

Sample Course Syllabus

FIELD EXPERIENCE IN HUMAN SERVICES

PSY 410/406

6-12 credits

Pre-requisites: Junior/Senior status and instructor approval

Instructor: Rachel Dilts, PhD, NCC
E-mail: rachel.dilts@oregonstate.edu

Office: Virtual
Psy Dept. Phone: (541) 737-2311

Course Objectives

The Field Experience in Human Services course is designed to provide students with an opportunity to apply coursework and theory to the real world. Virtually all jobs and graduate programs in the field of mental health require prior hands on experience, because some skills are better learned by doing. Internships are a great way to learn about differences between psychology, social work, and psychiatry; determine whether a career in human services is a good fit for your interests and abilities; practice establishing rapport with clients; and strengthen skills for communicating and collaborating with co-workers.

Through this course, students earn college credit for a psychology-related internship experience at a site of their choosing. Although the vast majority of your time will be spent in clinically-related activities at your internship site, the course also involves regular reading and writing assignments, as well as online discussions to help you make the transition to a professional role and establish a connection between research and practice.

Because clinical work requires intensive training, students enrolled in PSY 406/410 are required to spend between 20 and 40 hours per week at their internship site. This intensive exposure ensures that students will have sufficient time to develop the skills required to engage in meaningful clinical work. During the eight week session, a half-time internship involves enrolling in 3 credits of PSY 406 and 3 credits of PSY 410; a full-time internship involves enrolling in 3 credits PSY 406 and 9 credits of PSY 410. You may also sign up for any number of credits between 6 and 12, depending on how many hours you put in per week. This component of the internship experience is graded as Pass/No Pass. **You must be concurrently enrolled in PSY406 and PSY 410.** Psy 406 is a vital academic and didactic component of your internship experience and both courses will be graded Pass/No Pass. It is possible to pass one course and not the other.

Course Website

The official internship website is <http://oregonstate.edu/cla/psychology/student/internship/index.php>. This site has information about the internship program requirements and procedures for enrolling in the class. Grades and assignments will be posted using the Blackboard system at <http://my.oregonstate.edu>. You will need an ONID account (obtainable at <http://onid.orst.edu>) in order to log on to this site. Both websites will include copies of the syllabus, the intern evaluation form, and the site evaluation form.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Accurately identify the various professions that work within the mental health field.
2. Evaluate the risk for ethical violations that may potentially occur within one's agency.

This course is offered through Oregon State University Extended Campus. For more information, contact:
Web: ecampus.oregonstate.edu Email: ecampus@oregonstate.edu Tel: 800-667-1465

3. Critically examine one's own strengths and limitations for working with diverse clients and unmotivated clients.
4. Effectively identify and compare appropriate and inappropriate therapeutic interventions relevant to the particular population with which one is working.

Student Grading

PSY 410

This course is graded "Pass/No Pass". In order to receive a passing grade, you must:

1. Hours

Complete the number of hours at your internship site specified in your internship contract.

2. Performance Evaluations

Receive a favorable performance evaluation from your on-site supervisor at the end of the term (average score of "3" or higher on the Intern Evaluation form).

Your onsite supervisor will be encouraged to provide you with supervision and evaluative feedback on a weekly basis. During the midpoint of your internship, the internship advisor/instructor will contact your supervisor by phone or e-mail to encourage them to provide you with formal feedback regarding your progress thus far. Supervisors will be asked to complete a final evaluation of your performance after you have completed all your hours. You must be rated as average or above to pass the class.

Site Visits

The internship advisor/instructor will be in contact with internship sites by phone and/or e-mail, and may visit in person. The intent of these visits is to evaluate the quality of the internship experience, get to know supervisors, and to make sure that everything is working out satisfactorily between the intern and their placement site.

In the event of problems

Ideally, everything at your internship site will go smoothly. You'll be given opportunities to do the meaningful clinical work outlined on your contract, you'll get regular supervision, very little of your time will be spent on rote tasks like filing, the agency staff will love working with you, and you'll never feel that you're in over your head. Unfortunately, this isn't always the case, and interns sometimes feel overwhelmed, inexperienced, bored, frustrated, or neglected. Some level of difficulty is inherent in learning new skills and taking on new challenges, but you don't need to sort everything out on your own. **Please** contact the internship advisor/instructor if you have any questions, concerns, or problems. The advisor/instructor can problem solve with you, talk to your supervisor, help you find an emergency replacement internship site, etc. Most agencies rely heavily on intern support, and want to ensure that OSU students continue to volunteer their time, and will work with interns and with the internship advisor/instructor to resolve problems.

Typical intern concerns include:

- Inadequate supervision
- Too much time spent on non-clinical tasks
- Not enough work to fill the required contract hours
- Conflict with agency staff
- Feeling upset by critical feedback
- Repeated requests to stay late or work odd hours

- Work with aggressive or frightening clients
- Problems with confidentiality or other ethical violations

PSY 406

This course is also graded Pass/No Pass based on the assignments below:

1. Weekly Assignments

Complete all weekly reading and writing assignments on time. Assignments must be thorough, thoughtful, well-organized, and free of grammatical and spelling errors. Each assignment will be graded as follows: N/A (did not turn in paper), 0 (paper turned in late), 1 (below average), 2 (average), or 3 (above average). A passing grade requires that you have an average grade of 2.

These assignments are designed to help you learn more about clinical psychology, reflect on your experiences, and link research and practice. **Assignments are due by Sunday 11:59pm each week**, and will be submitted via Blackboard. Please submit these in Microsoft Word format. Assignments not turned in on time will receive a grade of zero, so please plan ahead. Not turning in an assignment (graded as “N/A”) will result in an Incomplete for the term until all assignments have been turned in. Receiving a 0 on more than two assignments (for turning assignments in late without notifying and clearing it with the instructor first) will result in a final grade of “No Pass” for the course. Learning to juggle deadlines, computer crises, and unexpected clinical demands is a critical part of professional development in the helping professions. If the assignment deadlines conflict with your work schedule, you might consider turning assignments in early. Keep in mind that you must have an average grade of 2 or better on your assignments to pass the class.

A good weekly writing is one that a) clearly demonstrates that you read the article, understood the article, and thought about how it applied to your work and b) answers the assigned questions. You should be able to demonstrate this in approximately 2-3 pages. In order to convey to me that you actually did the reading assignment, your paper will need to include statements along the lines of “the information about ... presented on pg X is related to my experiences in that...”. So not only are you to answer the questions provided for the reading assignments, but make sure you incorporate information from, and provide reference to, the readings. **If the students enrolled in the class do not adequately incorporate the reading material into their writing assignments, I will start having weekly exams in addition to the writing assignments to help ensure that you are reading the material.**

As you write about your experiences, please be aware of **confidentiality issues**. **NEVER use the actual name of a client**, and be sure not to provide details that would allow a reader to identify the individual. In general, basic descriptive statements like, “Mikey (not his real name), was abused by his step-father and has attentional problems” will be okay, but more specific statements, such as, “George’s step-father was arrested last week for drunk driving in Philomath,” will be problematic. When in doubt, ask your supervisor for guidance.

All pre-assigned readings will be available via Blackboard in pdf and/or html format. In addition to the pre-assigned readings, in the last few weeks of the term you will be asked to obtain articles from the library on your own, based on the population you work with and the setting you are in. If you will be interning outside of Corvallis, you will need to plan ahead to either make use of the library at a local university or, if you are nearby, to return to Corvallis to use the OSU library to find appropriate reading assignments for these weeks. You will also have access to the OSU Virtual Library via the links provided in blackboard for e-campus courses. Let me know ahead of time if you have any questions about these last reading requirements.

2. Blackboard Discussions

Make one weekly post to the Discussion Board regarding your site experiences for that week. You can make responses to other students if you wish, but the only requirement is one post about what is happening at your site weekly due Sunday 11:59pm. What is happening may include new things you are learning, new clients you are working with, problems you encountered or anything related to what you are experiencing at your site both positive or negative.

Ideally, this will 1) help you get to know the other students enrolled in the course, and 2) learn about different placement settings, different opportunities, different client populations, etc. to help guide you in choosing a mental health-related career path that is right for you. Please be sure to follow the confidentiality rules described below under “Weekly Assignments” in your discussion board postings. If these rules are broken I may need to pull a discussion board posting to protect the confidentiality of your clients and that post will not be counted.

In order to pass this portion of the class you must have the minimum discussion board requirements met weekly 6 out of the 8 weeks. But you are highly encouraged to make all 8 weekly posts.

Assignment Schedule

Week 1:

Watch training video or powerpoint from OSU’s risk management officer Joyce Fred.

Read “An Overview of Clinical Psychology” from Compas, B.E. & Gotlib, I. H. (2002). *Introduction to Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*. McGraw Hill: New York.

Write about how the work you’ll be doing is related to clinical psychology (what type of tasks will you be doing, what type of mental health professionals work at your facility, etc). Reflect on the goals you’ve set for yourself during this internship and the challenges you anticipate experiencing. Consider aspects of your work that excite and inspire you, and the aspects that annoy, scare, or frustrate you.

Week 2:

Read the *Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct*. (2002). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association (booklet). It is available at <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code2002.html>.

Ethical knowledge and practice is a vital component of providing adequate care in the helping professions. Write about an ethical dilemma you have experienced or observed at your placement. If you have not yet experienced an ethical dilemma, write about a problem that may arise. Potential topics include hearing a report of child abuse, overuse of medication, use of interventions that are not supported by research, inadequate supervision, or being asked to do things that are beyond the bounds of your competence. Discuss the ethical principles involved, potential solutions, and your course of action. Be sure to link your writing to the ethical principles that you read.

Week 3:

Read Johannes, C.K. & Erwin, P.G. (2004). Developing multicultural competence: Perspectives on theory and practice. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, 17, 329-338.

Skilled members of human services professions inform themselves about cultural and ethnic differences and strive to be aware of ways in which their own background influences their perceptions, expectations, and interactions. Write about an aspect of working with a diverse group of clients or staff members that has been challenging or eye-opening for you. For example, have you had to work harder to gain the trust of people from different backgrounds? Experienced prejudicial comments? Become more aware of the stereotypes you hold? Learned something new about an unfamiliar culture? Keep in mind that multiculturalism involves more than just race/ethnicity differences; it also includes education, SES, religious, sexual orientation, and other differences as well.

Week 4:

Read Willshire, D., & Brodsky, S.L. (2001). Toward a taxonomy of unwillingness: Initial steps in engaging the unwilling client. *Psychiatry, Psychology, and Law*, 8, 154-160.

Many participants in clinical services are neither self-referred nor motivated to participate – many teens are told by their parents that they have to go to therapy, and many adults are mandated to receive services (e.g., court referred for substance use or criminal behavior, state-required pre-divorce sessions about parenting, hospitalization for suicidality). To what extent does client motivation to receive services influence the impact of your work? Given that blaming clients for lack of motivation is rarely productive, what could you do to help clients become more receptive to your agency's services? Looking at the situation from the client perspective, what barriers do they face and what do you think could be improved?

Week 5:

Read Wandersman, A. & Florin, P. (2003). Community interventions and effective prevention. *American Psychologist*, 58, 441-448.

Most community agencies seek both to treat current problems and prevent future problems. Where do the goals of your agency fall on the continuum from prevention to treatment? How does the agency determine whether or not it is effective in meeting these goals? In which areas does the agency succeed and in which could it improve?

Week 6:

Select a treatment outcome or program effectiveness article related to the type of work your agency does. For example, if you are working in a homeless shelter, find an article about the success of shelters in helping people find stable living environments. If you're working in a residential treatment center, find an article comparing the impact of residential treatment to outpatient therapy. The article you select should be based on data collection and statistical analyses, not just a summary of other studies or an opinion piece. Write about how the procedures used at your agency compare to what is known to work (or not to work).

Week 7:

Pick a particular client from your internship site. Select a journal article or book chapter written for a professional audience on a topic that is related to this client's problems or life experiences, and integrate the research-based information from the reading with your clinical experiences. For example, if a child in your setting has autism, you could read about the social deficits related to autism and write about how these deficits have affected a client's interactions with peers and adults.

Week 8:

Garcia-Lawson, K. A., & Lane, R. C. (1997). Thoughts on termination: Practical considerations. *Psychoanalytical Psychology*, 14(2), 239-257. You will just need to read pages 9-20, as it is a lengthier article, starting with reactions to termination.

How do you think the process of forced termination effects the clients you are working with? What kinds of things do you think your clients will have to deal with and how does this effect their treatment or not? Try to put yourself in your client's shoes, what do they see, feel, think, etc. about having an intern or other staff member terminate before treatment has ended for them? What if the client's treatment ends at the same time, is there any difference? For those of you not leaving your site, how do you see the effects of other staff leaving, or the potential for staff to leave before or at the same time a client's treatment has ended?

1. Talk to your supervisor and at least one other experienced staff member at your agency about the process of termination. This is important both because they will have useful advice about how to end close relationships with clients and because you need to be aware of policies about any future contact. For example, most agencies do not allow interns to remain in contact with clients once they leave the agency.
2. Complete and submit your internship site evaluation (available on Blackboard and the psychology internship website).
3. Give your supervisor the intern evaluation form (available on the websites listed above) and a stamped envelope. The evaluation is due upon completion of the hours specified on your Internship Agreement.
4. Your grade cannot be posted until all your weekly assignments have been completed and the site evaluation, intern evaluation and journal applications have been turned in.

Academic Honesty

OSU provides definitions of academic dishonesty at <http://www.orst.edu/admin/stucon/achon.htm>. Examples relevant to this class would be falsifying the number of hours you have worked, plagiarizing from another student or from a reference in your written work, signing your supervisor's name, or altering your supervisor's responses on your evaluation form. A college degree is only meaningful when it represents actual learning experiences. As such, academic dishonesty will be reported to help maintain educational integrity. Under university policies, penalties for academic dishonesty can be as severe as failing the entire course.

Accommodations for Disabilities

Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty, and Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Students with accommodations approved through SSD are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Given the nature of this course, accommodations will also need to be negotiated with your internship site supervisor. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through SSD should contact SSD immediately at 737-4098.