interviews and doing interviews yourself -- both as the interviewer and as the interviewee -- are an essential part of our learning process. Relax! We'll all make mistakes, but we'll learn at least as much from the mistakes as from our successes. Please talk to me if you are uncomfortable with this process and we will work together to make it work as smoothly as possible.

Interviews. Seeing yourself on tape is rarely fun, yet my previous students agreed that this assignment was a very important part of this course! You must schedule a time to review your tape with me. If you want an A in this class, you must do a second interview and turn in a five page summarizing the interview, critiquing your work in it, discuss your strengths and weaknesses, and your improvement in your listening skills across the course. Your first interview is worth 10 points extra credit, the second is worth 50 points and is part of the course grade.

Listening quiz. We will have one quiz to assess your understanding of listening skills and when/why they would be used. This quiz will assess your understanding of the skills discussed to date as seen in a taped interview.

Journal. Effective listeners spend time thinking about what does and does not work in their and others' listening styles. I'd like to engage in this "conversation" with you throughout this semester. You must turn in a typed journal entry weekly over the first 10 weeks of the semester (starting with week 2). While entries do not have to be on exercises from your texts, these exercises might be a good source of ideas. Your journals will be graded as check - /check/check + to give you an idea of how I think you're doing. Journals that are

competent, but not insightful or thoughtful, will earn a check. Journals that are interesting, insightful, or make me think will earn a check plus. I don't plan on awarding a check minus, but that would occur if your entries are short, ask a question without also considering it, or do not contain college level thought and writing. Journals with fewer than 10 entries will be graded more poorly, depending on length, number of entries, and the thoughtfulness of entries. Journals where an entry is turned in late (after Wednesday of a given week), will be docked 2 points per late entry.

These are short examples of what good and not so good entries might look like:

Weaker entries	Stronger entries
<p>You know, I just don't get this whole listening thing. My friends tell me I'm a good listener even though I tend to doodle while talking to them. It just seems so subjective.</p>	<p>You know, I'm having a hard time understanding the listening skills. My friends tell me I'm a good listener even though I tend to doodle while talking to them. It just seems so subjective.</p> <p>Ok, so what do I do that helps them see me as a good listener even when I doodle? Well, I do a pretty good job maintaining eye contact with them and everyone says that I really understand them well. Last night, for example, I...</p>
<p>I've been watching the videotapes and some people like one therapist, but don't like another. I think the ones who are best are those who listen and let the client say or do whatever they need to.</p>	<p>I've been watching the videotapes and some people like one therapist, but don't like another. I think the ones who are best are those who listen and let the client say or do whatever they need to. However, I've noticed in our role plays that Jamal doesn't seem to care whether people listen to him; he wants someone who challenges him when he's off. And Mercedes, she wants someone who has a sense of authority and tells her what to do.</p> <p>I know there are a lot of things involved here, but I wonder to what extent culture plays a role. Jamal, for example, seems to appreciate it when the person working with him recognizes the real oppression associated with being an African American. And Mercedes, as a traditional Latina, ...</p>
<p>I've been watching Chantal, who is a good listener. What I noticed is that she makes good</p>	<p>I've been watching Chantal, who is a strong listener. What I noticed is that she makes good eye contact with me and I really feel understood</p>

<p>eye contact with me and makes me feel good.</p>	<p>when she listens to me. Most of my other friends look away from me or do something else when I talk about something embarrassing. Instead, she makes time for me; notices the little things that I do, like when I hesitate or try to change the subject; and really seems to understand not just what I say, but what I mean.</p> <p>Yesterday, for example, I said that I was excited about the new semester to both Tabitha and Chantal. Tabitha nodded and went on talking about her courses. Chantal heard the excitement, but also noticed the way that I hesitated when I said this. She said, <i>It sounds like you're also feeling nervous about what you're taking.</i> I really felt heard!</p>
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Writing projects. In your professional careers, a significant amount of your time will be spent writing reports, intakes, SOAP notes and letters. The faster and better you can do these, the more effective you will be on your job -- and the stronger your supervisor's evaluations of you will be! Although your job setting may use a somewhat different style than we will use here, the general ideas are the same across settings. In most settings you will be writing carefully and respectfully about what you observe. When you draw inferences, you will be expected to document the sources of your inferences carefully.

There are six kinds of writing assignments that you will perform across the course of the semester in addition to the journals. Papers are expected to be typed and double spaced. A 10% penalty will be assessed for late papers. Assignments include:

(a) **Behavioral observation.** Psychologists must carefully observe and describe the person with whom they work. Your first taped interview might be the basis of this observation. What do you see during the interview? What does this mean? This can be done based on a tape seen in class or any other interview from the list of movies that I will give you.

(b) **SOAP note,** a formal and brief way of presenting the content of an interview. This can be written based on tapes watched in class or movie interviews, even the movie or tape that you used for your behavioral observation.

(c) **Psychosocial history,** a written summary of the client's functioning in a variety of areas. We will do one in class and you are expected to do a second out-of-class based on yourself, a live interview with a friend, or a fictional or historical character (e.g., Harry Potter, Adolf Hitler, Amelia Earhart). Obviously,

this may require significant research if you are doing a figure you don't know. I have books in my office that I would be willing/happy to share for this assignment.

Choosing to do your psychosocial history with someone with "a problem" can give you the basis for your treatment plan. Doing a live interview in order to gather your psychosocial history can give you a second taped interview.

(d) **Research summary**, a two page summary of the research on treatment of an issue. This should be done on the issues that you are investigating in your psychosocial history (it's to your benefit to have identified who you're doing it on and what issues you want to address. Ideas must be cited and referenced in APA format. You can earn no more than 44 points (of 50) if your paper does not use primary sources or research articles.

(e) **Treatment plan**, an outline of the treatment goals jointly developed with a client and the interventions designed for meeting these goals. We will initially do this in class, and then will do it out of class. Please attach your psychosocial history and research summary, if you did them on the same person. If you didn't, please describe the person and context in one page and briefly summarize the literature on the problem in another page before writing your treatment plan.

(e) **Client handout**. a short, but clear description of some of the issues that you would want your clients to consider. You might, for example, pull together a handout on coping with a depressed relative, working effectively with the school system, or on diagnostic issues for depression or generalized anxiety disorder. Although not required, it would make sense to develop your handout for the "client" for which you are developing a your treatment plan.

Attendance

As class participation is an **essential** part of this class, you will lose 4 pts. per class (about 1% of your final grade) after your third missed class for any reason. In other words, you have three free absences; use these wisely.

Letters of Recommendation

Psychology is a career that generally requires at least a master's to enter and "practice." If you haven't begun thinking about this process yet, you should now! Many of you will probably consider asking me for a letter. These are some of the things I consider as I write my letters:

- performance in class
- the nature of questions raised and answers given
- attitude and motivation, including persistence and attendance
- quality of writing or analysis in your writing
- ability to continue to perform even as you experience stressors in your life
- other relevant interactions we have had and how you have performed there, including with Psi Chi, on research with me, or on departmental and university committees

Be aware of these and present your best face. I am not asking that you be "perfect," instead that you demonstrate a willingness to think, learn and profit from experience, as well as an ability to behave professionally.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Clarion University is mandated by federal and state laws to report crimes occurring on campus or in campus-related functions. In order to help Clarion University comply with these laws, I am required to report information about university-related crimes to Public Safety. If you tell me of a crime that meets university criteria (especially assaults, sexual assaults, robbery, or hate crimes), I will report it. I am not required to identify either victims or witnesses by name. I will, of course, inform you before making a report.

GRADES

Grades will be determined as a percentage of the available points earned. These will come from ten sources: (a) journal (100 pts.); (b) a behavioral observation (50 pts.); (c) a SOAP note (20pts); (d) a research summary (50 pts.); (e) a psychosocial history (100 pts.); (f) a treatment plan (50 pts.); (g) listening skills quiz (100 pts.); (h) a client handout (25 pts.), (i) the first interview (10 pts. extra credit), and (i) the second interview (50 pts., optional, but required for an A), less (k) four points for each class missed beyond three.

Grade	Percentage Earned	Points earned
A	90 - 100%	490 and up
B	80 - 89%	436-489
C	70 - 79%	381-435
D	60 - 69%	327-380

E	less than 60%	326 and down
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If you choose not to do the second interview and analysis of your work, compare your performance to this scale:

Grade	Percentage Earned	Points earned
B	80% and up	396 and up
C	70 - 79%	346 - 395
D	60 - 69%	297 - 345
E	less than 60%	296 and down

I do not expect that a certain number of students fail and I would be happy if the class received only As and Bs. To meet this goal I will be happy to help you when you need it. If you have test anxiety or if this course raises issues which you want to work on, but that are beyond the scope of this class, call the Counseling Center (2255).

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

[E-readings](#) [Learning to write well](#)

8/30-9/20	Making good observations and inferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M & D: Ch. 1, 6 (pp.130-142) • S: Ch. 1 • Phillips (1996) 	Video 1.1, 6.1 First journal due 9/8 and weekly thereafter
9/22	Talking about change: Difficulties in making it and ways to maximize it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S: Chs. 6, 8, & 9 • Lebow (2002) 	Video 2.1 - 2.4 9/22: Behavioral observation due
9/27-9/29	Nonverbal listening strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M & D: Chs. 3, 4 • S: Tables 8.2 & 8.3 	Video 3.1 - 4.4 9/29: SOAP note due
10/4-10/13	Verbal listening strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M & D: Chs. 5, 7, 8 Edgette (2002) 	Video 5.1 - 5.3, 7.1 - 8.4 10/13: Listening skills quiz
10/18-	Choosing a focus	S: Ch. 12	<i>Interviews must be</i>

10/20			<i>reviewed with me between 10/18 and 10/27</i>
10/25-10/27	Identifying and engaging "natural" supports: The role of context	S: Chs. 2 & 13	10/27: Research summary due
11/1-11/10	Thinking about problems in their larger context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S: Chs. 2-4 • Associated Press (2002) -- not for the faint of heart! • Hardy (2001) • Gandy (2002) • Roche (2002) 	Video 6.1, 7.1 - 7.4 11/3: Client handout due! 11/10: Journal due.
11/15-11/22	Treatment plans: Knowing where you're going	Continue with Yates readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M & D: Ch. 6 • Kaysen (2001) 	11/15: Psychosocial history due. *** Out-of-class tape reviews
11/29-12/6	The advantages (and difficulties) of empowering clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S: Ch. 10 • Shimrat (1997) • Glenn (2003) 	11/29: Treatment plan due 12/6: Optional interview due.
12/8	Your own supports are important too...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weiner-Davis (2001) • DeAngelis (2002) • Dess (2002) 	

References

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