



CO 714 Counselling Theories and Systemic Approaches Winter 2026

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Course Dates: January 5-9, 2026
Course Delivery Method: Online Modular

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

Hubble, Mark, Barry Duncan & Scott Miller, Eds. (2010). *The Heart and Soul of Change: Delivering What Works in Therapy* (2nd ed.). 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.

Halbur, Duane, A., & Vess Halbur, Kimberly. (2011). *Developing Your Theoretical Orientation in Counselling and Psychotherapy* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Pearson.

Mental Health Commission of Canada www.mentalhealthcommission.ca

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

- Introductory knowledge of the most common therapeutic approaches in counselling psychology.
- An understanding of each presented theory's history, founder and key concepts.
- Application of the theory in practice through an example method.
- An awareness of an eclectic therapeutic approach and what makes therapy effective.
- Nomenclature surrounding continuing education and where to find more information on an approach that appeals to the learner.
- An awareness of how to choose a counselling system from a personal stand point and where to begin that training.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

1. Effective Therapy
2. Psychodynamic Theory
3. Adlerian Theory
4. Existential Theory
5. Person-Centered Theory
6. Gestalt Theory
7. Behaviour Theory
8. Cognitive Behaviour Theory
9. Feminist Theory
10. Post Modern Approaches

Each lecture will briefly summarize the history of the theory and its founders, introduce key concepts of the approach, the therapeutic relationship as a part of the theory, introduce its modern application with an example, if time a demonstration of a method/ technique pioneered by the theory and finally observe the approach being used through media sources.

ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

Pre-course: The pre-course assignment is due on Monday, January 5, 2026.

Study the website of the Mental Health Commission of Canada and write a review of the issues it tackles, policies it promotes, and the resources that it offers.

Length: 3-4 pages. **Value: 10%**

Post-course: All assignments are due on Friday, March 6, 2026.

1. Write a reflective paper on the chapters in *The Heart and Soul of Change* that discuss the common factors, and reflect on the significance of these ideas for counselling. Also, reflect on the latter sections of the book as well. The intention of this assignment is to lead you to some reflection on the meta-issues of counselling and psychotherapy, such as the factors that produce change, what it is that changes in counselling, and what the overall vision of the results of change might be, so that you will be able to think more thoroughly about each of the other approaches, rather than “being blown and tossed by the wind” (James 1:6) of every new idea.

Length: 6-8 pages. **Value: 30%**

2. Write a paper summarizing the ideas presented by McMinn and Campbell. Specifically, consider the issues involved in the integration of Christian and psychological resources for the work of counselling, and their application in symptom-focused, schema-focused, and relationship-focused interventions.

Length: 6-8 pages. **Value: 30%**

3. Read chapters one through four of *Developing Your Theoretical Orientation in Counselling and Psychotherapy* by Halbur and Vess Halbur (2011) and complete the reflection questions and activities throughout. Record your answers listing both the question and your answer in a word document in APA formatting. Complete the Selective Theory Sorter-Revised on pages 32-36 but do not list each answer for this in the word document, only the results to question three on page 37. Finally, end the assignment with a paragraph providing feedback on whether you found this activity helpful in deciding on a theoretical orientation and why. Did your leanings change at all after completing the course and assignment work, and if yes, how so? Include concrete examples. **Value: 30%**

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).