

*Sul Ross State University*

# **Rio Grande College**

## **Counseling Program**

*Department of Education*

# **COUNSELING AT-RISK YOUTH**

EDUC 6346

3 semester credit hours

Summer Session I 2016

**Instructor:** Todd T. Russell, Ph.D.

**Office:** RGC Uvalde Campus A126

**Business Cell:** (210) 253-0884    **Home Office:** (210) 233-1953

**University Office:** (830) 279-3025    **Fax:** (210) 340-2359    **E-Mail:** [trussell@sulross.edu](mailto:trussell@sulross.edu)

### **Student Availability Hours**

Available to meet with students by appointment or for virtual assistance via online chat, Skype, Collaborate, email and cell phone (voice or text)

## **Course Description**

This course explores theory and practice related to counseling at-risk youth including the social, multicultural, ethical, and legal issues associated with school failure and drop-out, teen pregnancy and sexuality, substance abuse, violence, and criminal behavior. Emphases are on the etiological and environmental factors associated with high risk, antisocial, violent, and illicit behaviors of youth, counseling skill development, prevention strategies and social justice factors. This course is one of the four courses required for the school counseling specialty.

## **Course Purpose**

The term “youth” is generally applied to the period of development between childhood and adulthood. Some researchers define youth as all school-age children, while others consider the term to mean those individuals who are preteens and adolescents. In this course we will use the term “youth” fairly broadly and interchangeable with “children and adolescents.” An at-risk youth is a child or adolescent who is less likely to transition successfully into adulthood. Success can include academic success and job readiness, as well as the ability to be financially independent. Characteristics of at-risk youth include emotional or behavioral problems, truancy, and low academic performance, showing a lack of interest for academics, and expressing a disconnection from the school environment. Counseling youth identified as being at-risk is essential in being an effective counselor in a school or community agency setting. This course will provide a thorough review of the theories and issues related to children and adolescent considered to be at-risk, issues of school failure and drop-out, teenage pregnancy and sexuality, substance abuse, violence, and juvenile delinquency.

## Course Objectives

Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe and discuss the psychological, sociological, and ecological factors affecting at-risk youth. *Assessment of this objective will be conducted through instructor observation of student participation in the virtual classroom, the Youth Case Study, and the Final Examination.*
2. Identify the hardships, challenges and problems experienced by at-risk youth. *Assessment of this objective will be conducted through instructor observation of student participation in the virtual classroom, the Youth Case Study, and the Final Examination.*
3. Discuss the interrelationship of school and community agency counseling in providing effective interventions with at-risk youth. *Assessment of this objective will be conducted through the Final Examination.*
4. Examine and evaluate contemporary prevention programs designed to address the problems of at-risk youth. *Assessment of this objective will be conducted through instructor observation of student participation in the virtual classroom.*
5. Demonstrate appropriate counseling skills for effectively working with at-risk youth. *Assessment of this objective will be conducted through instructor observation of student participation in the virtual classroom, the Youth Case Study, and the Final Examination.*
6. Identify and describe the multicultural and diversity issues involved in working with at-risk youth populations. *Assessment of this objective will be conducted through instructor observation of student participation in the virtual classroom, the Youth Case Study, and the Final Examination.*
7. Explain the issue of social justice as it applies to working with various at-risk youth populations. *Assessment of this objective will be conducted through instructor observation of student participation in the virtual classroom and the Final Examination.*
8. Describe and discuss the counselor's roles of advocacy and leadership in working with at-risk youth populations. *Assessment of this objective will be conducted through instructor observation of student participation in the virtual classroom and the Final Examination.*
9. Demonstrate an increased personal awareness for effectively counseling at-risk youth populations. *Assessment of this objective will be conducted through instructor observation of student participation in the virtual classroom, the Youth Case Study, and the Final Examination.*

## Readings

There are no required texts in this class. There will be an abundance of required reading that will be posted each week on Blackboard. Additionally, students will be expected to locate and share valuable resources for counseling at-risk youth.

## Class Sessions

This class will meet in the virtual world online in the Blackboard system as well as through email (reply all) discussions. Students will be expected to log in and participate in presentations, discussions, assignments, and special readings for a minimum of twelve hours per week. (Refer to the *Distance Education Statement* of Rio Grande College near the end of this document.) Additionally, students are expected to regularly monitor email accounts for ongoing dialogues via emails to all.

## Course Requirements and Grading

*class participation	50 points
*youth case study	50 points
*final examination	100 points

According to this scale, there are 200 total points possible on which your final course grade will be based. A final point total of 180 or greater will earn you a final grade of A, a total of 160-179 will be a final grade of B, and a total of 140-159 will be a C grade. Regardless of the excuse, late assignments will be discounted in point value at 10% of the total points possible per day of lateness.

# Proposed Course Outline

## **Date**                      **Topics, Issues and Assignments Due**

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### **Week #1**

*June 1-5, 2016*

- \*Introductions
  - \*Course Overview and Expectations
  - \*Definition of At-Risk Youth
  - \*Characteristics of High-Risk and Low-Risk Youth
  - \*Environmental and Societal Factors
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### **Week #2**

*June 6-12, 2016*

- \*Legal and Ethical Issues
  - \*Impact of Dysfunctional Family Dynamics
  - \*School and Educational Issues
  - \*School Dropout
  - \*Substance Use and Addiction
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### **Week #3**

*June 13-19, 2016*

- \*Teenage Pregnancy, STDs, and Risky Sexual Behavior
  - \*Violence and Trauma in Children and Youth
  - \*Gang Involvement
  - \*Homelessness
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### **Week #4**

*June 20-26, 2016*

- \*Mental Health Disorders in Youth
  - \*Suicide Ideation and Suicidal Behavior in Youth
  - \*Prevention, Early Intervention and Treatment Framework
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### **Week #5**

*June 27-July 3, 2016*

- \*Verbal-Based Counseling Approaches and Strategies
  - \*Nonverbal Counseling Approaches and Strategies
  - \*Integrated Personal Approach for Counseling At-Risk Youth
  - \*\*Due by 7/3/16: Youth Case Study**
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### **Week #6**

*July 5, 2016*

- \*\*Final Examination**
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## **Important Dates to Remember**

<b>June 1</b>	<b>Summer I classes begin.</b>
<b>June 3</b>	Last day for late registration and schedule changes.
<b>June 21</b>	Mid-Semester.
<b>June 23</b>	Last day to drop a course or withdraw from the University.
<b>July 3</b>	Youth Case Study is due via email.
<b>July 4</b>	Holiday – University closed.
<b>July 5</b>	Final Examination will be available online.

# Assignments and Activities

## Participation in Virtual World

All students are expected to participate in the virtual classroom community for a minimum of twelve hours per week. All content of this course is offered online via Blackboard and email assignments and discussions. All students are expected to fully participate in all online experiences and activities. Participation is evaluated by the instructor on a subjective basis and through Blackboard user statistics available to the Instructor. Participation in the virtual world is worth a total of **50 points** toward your final grade in this course.

I will post audio lectures, lecture notes, articles, video clips, video links, web links, and PowerPoint presentations on Blackboard on a week-by-week basis and you are expected to carefully read, review, and study these documents. They will be the primary sources of both the Midterm and the Final Examinations. You are expected to read and respond to the blog postings of other students and participate in the Discussions on Blackboard (some will occur via email). All assignments are due via email *no later* than the dates specified on the course outline. Do not attempt to fax, send, or hand deliver any assignments. Do not post your papers on Blackboard or use the digital drop box. Email all assignments directly to me at [trussell@sulross.edu](mailto:trussell@sulross.edu). I will maintain contact with you via email and Blackboard announcements. Beware that if you do not check your various email addresses on a regular basis, you will miss important information. All announcements originating from Blackboard will only be sent to your Sul Ross email account. Therefore, it is important to regularly check your Sul Ross email account or have it forwarded to a more convenient email address. Grades and comments on your papers will be sent to you personally via email.

Your routine and regular email correspondence with me is highly encouraged. It is how I know that you are alive, thinking about the course material, and planning on earning a good grade! Moreover, I appreciate students who participate in the “reply all” email discussions which will occur from time to time during the semester. When I receive your email messages and attachments, I will send a confirmation notice to you via return email within two working days. I will rely on email to make special announcements and/or notifications. Please get in the habit of checking your various email accounts regularly each day, **including your Sul Ross account.**

When you email me a document, I will respond within one *working day* and confirm that I have received your email message and attached document. (Usually I will respond within less time than that.) Therefore, if you send me something, and then a couple of days later you have not received a confirmation notice from me, then that means that **I did not receive your email or your attachment.** Remember many things get lost in cyberspace. I hold you entirely accountable for that. Do not call me on the phone to ask if I have received your email or your attached paper. Just simply send it, and within a very reasonable time you should receive a confirmation notice from me. The confirmation notices are sent directly back to the sending email address. Therefore, if you email me from a friend’s email account, then it is your friend who will receive the confirmation notice. All course materials will be distributed to you via the Blackboard. The technology consultant at your site can explain accessing Blackboard to you. You must get in the habit of checking this site on a daily basis for postings from me, and you must schedule a minimum of twelve hours for working on the course requirements online, in addition to your outside research, writing, and studying.

## Youth Case Study

All students are expected to complete a comprehensive case study analysis on a particular at-risk child or adolescent. The purpose of this assignment is to refine, expand and strengthen your observation, conceptualization, and analytical skills. Professional counselors are often expected to communicate accurate clinical information to other professionals such as other counselors/therapists, physicians, psychiatrists, judges, and social workers. The Youth Case Study provides you with the opportunity to develop a narrative style for clinical report writing. You must find a “willing” participant between the ages of 8 and 16 years old who is considered to be “at-risk” academically, psychologically, or socially. Through client self-report, parent and teacher interviews, academic records, and medical records you will gather as much data as you can in order to thoroughly discuss the background, current behaviors, treatment plan, and prognosis. You will not be responsible for providing the counseling or implementing the treatment plan, unless you choose to do this on your own. The Youth Case Study will be constructed in a manner that is appropriate for mental health professionals. It will thoroughly describe the youth’s history and the clinical risk factors of the past and present. You are free to employ reliable and valid assessment devices as well as informal methods of data collection (e.g., drawings, writing samples, public information). The Youth Case Study is worth a total of **50 points** possible toward your final grade in this course, and it is due via email to the Instructor on or before **July 3, 2016**. We will devote class time (via Collaborate sessions) to discussing this assignment. The required format for this report is included below, along with the scoring criteria.

### Case Study Format

#### **Identifying Information** (5 Points)

In narrative format, describe and discuss the client’s age, gender, ethnicity, language, family composition, living situation, educational performance, physical appearance, health, self-presentation, and any other relevant demographic information.

#### **Description of the Presenting Problem** (5 Points)

Describe the current problems or symptoms indicated by the client, parent, or teacher, or inferred from an abundance of data. Identify any physical, emotional or sensory symptoms observed or reported by the client and/or significant others. Include discussion of the relevant thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the client, as well as the precipitating circumstances associated with the “at-risk” problems. You can incorporate the results and interpretations of any diagnostic assessments used with the client, as well as a simplified *DSM-5* diagnosis.

#### **Relevant History and Background Information** (5 Points)

Describe and discuss the client's history and background. Extensively document the various historical factors that may be associated with the client’s current “at-risk” status such as the evolving family composition and atmosphere, socioeconomic status, physical and mental health histories, academic records, social relationships, substance use behaviors, life challenges, and client coping skills.

#### **Social and Environmental Factors** (5 Points)

Describe the elements in the client’s various environments (family, school, social) that function as stressors, including both those centrally and peripherally related to the at-risk status. Also, describe the elements in the client’s environments which function to either reinforce at-risk behavior or support healthy change.

### **Personality Dynamics (5 Points)**

Thoroughly discuss the cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements of the client.

- **Cognitive:** Identify and describe mental processes, thinking, intelligence, attentiveness, persistence of negative cognitions, nature and content of fantasy life, and level of personal insight. Describe the client's processes of being aware and observant of his/her own feeling states and behaviors. Does the client have a particular personal narrative or interpretive scheme to explain his/her own feelings and actions? What are the client's own hypotheses about his/her behavior, the behaviors of others, his/her capacity of judgment, and his/her ability to make decisions and implement plans?
- **Affective:** Identify and describe the client's most common emotional states, moods in various situations, appropriateness of affect, range of emotions the client has the capacity to display, and cyclical aspects of the client's emotional life.
- **Behavioral:** Identify and discuss the client's actions in various settings and situations (e.g., school, home, social); including psychosomatic symptoms, medical symptoms, existence of persistent habits or mannerisms, eating patterns, and sleeping patterns.

### **Comprehensive Client Conceptualization (10 Points)**

Delineate and discuss your conceptualization of this client and his/her at-risk status. In narrative format, put the pieces of the puzzle together. Why is the client at-risk; what caused this; what contributed to this; and what purposes does the at-risk behavior serve for the client? Pull everything together and provide a portrait of the client; include the most central core dynamics of the client's personality, and note in particular the interrelationships between the major dynamics and behaviors. What are the common themes and patterns that are apparent? What ties it all together?

### **Intervention and Treatment Plan (10 Points)**

Describe the interventions and strategies needed to help this client while simultaneously anticipating his/her reactions to treatment and responsiveness to counseling interventions, the counselor-client relationship, and commitment to the therapeutic process. Indicate the length of treatment and the optimum duration of the client's involvement, from intake to discharge, with the counseling process. When recommending various treatment strategies be sure to discuss the rationale for the strategy, the desired change that may result from the strategy, the explanation of strategy effect, and therapeutic evaluation procedures. Indicate the outcome goals of counseling with this client, the objectives, counseling interventions, evaluation, and ethical considerations. Explain how the counselor and client will conjointly evaluate the effectiveness of counseling.

### **Counselor Observations and Insights (5 Points)**

Discuss your own thoughts, observations and insights about this client? What do you think the prognosis is for this client? Describe and explain any other thoughts and insights you have about this case.

## Objective Final Examination

All students are expected to complete an online final examination on **July 5, 2016**. The examination will consist of 100 objective (multiple choice and true/false) items. You will have three hours (180 minutes) to complete the 100-item examination. The exam will cover all Collaborate discussions and Blackboard materials such as postings, readings, lectures, presentations, and research. It is recommended that students use Chrome as the web browser for taking these exams. Firefox is less error-free than Chrome as a platform for Blackboard. The Final Examination will be worth **100 points** toward your final grade in this course.

## Distance Education Policy Statement

This class is being offered as a web-based course. The full experience of this course will take place on Blackboard. We will utilize the new Collaborate feature of Blackboard in order to connect with one another for “*real time*” discussions and Q-and-A sessions. Required readings, assignments, presentations, and videos will be posted on Blackboard. All students are expected to regularly access the class site on Blackboard and participate fully in the virtual elements of this course.

**The policy on Distance Education at Rio Grande College is as follows:** Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university’s academic support services, library resources, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should submit online assignments through Blackboard or SRSU email, which require secure login information to verify students’ identities and to protect students’ information. The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.

## **Professional Counseling Identity and Behavior**

The **Counseling Program** of Rio Grande College is a professional graduate program designed to meet the standards for Texas school counselor certification and professional state licensure. The **Counseling Program** does not train students for specific job descriptions, but rather provides a comprehensive preparation meeting the national and state standards of professional knowledge and skill in Counseling. The **Counseling Program** has specific policies and procedures which provide students with a sequential, growth-oriented progression of courses to take; students are fully responsible for knowing and following these policies and procedures. This is not a singular academic program to prepare students for advanced levels of teaching or beginning levels of administration, but rather a distinctly different profession entirely. Counseling is not an appropriate career field for all students. In the process of pursuing professional training in Counseling, some students discover (or faculty may advise) that they are not appropriate for the Counseling field, nor is the field of Counseling appropriate for them. Faculty of the **Counseling Program** will provide continuous, honest and pragmatic feedback to each student regarding progress and suitability in this program.

It is the personal and professional responsibility of each and every graduate student in the **Counseling Program** of Rio Grande College to be familiar with the most current issue of the **Counseling Program Handbook**. This document details and describes all aspects of the **Counseling Program**, from taking the first courses to passing the Comprehensive Oral Examination and graduating with the Master's in Counseling.

Unethical behavior (as defined by the **Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice** of the American Counseling Association) by a student enrolled in any counseling course will result in the exclusion of that student from the Counseling Program of Rio Grande College, and may subject the student to civil penalties as well. Professional behavior is expected of each and every student at all times across all Counseling courses. Failure to maintain professionalism is considered unethical behavior.

## **Accessibility and Safe Learning Environment**

The Counseling Program of Rio Grande College is committed to providing a learning environment that is free from intentional or unintentional sexual harassment, as defined below, or harassment on the basis of any protected classification including, but not limited to race, gender, color, religion, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability, medical condition, marital status, veteran status or on any other basis protected by law. Such conduct is unprofessional, unproductive, illegal, and generally unacceptable. All conduct of this nature is expressly prohibited, regardless of whether it violates the law.

The Counseling Program of Rio Grande College supports equal employment and educational opportunities for all persons. No person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity sponsored by Rio Grande College on any basis prohibited by applicable law, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability.

The Counseling Program is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Disability Services Coordinator assists students with disabilities in gaining opportunities for full participation in programs, services and activities. The Disability Services Coordinator is the Director of Student Services (830-758-5006) in Eagle Pass, Texas. Services available to all students include consultation, information and referral as well as personal counseling and academic advising. A student is eligible for disability services if s/he has been admitted to Rio Grande College and has a documented physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Qualified students with disabilities who need academic adjustments, auxiliary aids or services or other accommodations to ensure equal access must register with Disability Services. It is the student's responsibility to bring disability documentation with them to an appointment with the Disability Services Coordinator to discuss their individual needs at this time. Each request is considered on an individualized, case-by-case basis. As considerable time may be involved in obtaining complete and adequate documentation and arranging for qualified service providers, prospective and current students should request services in a timely manner. These services should be requested well in advance of the anticipated need.

Recent disability documentation from appropriate qualified professionals must be provided by the student to establish current functional limitations and the impact of the disability. Any recommendations for specific accommodations may be helpful in making determinations and these will be considered as part of the documentation review process. Documentation of disability status and other related information is handled in a confidential manner and is maintained in files separate from a student's educational record.

In compliance with applicable laws, unless Rio Grande College can demonstrate that an academic requirement is an essential component of a degree or program, the University will make reasonable adjustments to requirements to ensure that the requirements do not discriminate against qualified students with disabilities. A student with a disability may request a course substitution or a modification of a degree or program requirement through the following process.

The student's first point of contact for assistance with this process should be the Disability Services Coordinator. The student should submit:

1. A written request for the modification explaining his/her difficulties in the relevant areas and reasons for requesting the modification;

2. Information about the results of previous efforts in the relevant area (transcripts, etc.); and
3. Comprehensive documentation of the disability and the specific aspects of the disability which impair the student's ability to learn or perform in the area in which the student is requesting the modification. The Disability Services Coordinator will meet with the student, review the documentation and prepare a recommendation on the request.
  - a. A diagnostic statement identifying the disability, date of the current diagnostic evaluation (within a 5 year period), and the date of the original diagnosis.
  - b. A description of the diagnostic criteria and/or diagnostic test(s) used.
  - c. A description of the current functional impact/limitations of the disability.
  - d. Treatments, medications, assistive devices/services currently prescribed or used.
  - e. A description of the expected progression or stability of the disability over time.
  - f. The credentials of the diagnosing professional(s) to include the training and experience which enable the person capable of making the diagnosis.

Recommendations for accommodation are helpful and will be given due consideration. If a student feels that s/he has been discriminated against based on disability, it is recommended that the student first attempt to resolve the issue directly with the individual or group suspected of discrimination. If this procedure is non-productive, a second step may be to seek assistance from the Disability Services office. Students may also file a complaint with the appropriate university officer for ADA/504 compliance, the ADA Compliance Officer, according to the student grievance procedure.

Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature where such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to: unwanted sexual advances; demands for sexual favors in exchange for favorable treatment; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; graphic commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess, or sexual deficiencies; leering; whistling; touching; pinching; assault; coerced sexual acts; suggestive, insulting or obscene comments or gestures. The Counseling Program prohibits all conduct of this nature whether or not such conduct violates any applicable laws.