

COUN: 689 AI and Adolescence in Mental Health

Course Syllabus: Summer 2026

10 weeks

Independent study

Synchronous class

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Ajitha Chandrika Prasanna Kumaran, PhD, NCC, LPC

Office Location: Virtual office

Office Hours: By appointment

University Email Address: Ajitha.Kumaran@tamuc.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: email

Communication Response Time: 24-48 hours, Monday – Friday

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Required Textbook

There is no specific book; reading materials will be posted in D2L and in class.

Readings for class

Bo, J. Y., Kazemitabaar, M., Deng, M., Inzlicht, M., & Anderson, A. (2025). Invisible Saboteurs: Sycophantic LLMs Mislead Novices in Problem-Solving Tasks. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2510.03667*.

Carro, M. V. (2024). *Flattering to deceive: The impact of sycophantic behavior on user trust in large language model*. arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2412.02802>

Cheng, M., Lee, C., Khadpe, P., Yu, S., Han, D., & Jurafsky, D. (2026). Sycophantic AI decreases prosocial intentions and promotes dependence. *Science*, 391(6792), eaec8352.

Clark A. The Ability of AI Therapy Bots to Set Limits With Distressed Adolescents: Simulation-Based Comparison Study. *JMIR Ment Health*. 2025 Aug 18;12:e78414. doi: 10.2196/78414. PMID: 40825182; PMCID: PMC12360667.

Clegg, K. A. (2025). Shoggoths, sycophancy, psychosis, oh my: Rethinking large language model use and safety. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 27, e87367.

<https://doi.org/10.2196/87367>

Common Sense Media. (2025). *Social AI companions: A risk assessment for youth*.

<https://www.common sense media.org/research/social-ai-companions-risk-assessment>

Fowler, S. L., & Lowry, P. B. (2025). GenAI's Dark Sycophantic Side.



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Grantham-McGregor, S., & Smith, J. A. (2026). Sycophantic AI decreases prosocial intentions and promotes dependence. *Science*, 391(6792), 612–613.

<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aec8352>

Hall, R. (2025, August 30). *AI chatbots are becoming popular alternatives to therapy. But they may worsen mental health crises, experts warn.* The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/aug/03/ai-chatbot-as-therapy-alternative-ment-al-health-crises-ntwnfb>

Kim, P., Xie, Y., & Yang, S. (2025). "I am here for you": How relational conversational AI appeals to adolescents, especially those who are socially and emotionally vulnerable. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2512.15117*.

Knox, W. B., Bradford, K., Castro, S. V., Ong, D. C., Williams, S., Romanow, J., ... & Baker, S. (2025). Harmful Traits of AI Companions. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2511.14972*.

Lee, D., Wan, C., Ng, P. M., Fung, Y. N., & Wu, N. (2026). Effects of AI companions' sycophancy and emotional mimicry on consumers' continuance intention and social wellbeing. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 1-23.

Li, S., Jassbi, M. A., Barata, J., & Aliabadi, R. (2024). *Artificial affection, real risks: Rebuilding the "relational infrastructure" for our youth in the age of AI companions.* AI Policy Institute.

<https://theaiapi.org/artificial-affection-real-risks-rebuilding-the-relational-infrastructure-for-our-youth-in-the-age-of-ai-companions/>

McBain, R. K., Cantone, R. E., & Yu, H. (2025). Use of generative AI for mental health advice among US adolescents and young adults. *JAMA Network Open*, 8(11), e2542281.

<https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.42281>

Moore, A. (2025, May 29). *Can AI be your therapist? New research reveals major risks.* Psychology Today.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/urban-survival/202505/can-ai-be-your-therapist-new-research-reveals-major-risks>

O'Brien, M., & Ortutay, B. (2025, August 6). *Disturbing new study reveals ChatGPT encourages harm among teens.* RochesterFirst.

<https://www.rochesterfirst.com/reviews/br/services-br/technology-br/study-disturbing-findings-chatgpt-encourages-harm-among-teens/>

Phang, J., Lampe, M., Ahmad, L., Agarwal, S., Fang, C. M., Liu, A. R., Danry, V., Lee, E., Chan, S. W. T., Pataranutaporn, P., & Maes, P. (2025). *Investigating affective use and emotional well-being on ChatGPT.* OpenAI. <https://openai.com/index/affective-use-study/>

Probst, M. The Epistemic Vices of AI Sycophancy.

Qian, Z., Xiong, Y., Sui, Y., & Tong, C. (2026). Chatbots for children and adolescents: A meta-

analysis of chatbots for mental health issues and psychosocial well-being outcomes. *Adolescent Research Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-026-00284-8>

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Radesky, J. S., Weeks, H. M., & Schaller, A. (2025). Generative artificial intelligence applications use among US youth. *Emerging Adulthood*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.54820>

Stanford University. (2026, March). *AI overly affirms users asking for personal advice*. Stanford Report. <https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2026/03/ai-advice-sycophantic-models-research>

Turner, C., & Eisikovits, N. (2026). Programmed to please: the moral and epistemic harms of AI sycophancy. *AI and Ethics*, 6(2), 168.

Vanhoffelen, G., Vandenbosch, L., & Schreurs, L. (2025). Teens, tech, and talk: Adolescents' use of and emotional reactions to Snapchat's My AI chatbot. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(8), Article 1037. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15081037>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Description of the Course

This course explores the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI), digital technology, and adolescent mental health. The student will explore the current literature and evidence-based practices in AI and adolescent mental health.

Course Objectives

Course Objectives include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Understand AI's role in adolescent mental health
2. Evaluate risks and benefits of AI use
3. Apply counseling theories to digital contexts to serve adolescent populations.
4. Demonstrate ethical decision-making and incorporate AI in mental health services.
5. Develop intervention strategies to navigate mental health services incorporating AI.

CACREP 2024 Standards

This course is based on the 2024 CACREP and Clinical Mental Health Standards.

3.E.5. application of technology related to counseling

5.C.5. techniques and interventions for the prevention and treatment of a broad range of mental health issues

6.B.4.h. professional writing for peer-reviewed journal publications

6.2.g preparing students to become familiar with and

knowledgeable about current trends and technology use in

the delivery of counseling services, counselor education, and counselor supervision.



COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

In this class, you will utilize the Learning Management System (LMS) entitled D2L for portions of instructional and learning methods, submitting assignments, participating in online discussions, and completing quizzes. You will need to utilize other technologies such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, etc. If you have issues with this system, it is your responsibility to contact the help desk immediately.

Instructional Methods

The course is synchronous, and the student will meet twice a month with the course instructor to review the readings and assignments.

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

As a student in this course, you are responsible for the active learning process. Expectations of this course include the following:

1. You are expected to display professionalism at all times. Be respectful of your professor and peers. Be open to feedback, as you will receive this throughout the program.
2. Prepare for classes. Complete any and all readings prior to class time.
3. Complete all assignments by the deadline.
4. Adhere to the university student code of conduct.

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5. Participate. During face-to-face classes, you are expected to actively participate in all activities and discussion. In the online format, you are expected to participate in all online discussions/activities. This is crucial to your learning.
6. All writing assignments must be done according to APA 7th edition. (See the APA 7th edition formatting guide for more specific guidance).
7. Regularly check your university email. My suggestion is to check this at least once a day as your instructors and others from the department and University may contact you.
8. Begin your readings ASAP. Sometimes it may take more than one attempt to digest the material.
9. Deadlines are the last possible moment something is due—not the first moment to start. Work ahead. I realize this may not always be possible; however, when you can, do so.
10. Be open to the process. This degree takes time, work, effort, and growth.

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Assignments/Assessments

**Note. All assignments are to be submitted in D2L

1. Interview

Students will conduct interviews with one school counselor and several adolescents, then write a summary of their findings. The interviews are for educational purposes only and will not be recorded or used for research. Students will use open-ended questions to explore how AI is utilized within school counseling settings, including its perceived benefits and challenges, and its impact on adolescents' mental well-being.

Criteria	Does Not Meet Requirements	Meets Requirements	Exceeds Expectations
Interview Completion (10 pts)	Interviews are incomplete or missing key participants	Completed interview with the school counselor and adolescents as required	Completed all interviews with thorough engagement and strong participation from all parties
Quality of Questions (10 pts)	Questions are mostly closed-ended, unclear, or not aligned with topic	Uses appropriate open-ended questions related to AI and mental health	Questions are highly thoughtful, probing, and elicit deep, meaningful responses
Summary & Organization (10 pts)	Disorganized, unclear, or missing key information	Organized summary with clear main ideas	Exceptionally clear, cohesive, and well-structured summary with strong flow
Reflection on Mental Well-being (5 pts)	Minimal or no reflection on mental well-being or AI's impact on adolescents' well-being	Adequate reflection on AI's impact on adolescents' well-being	Insightful and critical reflection demonstrating depth and awareness
Writing Quality (5 pts)	Writing is unclear, contains multiple errors, and lacks structure	Writing is generally clear with minor errors and appropriate structure	Writing is polished, clear, and professional with no significant errors

Research Paper

Students will develop a conceptual research paper suitable for submission to an peer reviewed journal. The paper will explore a topic related to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in mental health, with a focus on adolescents and/or school counseling contexts. This assignment is designed to strengthen scholarly writing, critical thinking, and the ability to integrate theory, research, and emerging trends in AI.

- To critically examine the role of AI in adolescent mental health
- To integrate existing literature and theoretical frameworks
- To propose implications for counseling practice, policy, and future research



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- To prepare students for scholarly publication
- Length: 10–15 pages (excluding title page and references)
- Format: APA (7th edition)
- Sources: Minimum of 12–15 peer-reviewed journal articles

Criteria	Does Not Meet Requirements	Meets Requirements	Exceeds Expectations
Content & Topic Relevance (20 pts)	Topic is unclear, lacks focus, or is not aligned with AI and adolescent mental health	Clearly addresses AI in mental health with appropriate focus on adolescents	Highly focused, innovative, and demonstrates strong significance and originality
Literature Review & Sources (20 pts)	Limited, outdated, or inappropriate sources; little integration	Adequate use of peer-reviewed sources with clear connections	Extensive, current, and well-synthesized literature demonstrating strong scholarly engagement
Conceptual/Theoretical Framework (15 pts)	Framework is missing, unclear, or not relevant	Appropriate framework is identified and explained	Framework is deeply integrated and enhances understanding in a meaningful and sophisticated way
Critical Analysis & Depth of Insight (20 pts)	Lacks analysis; mostly summary with minimal critical thinking	Demonstrates clear analysis and some critical evaluation	Strong, original, and nuanced analysis with advanced critical thinking
Implications for Practice & Future Directions (10 pts)	Implications are limited or unclear; lacks relevance to counseling practice	Provides appropriate implications and future research directions	Insightful, practical, and forward-thinking implications with strong relevance to the field
Organization & Academic Writing (10 pts)	Disorganized; unclear writing; frequent grammar/spelling errors	Generally well-organized with minor writing issues	Exceptionally clear, cohesive, and polished academic writing
APA Format & Scholarly Style (5 pts)	Significant APA errors; inconsistent scholarly tone	Minor APA errors; appropriate scholarly tone	Accurate APA formatting; professional, publication-ready writing

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

90%-100% A
80%-89% B
70%-79% C
60%-69% D
< 59% F

Assignment/Assessment Point Value

Interview 50 points Research paper 100 points

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Total points possible = 150

Your Final Grade is determined by adding the point values earned from each assignment and then dividing by 150. The resulting value is multiplied by 100 to yield a percentage. For example: $(130 \text{ [points earned]} / 150) \times 100 = 86.67\%$

*****No late assignments**

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Browser support

D2L is committed to performing key application testing when new browser versions are released. New and updated functionality is also tested against the latest version of supported browsers. However, due to the frequency of some browser releases, D2L cannot guarantee that each browser version will perform as expected. If you encounter any issues with any of the browser versions listed in the tables below, contact D2L Support, who will determine the best course of action for resolution. Reported issues are prioritized by supported browsers and then maintenance browsers.

Supported browsers are the latest or most recent browser versions that are tested against new versions of D2L products. Customers can report problems and receive support for issues. For an optimal experience, D2L recommends using supported browsers with D2L products.

Maintenance browsers are older browser versions that are not tested extensively against new versions of D2L products. Customers can still report problems and receive support for critical issues; however, D2L does not guarantee all issues will be addressed. A maintenance browser becomes officially unsupported after one year.

Note the following:

- Ensure that your browser has JavaScript and Cookies enabled.
- For desktop systems, you must have Adobe Flash Player 10.1 or greater.
- The Brightspace Support features are now optimized for production environments when using the Google Chrome browser, Apple Safari browser, Microsoft Edge browser, Microsoft Internet Explorer browser, and Mozilla Firefox browsers.



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Desktop Support

Browser		rowser Version(s) Maintenance sion(s)
Microsoft® Edge	Latest	N/A
Microsoft® Internet Explorer®	N/A	11
Mozilla® Firefox®	Latest, ESR	N/A
Google® Chrome™	Latest	N/A

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Apple® Safari®	Latest	N/A
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Tablet and Mobile Support

Device	Operating System	Browser	Supported Browser Version(s)
Android™	Android 4.4+	Chrome	Latest
Apple	iOS®	Safari, Chrome	The current major version of iOS (the latest minor or point release of that major version) and the previous major version of iOS (the latest minor or point release of that major version). For example, as of June 7, 2017, D2L supports iOS 10.3.2 and iOS 9.3.5, but not iOS 10.2.1, 9.0.2, or any other version. Chrome: Latest version for the iOS browser.



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Windows	Windows 10	Edge, Chrome, Firefox	Latest of all browsers, and Firefox ESR.
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- You will need regular access to a computer with a broadband Internet connection. The minimum computer requirements are:
 - o 512 MB of RAM, 1 GB or more preferred
 - o Broadband connection required courses are heavily video intensive
 - o Video display capable of high-color 16-bit display 1024 x 768 or higher resolution
 - **For YouSeeU Sync Meeting sessions 8 Mbps is required.** Additional system requirements found here: <https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>
 - You must have a:
 - o Sound card, which is usually integrated into your desktop or laptop computer
 - o Speakers or headphones.
 - o *For courses utilizing video-conferencing tools and/or an online proctoring solution, a webcam and microphone are required.
 - Both versions of Java (32 bit and 64 bit) must be installed and up to date on your machine. At a minimum Java 7, update 51, is required to support the learning management system. The most current version of Java can be downloaded at: [JAVA web site](http://www.java.com/en/download/manual.jsp)
<http://www.java.com/en/download/manual.jsp>
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- Current anti-virus software must be installed and kept up to date.
 - Running the browser check will ensure your internet browser is supported. Pop-ups are allowed.
 - o JavaScript is enabled.
 - o Cookies are enabled.
 - You will need some additional free software (plug-ins) for enhanced web browsing. Ensure that you download the free versions of the following software:
 - o [Adobe Reader](https://get.adobe.com/reader/) <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
 - o [Adobe Flash Player \(version 17 or later\)](https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/) <https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>
 - o [Adobe Shockwave Player](https://get.adobe.com/shockwave/) <https://get.adobe.com/shockwave/>
 - o [Apple Quick Time](http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/) <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/>
 - At a minimum, you must have Microsoft Office 2013, 2010, 2007 or Open Office. Microsoft Office is the standard office productivity software utilized by faculty, students, and staff. Microsoft Word is the standard word processing software, Microsoft Excel is the standard spreadsheet software, and Microsoft PowerPoint is the standard presentation software. Copying and pasting, along with attaching/uploading documents for assignment submission, will also be required. If you do not have Microsoft Office, you can check with the bookstore



to see if they have any student copies.

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Brightspace Support Need Help? Student Support

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778 or click on the **Live Chat** or click on the words “click here” to submit an issue via email.

System Maintenance

Please note that on the 4th Sunday of each month there will be System Maintenance which

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means the system will not be available 12 pm-6 am CST.

Interaction with Instructor Statement

Communication with your professors is key to your professional growth. I am here to support and guide you along your academic journey. With that being said, I cannot help you if you do not communicate with me. Please make an appointment if you have any concerns or questions. Because I teach in different locations, email is the best way to reach me. I will attempt to answer all emails within 24 hours, Monday-Friday, but at times will need up to 72 hours to do so. When emailing, please use your university email and address me with courtesy and respect.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies



Written assignments are due on the day noted in the syllabus. All papers are due at the beginning of the class period. Late papers will have 10% deduction per day late from the final score.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the Student Guidebook.

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: Netiquette

<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the Attendance webpage and Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01.

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

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Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

ADA Statement: Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides



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comprehensive civil rights protection 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 have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

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Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.



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Weeks	Content/assignment/online meetings
Week 1	Syllabus
Week 2	Meet online -design research objectives and journal selection
Week 3	Read and synthesize literature review
Week 4	Meet online and discuss interview questions for the assignment
Week 5	Draft research manuscript
Week 6	Submit the interview assignment
Week 7	Share the draft and meet online
Week 8	Writing in progress
Week 9	Meeting online to discuss reading and draft of the paper
Week 10	Submit Research assignment