BRIERCREST SEMINARY

CO 703 Counselling Skills and Procedures
Winter 2026

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Course Dates: April 13-17, 2026
Course Delivery Method: In-Person Modular on campus

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of counselling interventions from several therapeutic perspectives. This course will cover essential skills in family therapy, the counselling process from intake to termination, and emergency procedures in mental health practice.

Prerequisite: CO 603 Foundations of Systemic Therapy

COURSE INTEGRATION

This course seeks to fulfill Briercrest Seminary-wide Outcome (SO) #2 by prompting students to think about their vocation of counselling as embodiment of their faith. This course also seeks to fulfill SO#3 by considering the vocation of counselling as participating in God's work of bringing hope and healing.

In seeking to fulfill the Master of Counselling (MC) /Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy (MAMFT) Program Outcomes (PO) by building upon learning from CO 603 Foundations of Systemic Therapy, this course enables students to articulate their emerging therapeutic stance, to utilize counselling microskills, and to understand each stage of the therapeutic process and how to engage effectively in each (MC/MAMFT PO#1). This course helps students understand the application of ethical practice in crisis intervention and to a case study (MC/MAMFT and MACC/MACFT PO #2 and #3). This course also seeks to fulfill MC/MAMFT Program Outcome #3 by meeting the CCPA requirement of training in counselling/communication skills and/or CACFT requirement of therapeutic skills (MC/MAMFT and MACC/MACFT PO #3).

COURSE TEXTS

Alberta Health Services (2016) *Enhancing concurrent capability: Comprehensive assessment.* Retrieved on June 11, 2020 from https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/amh/if-amh-ecc-comprehensive-assessment.pdf

Brown, J. E. (1997). The question cube: A model for developing question repertoire in training couple and family therapists. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 23*, 1, 27-40.

Combs, G., & Freedman, J. (2012). Narrative, poststructuralism, and social justice: Current practices in narrative therapy. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 40(7), 1033-1060. **(available through Canvas)**

D'Aniello, C., Piercy, F., Dolbin-MacNab, P., & Perkins, M. (2019). How clients of marriage and family therapists make decisions about therapy discontinuation and persistence. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 41*(1), 1-11.

Freedman, J. (2019). The Willow and the oak: Introduction to the classic article. *Journal of Systemic Therapies,* 38(1), 61-61. **(available through Canvas)**

Miller, W. R. and Moyers, T. B. (2021). *Effective Psychotherapists: Clinical skills that improve client outcomes.* The Guildford Press.

Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2023). Chapter one: The mind and heart when helping. In *Motivational interviewing: Helping people change and grow*. *(4thed.)* (pp 1-14). Guilford Publications. **(available through Canvas)**

Pare, D., & Lysack, M. (2004). The willow and the oak: From monologue to dialogue in the scaffolding of therapeutic conversations. *Journal of Systemic Therapies,23*(1), 6-20.

Patterson, J., Williams, L., Edwards, T., Chamow, L., Grauf-Grounds, C. (2018). Essential skills in family therapy: From the first interview to termination (3rd ed.). The Guilford Press.

Poole, Nancy, & Greaves, Lorraine. (2012). *Becoming Trauma Informed*. (pp. xi – 36 only) Canada: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. **(available through Canvas)**

Walker, M. (2001). Practical applications of the Rogerian perspective in postmodern psychotherapy. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 20(2), 41.

Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's APA 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 rigour), and strength (vocation).

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PROGRAM OUTCOMES (PO) MACC AND MACFT
Students and graduates will:
1. Demonstrate a systemic and strength-focused perspective on people and their problems.
2. Demonstrate competence in a client-centred, collaborative therapeutic approach.
3. Demonstrate ethical clinical practice.
4. Take a reflective stance in their clinical work.
Additional PO MACFT ONLY
5. Demonstrate skills in working with couples and families to improve their relationship quality.

COURSE OUTCOMES

- Students will understand therapeutic stance, how it affects all of therapy and reflect on their own emerging stance
- Students will understand the processes and procedures for the beginning, middle and end of therapy
- Students will acquire and practice a variety of therapeutic skills through role play, discuss situations in which to use them and how they may be used differently depending on therapeutic approach
- Students will learn about crisis interventions and practice suicide screening

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

DAY	TOPIC	SUPPORTING RESOURCES
Monday	INTRODUCTION THERAPEUTIC STANCE • Client-centred • Strength-based • Systemic • Collaborative • Influential • Trauma-informed	Becoming Trauma Informed, pp. xi-36 Motivational interviewing: Helping people change (3rd ed.) Chapter two, pp. 14-24 Narrative, poststructuralism, and social justice: Current practices in narrative therapy Practical applications of the Rogerian perspective in postmodern psychotherapy

	THERAPEUTIC PROCESS & PROCEDURES
	• Throughout therapy
	  o Professional behaviour
	  o File keeping
	  o Supervision
		Essential Skills in Family Therapy: From the First Interview to Termination

Tuesday	THERAPEUTIC PROCESS & PROCEDURES (continued)
	• Beginning
	  o Engaging client
	  o Understanding client
	• Middle
	  o Collaborating with client
	• End
	  o Evaluating goals and effectiveness of treatment
	  o Terminating
		Enhancing concurrent capability: Comprehensive assessment
		
		Essential Skills in Family Therapy: From the First Interview to Termination
		
		How clients of marriage and family therapists make decisions about therapy discontinuation and persistence

Wednesday	THERAPEUTIC SKILLS • Non-verbal skills	Essential Skills in Family Therapy: From the First Interview to Termination

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	• Verbal skills	Effective Psychotherapists: Clinical skills that improve client outcomes Narrative, poststructuralism, and social justice: Current practices in narrative therapy Practical applications of the Rogerian perspective in postmodern psychotherapy The willow and the oak: From monologue to dialogue in the scaffolding of therapeutic conversations The question cube: A model for developing question repertoire in training couple and family therapists
Thursday	THERAPEUTIC SKILLS (continued) • Crisis intervention • Systemic interventions	Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale Essential Skills in Family Therapy: From the First Interview to Termination
Friday	BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER	

ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas following Briercrest's APA guide. **Please note: The use of AI, such as Grammarly, can only be used for final editing of the two papers and the case study. AI cannot be used with the Intake/ Assessment Forms, and it cannot be used for any outline or content creation for any of the assignments. Acknowledgement of any AI use must be included in the assignment as per the Academic Honesty policy.**

1. **Therapeutic Stance Paper** (SO#1, SO#3, PO#1, PO#2)
   Considering the required reading, write a 4-page paper on your emerging therapeutic stance, discussing key perspectives and values that resonated with you about the 'way of being' you hope to embody when working with clients.

   Your paper should consider and cite, perspectives and values discussed in Miller, W. R. and Moyers, T. B. (2021) Ch 2-6; Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2023); and Poole, Nancy, & Greaves, Lorraine. (2012). Also, integrate how the values discussed in your emerging therapeutic stance relate to your biblical anthropology and theological values (material covered in CO 603 i.e., humanity created in God's image and also fallen).

   Please ensure your paper is structured around the key points of your emerging therapeutic stance (and not as a review of texts/sources) with clear introduction, body paragraphs that address each point, and a concluding paragraph (see https://libguides.usask.ca/ld.php?content_id=33978869 for basic essay structure).
   Due: April 11, 2026   Value: 15%

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2. **Beginning Therapy Paper** (PO#2, PO#3)
    Write a 3 to 4-page paper (following basic essay structure), with reference to the below mentioned sources, responding to the question of "How can you gather relevant intake and assessment information at the beginning of therapy in a client-centred and collaborative manner?"

    Your paper should consider and cite Miller, W. R. and Moyers, T. B. (2021), Patterson, J., et al. (2018) Ch 2-4, and Alberta Health Services (2016).
    Due: April 11, 2026   Value: 15%

3. **Reading:** Read all required texts, articles, and chapters.
    Due: April 12, 2026

4. **Intake and Assessment Forms** (PO#2, PO#3)
    Considering guidance from Patterson et al. (2018) ch. 3-4 and Alberta Health Services (2016), create an intake form and an assessment question guide based on what information you believe is important to collect, ensuring you balance depth of information collection with usefulness to the therapeutic process. Indicate, in a statement at the beginning of each document, how each will be used (i.e., Intake form – completed independently by the client and submitted or by telephone with the counsellor entering the client responses). Your intake form and assessment guide will be used for the post-course assignment. Please cite any sources used to inform the development of your intake form and assessment guide.
    1. Intake form (Word or PDF)
    2. Assessment question guide (Word or PDF)

    Draft* Due: April 12, 2026
    *You must have this submitted as it will be used for a class activity. You will be able to revise the components of this assignment after some class discussion/activities.
    Final Due: April 14, 2026   Value: 10%

Post-Course Assignments:

1. **PARTIAL Case Study and Self Review** (PO#1, PO#2, PO#3, PO#4)
    Following the full instructions for post-course assignment #2 (see below), submit the following components of your Case Study for self-review and professor feedback:
    1. Description of the client
    2. First contact
    3. First session:
        a. First session description
        b. Metacognition description
        c. Progress note

    Draft due: **May 11, 2026**

    Self-Review: Review your submitted draft based on the checklist provided in Canvas. Review the checklist and an example assignment provided. Following the instructions in the checklist and using Word track changes, submit a revised draft addressing any issues to improve it.

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Revised draft based on self-review Due: May 14, 2026
Value: 15%

2. **Case Study:** (PO#1, PO#2, PO#3, PO#4)

The purpose of this assignment is to treat a case in order to demonstrate understanding of the therapeutic stance, process, procedures, and skills of a counsellor.

Each student will write a case study based upon an imaginary counselling situation with a client. Non-identifiable aspects of an actual situation from your life or a situation known to you can be used but ensure you do NOT identify any individuals.

As you work through the steps of the assignment, *use your imagination to create a full description* of the client and your counselling sessions with them to help you complete the various elements. The case study will include the following elements and should clearly follow this outline, in this order in the paper:
1. **Description of the client:** Written description of the client including current situation, family structure and reason for coming to counselling (1 page).
2. **First contact:** Written description of your first contact with the client to initiate therapy, *focusing on your actions* as a therapist as you worked to engage and understand the client contacting you (1-2 page).
3. **Intake form:** Completed intake form. Indication in either first contact or first session description of how the intake information was collected.
4. **First session:**
    i. **First session description:** Written description of your first session with the client *focusing on how you* conducted the session to engage the client, complete informed consent, gather information to understand the client and determine if the client would like to return. (2-3 pages)
    ii. **Metacognition description:** Written description of your metacognition about the client and the problems they face, including client strengths and resources, initial thoughts and further curiosities about the client informed by theoretical or therapeutic concepts such as cultural considerations; family life cycle; family systems theory; attachment needs; or Biblical anthropology and theological principles. (2-3 pages):
    iii. **Progress note:** Completed progress note following the DAP format (1-1.5 pages).
5. **Second session:**
    i. **Second session description:** Written description of your client-centred "assessment" session *focusing on how you* conducted the session to complete the assessment form and genogram (2-3 pages). (Assume that you are able to "assess" and understand the family in the first two sessions, even though some clients will take longer than this).
    ii. **Assessment form:** Completed assessment form.
    iii. **Genogram:** Completed genogram with relationship lines.
    iv. **Metacognition description**: Written description of your metacognition about the case including hypothesis about the problem(s) the client is facing (informed by theoretical/therapeutic factors mentioned above in 4.ii.), growing insight into

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client strengths, potential unique outcomes, and opportunities for change (2-3 pages).

    v. **Progress note:** Completed progress note following the DAP format (1-1.5 pages).

6. **Third session:**

    i. **Third session description:** Written description of your collaborative "treatment planning" session *focusing on how you* conducted the session to arrive at a shared family goal(s), shared your insights and recommendations and came to agreement on a treatment plan (2-3 pages).

    ii. **Metacognition description**: Written description of your metacognition about future sessions with the client and the theoretical direction of your treatment approach focusing one (or more) of the following (2-3 pages):

        1. Systemic approach;
        2. Narrative therapy approach;
        3. Emotionally-focused/attachment approach;
        4. Solution-focused approach; and/or
        5. Other therapeutic approaches.

    iii. **Progress note:** Completed progress note following the DAP format (1-1.5 pages).

Due: June 12, 2026   **Value: 45%**

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.

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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

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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).

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