Psychology 364 – Professional Affairs and Ethics
University of Vermont, Department of Psychology
Syllabus – Fall 2009

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Office Hours: By appointment.
Class time: Fridays, 10:00 – 1:00, Dewey 238.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course hopes to provide a framework for understanding the nature and behavioral implications of professionalism and ethics in psychology. This entails a thorough exploration of the concept and operationalization of professions and professionalism in general, and examination of the values and principles that guide a range of professional activities in psychology, including clinical practice, research, teaching, clinical supervision, and consultation. Philosophical analysis, review of scientific research, and personal exploration and reflection are all brought to bear on this task.

PREREQUISITES
Enrollment in the graduate program in psychology at the University of Vermont, or permission of instructor.

COURSE GOALS

- Understand the philosophical and historical context in which professionalism and professional ethics in psychology have evolved.
- Develop a good working knowledge of the APA ethics code.
- Develop a framework for making ethical decisions during professional endeavors, with some emphasis on preventing serious ethical dilemmas from emerging before problems can occur.
- Learn how and why professional misbehavior occurs, and explore barriers to good ethical decision-making.
- Explore ways of engaging and resolving professionalism problems as they emerge.
- Develop a language for communicating about issues around professionalism and ethics, and begin to form habits of open and effective communication about difficult professional issues.
• Gain understanding of the practical and legal implications of complex professional activities, such as therapy, assessment, and forensic consultation.
• Continue to develop oral and written communication skills.
• Explore deeply one particular topic of interest related to the course material.

READINGS

Texts (available at the bookstore):


Additional Resources:


American Psychological Association (1990). Guidelines for providers of psychological services to ethnic, linguistic, and culturally diverse populations. (Available at apa.org/pi).


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **WEEKLY REFLECTIONS.** Weekly written reactions to or reflections on the readings, with questions for discussion are due every Thursday morning at 9:00 am. An important part of being professional and ethical is cultivating reflectivity and active engagement with difficult material. Moreover, a crucial part of being actively engaged in this class is doing the assigned readings. Therefore, each week, a brief reaction in writing is due the morning of the day before class. These should be two or three paragraphs long and contain analysis, or intellectual and emotional responses to the material, and at least two questions for discussion. Students are not required to submit a weekly reflection on the week of their presentation.

2. **IN-CLASS PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION FACILITATION.** Individually or in teams of two, students will present to the class an exploration of a topic relevant to ethics or professionalism. Presentations will last about 30 minutes, followed by 30 minutes of discussion with the class. Detailed instructions to follow.

3. **CLASS PARTICIPATION.** As with all professional endeavors, attendance is mandatory, as is active engagement. Most of class time will be spent in discussion. To achieve the course goals, engaging in dialogue with peers is essential. Therefore, a substantial part of this course grade will be determined by class participation. Attendance aside, participation will be evaluated subjectively, but not arbitrarily. Questions that pertain to the assessment of participation are:
Has the student contributed to discussion?
Has the student brought new material to the discourse on the topic at hand?
Has the student shown interest in the views of others in the class?
Does the student facilitate the participation of other students?
Is the student able to move the discussion to new levels of analysis?
Does the student reference the readings and show evidence of active reflection on course materials?
Can the students bring in personal experiences in professional endeavors that are relevant to the topic at hand?

While complete objectivity cannot be guaranteed here, ongoing communication between the instructor and each student around the participation grade is necessary and potentially quite helpful. Therefore, mid-semester feedback from the instructor will be delivered.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

If you have a formal accommodation plan developed in conjunction with UVM’s ACCESS Office or would like to discuss the supports that you need in order to learn well in this course, please contact the instructor in the beginning of the semester. Adaptations and instructional supports are available through consultation with the instructor and the ACCESS Office (www.uvm.edu/~access/).

It almost goes without saying that students are expected to conform to UVM’s standards for academic integrity. Of particular note is the requirement of attribution when other peoples’ ideas are being referenced. (see www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf).

FINAL GRADE FORMULATION

Final grades will be based on an accumulation of a total possible 360 points, distributed as follows:

Weekly reflections: 10 x 10 points each – 100
Presentation: 80
Class participation 100
Total 300

SCHEDULE

9/4/09: Introduction to the course; review of syllabus and course “contract;” introduction to professionalism, professional misbehavior considered.

9/11: Introduction continued; philosophical and historical context.

Readings due: Knapp & VandeCreek, chapters 1 and 2; Bersoff, chapter 3.

9/18: The APA Ethics Code, ethical decision making.
Readings due: Knapp & VandeCreek, chapters 3 and 4; Bersoff, chapter 1, pp. 7-37, and chapter 2, pp. 67-90.

9/25: Competence, multiple relationships and boundaries.

Readings due: Knapp & VandeCreek, chapters 5 and 6; Bersoff, chapter 5.

10/2: Informed consent, confidentiality, record keeping, internet issues.

Readings due: Knapp & VandeCreek, chapters 7 and 8; Bersoff, chapter 7, pp. 329-341, and pp. 376-384.

Autumn recess!

10/16: Life-endangering patients, business issues.

Readings due: Knapp & VandeCreek, chapters 9 and 10; Bersoff, chapter 7, pp. 342-345, and chapter 10.

10/23: Assessment.

Readings due: Knapp & VandeCreek, chapters 12; Bersoff, chapter 9.

10/30: Special topics in therapy, competent practice with diverse populations.

Readings due: Knapp & VandeCreek, chapter 13; Bersoff, chapter 7, pp. 342-369.

11/6: Teaching and research.

Readings due: Knapp & VandeCreek, chapters 14 and 16; Bersoff, chapter 8.

11/13: Forensic psychology.

Readings due: Knapp & VandeCreek, chapter11; Bersoff, chapter 9.

11/20: Boundaries revisited, self-disclosure in clinical practice


Thanksgiving!

12/4: Clinical supervision.

Readings due: Knapp & VandeCreek, chapter 15;

Finis!