

Counseling Program
Group Counseling

EDUC 7315

3 semester credit hours

Fall Semester 2021



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Student Availability and Office Hours

Available for virtual assistance via Collaborate, Zoom, TEAMS, email, text or voice
9:00 am – 12:00 pm Mondays and Wednesdays; 10:00 am – 2:00 pm Thursdays
Available other days and at other times by appointment

Counseling Program Virtual Access Information

Community Counseling Clinic: <https://www.srsu-mrg-ccc.org/>

Clinic Email: srsu.mrg.counseling@gmail.com

Counseling Program Website: <https://www.sulross.edu/page/4849/master-education-counseling>

Course Prerequisites: Student must have earned a grade of B or higher in *Personality and Counseling Theories* (EDUC 5314) and have permission of the instructor. This course is taken concurrently with *Techniques of Counseling I* (EDUC 6321).

Course Purpose: This course will provide students with an experiential and interactive opportunity to develop awareness and competence in counseling diverse groups of individuals through exploration of group dynamics, processes, and therapeutic interventions.

Course Description: This course is designed to provide counseling graduate students with an understanding of the theories and an appreciation for the practices of group counseling and psychotherapy. Group counseling is considered an effective, efficient modality of treatment and is preferred to individual counseling in some clinical settings. While there is some overlap in the skills, strategies and techniques employed in both individual and group counseling, there are also profound differences. This course allows students to explore and experience the therapeutic group as a participant while simultaneously observing the demonstrations of effective group counseling. This class will meet on Wednesday evenings, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., on the Collaborate Ultra or Zoom platform. Class sessions are entirely experiential, with skill demonstration, modeling, discussion, and interpersonal group experiences. All students are group members, and the instructors are co-facilitators. Due to the pandemic-related restrictions, the group experiences will only occur in the “virtual world.” This forces all of us out of our ordinary comfort zones and into a group environment with unlimited possibilities. Group counseling is essentially about exploring, discovering and implementing new and previously unimaginable possibilities. The group will meet each Wednesday through **November 17, 2021**. We will not meet as a group (or as a class) following November 17, 2021, because the remainder of the semester will be devoted to the academic tasks and exams.

Course Goal: The primary goal of this course is to provide counseling students with an authentic group experience in which they will learn the theoretical and conceptual foundations of group counseling while simultaneously developing the skills, strategies and techniques necessary for conducting effective therapeutic groups. Students will incorporate their own observations, assumptions and experiences into their emerging and evolving integrated personal approach to counseling and psychotherapy. As one of the first “hands-on” classes of the Counseling Program, the students will demonstrate professional competencies in the knowledge and skills that are essential for the facilitation of effective and culturally relevant group counseling experiences.

Student Learning Objectives: Upon successfully completing this course students will:

1. Identify and explain small group dynamics and stages of group development.

Evaluation Method: Assessment of this objective will be conducted by the Group Observation Blog, Instructor Observation of Classroom Group Participation, the Group Experience Curriculum, the Objective Final Examination, and the Take-Home Final Examination.

2. Identify and describe the counselor characteristics and behaviors that influence the group counseling process.

Evaluation Method: Assessment of this objective will be conducted by the Group Observation Blog, Instructor Observation of Classroom Group Participation, the Group Experience Curriculum, the Objective Final Examination, and the Take-Home Final Examination.

3. Specify and describe the major ethical issues in group counseling and psychotherapy.

Evaluation Method: Assessment of this objective will be conducted by the Group Observation Blog, Instructor Observation of Classroom Group Participation, the Group Experience Curriculum, the Objective Final Examination, and the Take-Home Final Examination.

4. Demonstrate and discuss the essential group leadership skills and facilitation styles.

Evaluation Method: Assessment of this objective will be conducted by the Group Observation Blog, Instructor Observation of Classroom Group Participation, the Group Experience Curriculum, the Objective Final Examination, and the Take-Home Final Examination.

5. Recognize and apply theoretically specific techniques for group counseling and psychotherapy.

Evaluation Method: Assessment of this objective will be conducted by the Group Observation Blog, Instructor Observation of Classroom Group Participation, the Group Experience Curriculum, the Objective Final Examination, and the Take-Home Final Examination.

6. Incorporate and integrate a developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant perspective to the inclusion, protection and termination of individual group members.

Evaluation Method: Assessment of this objective will be conducted by the Group Observation Blog, Instructor Observation of Classroom Group Participation, the Group Experience Curriculum, the Objective Final Examination, and the Take-Home Final Examination.

7. Recognize and define the concept of mindfulness as it relates to the group counseling processes and implement and maintain a personal mindfulness practice.

Evaluation Method: Assessment of this objective will be conducted by the Group Observation Blog, Instructor Observation of Classroom Group Participation, the Group Experience Curriculum, the Objective Final Examination, and the Take-Home Final Examination.

8. Demonstrate personal growth, increased self-awareness, and heightened insight as the result of authentic and genuine group participation.

Evaluation Method: Assessment of this objective will be conducted by the Group Observation Blog, Instructor Observation of Classroom Group Participation, the Content Quizzes or Encounter Group Marathon Participation, and the Take-Home Final Examination.

Proficiencies for Counselors: Proficiencies that students must master in this course are derived from two sources: The *State of Texas Standards Required for the School Counselor Certificate* (§239.15) and the *Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs* (CACREP).

The following school counselor certification standards (TAC §239.15) are addressed in this course:

Standard I. Learner-Centered Knowledge: The certified school counselor has a broad knowledge base. The certified school counselor must know and understand:

- (2) counseling and consultation theories and practices
- (7) environmental, social, and cultural factors that affect learners' development and the relevance of those factors to educational, career, personal, and social development, along with comprehensive school counseling programs;
- (9) legal and ethical standards, practices, and issues and the importance of commitment to and implementation of ethical principles
- (13) the roles and responsibilities of a comprehensive school counseling program that is responsive to all students
- (14) counseling-related research techniques and practices;
- (15) developing and teaching best practices on leadership skills;
- (16) how cultural factors and group membership impact individual students;

Standard II. Learner-Centered Skills: The certified school counselor applies the knowledge base to promote the educational, personal, social, and career development of the learner as outlined in *The Texas Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs*. The certified school counselor must:

- (3) counsel individuals and small groups using appropriate counseling theories and techniques in response to students' needs
- (6) demonstrate proficiency in teaching small and large groups by actively engaging students in the learning process;
- (9) use counseling-related research techniques and evidence-based practices to address student needs;
- (10) advocate for a comprehensive school counseling program that is responsive to all students;
- (11) facilitate learners' ability to achieve their potential by helping them set and attain challenging educational, career, personal, and social goals based on various types of information;

Standard III. Learner-Centered Process: The certified school counselor participates in the development, monitoring, revision, and evaluation of a campus based on *The Texas Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs* that promotes learners' knowledge, skills, motivation, and personal growth. The certified school counselor must:

- (3) use both preventive and intervening strategies to address the concerns of learners and to help them clarify problems and situations, set goals, explore options, and implement change

Standard IV. Learner-Centered Equity and Excellence for All Learners: The certified school counselor promotes academic success for all learners by acknowledging, respecting, and responding to diversity while building on similarities that bond all people. The certified school counselor must:

- (1) understand learner differences, including those related to cultural background, gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic levels, academic ability, and learning styles, and know ways to create and maintain a positive school environment that is responsive to all learners;
- (2) advocate for a school environment in which diversity is acknowledged and respected, resulting in positive interactions across all cultures, genders, ethnicities, and learning styles;
- (3) facilitate learning and achievement for all students to ensure services that cover an array of exceptionalities, including special populations, by promoting a cooperative, inclusive, purposeful learning environment;
- (4) take a positive, strength-based approach that builds on commonalities versus differences in all learners;
- (5) understand how environment and behavior may impact or influence individual learners;
- (8) acknowledge learners' gifts, strengths, and extracurricular talents when considering programs and services

Standard V. Learner-Centered Communications: The certified school counselor, an advocate for all students and the school, demonstrates effective professional and interpersonal communication skills. The certified school counselor must:

- (1) demonstrate effective communication through oral, written, and nonverbal expression;
- (2) use knowledge of group dynamics and productive group interaction;
- (8) work effectively as a team member to promote positive change for individuals, groups, and the school community;
- (9) take a positive, strength-based approach that verbalizes commonalities versus differences in all learners;

Standard VI. Learner-Centered Professional Development: The certified school counselor continues professional development, demonstrating a commitment to learn, to improve the profession, and to model professional ethics and personal integrity. The certified school counselor must:

- (3) strive toward the highest level of professionalism by adhering to and modeling professional, ethical, and legal standards

The following CACREP Common Core standards are addressed in this course:

Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice

- i. ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling
- k. strategies for personal and professional self-evaluation and implications for practice
- l. self-care strategies appropriate to the counselor role

Social and Cultural Diversity

- a. multicultural and pluralistic characteristics within and among diverse groups nationally and internationally
- b. theories and models of multicultural counseling, cultural identity development, and social justice and advocacy
- c. multicultural counseling competencies
- d. the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others
- e. the effects of power and privilege for counselors and clients
- g. the impact of spiritual beliefs on clients' and counselors' worldviews

Human Growth and Development

- i. ethical and culturally relevant strategies for promoting resilience and optimum development and wellness across the lifespan

Counseling and Helping Relationships

- a. theories and models of counseling
- d. ethical and culturally relevant strategies for establishing and maintaining in-person and technology-assisted relationships
- f. counselor characteristics and behaviors that influence the counseling process
- j. evidence-based counseling strategies and techniques for prevention and intervention
- n. processes for aiding students in developing a personal model of counseling

Group Counseling and Group Work

- a. theoretical foundations of group counseling and group work
- b. dynamics associated with group process and development
- c. therapeutic factors and how they contribute to group effectiveness
- d. characteristics and functions of effective group leaders
- e. approaches to group formation, including recruiting, screening, and selecting members
- f. types of groups and other considerations that affect conducting groups in varied settings
- g. ethical and culturally relevant strategies for designing and facilitating groups
- h. direct experiences in which students participate as group members in a small group activity, approved by the program, for a minimum of 10 clock hours over the course of one academic term

Research and Program Evaluation

- b. identification of evidence-based counseling practices
- c. needs assessments
- d. development of outcome measures for counseling programs
- e. evaluation of counseling interventions and programs

Student Learning Outcomes Based on Counseling Program Objectives: Upon successful completion of the Counseling Program, the candidates for the degree of Master of Education in Counseling, will clearly and unambiguously demonstrate to the Counseling faculty that they:

- Understand traditional and contemporary personality and counseling theories and can apply appropriate counseling interventions and strategies in individual and small group counseling.
- Identify and utilize basic assessment principles related to standardized assessments and designing an appropriate treatment plan.
- Comprehend the role and function of the counselor in a variety of work settings.
- Know and apply the professional standards of practice and the relevant code of ethics.
- Attend to their own personal growth, as well as that of their students and clients, through utilizing supervision, valuing interpersonal feedback, and engaging in mindful self-examination.
- Possess the knowledge and skills necessary to practice as a highly competent counseling professional.
- Employ personal self-awareness and professional sensitivity to the divergent values, behaviors, traditions, and counseling needs of all students and clients regardless of gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, ability, language, religion, ethnicity, or race.
- Engage in compassionate cultural sensitivity by applying core counseling concepts, mindfulness-based skills, and professional practices with diverse populations, in particular, the bilingual and bicultural students and clients living in the South Texas border region.
- Model intellectual curiosity and a strong personal commitment to continually expanding their counseling knowledge and proficiency through lifelong learning and professional development.

Counseling Program Marketable Skills: Upon successful completion of the Counseling Program, the candidates for the degree of Master of Education in Counseling will possess the following marketable skills:

1. The Master of Education Counseling student will demonstrate analytical and critical thinking skills.
2. The Master of Education Counseling student will demonstrate empathy and listening skills.
3. The Master of Education Counseling student will demonstrate deductive and inductive cognitive skills.

Marketable Skills Dissemination Strategy: The marketable skills are included in the course syllabi for the Master of Education in Counseling; and the faculty present and discuss these skills online or in-class with students. Each marketable skill includes consideration of the cultural influences on an individual's worldview perspective. The cultural focus is reflected and emphasized in all courses, as are reflective writing or research assignments. *Techniques of Counseling I* (EDUC 6321) emphasizes the essential communication skills and therapeutic interventions of active listening, reflecting feeling and demonstrating authentic empathy.

Required Readings: The instructors are conscientious of the outrageous costs of graduate studies and the rapidly escalating costs of counseling textbooks. Additionally, after 37 years of training masters level counselors, Dr. Russell considers most group counseling textbooks to be deficient in one or more areas of training. Therefore, we do not use any required textbooks in this course. Instead, all required readings are posted on our class Blackboard site. Once the Blackboard sites have been revised and edited for the fall semester of 2021, all students will be notified. You are expected to remain current with the posted readings, articles, handout materials, videos and presentations available on Blackboard if the traditional course format is selected. Since the virtual group meetings will end on November 17, 2021, students have the flexibility to schedule their reading and study time in a style and pace most conducive to individual learning styles. Although there are no textbooks for this course, there is required reading that will be posted and available to students on Blackboard.

Course Requirements and Grading:

*regular attendance and participation	50 points
*group experience curriculum	50 points
*group observation blog	50 points
*objective final examination	100 points
*take-home essay final examination	100 points

According to this scale, there are 350 total points possible on which your final course grade will be based. A final point total of 315 or greater will earn you a final grade of A, a total of 280-314 will be a final grade of B, and a total of 245-279 will be a C grade (*does not meet the prerequisite for Practicum*). **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, TASKS & ASSIGNMENTS DUE

August 25

- *Introductions
- *Course overview and expectations
- *Group counseling and psychotherapy
 - ****Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

September 1

- *Grouping and ice breakers
- *Observation skills: Debriefing and feedback
- *Self-monitoring
- *Consensus and task groups
- *Group processes
- *Group stages of development
- ****Due by 09/01/21: Creation of Group Observation Blog**
 - ****Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

September 8

- *Purposes of groups
- *Planning groups
- *Ethical issues in group counseling
 - ****Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

September 15

- *Initial stage of group development
- *Trust and safety
- *Beginning stage
 - ****Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

September 22

- *Transition stage of group development
- *Basic skills of group leaders
- *Dealing with conflict in groups
- *Roles of group members
 - ****Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

September 29

- *Working stage of group development
- *Leadership
- *Group norms and behavior
- *Decision-making
- *Self-disclosure
 - ****Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

October 6 *Group cohesion
 *Power
 *Humor in groups
 *Using group exercises and experiences
 ****Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

October 13 *Final stage of group development
 *Application of counseling theory to group counseling
 ****Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

October 20 *Process of therapy in groups
 *Emotional intensity
 *Common pitfalls of beginning group counselors
 ****Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

October 27 *Dealing with problem situations
 *Counseling children in groups
 *Groups for adolescents in groups
 ****Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

November 3 *Groups for adults
 *Groups for the elderly
 *Special issues in group counseling
 *Group counseling in the 21st century
 *Group guidance activities
 ****Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

November 10 *Working with groups of parents
 *Groups for special populations
 ****Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

November 17 *Terminating the group experience
 *Rituals for termination
 ***Final group meeting.*
 ****Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

November 24-26 ****Thanksgiving Holiday**

December 1

- *Multicultural issues in group counseling
- *Group counseling in school settings
- *Identifying and sharing group counseling resources
- **Independent Work Online**
- **Disseminate 12/01/21: Take-Home Final Exam**
- **Due 12/05/21: Group Experience Curriculum**
- **Available 12/02/21: Objective Final Exam**
- ***Blackboard: Readings and Blog*

December 9

- *Facilitating a group: From promotion/screening to termination/referral
- *Review essential elements of group dynamics and processes
- *Review ethical, legal and professional issues inherent in group work
- *Review for both the Objective and the Take-Home Final Exams
- **Independent Work Online**
- **Due 12/07/21 by 11:00 pm: Take-Home Final Examination**
- **Due 12/09/21/21 by 11:00 pm: Objective Final Exam**
- **Due 12/09/21 by 11:00 pm: Group Observation Blog Completion**

Remember these important dates:

August 23	Class begins and last day
August 26	Last day for late registration and schedule changes
September 1	Initial entry required for Group Observation Blog
September 6	Labor Day Holiday: No Class
September 8	Last day to drop the Experiential Block without academic record
October 18	Midterm Skill Evaluations conducted
November 11	Veterans Day Holiday: No Class
November 12	Last day to drop a course or withdraw from the University
November 17	Final Group Counseling Session and Termination
November 24-26	Thanksgiving Day Holidays
December 1	Take-Home Final Examination is Available
December 2	Objective Final Examination is Available on Blackboard
December 5	Group Experience Curriculum is due by 11:00 pm
December 7	Take-Home Final Examination is due by 11:00 pm
December 9	Group Observation Blog completed by 11:00 pm
December 9	Objective Final Exam must be completed online by 11:00 pm
December 10	Final Grades Submitted

Attendance and Participation: All students are expected to attend all group sessions regularly and on time. Tardiness and absenteeism have extreme detrimental effects on small group processes. Missing a group session (class meeting) for any reason will result in the deduction of **20 points** from the attendance and participation score, regardless of the excuse. Showing up late (after the co-facilitators have convened the group) will result in the deduction of **10 points** from the attendance and participation score, regardless of the excuse. All group members are expected to fully participate in all group experiences and activities. Participation is evaluated by the Instructors on a subjective basis. Attendance and participation are worth a total of **50 points** toward your final grade in this course. The instructors will not judge the merits of a student's reasons for missing class – all absences and tardies will be treated the same. There will be no opportunities for making up missed group time. Participation in the group experience is measured by one's willingness and courage to take risks. All group sessions will be conducted on the Zoom platform, and they will **never** be recorded. All students are required to keep both their video and audio feeds fully active and unmuted unless requested to do otherwise. It is critically important that all group members create and maintain predictably safe, secure and confidential environments for accessing the group sessions. Students will need to be free from all external interruptions by family members, pets or other electronic devices. You will never need to take notes. Group cohesion is entirely dependent on each and every group member genuinely trusting in the safety and confidentiality of all group environments, experiences, and exchanges.

Objective Final Examination: All students are expected to satisfactorily complete a 100-point objective final examination that is based on the readings and course experiences. The examination items will expect you to integrate course content with the readings and will consist of one hundred objective items (multiple-choice and true/false). The final examination will be available on Blackboard, **December 1-9, 2021**, and is worth a total of **100 points** toward your final grade in the course.

Take-Home Final Examination: All students are expected to satisfactorily complete an essay style take-home final examination that will be based on the discussions, readings and experiences during the semester. The examination items will expect you to integrate course content and experiences with the readings. The exam will consist of ten essay items chosen by you from a list of options. The take-home final examination, worth a total of **100 points**, will be disseminated on December 1, 2021, and will be due via email to the instructors no later than **December 7, 2021**.

Mindfulness and Counseling: Mindful counselors are able to interact more effectively with their personal and professional environments; they are able to respond rather than react to life's unexpected happenings; they are more effective communicators professionally and personally; and they are more creative and effective agents of client-desired change. A routine personal mindfulness practices provides the counseling graduate student with the knowledge and skills to:

- Slow down or stop the cascade of automatic and habitual reactions.
- See oneself and others more clearly.
- Listen deeply and understand situations just as they are.
- Be open to creativity beyond conditioning.
- Respond effectively to complex and/or emotionally charged situations.
- Act competently and ethically.
- Achieve balance and resilience in personal and professional lives.

Group Experience Curriculum: One of the most important qualities of an effective group counselor is spontaneous creativity (referred to as "*therapeutic spontaneity*"). Group counselors are continuously required to "*invent*" therapeutic experiences in the moment. All students are expected to create a ten-session (or ten-hour) curriculum for group counseling. This curriculum should consist of ten therapeutic experiences for a specific group (or ten hours of group counseling). Each of the ten experiences should be prepared much like a standard lesson plan, each reflecting the therapeutic goals of the counseling group and developmentally appropriate for the specific target population. You will determine both the focus of the group (common counseling concern) and the target population. Each "lesson" (experience or activity) must include the following information:

GOALS

Concise statements of the specific goals of this activity as related to the overall therapeutic goals of the group.

OBJECTIVES

Action-oriented statements of the specific behavioral objectives of this activity as related to the overall therapeutic goals of the group.

MATERIALS

Listing of all materials required for this experience or activity.

DIRECTIONS

Step by step procedures for effectively implementing this activity or experience. Instructions should be clear and specific so that the experience can be easily and accurately replicated by another professional.

EVALUATION

Describe the procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of the specific lesson or experience with the group members. Each session must be evaluated, and the complete group experience must also be evaluated.

Continued Description of the Group Experience Curriculum: The Group Experience Curriculum must be in PowerPoint format to facilitate immediate posting on the Blackboard in order to be available to all students. The PowerPoint must be self-contained (i.e., “stand alone”) and include engaging audio narration (or video annotation). The project is due, to all Instructors, on or before **December 5, 2021**, and is worth a total of **50 points** toward your final grade. The Group Experience Curriculum will be graded on originality, creativity, cohesiveness, potential effectiveness, narration (annotation) engagement, and overall value to group counselors. All Group Experience projects will be shared with the entire group on Blackboard after instructor evaluation.

Group Observation Blog: All students are required to maintain a Group Observation Blog on our class Blackboard site. You must title your blog space with your first and last name followed by the designated assignment title. For example, *Todd Russell Group Observation Blog* would be the title of my blog space under that particular function. The Group Observation Blog includes documentations and demonstrations of one’s reactions to the group sessions, information, discussions, readings, and interactions. Blog entries should be made **at least two times per week**. The Blog must document the student’s observations of the group processes and dynamics and their own personal reactions to the group evolution and experiences. Students will observe and record in their blogs the interpersonal communication systems, leadership roles, member roles, stages of group growth, decision-making processes, the purpose of conflict, and power as they have witnessed and experienced in the processes of the group experience. Additionally, students should record their own cognitive and affective responses to group events and interpersonal interactions with other group members. Blog entries (**250-500 words**) must be of substantial quantity and graduate level quality.

All students are required to read and comment on other students’ blogs. In your initial blog entry, please share some information about yourself so that we can get better acquainted with one another. Please tell us your name, and then something about your various roles in life (family, work, social, leisure). Also, please tell us why you are in the Counseling Program and what you would like to do with your degree and/or training in this field. Finally, please share with us what you expect to get from this course in group counseling. Posts and entries in your Group Observation Blog can include:

- ☞ Personal thoughts, feelings, insights, and reflections.
- ☞ Questions or concerns that arise as a result of various group experiences or course readings.
- ☞ Primary lessons learned.
- ☞ Applications of concepts and strategies to future group experiences.
- ☞ Thoughts that aren't yet fully formed, but that you want to refine later. This could include your feelings about the course and your progress in it, and theories that are developing in your mind.
- ☞ Keep in mind, that the ideas mentioned above must be relevant to your growth throughout the duration of this class.

At various points throughout the semester the instructors will provide feedback to you regarding the content and depth of your Group Observation Blog entries. Your blog must be created, and your first entry posted on or before **September 1, 2021**. There will be a minimum of two blog postings per week. The Group Observation Blog is worth a total of **50 points** toward your final grade in this course.

Observation of Group Process: When observing the group processes and recording your observations in your blog, use the following prompts to guide your reflections, contemplations and notations:

- ☉ How would you describe the patterns of participation in the group? Did all have opportunities to participate? Were some excluded? Did a few dominate? Was an effort made to draw people out? If some members did not participate, how might you account for this? What needs to happen in the group in order for everyone to participate?
- ☉ How would you describe the patterns and styles of leadership behavior that emerged during the group? Did a leader, as such, emerge? Was a leader designated? Was leadership shared? Was there any structuring of the group? Were facilitation skills demonstrated? If so, by whom? If not, why not?
- ☉ How would you describe the structures that emerged to govern the behavior of the group members? What were the rules on which the group functioned? Did you notice any new or emerging rules or norms? Which rules seem to be present but unspoken? How was power manifested? Where and how did power flow during the group experience? Did group seem to be avoiding something? If so, what? How did the group deal with member anxiety? Where is your group developmentally? What needs to happen for your group to develop further?
- ☉ How would you describe the individual roles and responsibilities that developed and emerged in the group? Who initiated ideas? Who supported them? Did anyone block? Who helped push for decisions? Was there any attempt to summarize and pull together ideas? Do some members tend to assume “care-taking” roles and responsibilities? Does someone seem to be the protagonist? Does someone seem to be the antagonist?
- ☉ How would you describe the decision-making processes employed by the group? Did the group get a lot of ideas suggested before beginning to decide, or did it begin deciding on only a single idea? Did everyone agree to the decisions made? Who helped influence the decisions of others? What issues did the group seem to (not) resolve? Did the group experience conflict? If so, why? If not, why not?
- ☉ How would you describe the patterns of communication utilized in the group? Did people feel free to talk? Were there any interrupting or cutting people off? Did people really listen to others? Was there clarification of points made? Who did people look at when they talked?
- ☉ How would you describe the affective qualities of trust and safety in the group? Were members sensitive to the needs and concerns of each other? What feelings did you see being expressed either verbally or nonverbally? What level of trust do you currently feel for the group? In which situations would you still not feel safe with your group? What needs to happen for group members to feel greater levels of trust and safety within the group?

Professional Counseling Identity and Behavior: In registering for classes in the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College, graduate students accept responsibility for attending scheduled class meetings, completing assignments on time, contributing to class discussions, and fully participating in all experiential learning activities. Counseling faculty members maintain specific attendance and participation requirements for each particular class. Faculty members may impose academic penalties upon absences from some classes and/or experiences; however, such penalties for absences will be a part of each course syllabus and will be distributed to each class at the beginning of each class and a copy filed in the departmental office.

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. By the time a student is admitted to the **Experiential Block**, it is expected that she or he has thoroughly read and comprehended the complete policies, procedures and recommendations of the most recent 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. 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 and/or the field of counseling is not 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.

Unethical behavior (as defined by the *Code of Ethics* 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. The Counseling Program emphasizes professional, personal, and academic development as essential in counselor education and training. Students must not only excel academically but must adhere to the professional and ethical standards of the profession, demonstrate effective counseling skills and competencies, and focus on their own personal development as it impacts their ability to work effectively and ethically as counseling professionals.

Counseling students are expected to attend to their own social and emotional development through extensive self-reflection and mindfulness. They must be open to new and divergent ideas, prepared to examine their own values and assumptions, ready to recognize their own prejudices and biases, willing to be present in the moment with highly uncomfortable (painful) emotions that initially evoke the "fight-flight-freeze" hijacking of the primitive limbic system, able to receive critical feedback in the company of peers with an open mind and a

tender heart, and capable of engaging in personal growth and transformation. At times this will involve examining one's own life experiences while creating space and understanding for one's inner demons and emotional obstacles to personal growth. Willingness to do this important personal work is an integral part of any counselor's professional training.

Therefore, graduation from the Counseling Program requires that students successfully complete the academic and experiential requirements with mindful regard to both professional and personal development. Students must, in the professional judgment of the faculty and supervisors, understand and behave in accordance with the professional standards of behavior, meet the requisite counseling competencies and skills to work as an effective professional counselor, and be free from any psychological or emotional impairment that may act as a barrier to effective interpersonal and therapeutic interventions. Throughout the counseling course work and the practical experiences, the faculty members regularly review student progress on the following basic qualities:

- Openness to new ideas
- Flexibility
- Cooperativeness with others
- Willingness to accept and use feedback
- Awareness of own impact on others
- Ability to deal with conflict
- Ability to accept personal responsibility
- Ability to express feelings effectively and appropriately
- Attention to ethical and legal considerations
- Initiative and motivation
- Development of professional skills and competencies
- Psychological functioning and mindful self-management

Distance Education Statement: Due to the personal health conditions and remaining restrictions associated with the COVID-10 pandemic, the experiential learning and skill development of *Techniques of Counseling I* (EDUC 6321) will take place on Blackboard, Collaborate Ultra, Zoom and Google platforms. Required readings, assignments, blogs, 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 aspect of this course. The policy on Distance Education at Sul Ross State University 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 directly to the Instructors, which require secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. Students enrolled in distance education courses at SRSU 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. The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook.

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 SRSU 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 SRSU 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 1973. Students with disabilities are provided assistance in gaining opportunities for full participation in programs, services and activities. It is university policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. RGC students seeking accessibility services should contact Ms. Paulette Harris, Executive Assistant to the Vice President and Dean, at 830-279-3023 or email pharris@sulross.edu. Ms. Harris's office is at 2623 Garner Field Road, Uvalde, TX 78801 (this is the mailing address, too).

Verbal and Physical Harassment: 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.