TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI  
College of Nursing and Health Sciences  
Graduate Nursing Program  
Fall 2012

NURS 5624 - Advanced Health Assessment and Differential Diagnosis

Syllabus

Class Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Office Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Connie Martinez, RN, DNP, WHCNP-BC</td>
<td>Christell Bray RN, FNP, PhD, FAANP (resource faculty)</td>
<td>Island Hall 350-A</td>
<td>Island Hall 346</td>
<td>479-285-6044 (cell-preferred) 281-547-8029 (Home)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>By appointment</td>
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</table>

Clinical Faculty

Eva Bell, DNP, FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC  
Diana Jolles, MSN, CNM  
Patricia Olenick, PhD, CNM  
Beth Rappaport, MSN, RN, GNP-BC  
Leslie Smith, MSN, RN, FNP-BC

Credits

6 semester hours (4:2)

Prerequisites

Graduate Status, Core Courses, Undergraduate Health Assessment

Course Description

This course concentrates on the study and practice of complex skills for comprehensive health assessment with a focus on the differentiation and interpretation of normal and abnormal findings while developing a broad database to establish a list of differential diagnoses. Oral and written communication of findings in a collaborative relationship
with other health care providers is emphasized. Variables related to rural and multicultural populations are incorporated into the total assessment. Opportunities are provided to develop skills necessary for the identification of health problems, while considering variables associated with multicultural populations.

The clinical component of the course provides the opportunity to practice complex health assessment techniques. The clinical practice also provides the opportunity for the student to perform basic laboratory tests and interpret other common laboratory and diagnostic data including radiology and EKGs.

**Course Objectives**

By the end of the course the student will be able to:

1. Systematically apply a problem solving approach in the collection and synthesis of relevant data.
   - Perform a risk assessment of a client including assessing lifestyle and other risk factors.
   - Develop a comprehensive database, including a complete functional assessment, health history, physical examination and appropriate diagnostic examination.
   - Order, perform and/or interpret other selected laboratory and diagnostic tests.

2. Critically analyze and interpret health assessment findings.
   - Demonstrate sound critical thinking and clinical decision making.
   - Identify signs and symptoms of common illnesses.
   - Establish a differential diagnosis based on the assessment data.
   - Relate assessment findings to underlying pathology or physiologic changes.
   - Compare text-recommended diagnostic tests to those ordered by the preceptor.
   - Determine a test’s cost-effectiveness based on its sensitivity and specificity.

3. Incorporate into practice a structured format to communicate health assessment findings to other health care professionals.
   - Provide appropriate documentation of patient information in the medical record.
   - Present concise and organized oral case presentation.

4. Display commitment to expanding own role within the profession of nursing.
Texts

Required Didactic Texts:


Optional Didactic Texts:


Required Clinical Texts:


Learning Experiences and Teaching Methods

Course objectives may be met through individual study of required and recommended resources, formal and informal exchange of ideas with classmates, colleagues and both clinical and class faculty regarding specific topics and practicum activities, while utilizing the critical thinking skills demanded of the graduate student.

Teaching methods include online asynchronous discussion, independent study of texts, library and other professional resources, web-based activities, analysis and synthesis of clinical applications, feedback on clinical experience activities and reports, and the assignments listed in the course. While faculty provide guidance and consultation, the student is responsible for identification of learning needs, self-direction, and demonstration of course objectives.

Students must have access to the Internet to successfully complete the web assignments. *Word* is used as the word processor for the SOAP assignments. Students are reminded that web-based assignments, in general, take more time to complete than traditional face-to-face classroom work. However, time spent through independent web work is determined both by each student’s learning style and the tasks involved in the assignment. Students with limited experience using Blackboard software are expected
to seek assistance from the supportive services at the university Helpdesk to insure satisfactory completion of the required work.

**Learning Expectations Related to the Clinical Experience**

1. Regular attendance and participation at the clinical site throughout the semester
2. Timely maintenance of a clinical log using Typhon software documenting each patient encounter and procedure
3. Selected readings from current literature both in preparation for and as follow-up to learning associated with patient encounters
4. On-going self-evaluation of clinical progress
5. On-going evaluation by preceptor
6. Scheduled conferences and communication with clinical instructor
7. Observation and evaluation by clinical faculty
8. Participation in the clinical group discussion board

**Course Requirements and Grading**

**Syllabus:** Students are expected to review the syllabus along with guidelines for assignments and related grading criteria throughout the semester to insure that class assignments are completed correctly. *Students must acknowledge that they have read the syllabus and course information by completing the syllabus/course quiz. The quiz is required; however, it does not count toward your overall course grade. You will access the syllabus/course quiz through the quiz ICON on the homepage of the course. This assignment is due by January 18th at 11:55 PM.*

- **Course communication:** Communication should be conducted online, using the course specific Blackboard software.
  1. Blackboard email is to be used for private communication concerning the course.
  2. Blackboard discussions are to be used for group collaboration on weekly assignments and weekly clinical discussion group posts. All discussions should be posted in the body of dialogue box versus using attachments when possible. Tables can be posted as attachments.

As with most graduate courses, superior performance on assignments can only be achieved through independent efforts. Required readings provide a general framework for understanding topics relevant to this course. However, required readings are insufficient to establish expertise on any one topic. Therefore, students are expected to read additional material before completing most assignments. Course content sometimes promotes exchange of differing or alternative information during class discussion. Because it is assumed students are prepared for discussions, any student contributions will be considered “knowledgeable” ones on a given subject by demonstrating a breadth of reading as the foundation for ideas and opinions.
• **Student evaluations:** Students are expected to complete self, course, class faculty, clinical faculty, and preceptor evaluations at the end of the course.

• **Grading and evaluation of students:** The course is designed with evaluation as an ongoing process to provide feedback regarding the meeting of course objectives.

  The average of the four scheduled exams must be \( \geq 75\% \) to pass this course, regardless of any other grades received from required assignments. Therefore, less than a 75% average on these four exams will result in a course failure.

  Further, an unsatisfactory evaluation in the clinical portion of the course will supersede any class grade and result in an “F” for NURS 5624.

**Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90 -100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 – 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>75 – 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>67 – 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; 67</td>
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**Class Course Grade Components**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Graded Activity</th>
<th>Course Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>*4 Tests (20% each)</td>
<td>*80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graded Case Study Assignment</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competency-based EKG Quiz</td>
<td>S/U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Course Grade</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
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**Computer-based testing:** Four exams are scheduled for this course. See the course schedule for the content areas for each exam. Exams should be taken by the student independently without any consultation with others and without use of any resources, references or the internet. **They are “closed-book” and timed.** All material tested is identified on the “Topical Outline” found under the “Weekly Units” icon on the course Homepage. Exam material comes from the textbooks, any required assignments, and class discussions. Exams are not comprehensive in scope.

All exams will be on Tuesdays beginning at 6:30 pm with a 2-hour window to complete 50 objective test questions with 90 seconds allotted for each question and an additional 10 minutes added to allow for any computer difficulties that might arise. Therefore, you will have 85 minutes beginning with the test logon time. Students are encouraged to logon as early as possible during the testing period in the event that they encounter computer/Internet connection problems, so that the test can successfully be completed within this timeframe.
Exams will be given in a multiple choice format and are automatically graded in Blackboard after each student completes the exam. When the timeframe for the test is over, each student will receive a raw test score. This question format is similar to that used in the certification exams. Students receive questions from each major content area randomly chosen from a test pool. Questions and answers will be presented to students in random order resulting in each student receiving a unique exam. Following each exam, course faculty evaluate individual questions for psychometric soundness and grades sometimes improve as a result. Because evaluation of each exam and each item (question) is based on statistical analysis, individual student challenges to specific exam questions will NOT result in any further grade changes. Faculty will provide global class feedback for selected “best answer” rationales.

**The average of the four (4) exams must be > 75% to pass this course, regardless of any other grades resulting from assignments required for this course. Less than a 75% average on the four exams will result in a course failure.**

Make-up tests will NOT be permitted. Tests will only be given on the scheduled date and at the scheduled time. In the event that a student has a valid reason for missing a test, as determined by University policy AND with proper faculty notification PRIOR to the exam, faculty will follow official guidelines.

Competency-based EKG Quiz: A basic understanding of EKG interpretation is important for advanced practice. Students are required to pass a mandatory competency-based EKG quiz with a minimum score of 85% by the end of the semester. Multiple attempts are allowed to achieve a passing score.

Group Case Study Assignment: The purpose of the Case Study Assignment is to demonstrate the students' application of knowledge for the clinical assessment of a hypothetical "textbook case" patient with a common primary care clinical problem, relevant to the content areas covered thus far in this course. This assignment involves using the information available related to clinical presentation and relevant diagnostic testing. The students, on completion of this assignment, will be able to demonstrate their ability to incorporate risk factors relevant to the selected clinical problem within the assigned subject area and to incorporate appropriate health promotion and disease prevention assessments.

Weekly discussion participation: Students are assigned to two discussion groups during the semester: a class (case study) discussion group and a clinical discussion group. Students are assigned to class (case study) discussion groups randomly and to clinical discussion groups according to clinical faculty groupings. The weekly unit’s “Overview and Assignment” structures the content to be discussed during that particular week or unit. The Overview and Assignment, topical outline and case study (when assigned) will be posted each week by faculty no later than 12:01 AM on Wednesday. Case study discussion postings will be due no later than midnight on Monday. Although the weekly case study discussions will not be graded,
participation is required. **Testing will reflect weekly discussion content. Therefore participation is important.** Faculty will provide case study feedback no later than midnight on Wednesday.

Personal situations preventing participation or completion of a particular weekly assignment should be discussed and approved by the student’s group members, as well as the course faculty.

The clinical discussion group includes weekly required informal sharing of clinical pearls &/or interesting patient encounters. Further information is provided below under Clinical Course Grade Requirements.

**Group Discussion Netiquette**

- Recognize that everyone’s contribution is important.
- Respect a group member’s confidentiality if requested.
- When disagreeing with other student(s), do so without judgment or blame.
- Be open to new paths and new ways of thinking.
- If a group leader emerges, that person should identify him/herself as such and communicate with the faculty periodically about the group progress when necessary; if a group leader does not emerge, chose one.
- Feel free to develop group dynamic working guidelines, but make them guidelines (not rules) that everyone can live with; if a guideline does not fit the group any more, then negotiate to change or eliminate it.
- Members should stay in touch and communicate with group members. If a personal situation develops preventing an individual from meeting a group assignment deadline, please notify group members and course faculty as soon as possible.
- Remember that satisfactorily working within groups is a learned skill that is important in the FNP’s career.

**Clinical Course Grade Components**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Code</th>
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<tr>
<td>Completion of minimum number of 90 clinical hours spread throughout the semester (<strong>Last clinical day for the semester is 4/25/2012</strong>)</td>
<td>S/U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typhon documentation: Electronic clinical log documentation of patient encounters must be posted <strong>within a one-week period</strong> from date of patient visit; procedure documentation</td>
<td>S/U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical SOAP notes as required in the course and by clinical instructor</td>
<td>S/U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceptor &amp; Self-Evaluation (found in the “Preceptor Guide”)</td>
<td>S/U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Observation and Evaluation</td>
<td>S/U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular communication with clinical faculty &amp; clinical discussion group, which includes <strong>weekly</strong> sharing of clinical pearls &amp;/or interesting patient encounters</td>
<td>S/U</td>
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</table>
1. **Safe and satisfactory clinical practice:** One-third of the academic credit for this course is based on meeting the clinical performance components of the course. Safe and satisfactory clinical practice is mandatory for successful completion of the course. In the unusual circumstance that a student is unable to provide safe and satisfactory care to patients, based on the clinical faculty’s professional judgment, the student may be removed from the clinical setting. If this deficit cannot be remedied in the remaining clinical time and within the limits of available faculty or preceptor supervision, the student will not meet the clinical requirements which would result in a grade of “F” in the course.

2. **Clinical practice prerequisites:** Clinical hours may **NOT** begin until the following requirements are met-

   - Current information on file with the CONHS: Criminal Background Check, Urine Drug Screen, BLS for Healthcare Providers, TB test results, immunization record, and verification of Texas RN license.
   - Clinical site and preceptor approval by the clinical faculty member: A signed and approved Preceptor Agreement must be sent to the clinical faculty member. This preceptor agreement must have three signatures, your clinical faculty, the preceptor and yours. Following approval, a “Student Clinical Information Form” must be submitted to the clinical faculty member.
   - Demonstration of competent undergraduate clinical assessment skills: This is done by satisfactorily completing the Validation of Undergraduate Health Assessment Skills (VUHAS) check-off during the Clinical Skills Seminar. The VUHAS is available under the Information icon on the course Homepage. Although it is expected that there MIGHT be time allocated on the first night for students to refine these skills with faculty feedback. **Students are expected to come prepared to perform these skills after reviewing them at home prior to the seminar attendance.**
   - All students are expected to have a good quality stethoscope that has both an adult and pediatric bell and diaphragm, and a reflex hammer for use during the clinical experience.

3. **Clinical hours:** A minimum of ninety hours of clinical experience related to course content are required. Clinical evaluation is graded as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory (S/U). There will be a minimum of two clinical evaluations made by the clinical faculty member with additional evaluations dependent on individual student progress in the clinical area.

   Students are responsible for working with their clinical faculty member to plan experiences that meet the course objectives and take into consideration student skills and learning needs. Clinical learning experiences should reflect the course’s didactic content. In order to meet the course requirements and assignments, students should organize their clinical hours/days, so that they
span across the entire semester. This allows for continuing development of skills and affords clinical faculty ample time to evaluate students during the semester.

More details about the clinical hours can be found under the information ICON on the course homepage.

4. **Typhon documentation:** Complete electronic clinical log documentation of each patient encounters must be posted using the Typhon software within a **one-week (7 day)** period from date of the patient visit in order for the clinical time to count toward the minimum 90 hours. **Clinical hours and entries that are not entered into TYPHON within the one-week period will not be counted and additional hours will be required.** Participation in clinical procedures must also be documented in Typhon.

5. **SOAP notes:** Beginning the first week of clinical experience, **one SOAP note is due each week,** no later than the particular day and time specified by each student’s clinical faculty. Each SOAP note will relate to one patient seen by the student in the clinical setting. The clinical faculty will inform the student when or if SOAP Notes are no longer required, due to satisfactory submissions.

SOAP notes should be sent in an attachment via Blackboard email to the clinical faculty member. In the “subject” line of this email, each student should write his/her own last name, first name, and clinical week #. An example of the subject line of student, Bill Smith’s first SOAP email to his clinical faculty member would look like: Smith, Bill #1. Each succeeding clinical record number will increase by one digit.

Use Microsoft Word to compose the SOAP note attachment using the template provided for this course available under the Clinical Information icon from the Information link on the course Homepage. Do not use the patient’s name in the SOAP note or include any information that could directly identify the patient.

6. **Clinical group discussion posts:** A weekly informal sharing of clinical pearls &/or interesting patient encounter is required for each week the student participates in the clinical area.

**Academic Honesty:**
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to a penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, forgery, or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.)

[http://conhs.tamu.edu/nursingstuhandbook/007/AcademicHonesty.pdf](http://conhs.tamu.edu/nursingstuhandbook/007/AcademicHonesty.pdf)
**Statement on Copying/Printing Test Questions:**
Testing by examination is an essential component of the FNP Program because it aids in assessing the student's knowledge level within a format similar to the national certification examinations (required for advanced nursing practice in Texas). Possession and/or sharing of test question printouts are violations of security for online courses. The practice of printing and possibly sharing test questions is not only a breach in ethics, but it also impedes faculty from identifying and subsequently assisting students that might be at risk for failure. Even though students might pass a course with the assistance of previous test questions, the ability to pass a certification exam or assure a baseline of knowledge for safe competent practice is greatly hindered. Therefore, the following policy and consequences of the graduate program regarding test security will be enforced.

1. Exams are **NOT** to be printed or copied in any format for any reason. If students have a concern about a particular test question, then they can record the number of the question and their focus of concern related to the content. They can forward this information to the faculty for review.
2. Sharing copies of exams or content from exams is viewed as unethical and a form of cheating.
3. Students having the opportunity to take exams online at home or a setting of their choice is seen as a privilege. Potential consequences of a breach in test security would mean that all students might be required to go to a designated testing site (Temple or Corpus) to take all exams.

**Plagiarism:**
The highest standards of academic honesty are expected from students. Faculty adhere to the University policy regarding academic honesty as published in the University Catalog. Refer to APA manual, p. 95-98 for the proper way to use and cite quoted material. Plagiarism means to steal and pass off the work of another as one’s own work. It usually results from bad paraphrasing or improper referencing. The substitution of a few changes from those of the original author and forgetting to use quotation marks, and reference citation are technically considered plagiarism. The only safe way to paraphrase is to read the original several times and then write your conception of what you have read without looking at the original. In other words, when paraphrasing, keep the source book closed! (Wilson, p. 523)


**Dropping a Class:** I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping a course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop through the Student Services Center, filling out a course drop form, and informing the graduate academic advisor, Barton Bailey, barton.bailey@tamucc.edu. Just stopping course by going attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically
result in you being dropped from the class. April 4, 2012 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic “W” this term.

**Grade Appeal Process:**
As stated in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences (CONHS) Handbook under section VII Policies and Procedures, a student that believes they have an academic grade appeal is encouraged to go through the CONHS academic review process prior to pursuing University Grade Appeal. See the handbook for the process.

As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Website at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**Statement on Disability:**
The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) a federal anti-discrimination statue that provides comprehensive civil rights protections for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Services Office at 361-825-5816 or visit the office in Driftwood 101.

**Academic Advising:**
The College of Nursing and Health Sciences requires that students consult with an Academic Advisor regarding their degree plan and/or changes to their degree plan. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan and indicate that the plan is active by signing it. Once the plan is completed it will be filed in the student’s record. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Island Hall room 322, and the graduate advisor, Barton Bailey can be reached at 1-361-825-5839 or by email, barton.bailey@tamucc.edu