



CO 705 Counselling Ethics Winter 2026

Professor: Jesse Schellenberg
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Course Dates: February 16-20, 2026
Course Delivery Method: Online

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A survey of ethical, legal, and professional issues within the counselling profession. The course will explore issues of boundaries, informed consent, confidentiality, and legal demands.

COURSE INTEGRATION

This course is an integral part of the counselling program, taking the highest view of the need for counselling practices that affirm the dignity of the person, and the requirement of providing the best possible care in counselling (SO #1; MACC/MACFT #3). This course will seek to aid students in the ethical practice of psychotherapy as an expression of their Christian faith (SO #1 & 3). This course meets a requirement of professional associations in Canada for the practice of counselling (MACC/MACFT #3).

COURSE TEXTS

Kindle versions of these texts are acceptable

1) Brown, K.S. (Ed.). (2024). *Systemic Ethics Textbook*. American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy.

Note: this text is available as an eBook only and [can be purchased here](#).

2) Yalom, I.D. (1989). *Love's Executioner & Other Tales of Psychotherapy*. Harper Collins Publishers.

Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents here: <https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/seminary-life/documents>.

These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/seminary-life/bookstore>.

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

SEMINARY-WIDE OUTCOMES

Students will graduate:

1. Describing and demonstrating evangelical faith and values.
2. Preparing to serve God's kingdom in its diversity. Describe God, God's kingdom, and your calling (vocational sensitivity) within it, including the types of contexts and people you feel best prepared to serve.

3. Participating in the action of our Triune God through formation of the soul (i.e., virtue and spiritual integrity), mind (academic rigor), and strength (vocation).

Program Outcomes for MACC/MACFT

1. Students and graduates will demonstrate a systemic* and strength-focused perspective on people and their problems.
2. Students and graduates will demonstrate competence in a client-centered, collaborative therapeutic approach.
3. Students and graduates will demonstrate ethical clinical practice.
4. Students and graduates will take a reflective stance in their clinical work.

Additional Program Outcome for MACFT

5. Students and graduates will demonstrate skills in working with couples and families to improve their relationship quality.

COURSE OUTCOMES

1. The student will consider the issues involved in developing a theological and philosophical foundation for ethical decision-making, an understanding of ethical issues pertinent to the field of Marriage and Family Therapy, counselling and psychotherapy, and an understanding of legal requirements incumbent upon professional therapists.
2. The student will develop a commitment to the practice of high ethical principles and will gain a sense of strength that comes from consistent ethical practice.
3. The student will develop an ability to think systematically through the steps involved in making ethical decisions.
4. The student will gain sensitivity to the prominence of ethical issues in the work of counselling.
5. The student will gain ethical competence for working with minority groups according to the TRC proposals for working with members of Indigenous and First Nations population.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

- 1) Counselling Ethics
- 2) Person of the Therapist Issues and Counselling Ethics
- 3) Client Rights
- 4) Managing Boundaries and Multiple Relationships
- 5) Working with Minority Clients
- 6) Ethics in Theory and Practice
- 7) Ethical Issues in Couple and Family Therapy

ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

Pre-Course Assignments:

1) Reading Response #1, 20%, 8 pages (MACC/MACFT #1,3,4; SO #3):

Students will read the *Systemic Ethics Textbook* and write a thoughtful response that engages with the material in the following chapters (1-14, 17, 19, 22, 24-27, 34). *This is not intended as a book review,*

though the text should be referenced throughout. Questions to be answered may include but not be limited to: what ethical issues might you find particularly difficult to navigate in therapy? How might you go about resolving these issues when they arise? How does your faith inform your understanding of ethics in counselling? What areas of your faith might conflict with the practice of counselling and how will you navigate this conflict in therapy?

Due the first day of class: February 16, 2026

2) Reading Response #2, 15%, 4 pages (MACC/MACFT #3 & 4; SO #1 & 3):

Students will read *all* of *Love's Executioner* and then respond to 4 chapters of their choosing. This is not intended as a book review though the text should be referenced throughout. Students will identify what ethical issues they feel are present, how they would presently navigate these issues, and how their Christian ethics inform their decision making.

Due the first day of class: February 16, 2026

Mid-Course Assignments:

3) Online postings, 5% (100-250 words per post; MACC/MACFT #4):

At the end of each class, students will post a response in the online discussion form, reflecting on the information and activities of the day. Students will additionally post a thoughtful response to one of their cohorts' reflections.

4) Final Exams, 15% (MACC/MACFT #1, 3, 4):

Students will perform an in-class written exam on the last day. In groups, and using the course material, students will watch a film of the professor's choice and analyze the movie's characters and ethical conduct.

Post-Course Assignments:

5) Membership, 5%:

Students will become members of a regulatory counselling body. Most regulatory associations will have student memberships which can be obtained. Students should try to become members of their provincial regulatory body but in some instances, this is not possible. Students will submit verification to the professor via Canvas. Some suggested associations are listed below.

Due March 20, 2026

Canadian Association for Couple and Family Therapy

<https://cacft.ca/>

Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association

<https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/>

6) Ethical Issue, 10%, 1 page (MACC/MACFT #3, 4):

Students will propose an ethical dilemma for their major paper and submit it to the professor for approval. Students will also identify 5 resources in a preliminary bibliography.

Due March 30, 2026

7) Ethical Issues Paper, 30%, 10-12 pages (MACC/MACFT #1, 3, 4; SO #2):

In the ethical issues paper, the student is to apply the ethical codes and moral principles as discussed in class and in the text to a specific problem in therapy. The length of the paper should be

10 – 12 pages. Any papers over 12 pages will be deducted 10% for each page over the limit. Learning to be concise is an important skill. This paper is intended to evaluate a specific ethical dilemma; it is NOT intended to provide a theoretical discourse or philosophical treatise. Students will use the CACFT and CCPA as their standards.

The following outline is intended to guide your thoughts and to ensure a minimum degree of organization and theoretical integrity to your paper. Note that these headings are steps to process any ethical decision. Please emulate these headings in your paper.

A. Statement of the Issues

- 1) Include the importance of this topic from your perspective. (1)
- 2) Identify and briefly discuss the ethical dimensions of the problem according to text and class notes and whether legal consultation is appropriate. (2)

B. Literature Review

- 1) Identify the typical kinds of issues and problems encountered in your area of concern. (5)
- 2) Identify the moral and spiritual principles generally applied. (1)
- 3) Compare and Contrast Opinions (3)
- 4) A minimum of 5 recent and relevant journal articles should be cited. (2)

C. Conclusion and Summary

- 1) Evaluate and draw conclusions about the literature and the resolutions; be evaluative, not descriptive. (3)
- 2) Identify all possible courses of action with attention to their implications. (3)
- 3) Using the ethical decision-making steps listed in the text and in class, identify your preferred course of action. Argue your conclusions. (5)

D. Comprehensive and Grammatical style, APA style, etc. (-5)

Due April 17, 2026

SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current [Seminary Calendar](#).

Attendance Policy

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

Modular Courses

Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Online Courses

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Semester-Based Courses

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

Modular Course Schedules

Modular classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

Assignment Submission

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

Return of Graded Assignments

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

Academic Honesty

As members of the Briercrest learning community, students have a responsibility to conduct themselves with integrity and honour. Students who cheat on exams, plagiarize, inappropriately collaborate, or use generative AI without instructor authorization violate the trust placed in them by their instructors, fellow students, and the seminary. Any such actions constitute a breach of academic honesty and will result in serious consequences, such as failure of an assignment, failure of a course, or expulsion from the seminary.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or involuntary, is the submission of the work of others, published or unpublished, in whole or in part without acknowledgment or proper documentation. All information, ideas and/or direct quotations taken from other primary or secondary sources must be documented appropriately.

Generative AI is an umbrella term for a type of machine learning and a group of algorithms that can create new content, such as text, code, images, videos, music, or a combination of all these formats. Generative AI produces output in response to a query or prompt using generative models such as Large Language Models (LLMs) that rely on large datasets. Generative AI

features are also often embedded within tools such as Grammarly, allowing these tools to generate new content, such as the rewriting, paraphrasing, or summarizing of existing text. The generated responses of these tools are probabilistic, which can result in errors and biases in responses.

The use of generative AI to create audio or visual media, to produce outlines, to generate partial or complete drafts of assignments, to answer questions on quizzes or exams, or to edit the grammar of assignment drafts is considered unauthorized unless it is explicitly permitted by the course instructor in writing. All use of generative AI tools must be properly documented.

Students are responsible for ensuring they are using their sources and completing their assignments with transparency and honesty. For more details, consult the [Seminary Calendar](#) and the Briercrest Format Guide. In addition to being familiar with these pages, instructors assume that you have completed the Briercrest Academic Integrity course on [Canvas](#) and understand the information contained in it.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition (mental or physical) who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should contact the ARC Coordinator in person (L234 in the Library), by phone (1-306-801-6159), or by email (arc@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.). It is recommended that students meet with their professors to discuss the requirements of their accommodations (i.e., how the student will receive lecture notes, or how the professor wants to receive extension requests).