

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE OUTLINE – WINTER 2026

PY4420 (A3): Introduction to Counselling – 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours for 15 Weeks

Northwestern Polytechnic acknowledges that our campuses are located on Treaty 8 territory, the ancestral and present-day home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, who are the original caretakers of this land.

We acknowledge the history of this land, and we are thankful for the opportunity to walk together in friendship, where we will encourage and promote positive change for present and future generations.

INSTRUCTOR:	Dr. Ali M. AL-Asadi, R.Psych (AB)	PHONE:	780-539-2061
OFFICE:	C-311B	E-MAIL:	aalasadi@nwpolytech.ca
OFFICE HOURS:	By appointments		

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: This course is an introduction to counselling and guidance services and is designed to appeal to students who plan to work in the fields of psychology and mental health, rehabilitation, education, and other human services occupations. Students will be exposed to a variety of theoretical perspectives in counselling and will be assisted in acquiring basic trans-theoretical micro counselling skills.

PREREQUISITE(S)/COREQUISITE:

EP3020, EP3040, PY1050, or permission of the instructor

REQUIRED TEXT/RESOURCE MATERIALS:

- Corey, M. & Corey, G. (2021). *Becoming a Helper* (8th Edition), Brooks Cole Publishing.
- A collection of reading materials, articles, and other resources based on Open-Sourced texts posted on this course's D2L site at: <https://myclass.gprc.ab.ca/d2l/home>
- Publication Manual of the APA 7th Edition (use this online site: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/apa_changes_7th_edition.html)

DELIVERY MODE(S): On-Campus

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

- articulate the professional and social responsibilities of counsellors
- exhibit knowledge of the theoretical basis and applications in counselling
- demonstrate the ability to **reason critically** about topics related to the essential ambiguities of the helping relationship
- demonstrate basic interpersonal communication and counselling skills, including nonverbal communication, open and closed questions, paraphrasing, and reflecting
- recognize, differentiate, categorize, and evaluate different counsellor responses that create obstacles to communication and contribute to transference and countertransference patterns in helping relationships

TRANSFERABILITY:

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check to ensure the transferability of this course at Alberta Transfer Guide at <http://transferalberta.alberta.ca/transfer-alberta-search/#/audienceTypeStep>

**** Grade of D or D+ may not be accepted for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability.**

EVALUATIONS:

Your final grade is based on any five of the following:

Exam 1	20%	2-3 summaries of Case Precedent	20%
Exam 2	20%	2-3 Summaries of Intervention	20%
Exam 3	20%	Research Essay	20%
Ethics Assignment	20%	Counselling Skills Video Assignment	20%
Presentation	20%	The combination of the last two submissions is your final exam, and it will have to be submitted by the date of the final exam	

* The nature, scope, and depth of each assignment will be further discussed in class.

* Remember, all exams may include questions from lectures that may not be covered by the textbook and reading materials.

Research Essay (Value: 20% of course grade)

The research essay shall focus on a topic of interest to the student. It may be related to any topics covered in class or the textbook. Examples of research topics may include topics on the evolution of counselling and how we got from there to here; topics on traditional and more contemporary interventions (for example, art, music, drama, dance, sport, and animal therapy); topics on being a therapist; topics related to ethical and professional conduct in counselling; and topics on the efficacy of counselling modalities including online therapy. Other topics may be considered if a student can show relevance to the field of counselling psychology. The research paper will be based on at least 6 peer-reviewed publications, plus other sources. The paper shall be about 2500 words in length (typed and double-spaced APA style). The word limit does not include a title, abstract, or reference page. Papers must be written and typed in proper and current APA format (7th Edition), 12-point font and approximately a one-inch margin on all sides of the text. Many websites are devoted to the APA writing style (for example, <https://apastyle.apa.org/>). The paper should be checked to ensure that spelling, grammar, and sentence structure are correct. The grade of the essay will be based on: a clear

and concise introduction that indicates the overall structure of the essay and the purpose of the work; a concise integrative synthesis of research articles and references while illustrating the ability of critical thinking; a good structure, logical flow and clarity of style; a good conclusion that summarizes the main themes and findings of the work; and the overall presentation of the work and the appropriateness of the selected references.

Presentation (value: 20% of course grade)

Once your topic is chosen and approved, prepare a presentation of 25-30 slides on it. Each slide should have sufficient content to be informative, but not so much as to make it difficult to read. The presentation should have sufficient details to inform and educate the audience. It should have sufficient depth and breadth to cover the topic justly. Please use superscript numbers (example¹) for in-text citations, and then use these numbers to reference these citations in your last slide(s). Students may be asked to present to the class.

GRADING CRITERIA*:

Please note that most universities will not accept your course for transfer credit **IF** your grade is **less than C-**.

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines		Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines
A+	4.0	95-100		C+	2.3	66-69
A	4.0	90-94		C	2.0	63-65
A-	3.7	85-89		C-	1.7	60-62
B+	3.3	80-84		D+	1.3	55-59
B	3.0	75-79		D	1.0	50-54
B-	2.7	70-74		F	0.0	00-49

*This grading criterion is specific to this course and differs from the general criteria.

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:

WEEK	TOPIC*	EVALUATION
Week 1	Are the Helping Professions for You?	
Week 2	Helper, Know Thyself	
Week 3	Knowing and Managing Your Values	
Week 4	Understanding Diversity	
Week 5	Common Concerns of Beginning Helpers	Exam 1 20%
Week 6	The Helping Process	
Week 7	Theory Applied to Practice	
Week 8	Ethical and Legal Issues Facing Helpers	
Week 9	Managing Boundary Issues	
Week 10	Working with Groups	Exam 2 20%
Week 11	Working in the Community	
Week 12	Stress, Burnout, and Self-care	
Week 13	Managing Crisis Personally and Professionally	
Week 14		
Week 15	No Classes. Final Exam Period. The Registrar's Office schedules the Final Exam.	Exam 3 20%

***Note: These discussion topics/dates may be modified, and/or other topics may be added.**

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Each class's assigned readings and exercises should be completed before attending. As this course depends heavily on discussion, at times practice exercises, and illustrations, attendance at all sessions is required and critical to the student's success in the course. In case of illness or emergency, notify the instructor as soon as possible. If you have difficulty in this course, please contact me immediately for assistance. If you want to discuss any aspect of the course, please visit my office during office hours or at a more convenient pre-arranged time.

You are accountable for attending to the delivered lectures, assigned readings, and any announcements made in class. If you are unable to attend a particular class, it is your responsibility to find out what was missed. For optimal learning and readiness for class participation, you are expected to attend class regularly (no less than 80% attendance) and read the assigned chapters/topics before coming to class on the dates indicated on the timetable, except for the first session. Past course records show that class attendance is highly correlated with the final grade.

If you are unable to write a test or exam at the scheduled time due to illness or an emergency, you should notify me immediately, preferably at least 1 day in advance. A message may be left on my voicemail (780-539-2061) or e-mail (aalasadi@nwpolytech.ca), including a phone number where you may be reached, to arrange an alternative date to write the test, if feasible. Failure to notify the instructor will result in a grade of zero for the missed tests unless proof is presented that you were physically or mentally unable to do so due to a sudden illness, emergency, or unavoidable circumstances beyond the student's control.

All students are expected to display a professional attitude and behaviour in the classroom. This includes reliability, respect for and cooperation with fellow students and the instructor, attention to fellow students' questions and the instructor's response, determination to achieve first-class work while meeting deadlines, and constructive response to criticism.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Academic Misconduct will not be tolerated. For a more precise definition of academic misconduct and its consequences, refer to the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy available at <https://www.nwpolytech.ca/about/administration/policies/index.html>

****Note:** all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

Instructors reserve the right to use electronic plagiarism and AI detection services on written assignments. **Instructors also reserve the right to ban the use of any form of electronics (cell phones, Blackberries, iPods, tablets, scanning pens, electronic dictionaries, etc.) during class and exams. A score greater than 10% on these detectors will result in a mark of 0 on the assignment.**

Additional Information

1. The format of each exam will be discussed in class.
2. Exam grades are final, and there is no substitute work for your poor exam grade.
3. The nature and topics of your written paper will be discussed in class
4. It is your responsibility to read each and every chapter and assigned reading (if any) and attend all lectures.
5. Lectures will not always cover the reading materials. Lectures may cover topics and include information not covered in your reading materials. Therefore, you must attend every class, as your exams may include materials from the lectures that are not covered by the reading materials.

6. Students are expected to display a professional attitude and behaviour. These attitudes and behaviours are many and will be discussed in class. Any violation or misconduct may result in dismissal from the class.
7. Talk to me if you have concerns or if you are experiencing difficulties that may have a negative impact on your academic performance.

Role Plays, Privacy, and Confidentiality

Because of the experiential nature of this course and the use of role-playing, practice interviewing, and counselling, it may be possible for a colleague to reveal personal and confidential information. You must maintain the confidentiality and trust of your classmates. These principles are critical to successfully completing this course and for counselling itself. ***At the same time, there are legal limits to confidentiality.*** You should come to the instructor if you suspect that a classmate may be at imminent risk of harm to themselves and/or others, or if you suspect/it is reported to you that a child (anyone under age 18) or vulnerable person (such as seniors) is being abused in any way or neglected. These instances must be reported by law in Alberta and are part of the codes of ethics for all helping professions. All other breaches of confidentiality and trust by a person involved in this course constitute a serious violation of the counselling profession's ethics codes and may have serious consequences for the person and others. **Never divulge personal information learned in this class to others without written permission from the person or persons involved.** Please also note that because confidentiality between classmates cannot be completely guaranteed, it is essential that you keep this in mind when sharing personal information.

When role-playing, as the client, you have the right to stop or not participate at any time. However, if you do not wish to engage in the counselling exercises despite the assurance of confidentiality, you should perhaps consider dropping the course. You also have the right and responsibility to only share what you want to talk about yourself. You are not required to disclose any personal information that you do not wish to share with your classmates. The topics or situations you choose to discuss in simulated counselling sessions may be hypothetical or contrived.

Self-Care/Assistance

You are also expected to take care of yourself physically, psychologically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually throughout this course. If you have difficulty in this course, please get in touch with the instructor as soon as possible for assistance.

If you have any questions or concerns about PY4420, please arrange a time to speak with me.

I wish you a successful term!

Please keep this course information sheet for future reference.