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PSYX 595.01: Special Topics - Clinical Assessment

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Clinical Assessment
PSYCHOLOGY 595
Spring 2014
Monday 1:10 – 3 (CPC 119)

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Office Hours: W 9-10:30; R 11-12:30; others by appointment

Course Objectives:

The primary objective of this class is to provide you with the opportunity to develop and refine clinical assessment skills. Through this course, you will be able to put your knowledge to practical use, while gaining experience working with a variety of populations and learning how to address referral questions that may be unique to those populations. You will gain experience with all phases of clinical assessment, including conducting goal-directed interviews, creating and administering appropriate test batteries, interpreting test results, conceptualizing cases, and making differential diagnoses, when appropriate. Additionally, you will gain experience writing clinical reports, paying particular attention to presenting problems, the functional impact of those problems, behavioral observations, and the integration of test data with information gleaned from interviews. Finally, you will learn to generate individually-tailored recommendations for both patients and their referring providers.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate development of a variety of skills that are crucial to clinical assessment, including interviewing, administering test batteries, conceptualizing cases, and arriving at diagnostic conclusions, when appropriate.
2. Students will also refine their report-writing abilities, and become more proficient at considering the functional impact of a presenting problem.
3. Students will learn to think critically about the functional impairment that may result from a presenting problem, and learn to generate appropriate recommendations.

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance: Due to the small, seminar style of this class, it is imperative that you attend class each week. Each of you possesses unique strengths and perspectives that will contribute to the learning experience of the entire group. Conversely, your absence will detract from the experience of others. **Two** or more unexcused absences will negatively impact one's grade. If you are unable to attend class, please inform your partner and I prior to the class.
2. Clinical Assessments: Each of you will be paired with another student, with whom you will collaborate on **four** assessments throughout the semester. You and your partner will take turns leading assessments, so that you will each act as "Lead Evaluator" on two cases and "Support Evaluator" on two cases. (The specific responsibilities of these two roles are detailed in a separate document.) Prior to each evaluation, I will meet with you and your partner to review the case and to consider appropriate test materials. We will meet again after you have completed the evaluation to discuss results and begin to conceptualize the case.

I will assign referrals to each of you, after which you will make an initial contact call to determine the suitability of the referral. This initial contact should be made 3-4 weeks before you hope to complete the evaluation, in order to allow for cancellations or no-shows. It is your responsibility to find time in your schedule to complete evaluations. Occasionally, you may need to be flexible in order to accommodate a patient's availability, but you should attempt to identify a single time (or at least a single day) that will work for each of your assessments throughout the semester. When scheduling, it will be very important that you keep in mind when you are to discuss the results of that evaluation with the class, so that you make sure to schedule the evaluation well in advance of that date. Also, before finalizing an appointment, please make sure that a testing room will be available at that time.

3. Group Supervision/Didactic Seminar: Class meetings will combine group supervision with a brief informal didactic series. The format of our meetings will be as follows:
 - Brief check-in with all pairs to discuss progress/concerns, etc.
 - Informal case presentation provided by the pair that most recently completed an evaluation
 - Referral question
 - Test selection with rationale
 - Brief history/patient profile
 - Test results
 - Clinical impressions
 - Informal didactic presentation by the pair that will conduct the next evaluation

- Each member of the pair should identify two articles related to the referral question for the upcoming evaluation and submit those to me no later than one week in advance of our meeting. I will assist you in determining which of the two articles to present to the class and will then make them available to the rest of the class via Moodle.

Examples of appropriate article topics include:

- Common neuropsychological profiles of a disorder
 - Controversies surrounding use of particular tests
 - Description of a test (i.e., purpose, strengths, limitations) that may be uniquely suited for a particular referral question or is not part of our “typical” battery (e.g., effort testing)
 - Utility of neuropsychological testing in a particular population
- Both members of the pair will each present one article, and briefly describe it in terms of the hypotheses, methodology, results, and conclusions.
 - Students who are not presenting articles are expected to have read the articles selected for that week (accessed via Moodle) and to come prepared with at least 2 questions/comments about those articles.

Course Materials:

There is no required textbook for this class. Instead, journal articles will constitute required reading and will be posted to Moodle on a weekly basis. Additionally, recommended readings will be posted on occasion.

Student Evaluation:

Grades will be based on class attendance and participation (including preparation for article discussions), the quality of your evaluations and reports, preparation for supervision, and working effectively and professionally as a colleague. In addition, your grade will be impacted by your ability to incorporate feedback throughout the semester and to demonstrate improvement in the skills that are required to effectively conduct a clinical assessment.

Important Dates:

February 17th: No classes (President’s Day)

March 31st: No classes (Spring Break!)

May 9th: Last Class

Academic Integrity:

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a sanction by the University. All

students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review Online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.

Student Accommodations:

Whenever possible, and in accordance with civil rights laws, The University of Montana will attempt to provide reasonable modifications to students with disabilities who request and require them. Please feel free to setup a time with me to discuss any modifications that may be necessary for this course. For more information, visit the Disability Services for Students website at <http://www.umt.edu/disability>.

Add/Drop Deadline:

Please take note of important registration dates listed in the Fall academic calendar. October 28th is the last day to drop classes with an add/drop form. After that date, no petitions to drop the course will be signed and no Incompletes will be given except in documentable emergency situations.

Student Feedback:

As with any graduate level course, your feedback and constructive comments for improving the course are always welcome. Because this is the first time this class has been offered, I will actively seek your feedback at various points throughout the semester, but want you to feel free to share any thoughts you may have at any time.