

PSYCHOLOGY 4318:1 – PERSON-CENTERED PSYCHOLOGY
Fall 2026

INSTRUCTOR:

Dr. James W. Downing

LH 302

Office Hours:

In Person: Wednesdays, 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm,
 Thursdays, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm,
 Fridays, 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Virtual: Wednesdays, 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm,
 Thursdays, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm,
 Fridays, 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm,
 or by appointment

Email: 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:

Di Malta, G., Cooper, M., O'Hara, M., Gollob, Y.,
& Stephan, S. (Eds.) (2024). The handbook
of person-centered psychotherapy and
counseling. (3rd ed.). London: Bloomsbury.

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, 8/25, 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 begin 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, 9/1 & 9/8.

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 1 and should be submitted via Blackboard by 5:30 pm. Subsequent reaction reports are due September 15, & 29, October 13 & 27, November 13, and 24.

-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>
8/25	1	Introduction, Course Overview, & Discussion	
9/1	2	Theoretical Basis of the PCA-I	Rogers, C. (1957) PCH (pgs. 1-16)
9/8	3	Theoretical Basis of the PCA-II	Rogers, C. (1959) PCH (pgs. 17-20)
9/15	4	Theoretical, Historical and Philosophical Foundations-I	PCH (pgs. 21-71)
9/22	5	Theoretical, Historical and Philosophical Foundations-II	PCH (pgs. 72-122)
9/29	6	Theoretical, Historical and Philosophical Foundations-III	PCH (pgs. 123-170)
10/6	7	Therapeutic Practice-I	PCH (pgs. 171-211)
10/13	8	Therapeutic Practice-II	PCH (pgs. 212-251)
10/20	9	Therapeutic Practice-III	PCH (pgs. 252-282)
10/27	10	Client Groups-1	PCH (pgs. 283-315)
11/3	11	Client Groups-II	PCH (pgs. 316-358)
11/10	12	Client Groups-III	PCH (pgs. 359-406)
11/17	13	Professional Issues I	PCH (pgs. 407-462)
11/24	14	Catch-Up Day	
12/1	15	Professional Issues-II	PCH (pgs. 463-506)
12/7		MONDAY! FINAL PRESENTATIONS, 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m., LH 200	

Below you will find the Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) dealt with in this course. The student learning outcomes follow and relate, to a greater or lesser extent, to the SLOs dealt with in the course.

Student Learning Objective (SLO #1)

1. The students will be able to demonstrate competency in the biopsychosocial approach.

Student Learning Objective (SLO #2)

2. The students will be able to demonstrate their critical thinking skills via tasks related to student thought, complexity, and originality.

Student Learning Objective (SLO #3)

3. The students will be able to attain a level of multicultural competency adding to their understanding of the biopsychosocial approach.

Student Learning Outcomes

Required Task-Reaction Reports:

Goal One: The student will demonstrate the ability to engage in the self-expression of emotions by writing weekly reaction reports. (Affective Domain: Respond)

Goal Two: The student will demonstrate value development by reporting an emotion they experienced in the reaction reports. (Affective Domain: Value Development)

Required Task-Journal:

Goal Three: The student will write an evaluation of the readings they complete for the course that will be examined both at the mid-term and the end of the semester. (Cognitive Domain: Evaluation)

Goal Four: The student will demonstrate an awareness of their responsibility for their development as a life-long learner by taking personal responsibility for the volume of readings they complete. (Affective Domain: Value Development)

Required Task-Final Paper or Project:

Goal Five: The student will create an original paper or project that represents their vision of a Person-Centered clinician or counselor. (Psychomotor Domain: Creation)

Goal Six: The student will create an original paper or project within the area of Person-Centered theory that combines their experiential and cognitive learning during the semester. (Cognitive Domain: Synthesis)

Marketable Skills Assessed by the Tasks Completed in this Course

1. Speaking Effectively: Students will demonstrate competency in public speaking and communicating scientific information to diverse audiences.
2. Describing Feelings: Students will demonstrate empathic or active listening and conversational skills, and/or write clearly about their affective stance, respectfully attuned to the needs of their audiences.

3. Identifying Resources: Students will demonstrate the aptitude to locate, organize and evaluate the credibility of information from multiple sources.
4. Analyzing: Students will demonstrate ability to examine the underlying issues of scientific problems, attending to the pertinent details and creating action plans, recognizing ambiguity and complexity as essential components. Students will communicate effectively in writing.

Libraries

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine. Offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LobolD and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

Disabilities Act Statement

SRSU Disability Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with 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. Alpine students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203 (please leave a message and we'll get back to you as soon as we can during working hours). Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall (Room 112), and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

Academic Integrity:

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: Turning in 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; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden.

SPECIAL NOTATION FOR EDUCATION STUDENTS:

I know that some education students may take this course. This course addresses some of the objectives of the TExES Exam for the subject area of social science, which includes a psychology portion. Specifically, this course may address the following objectives, among others.

Domain III

Geography, Culture, and the Behavioral and Social Sciences

Competency 13 (Social, Anthropological, and Psychological Concepts and Processes)

The teacher applies sociological, anthropological, and psychological concepts and processes to understand cultural formation and change, intergroup relations, and individual development.

- Demonstrates knowledge of the history and theoretical foundations of psychology.
- Demonstrates knowledge of the behavioral, social, cognitive, and personality perspectives of human learning.
- Understands basic psychological principles including those related to motivation, sensation and perception, personality, relationships between biology and behavior, and relationships between the self and others.

The interested student is informed that for full information concerning the TExES exam in education concerning psychology as a part of the social sciences, they should contact the SRSU Education Department for materials concerning test preparation and administration. It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of this course if he or she is a candidate for the exam. If so, the instructor can guide them to resources that will assist with their exam preparation.