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Spring 2-1-2023

### COUN 475.80: Forgiveness and Reconciliation - Honors

Veronica I. Johnson

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**COUN 475: Forgiveness and Reconciliation**  
**University of Montana Department of Counseling**  
**Spring 2023 Course Syllabus**

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**Instructor:**

Veronica (Roni) Johnson, EdD, LCPC, NCC

Email: [veronica.johnson@umontana.edu](mailto:veronica.johnson@umontana.edu)

Office location: PJWCoE 338

Phone: 406-243-4205

Office hours: Wednesdays 9:00 – 11:00, Thursdays, 9:00 – 12:00, and by appointment

**Class Location and Time:**

Phyllis J. Washington College of Education, room 334, Thursdays 1:00 – 3:50 p.m.

**Required texts:**

Cantacuzino, M. (2016). *The forgiveness project: Stories of a vengeful age*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Lazare, A. (2004). *On apology*. Oxford.

Waldron, V. R. & Kelley, D. L. (2008). *Communicating forgiveness*. Sage.

Other readings as assigned; available on Moodle.

**Course Description:**

This course explores the process of forgiveness and its potential outcome in reconciliation. During the semester we will learn to recognize and dispel misconceptions about the process of forgiveness while working toward an understanding of what helps individuals, communities, and nations repair ruptured relationships. I take the point of view that choice is more important than obligation, that forgiveness does not require people to forget, and that revenge is more costly than people often realize. We will investigate the part that communication plays in both creating grievances and resolving them. We will also learn about what makes some apologies better than others. We will focus on how forgiveness and reconciliation work in interpersonal relationships but will also explore historical and international conflicts. In this course we look at forgiveness and reconciliation from as many angles as possible, learning to recognize course themes in films, essays, poems, and popular media. This course blends personal reflection, active discussion of course materials, and writing assignments in which students are expected to demonstrate an ability to recognize and articulate course themes, as well as integrate theory and practice.

**Method of Instruction:**

- a) professor lectures
- b) guest lectures
- c) class discussion
- d) presentation of audiovisual material
- e) internet-based learning
- f) student presentations

### **Disability Accommodations:**

If you are a student with a disability and wish to discuss reasonable accommodations for this course, contact me privately to discuss the specific modifications you wish to request. Please be advised I may request that you provide a letter from Disability Services for Students verifying your right to reasonable modifications. If you have not yet contacted [The Office for Disability Equity](#), located in Lommasson Center 154, please do so in order to verify your disability and to coordinate your reasonable modifications.

### **Expectations of Teaching and Learning:**

This is an in-person class, and student attendance and participation are expected. If you face extenuating circumstances that prevent you from attending class in person, please communicate that to me as soon as reasonably possible to request an accommodation. My teaching philosophy is based in experiential learning and building a classroom environment conducive to various learning styles. It is my belief that if we can create a safe, trusting, and respectful classroom then authentic discussion and learning can take place. Creating meaning and having ownership and responsibility over your own learning are critical aspects of my teaching philosophy. I value the relationships we all build with each other, and the group as a unit. As such, I will be seeking feedback from you along the way, and I hope you will reach out any time with course feedback.

### ***Remote Learning Accommodations***

The Department of Counseling is an in-person program. As we continue the transition from COVID-19, we are aware that the pandemic continues to present risk for some. Should you have health concerns preventing in-person learning, we will work with you to make accommodations.

Because nearly all classes are designed for an in-person curriculum, arrangements for continuous remote learning must be approved by the faculty. Should short term, immediate needs require remote learning (travel due to the loss of a family member, quarantine, illness) please consult with your instructor as soon as possible. Remote learning will not be used to facilitate convenience, accommodate vacations, or the like.

We look forward to having you in class and creating rich learning environments together.

### ***Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement***

Consistent with [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan](#), I will strive to include the representation of different identities, characteristics, experiences and perspectives of all students. I will aim to offer everyone what they need to succeed by increasing access, resources, and opportunities for all, especially for those who are systematically underrepresented and have been historically disadvantaged. I will strive to create a welcoming learning environment in which differences are celebrated and everyone is valued, respected, and able to reach their full potential.

I believe that the learning environment is enriched when students' diverse perspectives are respected and shared. All students bring strengths to the classroom and I honor each student's perspectives in the learning environment. I respect all students' backgrounds, and will thoughtfully work to avoid discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, creed, sex, age, marital or familial status, physical or mental disability, sexual

orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. I will choose course assignments, activities, and readings that are respectful of and responsive to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

I acknowledge that existing systems, like higher education, have led to the oppression and marginalization of a range of minoritized groups, including, but not limited to Indigenous people in Montana, in North America, and around the world. My intent is foster a welcoming classroom environment; yet I recognize that bias or discrimination may occur. UM encourages anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity to speak out for justice and support.

This is meant to be a safe, welcoming, and inclusive classroom environment for students of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities/variances, ages, religions, economic classes, and ability statuses. As such, you will be encouraged and challenged to use language and basic counseling techniques that are respectful, inclusive, representative and culturally appropriate. Aspects of this course are designed to be introspective in nature; that is, they are designed for you to apply course materials to yourselves as a way to increase your personal awareness, and refine your counselor identity. Note: your evaluation in this class is *not* dependent on chosen levels of self-disclosure.

### ***Readings***

The readings for this class provide the foundation for the class. Students are expected to come to class having read the material and be prepared to discuss it and engage in activities focused around the readings. It is expected that all readings be completed prior to class in order to maximize class discussions. During class, relevant questions, pertinent comments, and risk taking are welcomed and encouraged.

### ***Assignments:***

Assignments are to be turned in via Moodle on the day the assignment is due. Only in the event of documentable extenuating circumstances are assignments accepted late. With the exception of documentable emergencies, late assignments will be assessed a 2-point deduction per day of lateness up to two weeks, after which late assignments will not be accepted. With the exception of quizzes, you are encouraged to work together, however your finished work must always be unique to you, and is your individual responsibility to complete. All assignments will be submitted via Moodle unless otherwise instructed. Please call or e-mail the instructor if you are experiencing difficulties in turning in an assignment on time.

### ***Academic Integrity***

Students are expected to practice professionalism and academic integrity in all assignments and class discussions. This includes but is not limited to treating other students and the professor respectfully, engaging in meaningful class discussions, thinking and writing critically and thoughtfully, creating original works, and citing all resources using APA format. Plagiarism will result in loss of credit for this course, and further consequences may result from the university system. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at the following link: <https://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/community-standards/default.php>

### ***Respectful Behavior***

I believe in creating a learning environment where students experience a sense of safety and trust to support risks of self-expression and class dialogue. This is an environment we must work

together to create. Therefore, interacting respectfully (turning off cell phones, etc.) and maintaining a curious and engaged way of being with one another is essential.

### ***Electronic Device Notice***

As a matter of courtesy to your classmates and the instructor, please turn off cell phones, and any other electronic devices that make any noise. If you must respond to a phone call or text during class time, please excuse yourself from the classroom to minimize the disruption to other students and the instructor.

### ***E-mail Policy***

You are assigned a university e-mail account that will be used by professors. Students should make every effort to get to know their account and check it regularly.

### ***Attendance & Participation:***

Because the themes of the class are deeply interwoven and we need each other to create a rich learning community, class participation is mandatory. If you have an emergency that requires you to miss class, please contact me ahead of time to arrange an alternate assignment.

Because this class is highly participatory, you are expected to read and be prepared to discuss assigned material **before** each class. You are expected to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of assigned readings, argue for your point of view while being open to the views of others, and integrate readings and discussion into your own life.

I welcome respectful interaction between students, not just with me. Honesty, enthusiasm, curiosity, imagination, and the ability to recognize connections between one source and another are signs of student involvement and bring energy to the learning environment.

You will receive a participation grade and this will reflect your professionalism including attendance, participation, preparation for class, and professional conduct. Attendance and participation will be worth 30 points towards your final grade. You are allowed one excused absence without losing participation points. Each additional absence will result in the loss of 5 participation points, unless prior arrangements are made with me to make up for missed class time. More than three absences will result in total loss of participation points, and one letter grade reduction for each class missed beyond four classes.

### ***Quizzes:***

There will be **two quizzes** in this course. The quizzes will consist of multiple choice questions, true-false questions, and/or short answer questions. Quizzes will be worth 25 points each, and cannot be made up if missed.

### ***Land Acknowledgement:***

The University of Montana resides on the traditional lands of many Indigenous peoples including the Selis (Salish), Ksanka (Kootenai), and Qlispe (Kalispel). Many other Indigenous peoples including the Amskapi Pikuni (Blackfeet), Nimiipuu (Nez Perce), Shoshone, Bannock, and Schitsu'umsh (Coeur D'Alene) also relied upon their traditional knowledge and relationships with this land and this space for survival in the past and today.

Action statement: We acknowledge that educational, health, and legal systems have led to the direct removal, oppression, and marginalization of Indigenous people throughout Montana and the nation. The University of Montana strives to improve education, service, and scholarship for all Indigenous peoples through actions aimed at respecting tribal sovereignty, empowering Indigenous scholars, and creating safe learning environments for all students to live, work, and learn together in equitable and positive ways.

*–This statement was developed with the Leadership of Dr. Annie Belcourt (Blackfeet, Mandan, Hidatsa, Chippewa), Professor in the School of Community and Public Health Sciences*



## Assignments and Grading:

### 1. Primers (10 points)

To begin each class, one student will be responsible for selecting a “primer” related to the course content. The primer could be a song, a poem, a news headline, a fictional or nonfictional story from a novel or other written work, a piece of art, etc. The student will present the primer to the class and facilitate a brief discussion about the meaning and purpose of the primer to its creator (writer, artist, etc.), incorporating relevant themes and content from class. Please limit the primer to 7 minutes, with 15-20 minutes for discussion. If you are considering a primer that is longer than 7 minutes, please contact me in advance to discuss the relevance and obtain prior approval.

### 2. Intersection Paper (20 points)

Write a short paper (approx. 3 pages) that describes your current awareness of the intersection between your own life and the themes of the course, as you understand them to date. As you prepare to write this paper you might ask yourself, “Where have I encountered the themes of



forgiveness and reconciliation in my own life or in the life of someone I know?" You may be struggling to forgive someone who caused you harm. You may be struggling to forgive yourself for harm *you* caused. You may be interested in the stories of other people as they struggle to forgive. Or you may be interested in forgiveness for purely academic or professional reasons. Give the reader a sense of the intersection between your own life and course themes. I will hold the content of your paper in confidence. I want to get a sense of your own perspective on these subjects before the Final Project. It is perfectly acceptable to tell a story in this paper and to offer initial reflections on it.

### **3. Public Apology (15 points; 10 for Apology/assessment, 5 for presentation)**

On this date you need to bring an example of a QUALITY public apology to class. Be prepared to share with the class a description or expression of the public apology you have encountered or researched (keep an eye out for public apologies in the newspaper or an internet source), as well as your assessment of its quality in the form of an informal oral presentation. Submit your apology and assessment of its quality to Moodle. If your example of a public apology is a video that you accessed online, or a news article, it is acceptable to provide a link to the corresponding web page, and your assessment of the quality of the apology in the same document.

### **4. Personal Apologies (20 points)**

This is a two-part assignment where you will prepare two apologies: 1) a written apology that you would like to offer, and 2) a written apology that you would like to receive (the level of personal disclosure should be determined by you; more instructions will follow). You will submit both to Moodle, and choose one to bring to class. On the due date, we will arrange ourselves in small groups and practice giving and receiving apologies based on what you choose to share. Each apology you prepare is worth 10 points.

### **5. Experiential Final Project/Research paper (50 points)**

This experiential project should provide substantial evidence of your understanding of course materials and themes. You have four primary options:

#### **1. \*For Non-Counseling Students ONLY\***

**Individual counseling/consultation lab** – This Lab requires that you attend 8-10 individual counseling/consultation sessions with a Counseling graduate student. The sessions will be 50 minutes each and you will need to attend at least 8 sessions to receive credit for this assignment. The student counselor will not inform of the content of your sessions, but you will be asked to provide a reflection on the experience at the end of the semester in the form of a 5-7 page paper, reporting on what you've learned about yourself, as related to course content. These sessions are an opportunity for you to explore the content of the course as it relates to your personal life and the sessions will be focused on forgiveness. Your student counselor will sign a verification slip (**Appendix C**) indicating that you have completed the lab requirements and I must receive this verification slip signed by you and your counselor no later than **Friday, May 5th** in order for you to receive credit. To participate in this option, you must sign up with your schedule availability around **January 27th** to ensure that you get the number of hours needed.

NOTE: If your schedule is NOT submitted by this date, you will not be able to participate in the individual counseling lab option. Also, if you are seeing an individual counselor during the current semester, you will need to speak with your instructor.

2. **Forgiveness book and reflection** – There are several works focused on the forgiveness process. Robert Enright’s *Forgiveness is a Choice* is one of which that offers direction for a journaling process. If an intensely personal situation brought you to this class, you might want to consider this option. Select a “forgiveness” book that will help to guide you through the process of forgiveness. Please consult with me prior to selecting the book. Write a dated journal in which you keep track of your own forgiveness journey. In a sense this journal is a dialogue between your own experience and course materials. This project will be evaluated not for its personal content, but for the student’s ability to closely relate course material and the personal struggle to forgive. The journal is for your own purposes of journeying through the book. The final project will be a 10-12 page reflection on what you’ve written in your journal, incorporating course content and themes with your chosen reading, and weaving in your experience of the process. The paper will be written in the first person, should include your original reflections, as well as content from your chosen text, and evidence of incorporation of course content and themes, cited using APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition format.
3. **Forgiveness Interview** – Conduct an interview with a person who has been through or is going through a forgiveness and/or reconciliation process. Schedule in advance at least two interview times with this person so that your *initial* questions elicit *subsequent* reflection on the part of the interviewee. Record the story you hear and your own responses to the interviewee. Analyze the process the person goes through in relation to any of our course materials. It is extremely important that you **prepare** the person you interview by letting him/her know *in advance* the kinds of questions you will ask. I can be helpful with your preparation. Please contact me if you take this option. You must obtain informed consent from your chosen interviewee before conducting the interview. Please see Appendix A for the informed consent document, and Appendix B for sample interview questions. Also see Appendix B of Waldron and Kelley (2008) for examples of three narrative prompts to inform your interview. Your reflection on the interview should be approximately 10 pages, and incorporate at least three relevant citations that connect what you learn from your interviewee with course themes.
4. **Forgiveness Research Paper** – Because the themes of forgiveness and reconciliation are central to human experience, countless topics are worthy of further exploration. Write a substantial research paper in APA format (10-pages not including title or Reference page) in which you explore a central question and possible responses to it. Your paper should include at least **five outside references**, in addition to relevant material that you cite from our class materials. For example you might explore any of the following topics in greater depth:
  - Analyze a pair of contemporary apologies in relation to apology theory (compare and contrast)
  - Trauma and forgiveness (Possible case study and analysis)



- Forgiveness in one or more novels (Comparison study); Forgiveness as explored by Shakespeare (e.g., King Lear and The Tempest)
- Forgiveness in short stories (a couple possibilities are short stories by Anne Lamott and Wendell Berry)
- Forgiveness themes in one or more films (compare and contrast)
- Forgiveness in the aftermath of crime (Case study and theory)
- An historical case study (e.g. South Africa; Rwanda; Cherokee Nation)
- Forgiveness in the life of a client/therapist relationship
- An in-depth analysis of spiritual resources in the forgiveness process
- Forgiveness in relation to sexual orientation and/or expression
- Forgiveness in the lives of those affected by drug/alcohol addiction
- Dream analysis to chart path to forgiveness
- Failure to forgive and analysis of rationale and consequences
- Physiology of forgiveness
- A family case study involving siblings, parents, step-children, or adoptee(s)
- Forgiveness complicated by interaction with a larger system (racism, economic injustice)
- Role of ceremony and ritual in a forgiveness process
- Analyze the process of self-forgiveness
- An analysis of course themes in NPR's "Storycorps"
- A case study and analysis of relational betrayal

Students who take this third option are strongly encouraged to visit with the professor before beginning in depth work on this project.

## 6. Final Oral reflection (10 points)

During the last week of class we will review our work during the semester, including your reflections on your final project. Prepare a **5-7 minute** oral presentation in which you reflect on how the perspective you took in your Intersection Paper has changed as a result of all that we have read, seen, and discussed, and what culminated in your final project. While this is not required, you may find it extremely helpful to keep a private journal of moments when course material struck a chord, made sense, led to more reflection. Drawing from a journal you keep along the way will significantly deepen these class presentations. Please be respectful of other students' time to present, and limit your presentation to the time allotted.

## Grading Criteria

Class preparation and participation is expected. The quality of participation can influence a final grade, especially if a student stands between two grades.

**Total points possible for course: 205**

### *Breakdown of points:*

Attendance and Participation:	30 points
Primers:	10 points
Quizzes (2):	50 points

Intersection paper:	20 points
Public Apology and Oral presentation:	15 points
Personal Apologies:	20 points
Final Oral Reflection:	10 points
Final Project:	50 points

A = 93-100%	B = 83-86%	C = 73-77%	D = 63-66%
A- = 90-92%	B- = 80-82%	C- = 70-72%	D- = 60-62%
B+ = 87-89%	C+ = 77-79%	D+ = 67-69%	F = Below 60%

## CLASS SCHEDULE:

### WEEK 1: January 19

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#### Topics/Readings:

- Introduction & Review of Syllabus
- What is forgiveness?
- Cantacuzino, Forward – page 76

#### Assignments/Activities:

- Primer: Roni
- Assign “Primers”

### WEEK 2: January 26

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#### Topics/Readings:

- Reconciliation, Revenge
- Cantacuzino, page 77 – page 139

#### Assignments/Activities:

- Complete counseling availability via Qualtrics (if choosing Option 1 for Final Project)
- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_

### WEEK 3: February 2

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#### Topics/Readings:

- Resolution
- Cantacuzino, page 140 – page 216

#### Assignments/Activities:

- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Film: *The Power of Forgiveness*

**WEEK 4: February 9**

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**Topics/Readings:**

- Conceptual Foundations on Forgiveness: Waldron & Kelley, Chapter 1

**Assignments/Activities:**

- Intersection paper due**
- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_

**WEEK 5: February 16**

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**Topics/Readings:**

- Elements of the Forgiveness Process: Waldron & Kelley, Chapter 2

**Assignments/Activities:**

- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_

**WEEK 6: February 23**

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**Topics/Readings:**

- Theorizing Forgiveness: Waldron & Kelley, Chapter 3

**Assignments/Activities:**

- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_

**WEEK 7: March 2**

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**Topics/Readings:**

- Enright, Chapter 4 (on Moodle)

**Assignments/Activities:**

- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_

**WEEK 8: March 9**

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**Topics/Readings:**

- Communicating Forgiveness: Waldron & Kelley, Chapter 4

**Assignments/Activities:**

- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Quiz 1 DUE – Cantacuzino, Enright, Chapter 4; and Waldron & Kelley, Chapters 1-3**

**WEEK 9: March 16**

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**Topics/Readings:**

- Practicing Forgiveness: Waldron & Kelley, Chapter 5

**Assignments/Activities:**

- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_

**WEEK 10: March 23**

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**SPRING BREAK – HAVE FUN!****WEEK 11: March 30**

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**Topics/Readings:**

- Studying Forgiveness: Waldron & Kelley, Chapter 6; McCullough, et al. (2000), Chapter 13 (On Moodle)

**Assignments/Activities:**

- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_

**WEEK 12: April 6**

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**Topics/Readings:**

- Self-forgiveness: Enright (2015), Key 7 (On Moodle)
- Apology: Lazare, Chapters 1-3

**Assignments/Activities:**

- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_

**WEEK 13: April 13**

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**Topics/Readings:**

- How to Apologize: Lazare, Chapters 4-6

**Assignments/Activities:**

- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Public Apology Due – Oral Presentations**

**WEEK 14: April 20**

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**Topics/Readings:**

- How Not to Apologize: Lazare, Chapters 7-9

**Assignments/Activities:**

- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Public Apology Oral Presentations, cont'd**

**WEEK 15: April 27**

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**Topics/Readings:**

- Self-forgiveness reflections

**Assignments/Activities:**

- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Personal Apologies Due; Small group role plays**

**WEEK 16: May 4**

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**Topics/Readings:**

- Looking Ahead: Lazare, Chapters 10-12

**Assignments/Activities:**

- Final Project Due**
- Primer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Final Oral Reflections

**WEEK 17: May 8-12**

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**FINALS WEEK****Assignments:**

- Quiz 2 – Waldron & Kelley, Chapters 4-6, and Lazare DUE May 11, midnight**
- Complete course evaluations

## APPENDIX A

### Consent for Interview

#### Forgiveness and Reconciliation, Spring 2023

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You are being asked to participate in a two-session interview conducted by a student enrolled in COUN 475: Forgiveness and Reconciliation at the University of Montana. The purpose of this interview is to understand your experience of a relationship rupture and how you have processed it. Forgiveness, and/or reconciliation are not required in order for you to participate in the interview process. The purpose is for the student to understand your process of working through the relationship rupture to whatever degree you have, and to apply some of the concepts that he or she has learned in the course to understand your story.

The interviews will take place on two occasions – during the first, the student will ask you several questions that invite you to tell your story about the relationship rupture. The second interview will take place several weeks later and will focus around your reflections and reactions to the first interview.

For review purposes, and to aid in writing the paper, the student will request that the interview be audio-recorded. The recorded interview is only for the purpose of the student using it to assist in the writing process, and will be destroyed once the paper is submitted. The instructor will not have access to the audio recording. Pseudonyms will be used in the paper to protect your identity.

If at any time you wish to stop the interview and cease your participation in the interview process, please feel free to do so without concern for the student's grade being affected. In such a case, the student would be given an alternate assignment to complete.

Please feel free to contact the instructor of the course, Dr. Veronica Johnson, with any questions or concerns you may have at any time before, during, or after your interview. Dr. Johnson can be reached by email at [veronica.johnson@mso.umt.edu](mailto:veronica.johnson@mso.umt.edu) or by phone at 406-243-4205.

Your signature below indicates that you give your consent to participate in the interview, and that you consent for the interview to be recorded.

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Signature

---

Date

---

Student Signature

---

Date

## APPENDIX B

### Sample Interview Questions

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1. How would you describe forgiveness? What does forgiveness mean to you?
2. Please describe the role that forgiveness has played in your life.
3. What has influenced your decision to forgive, or not forgive, someone who has hurt you?
4. What do you think the benefits of practicing forgiveness are? What do you think the drawbacks of practicing forgiveness are?
5. What do you think the relationship is between forgiveness and reconciliation – does a person need to reconcile in order to forgive, or forgive, and then reconcile?
6. Do you have any specific memories of a decision to forgive? Can you describe them?
7. What do you think are the specific steps towards forgiveness?
8. Do you think it is necessary to forgive?
9. Are there certain situations that you could never forgive?



**APPENDIX C**  
**Lab Verification Form**

Name of Student \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Counselor \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below, I am indicating that I have attended \_\_\_\_ sessions of **individual counseling** with a Counselor Education Counselor. **In order to receive full credit, you must attend at least 8 sessions for individual counseling.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Counselor Signature

\*\*\*This form must be signed by both student and counselor and turned in to your professor no later than **May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023**. This form is the only evidence that you have completed the consultation requirement and is necessary to earn credit for the assignment.