PSYC 5398.002 – Clinical Practicum

Instructor: Robert Mims, Ph.D.  Semester: Spring 2014
Email robert.mims@tamucc.edu  Class Location: EN 104
Class Time: 7:00 - 9:30 PM Tuesday

Office: Bay Hall, Room 356  Office Hours: Tuesday 5:00 - 6:00 PM
Wednesday 6:00 – 7:00 PM or by Appointment
Office Phone: 825-2389

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:


COURSE DESCRIPTION & REQUIREMENTS: Clinical Practicum is offered every full semester, and at the discretion of the program, each summer (7½ week) term given sufficient enrollment. Practicum is taken only after a student has passed the Written Comprehensive Examination and has completed the necessary coursework as outlined in the Graduate Catalog. Practicum placements are coordinated and supervised by the designated clinical practicum supervisor (Dr. Mims).

The current degree requirement for the practicum is two 3-hour courses. Each course requires a minimum of 150 hours of supervised experience (15 hours per week per semester; summer hours should be 15-30 hours and are dependent on the needs of the practicum site).

Licensure requirements for practicum experiences differ from degree requirements. The Licensed Psychological Associate (LPA) requires 450 hours of supervised experience and most students elect to complete 450 hours over a two-semester period rather than the 300 required by course criteria. The student should plan their time commitments according to these requirements. The student is expected to work in their assigned placement the entire semester even if they have completed all the required hours. Additional information about the specific requirements for each type of licensure can be found at the appropriate licensing board website (e.g., address for LPA and LSSP: http://www.tsbep.state.tx.us then navigate from left side bar to either Licensed Psychological Associate or Licensed Specialist in School Psychology; address for LPC and MFT: http://www.dshs.state.tx.us then navigate across top bar to ‘I want to …’ and the drop list offers choices).

A practicum application must be submitted to the practicum supervisor during the semester before the student intends to register for the practicum class or interviews at a practicum site. After completing a practicum application, students typically interview at the practicum site during the semester before they plan to begin their placement. All
paperwork required by the placement site must be completed during the semester before the beginning of practicum. Any delay in the submission may delay the practicum placement.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**
1. The student will demonstrate the ability to conceptualize clinical cases from a variety of clinical perspectives.
2. The student will demonstrate the ability to conduct individual and group therapy sessions, as applicable, as determined by the written evaluations of their practicum supervisor.
3. The student will demonstrate the ability to effectively administer and interpret appropriately chosen psychological assessment instruments.
4. The student will demonstrate the ability to effectively use clinical supervision as part of their ongoing professional development as documented by both on-site and University supervisors.
5. The student will demonstrate their understanding of the importance of professional ethics, boundaries and confidentiality as evidenced by their contribution to ethics discussions in class and an evaluation of their practicum performance.
6. The student will demonstrate competency in understanding workplace issues and organizational dynamics as well as professional interactions with other mental health professionals as documented in the written reports of their practicum site supervisors.
7. The student will demonstrate their integration of clinical skills through effective completion and presentation of a case for oral examination at the end of their second term of practicum as a requirement for graduation.

**Supervision & Placement:** Once the student has completed a practicum application and discussed possible placement sites with the practicum supervisor (Dr. Mims), they will be asked to schedule a meeting or telephone interview with the agency supervisor. During this meeting, the agency supervisor will want to know about your academic training and previous clinical experiences. They will also be interested in knowing what you’re like as a person. Can they rely on you? Are you a conscientious and effective worker? Do you respond to suggestions and evaluation non-defensively? Will it be worth the supervisor’s time and energy to supervise you? Making a good first impression is critical and many students who have a successful practicum placement often find employment at the supervising agency as a result of their experience. After the student meets with the agency supervisor, a determination will be made by the practicum supervisor, in consultation with the student, as to the appropriateness of the practicum placement.

The supervisory experience is a formal process that should follow the licensing rules of Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (regardless of student licensure interests). The student is encouraged to seek help early in the process should problems or questions arise. It is important that the student recognize situations or assignments that are beyond their ability and experience and they are encouraged to discuss this during supervision with both their practicum supervisor as well as their agency supervisor, peers and other faculty or staff.
Confidentiality: During practicum meetings cases will be presented, staffed and discussed. It is expected that all material presented during the meetings will be treated in a professional manner and the confidentiality of clients will be maintained. All identifying information must be removed from copies of testing materials and any other records discussed during practicum meetings. To facilitate this, students should obtain (1) client consent, (2) releases of information and (3) approval from the agency supervisor prior to presenting cases. Inform clients that their identity will not be revealed in the meetings and that presentations are for training purposes only. If the client is a minor or does not have legal management rights, you must get permission and a signed release from the parent or legal guardian. These conditions apply to all case material presented as well as the oral examination presentation. The student will also maintain secure storage of any confidential information of testing materials used in the practicum placement.

Evaluation At The Practicum Site: Each practicum site provides different training experiences and sets different expectations for professional behavior. Because practicum students differ in their personal goals, it is a good idea to be involved in the evaluation process from the outset. To avoid misunderstandings, the student will be given a copy of the evaluation form that will be used to document the student’s performance at the beginning of the practicum. Everyone can then work together to ensure that the evaluation process is productive and contributes to the overall learning experience.

Your agency supervisor and the University practicum supervisor (Dr. Mims) have established this format for evaluation, so review it carefully to be certain that you understand it. Seek and be receptive to feedback that helps improve one’s clinical knowledge and performance. It is easy for the novice clinician to be defensive or overconfident of their ability levels. Individual and group supervision provide a forum for exploring new skills and evaluating individual strengths and weaknesses. However, if you focus more on the evaluation than on learning, you may be reluctant to take on new challenges for fear that you will do poorly, which will adversely affect your evaluation. The student should work with their agency supervisor to develop a plan that allows and encourages you to try new skills and to recognize your own areas of development.

At the end of your practicum experience, you will be evaluated in the following areas:
1. Professionalism
2. Relationships with staff and agency
3. Therapy skills
4. Personal qualities
5. Psychological testing skills
6. Overall evaluation

Consultation (or How to Get Help When You Need It): If you have any problems or questions about your practicum, be sure to get assistance. During your practicum placement it is essential that you recognize when situations or assignments are beyond your ability and when you need help to deal with them. You may need help with anything from questions about ethics, to how to write a particular kind of case note. It might also
happen that you are working with a particularly challenging client, or perhaps you are not getting along well with a staff member or supervisor. Whatever the difficulty, when problems develop get help and do so early.

Resources include Dr. Robert Mims, Dr. Troy Martinez, your agency supervisor, peers, and other faculty or staff. The main point to remember is that people are ready and willing to help you and you are not expected to master all skills immediately or be able to do everything yourself. This is a fundamental principle of responsible professional conduct that will help you throughout your professional career.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION:

1. **Practicum Meeting Attendance.** Students are expected to have weekly supervision with their agency/on-site supervisor in addition to attending the weekly practicum seminar at the University. Students should come to the practicum meeting with a completed and signed weekly log, which they will turn in to the practicum supervisor (Dr. Mims). It is the student’s responsibility to maintain and keep a signed record of the practicum experiences. Records for each practicum experience should be kept separately. You should retain this record for future licensing purposes as you may be required to show proof of the types of training experiences you participated in.

Students who miss practicum meetings must notify the practicum supervisor in advance and schedule another meeting if the supervisor deems it necessary. Excessive absences (more than two) may result in a grade of “failed.”

Practicum students are expected to notify Dr. Mims of any problems that occur in the practicum at the earliest possible opportunity. If the discussion can wait until the practicum meeting, it can be discussed in the general meeting or in confidence with Dr. Mims before or after the meeting. It is imperative that the student notifies their agency supervisor and Dr. Mims in a timely manner should problems occur with clients, staff or other individuals.

2. **Participation in the Practicum Meeting.** Each student is expected to discuss the prior week’s activities at their practicum site and identify areas of interest, questions, concerns or any problems at the practicum site. Each student is also expected to give a Case Presentation and/or a topic/test/technique presentation during the semester. These presentations are designed to help the student prepare for the Oral Examination. You will use the same format described for the Oral Case Presentation during your class Case Presentation. Use Power Point to present your case and be sure that any supplementary material needed to knowledgeably discuss the case is present. You may be asked questions regarding aspects of your case (additional background information, testing information etc.), so be prepared to answer those questions. A schedule of presentations will be developed early during the semester.

3. **Evaluation.** The practicum is graded on a Pass/Fail basis. Your agency supervisor, as well as Dr. Mims, will monitor your progress at your practicum throughout the
semester. Successful completion of your practicum will depend on this ongoing evaluation plus the final evaluation reflected in the Practicum Student Evaluation Form that will be completed by the agency/on-site supervisor and reviewed by Dr. Mims. A completed evaluation form must be turned in for the student to receive credit for the course.

4. **Oral Examinations.** Those students in the process of successfully completing their second semester of practicum placement will be allowed to sit for the Oral Examination, which constitutes the exit examination for the Clinical Track Masters Degree in Psychology, providing they, in cooperation with their site supervisor and practicum supervisor, *successfully complete the necessary work* for the Oral Examination.

   A specific schedule of deadlines for the Oral Examination will be distributed in class to those individuals expecting to sit for the exam. If a student does not complete the necessary work for the oral examination as scheduled, as determined by the practicum supervisor, they will not be allowed to take the Oral Exam and may be required to complete an additional section of practicum until this criteria can be met. Those students who expect to sit for the oral examination will need to schedule additional meetings with the practicum supervisor to review their oral case materials. These meetings will be arranged at the discretion of the instructor and may include additional deadlines for the turning in of material and rewrites than those included on the oral examination schedule.

**CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

**Blackboard:** Materials related to the course *may* be posted on SAIL/WebCT. This or group emails/texts will be the primary means of communicating with the class regarding cancellations or any other changes. Please make sure your password information is up to date so you can access this information as well as supporting materials for the course, and make sure the practicum supervisor (Dr. Mims) has the best email address for contacting you in a timely manner.

**Classroom etiquette:** *All cell phones must be turned off completely and put away during class unless an emergency exists.* Basic social and professional decorum are expected.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism, handing in materials used in other courses, or the use of any work that is not the student’s will be dealt with according to University policy (see the current University Catalog and Student Handbook).

**Withdrawal/Incomplete:** The last day you may drop a course with a grade of “W” is April 11, 2014 and you must complete the necessary paperwork yourself. A grade of “Incomplete” is given only with the permission of the instructor if you have satisfactorily completed all course requirements to that point and you contact me at least one week prior to the end of class.
**Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities ACT (ADA) requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodations of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation please contact the Disability Services Office at (361) 825-5816 or visit the office in CCH 116. The tape recording of lectures or other class activities is prohibited without permission from the instructor, although exceptions will always be made for students with disabilities. Please see me if you believe you need to tape record in class.

**Academic Advising:** If you have not yet obtained a signed degree plan you should see your assigned faculty advisor immediately. Once a degree plan has been agreed upon, you will need to meet with an advisor at the advising center to formalize your plan. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-2651.

**Grade Appeal Process:** Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, [cla.tamu.edu/students/studentinfo.html](http://cla.tamu.edu/students/studentinfo.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

**All practicum forms will be distributed early in the semester.**
**READING ASSIGNMENTS:** The following schedule is subject to review and may be changed as the course progresses, including the assignment of additional readings.

A schedule of individual case and topic presentations will be developed once class begins.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/28/14</td>
<td>Structure of the Course</td>
<td>Review Forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/04/14</td>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Baird Ch. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/11/14</td>
<td>Getting Started</td>
<td>Baird Ch. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/18/14</td>
<td>Ethical &amp; Legal Issues</td>
<td>Baird Ch. 3, APA Ethics Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/25/14</td>
<td>Structure of the Oral Examination</td>
<td>Class Handout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/04/14</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Baird Ch. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/18/14</td>
<td>Working with Diversity</td>
<td>Baird Ch. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/25/14</td>
<td>Clinical Writing, Treatment Records, and Case Notes</td>
<td>Baird Ch. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/01/14</td>
<td>Stress &amp; Self-Care</td>
<td>Baird Ch. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/08/14</td>
<td>Assault &amp; Other Risks</td>
<td>Baird Ch. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/15/14</td>
<td>Closing Cases</td>
<td>Baird Ch. 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/22/14</td>
<td>Finishing the Practicum</td>
<td>Baird Ch. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/29/14</td>
<td>Frustrations, Lessons, Discoveries, &amp; Joy; and Licensure</td>
<td>Baird Ch. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/06/14</td>
<td>Formal Presentations (Oral Exam Candidates)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TBA</strong></td>
<td><strong>Oral Examinations (TBD - 2014)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>