



Introduction to Play Therapy

COU 6810/PSY 6810 |

Total Credit Hours: 3

Classroom:

Instructor

Course Description

This course is designed to provide a broad understanding of the various aspects of working with children and adolescents in a playroom setting. Students will gain an understanding of the child's view of self and self with others. Students will learn how to communicate with children and promote self-exploration through theoretical application and play media.

Rationale for Course

The focus of this course is to prepare the counselor by developing awareness, knowledge, and skills required for counseling children and adolescents in individual, group, or family therapy. As children and adolescents may not have the necessary tools for self-expression, play therapy can be used as a critical treatment modality. Students will be presented with an overview of the essential elements and principles of play therapy, including a review of the history of play therapy and the profession, the role of the play therapist, the stages of the play therapy relationship, the evolving research that guides play therapy interventions, the basic play therapy skills, and the training/supervision guidelines. This course will also promote cultural awareness in working with children and families of diverse backgrounds. This course partially fulfills the requirements towards becoming a registered play therapist with the Association of Play Therapy.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

- a) Compare and contrast the most widely accepted theoretical models of play therapy and the formats in which they are most commonly offered.
- b) Differentiate between the developmental stages of children and children's play.
- c) Identify developmentally appropriate play therapy toys and materials that can be incorporated for the purposes of both assessment and treatment.
- d) Explore the history and evolution of play therapy, including theoretical frameworks.
- e) Conceptualize a client's presenting clinical problems, developmentally and theoretically.
- f) Practice skills and interventions specific to utilizing play therapy in various settings and situations.
- g) Demonstrate and understanding of the role of the play therapist and play therapy in context of the client's environmental system.
- h) Evaluate how personal values, worldviews, and experiences may influence the practice of play therapy.
- i) Compare and contrast the legal and ethical issues that are unique to play therapy.
- j) Analyze the issues of diversity and how they impact play therapy.
- k) Identify the minimal training/supervision guidelines set forth by the Association for Play Therapy.
- l) Examine and discuss key elements in a play therapy relationship.
- m) Identify and recognize the current and developing research in play therapy.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Standards
2.F. 1. a. history and philosophy of the counseling profession
2.F.1.b. the multiple professional roles and functions of counselors across specialty areas, and their relationships with human service and integrated behavioral health care systems, including interagency and interorganizational collaboration and consultation.
2.F.1.d. the role and process of the professional counselor advocating on behalf of the profession.
2.F.1.g. Professional counseling credentialing, including certification, licensure, and accreditation practices and standards, and the effects of public policy on these issues.
2.F.1.i. ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling.
2.F.2.e. the effects of power and privilege for counselors and clients.
2.F.2.f. help-seeking behaviors of diverse clients.
2.F.3.a. theories of individual and family development across the lifespan.
2.F.5.a. theories and models of counseling.
2.F.5.f. counselor characteristics and behaviors that influence the counseling process.
2.F.7.d. procedures for identifying trauma and abuse and for reporting abuse
5.C.1.b. theories and models related to clinical mental health counseling
5.C.1.c. principles, models, and documentation formats of biopsychosocial case conceptualization and treatment planning
5.C.2.a. roles and settings of clinical mental health counselors.
5.C.2.j. cultural factors relevant to clinical mental health counseling
5.C.2.k. professional organizations, preparation standards, and credentials relevant to the practice of clinical mental health counseling.
5.F.1.b. theories and models of family systems and dynamics
5.F.1.e. principles and models of assessment and case conceptualization from a systems perspective
5.F.2.a. roles and settings of marriage, couple, and family counselors
5.F.3.a assessment, evaluation, and case management for working with individuals, couples, and families from a systems perspective.

5.G.2.b. school counselor roles in consultation with families, P-12 and postsecondary school personnel, and community agencies.
5.G.2.g. characteristics, risk factors, and warning signs of student at risk for mental health and behavioral disorders.
Task: Become familiar with major theorists/pioneers in the field and understand and communicate foundations and principals of theories as they apply to child and adolescent development
Assignment: Video, assigned readings, class discussion, Review of the Association for Play Therapy
Purpose: To understand and appreciate historical roots of the profession and identify how views and perspectives have changed with the societal needs. Therapists must also be able to discern the various theories and models to conceptualize and communicate from a theoretical lens.
Assessment: Participation in class discussion, quizzes, Designing a Playroom

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5.F.3.a. assessment, evaluation, and case management for working with individuals, couples, and families from a systems perspective.
5.G.2.b. school counselor roles in consultation with families, P-12 and postsecondary school personnel, and community agencies.
5.G.2.g. characteristics, risk factors, and warning signs of student at risk for mental health and behavioral disorders.

Assignment: Video, Class discussion

Purpose: There are a host of multicultural factors that can affect the client's worldview. It is important that the play therapist understanding differences among and between children and being able to identify the client's needs to better individualize the counseling process and to establish goals and gauge progress

Assessment: Participation in class discussion, quiz(zes)

Standards

5.F.1.b. theories and models of family systems and dynamics
5.F.1.e. principles and models of assessment and case conceptualization from a systems perspective
5.F.2.a. roles and settings of marriage, couple, and family counselors
5.F.3.a. assessment, evaluation, and case management for working with individuals, couples, and families from a systems perspective.
Task: Apply knowledge and awareness of play therapy to working with families

Assignment: Class discussion, assigned readings, Designing a playroom

Purpose: Therapists working with children or adolescents will need to understand the dynamics of the relationship and differently from that of working with adults. The therapist will also need to know when and how to use play therapy media as a clinical

modality for change.
Assessment: participation in class discussion, quizzes,

Prerequisites

None for this course.

Instructional Materials

The basic textbook for the course will be used to organize lectures, presentations and other learning experiences.

Required text:

Kottman, T. (2011). *Play therapy: Basics and beyond* (2nd ed.). American Counseling Association

Supplemental text:

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Washington, DC: APA.

Kranz, L. P & Lund, L. Nick. (1993). 1993: Axline's eight principles of play therapy revisited. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 2(2), p 53-60.

Occasionally journal articles will be used to present classic and contemporary accounts of selected theories and models, as well as evidence for the efficiency and utilities of techniques. These articles will be cited in presentations and lectures.

Methods of Instruction

Instructional methods for this class may include:

- A. Interactive lecture
- B. Discussion
- C. Case studies
- D. Demonstration
- E. Audio-visual recording and presentation
- F. Group work
- G. Dyadic work and role play
- H. Student presentations
- I. Computer applications
- J. Research and analysis
- K. Written assignments
- L. In-class assignments
- M. Personal reflection

Methods of Evaluation

Objectives will be assessed through multiple means: verification of class attendance and participations, satisfactory completion and timely submission of assignments, satisfactory performance on examinations/quizzes.

Specific course requirements include the following:

Complete all reading assignments.

Reading should be completed prior to their due date since they will form the basis of classroom discussions.

Participation points (25 points)

Participation points will be assigned through self-guided exercises that will be conducted in class. Participation points will also be awarded for the completion of worksheets dispersed throughout the course of the semester.

Reading quizzes (50 points)

Reading quizzes will be implemented throughout the course of the semester. Quizzes will cover material from the weekly readings. At times two weeks' worth of reading may be quizzed at once. For instance, you may take the quiz on the reading for the current week and for the previous week.

Student observation of play (25 points)

Students are required to physically observe a child at play for 20-30 minutes. Students are provided an observation log sheet and will identify the types of play observed. Students must select safe and open spaces, not engage, and not have an association with the child being observed. The instructor will evaluate student observation logs and an accompanied narrative for clarity of explanations and the ability to identify the multiple types of play. Students should complete the questions at the end of the observation log. Students may provide their answers under the questions.

Play therapy observation video and Bask: (50 points)

Students will be provided with one video of a play therapy session (posted on Canvas). Students must complete a Bask of the video. Students will be graded for their overall assessment of the session. Additionally, students must complete a one-page reflection discussing the therapist's style in the session and how the child responded to the therapist. You must highlight any important details that you observe regarding their interactions and any aspects of the session that stood out to you.

Talk about play therapy (40 points)

Students are required to engage with another individual (preferably a parent of a child/adolescent) who is not familiar with play therapy and will record a 5-10-minute audio discussion informing the person about play therapy (e.g., benefits, involvement, etc.). The purpose of the assignment is to assist the student with advocacy and encourage public interest in the area. The instructor will provide a rubric. Peers and the instructor will evaluate the recording.

Designing a playroom (100 points)

Creating a playroom is a process that is more than merely selecting toys to fill up a space. To assess your ability to conceptualize all that has been covered over the course of the semester you will design your own playroom and present it to the instructor. A playroom template will be provided to you and your goal is to fill in the template based on how you envision your playroom. You will be graded on your ability to follow the guidelines outlined in class and in the textbook. You will need to think through the placement of the toys, toy selection, and the materials that make up the playroom space. An explanation of why you chose to create your playroom should also be included. The explanation should be professionally written and should be submitted to Canvas. You should also follow APA formatting when writing your explanation.

MC Syllabus Statement

The MC Syllabus contains all policies and procedures that are applicable to every course offered by Mississippi College, both on campus and online. The policies in the MC Syllabus describe the official policies of the University as they relate to instruction and will take precedence over those found elsewhere. It is the student's responsibility to read and be familiar with every policy. The MC Syllabus may be accessed at any time on the MC website at the following: <https://www.mc.edu/provost/mcsyllabus>.

Grading Policy

Attendance and participation: 25 points
Student observation of play: 25 points
Play Therapy session and Bask: 50 points
Talking about play therapy: 40 points
Reading quizzes: 50 points
Designing a playroom: 100 points

Total 290 points

Extra Credit (5 points)

Students can earn extra credit points for joining or renewing membership in the Association for Play Therapy (a4pt.org). Students must present proof of membership to the instructor before the last day of class for the semester.

Grading scale

100 - 94 A
93 - 87 B+
86 - 80 B
79 - 73 C+
72 - 66 C
65 - 59 D
58 and below F

My goals are to (1) meet the course objectives and (2) ensure fairness. Accordingly, please do not contact the instructor at the end of the course to request an extra assignment, bonus opportunity, or grade change for any reason except an error in the calculation of the final grade. Grade appeals should follow the process outlined in MC Policy 4.20.

Additional Course Policies

Mississippi College and the School of Education have policies that apply to the conduct of all courses.

ATTENDANCE

Class attendance is an essential part of college education and students are expected to attend regularly and punctually. Individuals learn through active participation and involvement. There will be experiential components of this course. Cumulative absences will

result in a lowered grade or loss of credit.

The university policy will be followed concerning absences. "A student receives an F in any course immediately upon accumulating the following number of absences in that class... 4 in classes meeting one time per week." If the student misses more than the number of class periods specific in the university policy and believes there are reasonable explanations for the absences, he/she may appeal the absences to the Dean of the School in which the course is being taught. Tardiness will not be excused.

The last day to drop a course for the semester is listed in the current class bulletin. Students cannot withdraw after that date with a W (passing) unless the three following criteria are met:

- extenuating circumstances (clearly outside of student's control);
- passing the course at the time of withdrawal, and
- does not have excessive absences at the time of withdrawal

MAKE-UP TESTS

Making up tests are strongly discouraged. Make-up tests will only be given if a student has an excused absence. Make-up tests will need to be scheduled with the professor and must take place outside of the class period.

LATE PAPERS/ASSIGNMENTS

Assigned papers and assignments will be due at the beginning of class, unless instructed otherwise. Late assignments will be accepted with 5 points deducted each calendar after the due date.

TALKING IN CLASS

Excessive talking in class will result in a lowered daily grade average or loss of attendance/participation points for the student.

CELL PHONES and OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES

All electronic devices (cell phones, laptops, etc.) must be turned off/silenced and put away during class. Disregard for this request may affect your grade.

EATING IN CLASS

School of Education Policy: No food or drink is allowed in the classroom.

FLEXIBILITY CLAUSE

The aforementioned requirements, assignments, policies, evaluation procedures, etc. are subject to change. Student and instructor experience and needs, as well as emerging knowledge, will be considered in modifying this course syllabus.

Best Practices

Mississippi College Mental Health Services

<https://www.mc.edu/offices/mental-health-services/>

Mississippi College Writing Center

<https://www.mc.edu/academics/writing-center/>

Mississippi College Student Success

<https://www.mc.edu/success/>

Career Development
<https://www.mc.edu/career/about>

Leland Speed Library
<https://library.mc.edu/>

Course Outline / Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment	Assignment
Week 1	Introduction to the Course Course syllabi and expectations	Review Syllabus	
Week 2	Introduction to Play Therapy	Chapter 1 Kranz, L. P & Lund, L. Nick. (1993).	
Week 3	No Class- Labor Day *Fall semesters only*		
Week 4	The BASK	No reading	

Week 5	Theoretical Approaches to Play Therapy	Chapter 3	Observation of Play and recording sheet
Week 6	Basic Skills of Play Therapy Logistical Aspects	Chapter 4	
Week 7	Basic Skills of Play Therapy Tracking	Chapter 5	
Week 8	Basic Skills of Play Therapy Restating Content	Chapter 6	
Week 9	Basic Skills of Play Therapy Reflection of	Chapter 7	Play Therapy Session and

	Feelings		Bask
Week 10 10/21	Basic Skills of Play Therapy Setting Limits	Chapter 8	
Week 11	Basic Skills of Play Therapy Returning Responsibility to the Child Dealing with Questions	Chapter 9 Chapter 10	
Week 12	Basic Skills of Play Therapy Integration of Basic Skills: The Art of Play Therapy	Chapter 11	Talk about Play Therapy Video
Week 13	Expressive Arts in Play Therapy	Reading will be posted on Canvas.	
Week 14	Individual Meetings with Faculty		
Week 15	Thanksgiving Break No class. *Fall semester only*		
Week 16	Discussion of Playroom Design		Designing a Playroom Must be turned in before class
			starts or brought to class if it is a physical display.

Disclaimer

The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule proposed in the syllabus as necessary. Modifications will be provided in writing.