



SYLLABUS

EDSR 7315 Group Counseling

SEMESTER: Fall 2026 (August 24 – December 9, 2026)

Instructor Information:

Instructor: Beniam Aster Megabi Awoke Betsiha, Ph.D., MA, MRC, NCC, LPC, LCDC, CRC

Email: bbetsiha@sulross.edu (Email is the preferred method for all course-related inquiries. Responses can be expected within 24 hours, Monday through Friday).

Phone: 903.231.5010 (Text message highly preferred. Please reserve phone contact for urgent or emergency matters only. Texts will receive a response within 24 hours).

Physical Office Location: Virtual (Online) — No Physical Campus Location

Virtual (Online) Office Hours: Thursdays, 5:00–6:00 p.m. CST via Zoom. Students wishing to attend must request an appointment at least 24 hours in advance via Sul Ross email or Blackboard message. The Zoom link will be provided upon confirmation. Additional appointments outside this window are available upon request with a minimum of 24 hours' notice.

Required Text:

Corey, G (2023). Theory & Practice of Group Counseling, 10th ed. Cengage Learning, Inc. ISBN: 978-0-357-62295-7

Recommended Texts:

None

Course Prerequisites:

You must have successfully completed **ED 5314 – Personality and Counseling Theory and ED 7303 – Techniques of Counseling**, prior to enrolling in this course.

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 the 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. Group counseling is essentially about exploring, discovering, and implementing new and previously unimaginable possibilities.

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 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.

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 apply appropriate counseling interventions and strategies in individual and small-group counseling.
- Identify and utilize basic assessment principles related to standardized assessments and design 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 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 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.

In accordance with 2024 CACREP best-practice standards for counselor-in-training development, this course promotes the following areas:

Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice (2024 CACREP Section 3.A)

CACREP Standard	Activity	SLOs
1. history and philosophy of the counseling profession and its specialized practice areas	Assigned Reading Ch. 1; Discussion Board	1,3
2. the multiple professional roles and functions of counselors across specialized practice areas	Assigned Reading Ch. 1-14; Discussion Board	1,2,3
3. counselors' roles, responsibilities, and relationships as members of specialized practice and interprofessional teams, including (a) collaboration and consultation, (b) community outreach, and (c) emergency response management	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board; Assignment Paper 1	1,2,3
4. the role and process of the professional counselor advocating on behalf of and with individuals receiving counseling services to address systemic, institutional, architectural, attitudinal, disability, and social barriers that impede access, equity, and success	Assigned Reading Ch. 1-4; Discussion Board; Assignment Paper 1	1,2,3
5. the role and process of the professional counselor advocating on behalf of the profession	Assigned Reading Ch. 2; Lecture	3
6. professional counseling organizations, including membership benefits, activities, services to members, and current issues	Assigned Reading Ch. 2; Discussion Board	3
7. professional counseling credentialing across service delivery modalities, including certification, licensure, and accreditation practices and standards for all specialized practice areas	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board	1,2,3

CACREP Standard	Activity	SLOs
8. legislation, regulatory processes, and government/public policy relevant to and impact on service delivery of professional counseling across service delivery modalities and specialized practice areas	Assigned Reading Ch. 8-10; Discussion Board	2,3
9. current labor market information and occupational outlook relevant to opportunities for practice within the counseling profession	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board	3
10. ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling across service delivery modalities and specialized practice areas	Assigned Reading Ch. 8-10; Discussion Board; Final Exam	1,2,3
11. self-care, self-awareness, and self-evaluation strategies for ethical and effective practice	Assigned Reading Ch. 1, 3; Discussion Board	1,2
12. the purpose of and roles within counseling supervision in the profession	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board	1,2,3

Clinical Mental Health Counseling (2024 CACREP Section 5.C)

CACREP Standard	Activity	SLOs
1. etiology, nomenclature, diagnosis, treatment, referral, and prevention of mental, behavioral, and neurodevelopmental disorders	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board; Final Exam	1,2,3
2. mental health service delivery modalities and networks within the continuum of care, such as primary care, outpatient, partial treatment, inpatient, integrated behavioral healthcare, and aftercare	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board	1,2,3
3. legislation, government policy, and regulatory processes relevant to clinical mental health counseling	Assigned Reading Ch. 8-9; Discussion Board	2,3
4. intake interview, mental status evaluation, biopsychosocial history, mental health history, and psychological assessment for treatment planning and caseload management	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board; Assignment Paper 1	1,2,3

CACREP Standard	Activity	SLOs
5. techniques and interventions for prevention and treatment of a broad range of mental health issues	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board; Final Paper	1,2,3
6. strategies for interfacing with the legal system regarding court-referred clients	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board	2,3
7. strategies for interfacing with integrated behavioral healthcare professionals	Assigned Reading Ch. 1-14; Discussion Board	3
8. strategies to advocate for people with mental, behavioral, and neurodevelopmental conditions	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board	2,3
9. third-party reimbursement and other practice and management issues in clinical mental health counseling	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board	3

Group Counseling and Group Work (2024 CACREP Section 3.F)

CACREP Standard	Activity	SLOs
1. theoretical foundations of group counseling and group work	Assigned Reading Ch. 1-4; Discussion Board; Assignment Paper 1	1,2,3
2. dynamics associated with group process and development	Assigned Reading Ch. 1-7; Discussion Board	1,2,3
3. therapeutic factors of group work and how they contribute to group effectiveness	Assigned Reading Ch. 1-4; Discussion Board	1,2,3
4. characteristics and functions of effective group leaders	Assigned Reading Ch. 8-9; Discussion Board	2,3
5. approaches to group formation, including recruiting, screening, and selecting members	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board	1,2,3
6. application of technology related to group counseling and group work	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board	3
7. types of groups, settings, and other considerations that affect conducting groups	Assigned Reading Ch. 1-14; Discussion Board	3
8. culturally sustaining and developmentally responsive strategies for designing and facilitating groups	Assigned Reading Ch. 1-14; Discussion Board	1,2,3

CACREP Standard	Activity	SLOs
9. ethical and legal considerations relative to the delivery of group counseling and group work across service delivery modalities	Assigned Reading; Discussion Board; Final Exam	1,2,3
10. direct experiences in which counseling 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	Discussion Board reflection; Assignment Paper 1	1,2,3

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Student will be able to:

1. Define and distinguish among group guidance, group counseling, group psychotherapy, support groups, and advantages and disadvantages of group approaches versus individual counseling.
2. Discuss theories of group counseling including methods, techniques, and research findings, including group work with substance abuse and addiction.
3. Identify major persons and factors in the historical development of group counseling.
4. Discuss legal and ethical issues with group counseling, including how to make referrals.
5. Describe the various stages of the group process and roles of leaders and members at each stage.
6. Explain group dynamics in terms of cause and effect.
7. Describe different styles of leadership and leadership skills and techniques appropriate for each stage of the group process.
8. Explain characteristics of group leaders that affect group process; demonstrate personal awareness of his/her own strengths, weaknesses, values, prejudices, etc. and the effects on others.
9. Describe the implications of sociocultural, demographic, and lifestyle diversity on groups.
10. Discuss methods of evaluating the effectiveness of groups.
11. Describe how he/she would implement groups in his/her work.
12. Demonstrate knowledge of methods to continue learning about group process and group leadership.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate their ability to apply within guidance and counseling, their knowledge of human development, diversity, and factors that affect client's ability to achieve their potential

2. Demonstrate their ability to plan, implement, and evaluate a developmental counseling program, this program will incorporate assessment, as well as individual and group counseling services utilizing appropriate theoretical frameworks, techniques, and interventions to address personal, interpersonal/social, and educational needs.
3. Demonstrate the ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with others in diverse settings, including the community in order to facilitate client success, and will demonstrate the ability to apply ethical, legal, and professional standards.

COUNSELOR EDUCATION MARKETABLE SKILLS:

1. Graduates will demonstrate oral and written communication skills to apply in careers related to mental and behavioral health including school counseling.
2. Graduates will demonstrate knowledge of ethics, social justice issues, and multicultural concerns to apply in careers related to mental and behavioral health including school counseling.
3. Graduates will demonstrate knowledge of human growth development throughout the lifespan to apply in careers related to mental and behavioral health including school counseling.

SMARTHINKING:

With Blackboard, you will note two tabs on the left, a Smarthinking Handbook tab and a Smarthinking tab. Sul Ross State University is providing this writing tutorial program, free of charge, to currently enrolled students. Smarthinking is a proven, excellent writing tutorial program and user friendly. When you are ready to submit your draft paper to Smarthinking, you may do so through the Smarthinking tab.

This service does not detect plagiarism; you will still need to use SafeAssign for similarity detection. The Smarthinking Writing Center is designed to assist secondary, post-secondary, and graduate students become stronger writers. Students receive a detailed, personalized critique of any written assignment, such as an essay, paragraph, report, or creative work. When applicable, students can select specialists such as ESL, Technical Writing, or Creative Writing experts. Students can submit writing 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students in this class are required to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be timely, prepared, and focused. Meaningful, respectful, and pertinent online participation is also expected.

Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: submitting work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites **without citation**.

SAFE ASSIGN:

The Safe Assignment Tool is an advanced plagiarism prevention system deeply integrated with the Blackboard Learning Management System. SafeAssignment compares student papers

submitted to Blackboard against an enormous wide range of sources and provides instructors with detailed Originality Reports. Because of SafeAssignment's flexibility, this product is an effective plagiarism prevention system that helps instructors to raise student awareness about plagiarism and to educate students about the ways to avoid plagiarism. You can check your similarity report and make corrections if needed. With your similarity report, you will note highlighted areas that have similarity noted between your paper and another source. You will click on the tab within the colored square to see the percentage of the similarity. Percentages above 20% must be corrected. It does not matter if the source that is being noted for similarity is not the same source that you used. The system is telling you what you have written is too similar to another source and you need to make corrections. You may need to change up some of the wording or order of information to make it your information. More than three or four words in a row that are identical to the originating author can be detected. You can submit your paper as many times as you would like. This system is designed to assist students with increasing awareness of plagiarism. Typically, plagiarism is an accidental occurrence and occurs when students do not realize their writing is overly similar to another source.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The University does not recommend or endorse any specific AI tool or resource. Many generative AI tools, including ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot, store user input and may use that data to train future models. For this reason, never upload or share personal, confidential, or identifiable information, such as names, ID numbers, health data, or assignment submissions containing such details, into any generative AI platform. If you use an AI tool, verify that it complies with student privacy standards before entering coursework into it. I may recommend specific tools that better align with institutional data privacy policies, but responsibility for protecting your own data rests with you. Sul Ross State University is not liable for any adverse experience or impact arising from a student's use of these tools. Unless an assignment expressly permits it, do not use AI-generated content in place of your own work.

Instructor Expectations

This course is designed to cultivate advanced clinical knowledge, professional identity, and ethical competence in group counseling and group facilitation. The following expectations govern the responsibilities of both the instructor and students and are essential to maintaining a rigorous, respectful, and student-centered learning environment.

Instructor Responsibilities

- Maintain a structured, academically rigorous course environment aligned with 2024 CACREP standards and counselor education best practices.
- Provide clear, detailed instructions for all assignments, discussions, and assessments.
- Communicate expectations transparently and consistently throughout the term.
- Return feedback on submitted assignments within a reasonable timeframe.
- Respond to all course-related emails and Blackboard messages within 24 hours, Monday through Friday.
- Remain accessible during posted virtual office hours and by appointment with a minimum of 24 hours advance notice.

Student Responsibilities

- Log in to Blackboard regularly, at least every 24 hours, to monitor announcements, assignments, and course updates.
- Complete all assigned readings prior to engaging in module discussions and assignments.
- Submit all work by the stated deadlines in the Course Schedule; late submissions are subject to the Late Work Policy outlined in this syllabus.
- Engage in all discussion forums with substantive, evidence-based, and professionally appropriate contributions.
- Maintain the highest standards of academic integrity in all course activities.
- Use Sul Ross email (bbetsiha@sulross.edu) or Blackboard messages for all course-related communications; emails from non-Sul Ross accounts may not receive a response, as student identity cannot be verified.

Communication Expectations

Blackboard is the primary platform for course materials, announcements, and assignment submissions. For direct or time-sensitive communications, Sul Ross email or Blackboard messages are the preferred channels. Students are expected to monitor their Sul Ross email daily throughout the term, as important course communications will be distributed through that address. The instructor will respond to all course-related inquiries within 24 hours, Monday through Friday. Communications received after Friday at 5:00 p.m. CST will receive a response by the following Monday.

Rules of Engagement

This is a graduate-level course addressing group counseling and group process work, content that is inherently personal, interpersonally revealing, and emotionally significant for many students. All participants are expected to engage with one another and with course material in a manner that reflects the professional standards of the counseling field. The following guidelines apply to all forms of communication in this course, including discussion boards, emails, and any other course-related interactions.

This course operates under a modified **Chatham House Rule**: students are encouraged to explore emerging, controversial, or personally vulnerable perspectives in discussion forums and course interactions without fear that their words will be taken out of context or shared beyond this learning space. This norm exists to support intellectual risk-taking, honest clinical reflection, and genuine dialogue, particularly given the sensitive nature of diagnostic and mental illness content, much of which touches on stigma, family experiences, and personal or clinical proximity to the disorders we study. At the same time, this is not a no-accountability policy. It is not a shield for harmful speech without repair, and it does not substitute for ethical responsibility. Students are expected to engage one another with honesty, courage, compassion, and full professional accountability, consistent with counseling ethics and the field's standards.

The following specific guidelines govern all course interactions:

- All communication must reflect respect for the dignity, identity, and lived experience of every member of this learning community. Language or conduct that demeans, marginalizes, or discriminates against any individual based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, veteran status, or any other protected characteristic will not be tolerated and will be addressed in accordance with Sul Ross State University's Academic Code of Conduct.

- Challenge ideas, not individuals. Use critical thinking and evidence-based reasoning to engage with differing perspectives.
- Speak from personal experience using "I" statements; avoid speaking on behalf of groups or other individuals' experiences.
- Use correct names and pronouns for your instructor and classmates.
- Exercise particular care when discussing personal disclosures, group members, clients, or colleagues in discussion forums; never identify a specific person by name without their consent, and approach all shared experiences with clinical sensitivity and professional discretion.
- Avoid using all caps in written communications, as it is widely interpreted as aggressive in digital environments.
- Be mindful that humor and sarcasm are easily misread in online communication; when in doubt, err on the side of professionalism.
- Proofread all submissions and verify the accuracy of sources before posting or submitting.
- Remember that online posts are permanent records; exercise professional judgment before contributing to any course forum.

Quality of Work

As a counselor educator, I have the duty of being a gatekeeper to the profession. I take this responsibility very seriously; therefore, I expect graduate-level students to take their education seriously and take responsibility for gaining as much knowledge about the counseling profession as possible. Your seriousness and respect for the counseling profession are reflected in the quality of work you submit. I expect your work to reflect both the knowledge you have gained in this course and the effort you have put into producing it. I would rather you contact me and discuss an extension than turn in work that has been thrown together with very little effort and of poor quality.

Please keep in mind that as professional counselors, others are depending on you or looking to you to help them. If you try to get through this course or any other course in this program by doing as little work as possible or just enough to pass a course, you have to consider the disservice you are already giving your future clients. You have to ask yourself if your future clients deserve a counselor who just barely got by in their education or a counselor who was dedicated to helping and learned as much as possible in their education so they could be as competent as they could possibly be once they entered the field.

Rubrics

I hold every assignment, discussion board, and other graded activity to the rubric posted for it, without exception. Review the rubric before you begin and keep it beside you as you work; it is the exact standard against which your submission will be measured. This works in your favor: if you believe a deduction falls outside the rubric's criteria, you have standing to question it, and I correct any grading error I find without hesitation. Rubrics for all assignments, discussion boards, and other graded work are posted within the corresponding Blackboard module and attached directly to the assignment itself.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)

SRSU DISABILITY SERVICES:

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU 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. To help protect confidentiality, students seeking accessibility or accommodation services must submit the Accommodation Request Form available on the SRSU website. Students are welcome to call the Office of Accessibility Services at 432.837.8203 or visit Ferguson Hall, Room 112, with any questions about the process. Mailing address: P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832.

Student Responsibilities Statement

All students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Student Handbook and the Graduate Catalog and for abiding by university rules and regulations. Students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university, and every student is expected to obey all federal, state, and local laws and to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such laws.

Technology Requirements

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, including library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support; details are available on the [SRSU website](#). Correspond using your Sul Ross email account and submit assignments through Blackboard, which requires a secure login. You must maintain a computer, reliable internet access, and any software the course requires, and you remain subject to all policies on academic honesty and student conduct described in the Student Handbook. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the Student Handbook.

Counseling and Mental Health Resources

Sul Ross has partnered with TimelyCare, giving every SR student access to nine free counseling sessions and 24/7/365 support; learn more by searching TimelyCare SRSU. The SR Counseling and Accessibility Services office also offers in-person counseling in Ferguson Hall, Room 112 (Alpine campus), and telehealth Zoom sessions for remote and RGC students.

Library Resources

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and the Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offer free resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books and articles through the library's website, library.sulross.edu (off-campus access requires your LoboID and password). Librarians can be reached in person, by email at rsulibrary@sulross.edu, or by phone at 432.837.8123.

Tutoring Center

The Lobo Den Tutoring Center offers free tutoring in writing, math, science, and other subjects, with drop-in and scheduled appointments Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., in

BWML Room 128. Contact tutoring@sulross.edu or call 432.837.8726. Tutor.com also offers free 24/7 online tutoring in more than 200 subjects, including Spanish-speaking ESL and ELL support, accessible anytime through Blackboard.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

You are responsible for reviewing the university policies on Absences and Class Attendance in the SRSU Student Handbook.

PARTICIPATION POLICY:

Since EDSR 7315 is fully asynchronous, participation is measured entirely through your discussion board activity: your initial post, your replies to classmates, and the timeliness of both. There are no synchronous meetings and no attendance requirement tied to a class time. Your engagement with each module's discussion board is your participation grade.

For you to remain enrolled in EDSR 7315, you must reply to the Blackboard Discussion Board "Online Participation Policy" forum by the deadline posted in the Course Schedule below. It is Sul Ross State University policy that a student enrolled in an online course who fails to stay active for a period of 3 weeks, fails to submit assignments, and/or does not reply to instructor emails will receive a final grade of "F."

Late Work:

Each module runs for one week. Complete that module's discussion board, along with any assignment, exam, or paper due that week, before the module closes.

Late submissions on any graded component, including discussion boards, Assignment Paper 1, the Midterm Exam, the Final Paper, and the Final Exam, are penalized 10% of the available points per day late, calculated from the 11:59 PM CST deadline. Students anticipating a late submission should contact the instructor before the deadline to discuss an extension.

Syllabus Changes

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the grading statement, the syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

Grading/Feedback:

Most grading is technologically driven, and grades are posted immediately. Where grading requires professor review, I will complete all grading weekly. This will provide ample time for students to review their outcomes. Students are welcome to contact me anytime to schedule a meeting virtually to address any questions. In the event I do not answer the phone, please leave a message so that I may return your call, I respond to all my calls within 24 hours.

Grading Component	Points Possible	Grading Scale
Discussion Boards (13 total)	520 Points (40 each)	A= 90-100 B= 80-89 C= 70-79 D= 60-69 F= <60 ***** Discussion Boards, Assignment Paper 1, Midterm Exam, Final Paper, and Final Exam are added for a total of 1000 points; the resulting percentage determines the letter grade.
Assignment Paper 1	120 Points	
Midterm Exam	120 Points	
Final Paper	120 Points	
Final Exam	120 Points	
Total	1000 Points	100%

Discussion Boards:

This course runs entirely on discussion boards; there are no Collaborate Ultra sessions, live meetings, or class recordings. Each module opens Monday and closes Sunday, and each module's discussion board follows the same two-part deadline every week: post your initial response by Wednesday, 11:59 PM CST, and reply to at least two classmates by Sunday, 11:59 PM CST, when the module closes. The exact calendar date for each Wednesday and Sunday is listed in the Course Schedule below. Each board is graded against the rubric posted in its module and is worth 40 points, for 520 points across the term, the single largest share of your grade. Module 13 falls the week before Thanksgiving and carries a shorter, reflection-based prompt rather than new reading, since the week itself is short.

Assignment Paper 1:

Assignment Paper 1 replaces the Marathon Group Event, which is cancelled for this term. In place of the in-person or synchronous group encounter, you will submit a written analysis of a group counseling session using the observation framework below. Select a recorded group counseling session, a group you currently facilitate or participate in professionally, or a case example approved in advance by the instructor, and address each of the following dimensions with specific, observed evidence rather than general impressions:

Participation: Did everyone have opportunities to participate? Were some members excluded? Did a few dominate the discussion? Was an effort made to draw out quieter members?

Leadership: Did a leader emerge, or was one designated? Was leadership shared? Were facilitation skills demonstrated, and by whom?

Structure: What rules or norms guided the group, spoken or unspoken? How did power flow through the session? What was the group avoiding, if anything? Where is the group developmentally?

Roles: Who generated ideas, and who supported them? Did any member take on a caretaking role? Was there a central figure or an antagonist?

Decision-Making: Did the group generate multiple options before deciding, or settle quickly on one? Who influenced the outcome? Did the group encounter and resolve conflict?

Communication: Did members speak freely and listen to one another, or were there interruptions and cross-talk? Was there active clarification of points raised?

Trust and Safety: What level of trust did you observe among members? What would need to happen for members to feel safer disclosing?

Open your paper with a brief description of the group and its context, address each dimension in turn, and close with your own assessment of the group's developmental stage and what you would do differently as its leader. Assignment Paper 1 opens at the start of Module 7 (Monday, October 5, 2026) and is due Sunday, October 25, 2026, at 11:59 PM CST, the close of Module 9, worth 120 points. Full formatting requirements and the grading rubric are posted in the Module 7 folder in Blackboard.

Midterm Exam:

The midterm exam covers Modules 1 through 7, corresponding to Chapters 1 through 8: the foundations of group work, group leadership, ethical and professional issues, the developmental stages of a group, and the first three theoretical approaches covered in the course (Psychoanalytic, Adlerian, and Psychodrama). It draws directly from the assigned readings and discussion board topics and includes multiple-choice, true or false, and short-answer items. The exam opens Monday, October 5, 2026, and is due Sunday, October 11, 2026, at 11:59 PM CST, the close of Module 7, worth 120 points.

Final Paper:

The final paper is a scholarly, APA-formatted paper that integrates the course's assigned readings with your own experience across the term, whether through Assignment Paper 1's group analysis, your discussion board work, or your own clinical or professional exposure to group counseling. Discuss at least three theoretical frameworks covered in the course, apply them to a group context of your choosing, and evaluate their relative strengths for that context. The paper is due Sunday, November 22, 2026, at 11:59 PM CST, the close of Module 13 and a few days ahead of Thanksgiving break, worth 120 points. Full instructions and the grading rubric are posted in the Module 13 folder in Blackboard.

Final Exam:

The final exam is a comprehensive, multiple-choice assessment requiring application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the material covered across the full term: assigned readings, lecture content, and discussion board work. Worth 120 points, it opens Monday, November 30, 2026, the day students return from Thanksgiving break, and is due Friday, December 4, 2026, at 11:59 PM CST, the start of the final exam period, giving every student, including those traveling over the holiday, a full and fair window to complete it.

COURSE OUTLINE

Module / Assignment Description		
Date	Module 1: Introduction to Group Work and Group Leadership	Points
Aug 24 - Aug 30	• Read Ch. 1-2, pp. 3-33 • Participate in the DB1: Introduction to Group Work and Group Leadership discussion activity ○ Initial response: Due Wednesday, August 26, 2026, 11:59 PM CST ○ Response to two peer postings (minimum): Due Sunday, August 30, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	40 pts (4%)
Date	Module 2: Ethical and Professional Issues in Group Practice	Points
Aug 31 - Sep 06	• Read Ch. 3, pp. 34-55 • Participate in the DB2: Ethics and Professional Issues in Group Practice discussion activity ○ Initial response: Due Wednesday, September 02, 2026, 11:59 PM CST ○ Response to two peer postings (minimum): Due Sunday, September 06, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	40 pts (4%)
Date	Module 3: Early Stages in the Development of a Group	Points
Sep 07 - Sep 13	• Read Ch. 4, pp. 56-76 • Participate in the DB3: Early-Stage Group Dynamics discussion activity ○ Initial response: Due Wednesday, September 09, 2026, 11:59 PM CST ○ Response to two peer postings (minimum): Due Sunday, September 13, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	40 pts (4%)
Date	Module 4: Later Stages in the Development of a Group	Points
Sep 14 - Sep 20	• Read Ch. 5, pp. 77-97 • Participate in the DB4: Later-Stage Group Dynamics discussion activity ○ Initial response: Due Wednesday, September 16, 2026, 11:59 PM CST ○ Response to two peer postings (minimum): Due Sunday, September 20, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	40 pts (4%)
Date	Module 5: The Psychoanalytic Approach to Groups	Points
Sep 21 - Sep 27	• Read Ch. 6, pp. 99-129 • Participate in the DB5: Psychoanalytic Approach discussion activity ○ Initial response: Due Wednesday, September 23, 2026, 11:59 PM CST ○ Response to two peer postings (minimum): Due Sunday, September 27, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	40 pts (4%)

Date	Module 6: Adlerian Group Counseling	Points
Sep 28 - Oct 04	- Read Ch. 7, pp. 130-152 - Participate in the DB6: Adlerian Approach discussion activity Initial response: Due Wednesday, September 30, 2026, 11:59 PM CST Response to two peer postings (minimum): Due Sunday, October 04, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	40 pts (4%)
Date	Module 7: Psychodrama in Groups	Points
Oct 05 - Oct 11	- Read Ch. 8, pp. 153-181 - Participate in the DB7: Psychodrama discussion activity Initial response: Due Wednesday, October 07, 2026, 11:59 PM CST Response to two peer postings (minimum): Due Sunday, October 11, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	40 pts (4%)
	- Submit Midterm Exam (covers Ch. 1-8) Due Sunday, October 11, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	120 pts (12%)
	Assignment Paper 1 opens this module; due Sunday, October 25, 2026 (Module 9)	
Date	Module 8: The Existential Approach to Groups	Points
Oct 12 - Oct 18	- Read Ch. 9, pp. 182-207 - Participate in the DB8: Existential Approach discussion activity Initial response: Due Wednesday, October 14, 2026, 11:59 PM CST Response to two peer postings (minimum): Due Sunday, October 18, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	40 pts (4%)
Date	Module 9: The Person-Centered Approach to Groups	Points
Oct 19 - Oct 25	- Read Ch. 10, pp. 208-234 - Participate in the DB9: Person-Centered Approach discussion activity Initial response: Due Wednesday, October 21, 2026, 11:59 PM CST Response to two peer postings (minimum): Due Sunday, October 25, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	40 pts (4%)
	- Submit Assignment Paper 1 Due Sunday, October 25, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	120 pts (12%)
Date	Module 10: Gestalt Therapy in Groups	Points
Oct 26 - Nov 01	- Read Ch. 11, pp. 235-264 - Participate in the DB10: Gestalt Therapy discussion activity Initial response: Due Wednesday, October 28, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	40 pts (4%)

	○ Response to two peer postings (minimum): Due Sunday, November 01, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	
Date	Module 11: Cognitive Behavioral Approaches; Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy	Points
Nov 02 - Nov 08	• Read Ch. 12-13, pp. 265-30 • Participate in the DB11: Cognitive Behavioral and REBT Approaches discussion activity ○ Initial response: Due Wednesday, November 04, 2026, 11:59 PM CST ○ Response to two peer postings (minimum): Due Sunday, November 08, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	40 pts (4%)
Date	Module 12: Choice Theory/Reality Therapy; Solution-Focused Brief Therapy and Motivational Interviewing	Points
Nov 09 - Nov 15	• Read Ch. 14-15, pp. 308-353 • Participate in the DB12: Choice Theory/Reality Therapy and Solution-Focused/MI Approaches discussion activity ○ Initial response: Due Wednesday, November 11, 2026, 11:59 PM CST ○ Response to two peer postings (minimum): Due Sunday, November 15, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	40 pts (4%)
Date	Module 13 (reflection): Comparisons, Contrasts, and Integration	Points
Nov 16 - Nov 22	• Read Ch. 16, pp. 355-372 • Participate in the DB13: Reflection - Comparing and Integrating Theories (short prompt, no new reading load) discussion activity ○ Initial response: Due Wednesday, November 18, 2026, 11:59 PM CST ○ Response to two peer postings (minimum): Due Sunday, November 22, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	40 pts (4%)
	• Submit Final Paper ○ Due Sunday, November 22, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	120 pts (12%)
Date	Final Exam Period	Points
Nov 30 - Dec 04	Last class day is Wednesday, December 2, 2026 (16-week term). Dead Day is Thursday, December 3. Final Exam opens Monday, November 30, 2026.	
	• Submit Final Exam ○ Due Friday, December 04, 2026, 11:59 PM CST	120 pts (12%)

Group Counseling FAQs

What is Group Counseling?

In group therapy, six to twelve people meet face-to-face with one or more trained group counselors to discuss what is bothering them. Members also provide feedback to each other by sharing their feelings about what someone says or does. This interaction helps group members try out new ways of behaving and learn more about how they relate to others. The environment is unique because it is a closed and safe system. The content of the group sessions is confidential; what members talk about or disclose is not discussed outside the group.

The initial sessions of a group usually focus on building trust. During this time, members work to develop trust that allows them to speak personally and honestly. Group trust is established when all members commit to the group.

Why does Group Counseling work?

When people join a group and freely interact with other members, they often reenact the issues that brought them to group counseling initially. Under the expert guidance of a group counselor, the group can provide support, suggest alternatives, or gently challenge the individual. This process helps resolve the issue, teaches new behaviors, and allows the person to develop fresh social skills or ways of relating to others. During group counseling, participants begin to realize they are not alone. Many feel their problems make them unique, but hearing others face similar challenges can be very encouraging. In the trustful environment of the group, members feel comfortable caring about and helping each other.

What are the goals of Group Counseling?

- Exploring issues in an interpersonal context more accurately reflects real life.
- Group counseling provides an opportunity to observe and reflect on your own and others' interpersonal skills.
- Group counseling provides an opportunity to benefit through active participation and observation.
- Group counseling offers an opportunity to give and get immediate feedback about concerns, issues, and problems affecting one's life.
- Group counseling members benefit by working through personal issues in a supportive, confidential atmosphere and by helping others to work through theirs.

What are the benefits of Group Counseling?

- An increased sense of support and connectedness
- A decrease in self-criticism and negativity
- Renewed hope in one's own abilities
- Increased resourcefulness in finding solutions
- Greater ease in identifying feelings and self-disclosure
- A deepened trust in oneself and one's instincts
- More confidence in trying out possible solutions

What can I talk about in Group Counseling?

Discuss what initially brought you to the session. Share with the group what's bothering you. If you need support, let the group know; if you think confrontation is necessary, mention that as well. It's important to communicate your expectations to others. Unspoken feelings often cause difficulties. Sharing your feelings (self-disclosure) is a key part of group counseling and influences how much you benefit. Appropriate disclosures are those directly related to your current problem. How much you share depends on what you're comfortable with. If you're unsure about what might help, feel free to ask the group.

What are the common misperceptions about Group Counseling?

- **“I will be forced to tell all of my deepest thoughts, feelings and secrets to the group.”**
You control what, how much, and when you share with the group. Most people find that when they feel safe enough to share what is troubling them, a group can be very helpful and supportive. You are encouraged not to share what you are not ready to disclose. You can also benefit from listening to others and considering how what they say might relate to your own situation.
- **“Group counseling will take longer than individual counseling because I will have to share the time with others.”**
Group therapy is often more effective than individual counseling for two main reasons. First, you can gain from the group even during sessions when you say very little but listen attentively to others. You will realize that you have much in common with other members, and as they work through their concerns, you can learn more about yourself. Second, group members often bring up issues that resonate with you, but that you might not have been aware of or mentioned yourself.
- **“I will be verbally attacked by the leaders and by other group members.”**
It is crucial for group members to feel safe. Group leaders are there to foster a secure environment. Feedback can sometimes be hard to accept. As group members build trust and acceptance, they usually see feedback and even confrontation as helpful, similar to how a close friend would offer advice. One advantage of group counseling is the chance to get feedback from others in a supportive setting. It's uncommon to have friends who gently point out behaviors that might hurt yourself or others, but that's exactly what the group can provide. This is done in a respectful, gentle manner so that you can hear and use it effectively.
- **“Group counseling is second-best to individual counseling and psychotherapy.”**
If group counseling is being recommended for a client, it is because a counseling professional believes it is the best way to address your concerns. Group counseling is suggested when it is the most effective method to help clients.
- **“I have so much trouble talking with people; I'll never be able to share in a group.”**
Most people feel anxious about speaking in a group. Almost without exception, after just a few sessions, people begin to talk in the group. Group members remember what it feels like to be new, so you will most likely receive a lot of support when you start talking.

How to Recognize an Effective Group

1. **Members do not ignore seriously intended contributions.**

Each member needs to understand the impact of their remarks to improve their participation in the group. When other members do not respond, the speaker cannot know whether:

- They did not understand his/her remark
- They understood it and agreed with it
- They understood it but disagreed with it
- They understood it but thought it was irrelevant

When this principle is followed, the discussion is cumulative, and the group moves forward together. When it is not followed, the debate becomes scattered, the same points are repeated, and members feel like no progress is being made.

2. Members check to make sure they know what a speaker means before they agree or disagree with his or her contribution.

The question, “What is it?” should come before the question, “How do we feel about it?” For example, understanding comes before evaluation. Therefore, group members often use paraphrasing, perception checks, and provisional summaries to clarify their assumptions about what others are saying and feeling.

3. Each member speaks only for “self” and lets others speak for themselves.

Each member shares his or her reactions as his or her own. He or she does not attribute them to others or give the impression that he or she is speaking for others. Each member reports his or her reactions honestly. He or she understands that unless he or she is true to himself or herself, the group cannot consider his or her feelings.

1. All contributions are viewed as belonging to the group, to be used or not as the group decides.

A member who makes a suggestion does not need to defend it as “his” or “hers” against others. Instead, everyone accepts responsibility for evaluating it as the group's shared property.

4. All members participate but in different and complementary ways.

When some members fulfill task functions, others perform interpersonal functions. While some members provide information, others ensure it is understood and organized or identify points of agreement and disagreement. Each member does not always participate in the same way. Instead, they fulfill whatever function is appropriate to their interest in the task, their information, and the behavior of other group members.

6. Whenever the group senses it is having trouble getting work done, it tries to find the reason.

Some signs of difficulty include excessive hair-splitting, repeating points repeatedly, proposing ideas that are dismissed without consideration, private conversations within subgroups, two or three people dominating the discussion, members taking sides and refusing to compromise, ideas being attacked before they are fully expressed, and apathetic participation. When these signs appear, the group often shifts from working on the task to discussing its own interpersonal dynamics. Addressing interpersonal issues helps prevent pluralistic ignorance. For example, each member may be confused but believe they are the only one.

7. The group recognizes that what it does is a result of its choices. No group can avoid making decisions; it cannot choose whether to decide, only how to decide. Therefore, an effective group makes decisions openly rather than by default.

When a group faces an issue, it must decide. It may openly agree to act or to take no action. It may also decide by default to take no action. Deciding by default not to act has the same effect on the problem as openly agreeing not to act. However, decisions by default are perceived as failures by group members and cause tensions among them. A group grows more by openly agreeing not to act than by not acting because they could not reach an agreement.

The group sees each decision as a temporary trial that can be made, assessed, and changed based on experience. It understands that each decision doesn't have to be absolute or permanent. When the group decides not to proceed, it recognizes that the real choice was to not act, even if the apparent choice was to act. The group openly explores why the apparent and actual decisions differed. They aim to understand why some members agree with the decision even if they don't feel personally committed to implementing it. The group adopts different decision-making methods depending on the issue and the significance of the outcome. They might vote, assign the decision to a specific subgroup, flip a coin, or require unanimous agreement. The key is that everyone agrees on how decisions are made.

8. The group brings conflict into the open and deals with it.

The members recognize conflict as inevitable. They know the choice is theirs as to whether the conflict will be open (subject to group control) or disguised (out of control).

9. The group looks upon behavior that hinders its work as happening because the group allows or even wants it, not just as the result of a “problem member.”

A person who repeatedly introduces irrelevant topics can only change the subject if others follow his or her lead. Instead of blaming “him” or “her” as the problem, the group sees this as a shared issue. They ask why everyone allows it to happen. Maybe the other members welcome his digressions as a way to avoid open conflict that would arise if the discussion stayed on track. Similarly, the person who talks excessively, jokes too often, continually attacks others, or never participates signals a problem that involves the whole group. The group should discuss it openly as “our problem” to prevent the disruption. The group offers helpful feedback to individuals about how their actions affect the group. However, it does not analyze, dissect, or criticize them harshly.

Mindfulness and Counseling:

Mindful counselors can interact more effectively with their personal and professional environments; they can respond rather than react to life's unexpected happenings; they are more effective communicators both professionally and personally; they are also more creative and effective agents of client-desired change. A routine personal mindfulness practice 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.

Professional Counseling Identity and Behavior:

When registering for classes in the Counseling Program at Rio Grande College, graduate students agree to attend scheduled classes, complete assignments on time, participate in discussions, and engage fully in all experiential learning activities. Counseling faculty members set specific attendance and participation standards for each course. They may impose academic penalties for absences from certain classes or experiences; however, such penalties will be outlined in each course syllabus, distributed at the start of each class, and a copy will be kept in the departmental office.

The Counseling Program has specific policies and procedures that give students a clear, step-by-step path of courses to follow. Students are responsible for knowing and adhering to these policies and procedures. By the time a student joins the Experiential Block, it is expected that they have thoroughly read and understood all policies, procedures, and recommendations in the latest issue of the Counseling Program Handbook. This document covers everything about the Counseling Program, from initial courses to passing the Comprehensive Oral Examination and earning a master's degree in counseling. This is not a single academic program aimed at preparing students for advanced teaching roles or entry-level administrative positions but is instead a completely different profession. Counseling is not suitable for everyone. During their training, some students realize (or are advised by faculty) that counseling may not be the right fit for them or that they are not suited for the field. The faculty of the Counseling Program will provide ongoing, honest, and realistic feedback to each student regarding their progress and suitability for the program.

Unethical behavior, as outlined in the Code of Ethics of the American Counseling Association, by a student enrolled in any counseling course will lead to that student's removal from the Counseling Program at Sul Ross State University and may also result in civil penalties. Professional conduct is expected from every student across all counseling courses; failing to uphold professionalism is itself considered unethical behavior. The Counseling Program treats professional, personal, and academic growth as inseparable parts of counselor education and training. Students are expected not only to succeed academically but also to comply with the professional and ethical standards of the field, demonstrate strong counseling skills and competencies, and attend to their own personal development, since it bears directly on their ability to work effectively and ethically as counseling professionals.

Counseling students are expected to focus on their own social and emotional growth through deep self-reflection and mindfulness. They must be receptive to new and diverse ideas, prepared to examine their core values and assumptions, ready to acknowledge their prejudices and biases, willing to stay present with intense (sometimes painful) emotions that initially trigger the “fight-flight-freeze” response from the primitive limbic system, able to accept critical feedback from peers with an open mind and a compassionate heart, and capable of engaging in personal growth and transformation. Sometimes, this involves exploring one's own life experiences and making room for understanding inner struggles and emotional barriers to growth. Willingness to undertake this vital personal work is a key component of any counselor's professional training.

Therefore, graduation from the Counseling Program requires students to successfully complete both the academic and experiential requirements with careful attention to their professional and personal growth. Students must, in the professional judgment of the faculty and supervisors, understand and act in accordance with the professional standards of conduct, meet the necessary counseling competencies and skills to work effectively as professional counselors, and be free of any psychological or emotional impairments that could hinder effective interpersonal or therapeutic interventions. Throughout the counseling coursework and practical experiences, faculty members regularly evaluate student progress based on these key 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