

**PSYCHOLOGY 4318:1 – PERSON-CENTERED PSYCHOLOGY**  
**Fall 2025**

**INSTRUCTOR:**

Dr. James W. Downing  
FH 208B

Office Hours:

In Person:     Wednesdays, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm,  
                    Thursdays, 7:30 am - 9:30 am,  
                    Fridays, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Virtual:         Wednesdays, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm,  
                    Thursdays, 7: 30 am – 9:30 am,  
                    Fridays, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm,  
                    or by appointment

Email: [jdowning@sulross.edu](mailto:jdowning@sulross.edu)

**PREREQUISITE:**

Enrollment in this course requires successful completion of Introduction to Psychology or consent of the instructor.

**CLASS MEETINGS:**

LH 200, 6:00 pm -8:50 pm, T

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Cooper, M., O'Hara, M., Schmid, P.F., & Bohart, A.C. (Eds.) (2013). The handbook of person-centred psychotherapy and counseling. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Berlin: Springer.

A memo to: Students in PSYC 4318:1, Sul Ross State University

From: Jay Downing

*“All individuals have within themselves the ability to guide their own lives in a manner that is both personally satisfying and socially constructive. In a particular type of helping relationship, we free the individuals to find their inner wisdom and confidence, and they will make increasingly healthier and more constructive choices.” - Carl Rogers.*

I am very happy about the potential learnings contained in the experience I am going to share with you in this course. I eagerly anticipate the chance to examine classic and current issues in the field of person-centered theory. One of my goals in this course is to deeply examine with each of you person-centered theory as originally developed by Carl Rogers. This theory of therapy and personality stands in sharp contrast to psychoanalytic theory, behaviorism, and cognitive-behavioral theories of personality and therapy. Rather than being a theory based on human deficiency, person-centered theory is one of human potentiality, which may explain the misunderstandings surrounding its veracity and usefulness. I find person-centered theory a view of the world that is very engaging and refreshing, and I hope you will find it ultimately useful for you as well in your professional practice and personal life.

The handbook will provide an excellent base for the study of person-centered theory. We

will begin by reading Carl Rogers own words concerning his theory. We will then move into more recent work with the ideas. From there you can jump off into many areas of application and further theoretical development. I hope your interest and your reading will lead you to feel a high level of engagement with and excitement about person-centered theory. I see much validity in the person-centered approach, and look forward to discussing and experiencing these ideas together.

*The First Meeting, Tuesday, 8/29, 6:00 p.m. – 8:50 p.m.*

This should be a long enough session to enable us to get acquainted (or reacquainted), to go over reading assignment for the next week, and most importantly to being our first encounter experience.

I would also like to use this time to draw out your own notions of other issues related to the Person-Centered theory, which may be concern to you. What are your goals for the course? How do you wish the class to be conducted? What is the best way for you to learn? What do you want to learn about person-centered theory during the course? I hope this will be a discussion where we begin to develop goals for ourselves in the course.

We will then move into the experiential portion of the night, which will involve our creation of an encounter group among the class participants. This portion of class should lead each of us to experience this theoretical orientation.

*The Second and Third Meetings, Tuesday, 9/5 & 9/12.*

During the first two weeks of class, we will read Rogers' ideas in his own words. Class members will actively contribute to the discussion of the material.

#### Required Readings:

Rogers, C. (1957). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. Journal of Consulting Psychology, 21, 95-103.

Rogers, C. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships as developed in the client-centered framework. In S. Koch (Ed.), Psychology: A study of a science (pp. 184-256). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Person-centered theory is sometimes accused of being anti-intellectual and lacking scientific rigor. These readings specifically describe the concepts of person-centered theory, making them available for discussion and analysis. The core concepts of unconditional positive regard, empathetic understanding, and congruence are described. The application of the ideas to many realms of human experience is also examined in these readings. These two articles are core readings for a deeper understanding of person-centered theory.

#### *Requirements*

Each student in the class will be evaluated based on the following items.

**-Your completion of a journal of learning and experiences during the course.** The journal entries can be as long or as short as you desire. They should focus on the thoughts and feelings you have regarding what you are experiencing in preparing for and participating in the course.

**-Your attendance and active participation in all the aspects of each class period. Students will be required to drop the class if they miss three class periods of the course.**

**-Your completion of reading assignments prior to each class period and active participation in the discussion of those assignments.**

**-Your completion of one reaction report every other week based on any readings, any experience, or any discussion you may have had. This report can be as long or as short as you desire. It should, however, be limited to your reactions, by this I mean your feelings. I want you to feel as free as possible in these reports in expressing your feelings about anything you want to write about, whether or not it has anything to do with the course. Your first reaction report is due Tuesday, September 5 and should be submitted via Blackboard by 5:30 pm. Subsequent reaction reports are due September 19, October 3, 17, 31, November 14, and 28.**

**-Submission of your own evaluation of your work and the grade that you think is appropriate. This statement should include:**

- a) a statement of your self-directed goals for the course;**
- b) a description of the ways in which you have met or failed to meet those goals;**
- c) a description of feedback received from the group;**
- d) the grade which you think is appropriate to the way you have met or failed to meet your own goals and feedback from the group.**

If I find that my own estimate of your work is quite at variance with yours I will have a personal talk with you and we will see if we can arrive at some mutually satisfactory grade which I can in good conscience sign and turn in.

**-You will have a choice between completing:**

**-a final paper of approximately 20 pages (double-spaced, APA style) that will reflect the required readings and your own independent studies, demonstrate that you comprehend your class experiences, and contain your personal vision of a person-centered clinician and counselor.**

**or**

**-a project (video, book, art project, etc. . . ) that represents your learnings or vision of a person-centered clinician or counselor (which could be expressed in a paper but you prefer a different mode of communication other than written expression).**

**Failure to complete any of the requirements will result in a failing grade being assigned for the course.**

**The instructor will be evaluated on his ability to emphatically demonstrate knowledge, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard for participants and his ability to assist them in achieving their self-directed goals.**

Another expectation I have is your attendance and participation in class on a weekly basis. I often find that people miss class when they are feeling bad about what happens in class on a day-to-day basis. Please feel free to express both your joys and frustrations to me as the class progresses. If you merely stop coming to class, you have missed a chance to learn and denied me a chance to hear your concerns about the direction of the course. We are all participants in this course and if you fail to come to class, your voice will not be heard as we discuss and learn from one another. I want you to feel welcome and to realize I want to hear your ideas about the things you read and learn about in the course. All that being said, attendance is very important in this class. I reserve the right to drop a student from the class with a failing grade if he or she misses **three** class days.

**Additional requirements** will on occasion come up during the class. These requirements will be described as we encounter them, given our development as a class and as individuals.

**Finally, failure to fully complete any of the requirements will result in a failing grade being assigned for the course. This is the only way one can fail this class.**

*The final letter grade assigned in the course does not represent a measure of achievement in the realization of any personal values other than knowledge of specific factual information. The most important self-evaluations will have to be made by you some time in the future, perhaps months from the end of the class.*

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR PERSON-CENTERED PSYCHOLOGY

<u>Date</u>	<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Text Readings</u>
8/26	1	Introduction, Course Overview, & Discussion	
9/2	2	Theoretical Basis of the PCA-I	Rogers, C. (1957) PCH (pgs. 1-16)
9/9	3	Theoretical Basis of the PCA-II	Rogers, C. (1959) PCH (pgs. 17-20)
9/16	4	Theoretical, Historical and Philosophical Foundations-I	PCH (pgs. 21-71)
9/23	5	Theoretical, Historical and Philosophical Foundations-II	PCH (pgs. 72-122)
9/30	6	Theoretical, Historical and Philosophical Foundations-III	PCH (pgs. 123-170)
10/7	7	Therapeutic Practice-I	PCH (pgs. 171-211)
10/14	8	Therapeutic Practice-II	PCH (pgs. 212-251)
10/21	9	Therapeutic Practice-III	PCH (pgs. 252-282)
10/28	10	Client Groups-1	PCH (pgs. 283-315)
11/4	11	Client Groups-II	PCH (pgs. 316-358)
11/11	12	Client Groups-III	PCH (pgs. 359-406)
11/18	13	Professional Issues I	PCH (pgs. 407-462)
11/25	14	Catch-Up Day	
12/25	15	Professional Issues-II	PCH (pgs. 463-506)
12/8		<b>MONDAY! FINAL PRESENTATIONS, 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m., LH 200</b>	