



COUN 539: Introduction to Play Therapy

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Office hours: By Appointment Only

Introduction:

In this course, students will learn the basic principles and procedures of play therapy, which is considered the most developmentally appropriate mental health intervention for young children. Students will explore historical, theoretical, and multicultural foundations of play therapy and will learn how to implement basic play therapy skills to facilitate the child's self-exploration, self-expression, self-understanding, personal growth, and development.

Course Description:

This course utilizes a hybrid of methods (experiential, lecture, videos, and readings) to provide foundational knowledge and basic skill competencies to facilitate play therapy as a therapeutic intervention for children and families. This course provides students with the philosophical basis for play therapy, including a review of the history of play therapy, how to develop a relationship with a child through developmentally appropriate play-based skills, an introduction to one or two theories of play therapy (child-centered, cognitive behavioral, Adlerian, Ecosystemic, etc.), an introduction to various theoretical applications, and play therapy best practices. Students will demonstrate play therapy micro-skills as well as demonstrate an understanding of the purpose and goals of play therapy, therapeutic stages and themes, ethical issues, diverse social and cultural implications, basic developmental and neurological implications, and the ability to communicate the treatment process to various stakeholders including parents/caregivers and teachers.

CORE CURRICULAR EXPERIENCES COVERED

Social and Cultural Diversity	CACREP Standard	Curriculum/Evaluation Outcomes
1. Multicultural and pluralistic characteristics within and among diverse groups nationally and internationally	2.F.2.a	Assigned Reading/Lecture/Exam

2. The impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others	2.F.2.d.	Assigned Reading/Lecture/Exam
Human Growth and Development		Curriculum/Evaluation Outcomes
1. Biological, neurological, and physiological factors that affect human development, functioning, and behavior	2.F.3.e	Assigned Reading/Lecture
2. Systemic and environmental factors that affect human development, functioning, and behavior	2.F.3.f.	Assigned Reading/Lecture
3. Effects of crisis, disasters, and trauma on diverse individuals across the lifespan	2.F.3.g.	Assigned Reading/Lecture
4. Ethical and culturally relevant strategies for promoting resilience and optimum development and wellness across the lifespan	2.F.3.i	Assigned Reading/Lecture
Counseling and Helping Relationships		Curriculum/Evaluation Outcomes
1. Counselor characteristics and behaviors that influence the counseling process	2.F.5.f	Lecture/Practice/Session/Exam
2. Evidence-based counseling strategies and techniques for prevention and intervention	2.F.5.j.	Observations/Session
3. Crisis intervention, trauma-informed, and community-based strategies, such as Psychological First Aid	2.F.5.m	Assigned Reading/Lecture

Course Prerequisites:

This course requires an understanding of child development. Prerequisite for Counseling Department is COUN 516 (Counseling children and adolescents) and the co-requisite is COUN 528 (Introduction to Group Dynamics and Process). Students in the Psychology Department or Social Work Department must have equivalent courses.

Statement of learning:

The instructor will assume the responsibility for providing the conditions that allow positive learning through student involvement during the course. It is the responsibility of the student to engage in this process and utilize every opportunity given in the course to grow as a therapist. Therefore, choosing to not engage, complete assignments, or truly think about the application of this course will reflect not only in your grade, but also will be apparent in your counseling sessions with children.

Textbooks:

Axline, V. (1964). Dibs in search of self. Ballantine.

Kottman, T., & Meany-Walen, K. K. (2018). *Doing play therapy: From building the relationship to facilitating change*. Guilford Press.

Landreth, G. L. (2023). *Play therapy: The art of the relationship* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Supplemental Texts:

Carmichael, K. D. (2006). *Play therapy: An introduction*. Pearson Education, Inc

Homeyer, L., & Bennett, M. M. (2023). *The guide to play therapy documentation and parent consultation*. Routledge.

Ray, D. C. (Ed.). (2016). *A therapist's guide to child development: The extraordinarily normal years*. Routledge.

Supplemental Research Articles:

Bratton, S., Ray, D., Rhine, T., & Jones, L. (2005). The efficacy of play therapy with children: A metaanalytic review of treatment outcomes. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 36(4), 367-390. doi:10.1037/0735-7028.36.4.376.

LeBlanc, M., & Ritchie, M. (2001). A meta-analysis of play therapy outcomes. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, 14, 149-163. doi:10.1080/0951507011005914.

Ray, D. C., Armstrong, S. A., Balkin, R. S., & Jayne, K. M. (2015). Child-centered play therapy in the schools: Review and meta-analysis. *Psychology in the Schools*, 52(2), 107-123. doi: 10.1002/pits.21798

Please note that the instructor may assign additional readings to help supplement class discussions and further students' learning at their discretion. The above readings are not a thorough list.

Learning Objectives:

Student Learning objectives are aligned with the APT's Professional Play Therapy Competencies and tri-phasic play therapy education guidelines. This 3-hour course provides 67.5 of the required 150 play therapy instruction hours required for application as a Registered Play Therapist™ (RPT)/School-Based Registered Play Therapist™ (SB-RPT).

- 1) Compare and contrast play therapy pioneers, theorists, and organizations that shaped the history of the profession of play therapy through a historical and multicultural/social justice lens. (APT Primary Area 1).

- 2) Identify developmentally and theoretically appropriate play therapy toys and materials from diverse representation for the purposes of both assessment and treatment. (APT Primary Area 3)
- 3) Conceptualize a child's presenting mental health issue(s) and psychosocial problem(s) through a developmental and theoretical play therapy framework. (APT Primary Area 2).
- 4) Demonstrate an understanding of the role of the play therapist and play therapy in the context of the child's comprehensive ecological and systemic world, which includes considerations for family, school, community, social groups, diversity factors, strengths and risk factors, and mental health/psychiatric factors. (APT Primary Area 2).
- 5) Identify and differentiate the stages within the play therapy process from intake to termination, including a child's progress in the play therapy process, and be able to articulate these stages effectively to key stakeholders (such as parents/caregivers and teachers). (APT Primary Area 5)
- 6) Examine, discuss, and demonstrate key elements in a play therapy relationship. (APT Primary Area 2)
- 7) Demonstrate basic play therapy skills (with non-clinical volunteers) including (but not limited to) structuring, tracking, reflection of content and process, returning responsibility, facilitating self-advocacy, and limit setting. (APT Primary Area 3)
- 8) Evaluate personal and professional relational style and the impact of relational style on the unfolding relationship with the child. This will include issues of transference and counter-transference (APT Primary Area 2).
- 9) Identify and recognize the evolving body of current or up-to-date qualitative and quantitative play therapy research, and demonstrate a clear understanding about play therapy effectiveness as an evidence-based treatment for children. (APT Primary Area 4).

Training Hours:

This course will cover the necessary areas of training required by APT for application as a Registered Play Therapist™ (RPT™)/School-Based Registered Play Therapist™ (SB-RPT™).

History- 3 hours

Theory- 3

Skills- 58.5

Special Topics- 3 hours

Assignments:

Build a traveling play therapy kit (5% of grade): Toys for the playroom is an important part of the play therapy session. Play therapists must have toys that facilitate the therapeutic process wherever they go. Students must put together the essential play therapy traveling kit based off Landreth's categories for toys in the toy room. This kit will be used in class and during the practice sessions.

Play Therapy Micro-Practicum (15% of grade): Students will have a chance to do two supervised play therapy sessions in order to implement what was taught in class. You will get to analyze this experience in a group sharing session.

Observation of Experienced Play Therapists (10% of grade): You will have the opportunity to watch two taped play therapy sessions from different therapists in the play therapy field. Watching both, sessions are required. A 2-page critique of the sessions will be turned in using the following outline:

- 1) Name of Play Therapist™
- 2) Body language/demeanor of Play Therapist™.
- 3) Recognizing the child's feelings/reactions to therapist.
- 4) Tracking your reactions to the session.
- 5) What would you do differently?
- 6) Something you learned

This paper must be written in APA format.

Play Therapy Sessions Outside of Class (20% of grade): Students will conduct two play sessions with a child outside of class. The student must find a child to work with that is the ages between 4 and 7. Any child younger than 3 may be more of a challenge to work with at this point with your skills. Any child older than 7 is more likely want to do activity therapy. Along with the video, students will turn in an APA paper with the following:

- 1) Child's age and setting
- 2) Therapist's feelings about the session.
- 3) Child's feelings during the session (provide concrete examples)
- 4) When the therapist practiced returning responsibility to the child/self-esteem building responses. Must provide concrete examples.
- 5) The therapist's strengths for the session.
- 6) 6 corrected responses that you would like to correct using the following format:
 - a. Child (response or activity)
 - b. Therapist's Response
 - c. Corrected Response
 - d. Reason for change.

Research Paper/Exploration Paper (25%): This assignment will require the student to obtain 4 research articles that have been published within the past 10 years. The topics of the research articles should be something you are interested in or can be applicable to your future career as a Play Therapist™. Each research article will have its own page with the following on it:

- 1) APA format of the article.
- 2) Summary (may not be copied and pasted from the abstract. If this happens, it is an automatic 0).
- 3) Your response/reaction to the article. What did you like? Dislike? What did you take away? How can you apply it to your future work as a Play Therapist™?

The next portion of this paper will be an exploration of yourself as a Play Therapist™. The following will be addressed in this section:

- 1) What lead you to want to work with children? Please go into depth of childhood, work, family, ect...
- 2) How did you get to play therapy and why do you want to be a Play Therapist™?
- 3) How does the goals of play therapy align with your professional goals?
- 4) Do the APT standards and requirements for a Play Therapist™ align with your personal values?
- 5) What are your views about children?
- 6) What are your views about families? How do you incorporate them into the therapeutic process?
- 7) Do you think parents should be part of the process? Are they helpful or a hindrance to the process? How would you feel about working with them?
- 8) What are your fears in working with children?
- 9) What would be the hardest thing(s) for you to do as a Play Therapist™?
- 10) What do you think will be the easiest thing for you to do as a Play Therapist™?

Exams (20% of grade): A midterm and final exam will be given. The exams will consist of multiple choice and/or short essay. It will be up to the discretion of the instructor on how the exams will be constructed.

Participation (5% of grade): Participation is an important part of this course as there are many experiential pieces to it. Students are expected to not only show up on time to class but also must be prepared for each week.

All assignments will be turned in on time at the beginning of class. Late assignments will not be accepted. If the assignment is supposed to be uploaded and I cannot open it, the assignment will be considered not turned in. Please make sure your files are a PDF or a .DOC to ensure it can be opened properly.

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.

Desktop Support Browser	Supported Browser Version(s)	Maintenance Browser Version(s)
Microsoft® Edge	Latest	N/A
Microsoft® Internet Explorer®	N/A	11
Mozilla® Firefox®	Latest, ESR	N/A
Google® Chrome™	Latest	N/A
Apple® Safari®	Latest	N/A

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.
Windows	Windows 10	Edge, Chrome, Firefox	Latest of all browsers, and Firefox ESR.

computer requirements are:

- 512 MB of RAM, 1 GB or more preferred
- Broadband connection required
- courses are heavily video intensive
- 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-SystemRequirements>

- You must have a:
 - Sound card, which is usually integrated into your desktop or laptop computer
 - Speakers or headphones.

- *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>

- Current anti-virus software must be installed and kept up to date.

The Syllabus/schedule subject to change

Running the browser check will ensure your internet browser is supported. Pop-ups are allowed.

JavaScript is enabled.

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: ○ Adobe Reader

<https://get.adobe.com/reader/> ○ Adobe Flash Player (version 17 or later)

<https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>

- Adobe Shockwave Player <https://get.adobe.com/shockwave/>

- Apple Quick Time <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 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>

ETAMUC 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/13student/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:

Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03

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

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13student/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 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&MCommerce 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>

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

Tentative Course Schedule

Class/Week #	Topic (tentative list)	Readings/Activities	Assignment Due
Week 1 August 8/26	-Introduction/overview -Meaning of Play -Rationale for Play Therapy History and development of play therapy	Landreth- Chapters 1, 2, 4 Begin reading Dibs	
Week 2 September 2	-Neuroscience of Play Therapy -Why Play Therapy Works: The research		
Week 3 September 9	-Legal and ethical issues in play therapy	Before class read Landreth – Chapter 3, 10 (pgs. 145-147) “Paper on Touch”- Clinical, Professional & Ethical Issues article from APT website- D2L resources	
Week 4 September 16	-CCPT and Objectives -Child Development -Dibs discussion	Before class read Landreth - Chapter 5 -Complete reading Dibs before class	
Week 5 September 23	-The Play Therapist -Playroom and materials	Before class read Landreth- Chapters 6 & 8	
Week 6 September 30	-Child centered play therapy skills -8 Principles -Characteristics of facilitative responses -Responses practice	Before class read Landreth – Chapters 9 & 10	-Tote Bag/Box due 10/7-Bring to class -Parent consent forms due 10/7– Bring to class
Week 7 October 7	-Therapeutic limit setting -Limit setting practice	Before class read Landreth- Chapter 11 Tote Bag/Box Due-bring to class Parent Consent Forms due	
Week 8 October 14	-Typical problems in play therapy and what to do if.. -Midterm Review	Before class read Landreth- Chapter 12	
Week 9 October 14	Midterm		-Play Session #1 Reflection paper due 10/28 -Video #1 due in class 10/28

Week 10 October 28	-Group supervision #1	Video #1 – bring to class	
Week 11 November 4	--Resolving challenges in the playroom -Parents as partners in play therapy -Clinical forms -Treatment planning -Multicultural considerations -Skills checklist -Practice	Before class read Landreth – Chapter 13 Before class read Landreth- Chapter 7	
Week 12 November 11	-Children in play therapy -APT credentialing -Play therapy stages and termination -Theories	Before class read Landreth- Chapter 14 Before class read Landreth – Chapter 15 Before Class read Kottman Read pg. 43-49	-Play Session #2 Reflection paper due: 11/18 -Video #2 due in class 11/18
Week 13 November 18	-Group supervision #2	Video #2 – bring to class	
Week 14 November 25	No Class- Thanksgiving Week		

Week 15 December 2	-Parent/teacher consultations -Filial Therapy/CPRT -Play therapy advocacy -Research -Final exam review	Before class read Landreth – Chapter 17	
Week 16 December 9	Final Exam		