



CO 714 Counselling Theories and Systemic Approaches Winter 2026

Professor: Brianna Matchett

Email: bmatchett@briercrest.ca

Phone: 403-703-5019

Course Dates: January 12 – April 16, 2026

Course Delivery Method: Online

Asynchronous learning on Canvas: weekly x 2 hours

Synchronous Zoom classes: Tuesdays 3:15- 4:30pm (SK time)

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This survey course looks at a variety of current approaches to counselling and psychotherapy. It includes an extensive survey of systemic approaches, including the influence of postmodern ideas on this work. The course is intended to provide a broad background in systemic approaches for students of counselling and for others interested in the theological, philosophical, and technical bases of systems theory.

COURSE INTEGRATION

There are over 400 different approaches and techniques dedicated to helping people change through counselling. This survey course will look at a variety of the major current approaches to counselling and psychotherapy.

This course prompts students to think about their vocation of counselling as embodiment of their faith (Seminary-wide Outcome SO #2). This course invites students to consider the vocation of counselling as participating in God's work of bringing hope and healing and helping bring peace and connection in family relationships (SO #3). This counselling theory survey course meets Master of Arts in Couple and Family Therapy and Master of Arts in Clinical Counselling Program Outcome #1 as it provides knowledge of major counselling models and key theories, including systemic and developmental aspects.

COURSE TEXTS

Bailey, Russell J., and Ogles, Benjamin M. (2023). Common Factors Therapy: A Principle Based Treatment Framework. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

McMinn, Mark, R., and Campbell, Clark D. (2017). Integrative Psychotherapy: Toward a Comprehensive Christian Approach. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

Messer, S. B., & Kaslow, N. J. (Eds.). (2020). Essential psychotherapies: Theory and Practice (4th ed.). Guilford Press.

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 rigour), and strength (vocation).

COURSE OUTCOMES

1. Historical knowledge of basic types of approaches to helping people change.
2. Practice in the discipline of thinking systemically about people, their problems, and solutions.
3. An evaluative understanding of these various approaches, especially in the comparison between individualistic and family systems approaches in order to appreciate the complexity of systemic approaches.
4. Development of ideas about how to think about how change happens for people.
5. Appreciation for the creativity used to develop the various systems and approaches.
6. Curiosity about the larger field of psychotherapy.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

Date	Outline	Required Readings
Pre-course reading	Introduction	McMinn & Campbell Text Messer Ch. 1, Bailey Intro
January 13	Introduction & Psychoanalytic Therapy	Messer Ch. 2
January 20	Psychodynamic Therapy	Messer Ch. 3, Bailey Ch. 1
January 27	Behaviour Therapy	Messer Ch. 4
February 3	Cognitive Therapy	Messer Ch. 5, Bailey Ch. 2
February 10	Third-wave Therapy	Messer Ch. 6
February 17	Reading Break - No Class	
February 24	Person-centered	Messer Ch. 7, Bailey Ch. 3
March 3	Existential Therapies	Messer Ch. 8
March 10	Family Therapies	Messer Ch.9, Bailey Ch. 4
March 17	Couples Therapies	Messer Ch.10
March 24	Group Psychotherapies	Messer Ch. 11, Bailey Ch. 5
March 31	Interpersonal Psychotherapies	Messer Ch. 12

April 7	Integrative Approaches	Messer Ch. 13, Bailey Ch. 6
April 14	No Class	

ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

Pre-Course Assignments:**Integrative Psychotherapy Reflection Paper (15%)**

This assignment ensures students begin the course with a foundational understanding of the key themes in McMinn and Campbell's Integrative Psychotherapy. Students will summarize the central ideas of the text, reflect on the challenges of integrating Christian and psychological perspectives, and consider implications for Christian counselling practice.

Length: 3–4 pages

Due: January 12, 2026

Mid-Course Assignments:**Commonplace Book (30% [2 × 15%])**

A commonplace book is a compilation of knowledge, ideas, quotations, and observations collected by an individual. It serves as a digital notebook to organize and reflect on insights from readings, lectures, and discussions throughout the course.

Requirements:

1. Students will read the assigned sections of course readings (indicating the percentage completed).
2. Students will compile 1–3 pages of properly formatted reflections, quotations, and observations each week.
3. Students will complete entries in preparation for each class session, using the same commonplace book throughout the course.
4. The commonplace book will be submitted for grading twice.
5. Students may revise and refine their entries throughout the semester until each submission.

The commonplace book will demonstrate the student's engagement with course material and integration of ideas across readings and lectures.

Due: March 3 & April 16, 2026

Discussion Posts (15%)

Each student is responsible for actively participating in the weekly online discussion forum. Discussions are designed to promote critical thinking, meaningful engagement with the course readings, and dialogue with peers.

Posting Questions:

- Students will post two discussion questions during their assigned week, based on the course readings.

- Questions should invite critical analysis, reflection, and connection-making rather than yes/no answers.

Engagement:

- During their assigned posting week, students are expected to engage substantively with classmates' responses.
- During other weeks, students will respond thoughtfully to peers' posted questions.

Expectations:

- Responses should demonstrate engagement with the readings and contribute meaningfully to the ongoing conversation.
- Respectful, constructive, and collegial interaction is required.

Post-Course Assignments:

Final Integrative Paper (40%)

Students will write a paper integrating concepts from Bailey and Ogles' *Common Factors in Psychotherapy* with two or three therapeutic approaches from *Essential Psychotherapies*. The paper will demonstrate an understanding of how both common and model-specific factors contribute to therapeutic change, highlighting each approach's unique perspective, techniques, and view of people and problems. Students will analyze how these elements align or contrast with the common factors framework and consider implications for Christian counselling practice. Strong papers will show critical engagement, clear synthesis, and thoughtful integration of faith and theory.

Length: 8–10 pages

Due: May 7, 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).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bailey, Russell J., and Ogles, Benjamin M. (2023). *Common Factors Therapy: A Principle Based Treatment Framework*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Botkin, D. R. (2000). Family play therapy: A creative approach to including young children in family therapy. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 19(3), 31–42.

Bowen, C., & Madill, A. (2002). Parental accounts of blaming within the family: A dialectical model for understanding blame in systemic therapy. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, 28(2), 129–144.

Campbell, T. L. (2003). The effectiveness of family interventions for physical disorders. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, 29(2), 263–282.

Corey, C. (2017). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy*. Cengage Learning.

Driessen, H. P. A., Morsink, S., Busschbach, J. J. V., Hoogendijk, W. J. G., & Kranenburg, L. W. (2024). Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) treatment in the medical setting: A systematic review. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 15(1), 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/20008066.2024.2341577>

Doku Asare, E. P., Kushitor, S. B., Sutherland, E. K., Ofori Boateng, M., & Manortey, S. (2024). Knowledge and use of art therapy for mental health treatment among clinical psychologists. *PLoS ONE*, 19(5), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0303246>

Erford, B. T. (2020). *45 techniques every counselor should know*. Pearson.

Fox, F., Wiles, N., Kessler, D., Tallon, D., Thomas, L., Williams, C., Shafran, R., Lanham, P., & Turner, K. (2024). Patients' and therapists' views of integrated online CBT for depression. *Health Expectations*, 27(4), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.70002>

Gelo, O. C. G., & Salvatore, S. (2016). A dynamic systems approach to psychotherapy: A meta-theoretical framework for explaining psychotherapy change processes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 63(4), 379–395. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000150>

Gladding, S. T. (2019). *Family therapy: History, theory and practice*. Pearson.

Halbur, D., & Halbur, K. V. (2019). *Developing your theoretical orientation for counseling and psychotherapy*. Pearson.

Hatoum, A. H., & Burton, A. L. (2024). Applications and efficacy of radically open dialectical behavior therapy (RO DBT): A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.23735>

Hubble, M., Duncan, B., & Miller, S. (Eds.). (2010). *The heart and soul of change: Delivering what works in therapy* (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association.

Jodry, J., & Levitt, R. B. (2023). Feminist counseling theory and spirituality: Beyond patriarchal religious constructs. *Counseling & Values*, 68(1), 18–37. <https://doi.org/10.1163/2161007X-68010003>

Madsen, W. (1999). *Collaborative therapy with multi-stressed families: From old problems to new futures*. Guilford.

Messer, S. B., & Kaslow, N. J. (Eds.). (2020). *Essential psychotherapies: Theory and Practice* (4th ed.). Guilford Press.

McMinn, Mark, R., and Campbell, Clark D. (2017). *Integrative Psychotherapy: Toward a Comprehensive Christian Approach*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

Newcombe, B. C., Olthuis, J. V., MacLean, M., Hamilton, R., & McAulay, T. (2024). CBT + exercise vs treatment as usual in treating anxiety and depression in university students: A pilot study. *Journal of College Student Mental Health*, 38(2), 311–327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/87568225.2023.2181255>

Norcross, John C., Prochaska, Judith J., and Prochaska, James O. (2024). *Systems of Psychotherapy: A Transtheoretical Analysis*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Renger, S. (2023). Therapists' views on the use of questions in person-centred therapy. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 51(2), 238–250. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2021.1900536>

Rober, P. (2002). Constructive hypothesizing, dialogic understanding, and the therapist's inner conversation: Some ideas about knowing and not knowing in the family therapy session. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, 28(4), 467–478.

Short, F., & Thomas, P. (2015). *Core approaches in counselling and psychotherapy*. Routledge.

Smith, G. L. (1998). The present state and future of symbolic-experiential family therapy: A post-modern analysis. *Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal*, 20(2), 147–161. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1025073324868>

Wastell, C. A. (1996). Feminist developmental theory: Implications for counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 74(6), 575–581. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1996.tb02295>.