University of St. Thomas  
Houston, Texas  
Counselor Education Department  
COUN 6302 - Current Issues in Counseling  
Fall, 2015

Instructor: Sneha Nayar-Bhalerao, Ph.D., LPC-Intern

Office Hours: By appointment only  
Email: nayars@stthom.edu  
Office Phone: (713)-831-7242  
Cell Phone: (708)-714-1715

Class Time: Wednesday 5:00pm – 8:00pm  
Location: SanJacinto, Pasedena, Texas

Required Text Book:


Required for All Writing Assignments in All Classes


The University of Purdue, online APA formatting and style guide. Retrieved from: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Social Justice Teachings of the Catholic Church

*Subsidiarity:* Integrated in each course in the Counselor Education program is a sense of community. Students are guided to respect different perspectives within normed views. By using case study samples, students are exposed to varying situations not otherwise experienced.

*Dignity and rights of children:* The dignity and rights of all University of St. Thomas counseling program students along with the grade school students in which they work with receive confidentiality, respect, and appropriate supervision.

*People have a right to an education:* Equality is a major theme integrated in the Counselor Education program. In each course *equality* is stressed as evidenced in courses such as, however not limited to, Cultural Foundations and Multicultural Populations.
General Description of Course

This course examines current issues and trends that are of concern to professional counselors with an emphasis on crisis, trauma, disaster, suicide, and geriatric counseling. This course will provide opportunities for research and practice. Role playing and presentations are required.

COUN 6302, Current Issues in Counseling involve three equally important components, namely, cognitive, affective, and behavioral:

1. Cognitive – The cognitive components of this course include, but are not limited to, organizing, researching, integrating, creating, writing, and entering into academic, professional conversations with peers and professor in a learning community. Students will acquire knowledge, abilities, and skills related to current issues and trends in counseling including, but not limited to, crisis counseling, counseling older adults, college counseling, clients whose first language is not English, and counseling special populations.

2. Affective – The affective components of this course include, but are not limited to, bringing life experiences to the table when they enhance the dialogue, keeping journals on reflections regarding the experiences of taking this course, and identifying and sharing appropriately feelings with peers and professor. Students will classify and analyze feelings, attitudes, and perceptions toward counseling as a potential profession. Students will also become cognizant of feelings, attitudes, and perceptions toward potential clients who are different from themselves.

3. Behavioral – The behavioral components of this course include, but are not limited to, demonstrating appropriate boundary setting, self-disclosure, completing assignments with Masters Level Work, and performing with integrity at all times. The capstone behavioral experience is the successful completion of a comprehensive, in-class, final examination. Students will develop increased knowledge, abilities, and skills in counseling as related to legal and ethical practice. Students will also, become acquainted with professional organizations in the areas of counseling of special interest to students.

Learning Outcomes

COUN 6302, Current Issues in Counseling course will allow students to:

1. Recognize the well-known issues and trends found in the dominant discourse;
2. Demonstrate knowledge regarding general characteristics and responses to crises, traumas, and disasters;
3. Demonstrate knowledge regarding crisis prevention and planning principles and practices;
4. Discuss crisis prevention-mitigation strategies;
5. Demonstrate knowledge regarding crisis intervention principles and practices;
6. Engage in professional reading and keep abreast of current conversations concerning issues and trends in counseling.
7. Discuss common and unique characteristics of crisis response in children, adolescents, adults, older adults, and special populations, (ex. People with disabilities, with severe and persistent mental illness, and who have limited economic resources).
8. Discuss elements of crisis, traumas, and disasters that impact clients’ immediate and long-term experiences of triggering event and recovery from the crisis.
9. Discuss the four-stages of planning model for crisis management including prevention-mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery;
10. Discuss responsibilities as member of an interdisciplinary crisis or disaster response team;
11. Recognize the importance of collaboration with other mental health professionals, political entities, families, and communities during times of crisis, trauma, and disaster;
12. Develop some understanding of effective delivery of services when the issues are physical assault, sexual assault, abuse, neglect, intimate partner violence, and experience of individual, family, or community level trauma or disaster;
13. Understand the importance of facilitating clients’ use of natural support systems, such as families, friends, faith communities, and support groups when responding to crises.

Professional Standards of Behavior

- **Punctuality:** Leaders are never late! Being on time is essential for each class period. Late arrival (coming 15 minutes after class starts) and leaving early (15 minutes before class ends) is not acceptable and will result in lowering of 5 points from overall grade. These points will be deducted from your overall aggregate grade. In cases where a student may have to leave early due to a family emergency or poor health, permission to leave must be sought from the instructor. An excuse to come late OR leave early will be permitted ONLY ONCE to each student during the seven week course period, without the deduction of points. No exceptions will be made.

- **Academic Integrity** – Cheating is considered the actual attempted practice of fraudulent or deceptive actions for the purpose of improving grade. In situations where the student may be considered a suspect towards cheating, serious measures such receiving an “F” on the assignment will be considered. Taking credit for any thought, idea, or work that is not your own is plagiarism. Any instance of academic dishonesty will be documented and reported to the Dean of the School of Education. Students will be informed of this action and may submit a written response to the charge. The instructor has the right to fail the student for the specific project or the entire course. When writing any paper, reference any information, websites, books, etc. that is not your own, as directed by the Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.), (2010). Plagiarism is a serious offense that will cause you, the student to fail the course and can lead to steps being taken for dismissal from the program and UST. Plagiarism is a violation of integrity.

- **Make-up Exams and Late Assignments:** Complete all assignments by the due date. It is the instructor’s policy that late assignments will not be accepted. Prior permission should be sought from the instructor at-least two days in advance in situations where students are unable to turn in the assignments by the due date. Late assignments without prior permission will account for zero on that assignment. There will be no makeup exams for this course. Make-up exams and submission of late assignments will only be permitted under extenuating circumstances and will be at the discretion of the instructor. Only hospitalization or other equally serious life experiences can be held as a ground for late assignment.

- **Professional Conduct:** Students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom when working in groups with consistent participation, cooperation, sharing responsibilities, and respect for one another during classroom and group discussions.
Professional conduct will also incorporate, respect towards the professor and will be gauged in being punctual to class, respectful and professional interactions via email or face-to-face, refraining from using technology for personal purposes when in class and during the class presentations by instructor or colleagues, and adhering to course requirements. **Determining professional conduct will be at the discretion of the instructor. Inappropriate professional conduct in any way as mentioned above, will result in lowering of 5 points from the overall grade.**

- **Use of Personal Technology Devices:** This course expects students to keep their cell phones on silent mode or turned off during class. In emergency situation, students may notify the instructor before class and may step out to attend a call and return to the classroom as quickly as possible. All laptops, iPads, tablets, and other electronic devices should be on mute and could be used only for class purposes. **Scrolling through the phone, texting, visiting social networking sites or using other electronics for non-academic purposes is NOT ACCEPTABLE.** This is considered disrespectful and disrupts the learning environment. **If the instructor notices students accessing electronics for personal reasons, it's would be recorded and documented and result in lowering 5 points from the overall grade. Students will NOT be pardon if identified using electronics for personal reasons.**

- **Use of UST email accounts:** All email correspondence will be through the mystthom email system. Please check your email and Blackboard through your mystthom account daily for correspondence and announcements. When turning in any assignment via email or blackboard, students are expected to save the document as:

  Last Name_Frist Name_Name of the assignment.

In addition, **emails send by students to the instructor must have a clear subject description along with the purpose of the email.** Not adhering to these requirements will affect the attendance and participation grade.

- **Language Diversity:** The University of Saint Thomas values the speaking of more than one language. This course is especially sensitive to issues of language diversity, both on behalf of students for whom English is not their first language and in preparation to work with clients for whom English is not their first language. **The professor is always available to assist students who might need help with written English.** In addition, it is recommended that students who are bilingual or multilingual bring these gifts to the table in their journey through this course.

- **Americans with Disabilities Act:** In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the professor will make all possible and reasonable adjustments in policies, practices, services, and facilities to ensure equal and optimal educational programs and activities. Whenever a special accommodation is necessary in order to ensure access to full participation by students with disabilities, the student must inform the professor of any disability or needed accommodations. In addition, the student must contact the University Office for ADA Compliance. Only informing the professor is not adequate. The professor must receive a written recommendation for accommodations from the University Office for ADA Compliance.
The University Office for ADA Compliance may be asked to seek proof of disability and specify accommodations as requested. Contact the professor immediately if you have a need. All information regarding accommodations is confidential. You can see the professor before or after class or request time to discuss any matters found on the recommendations of the University Office for ADA Compliance.

Any student with documented special needs requiring academic adjustments or accommodations for enhancing potential for success in this course is requested to speak to me during the first two weeks of class. **Students with special needs will contact the University Office for ADA Compliance by calling 713-525-3162 or 6953.** It is essential that the professor receive official documentation for any accommodations that are made on behalf of students. This protects students’ rights. **Please let me know if I can be of any assistance in this regard.**

### Instructional Methods and Activities

Methods and activities for instruction include:

1. Traditional Experiences: Lecture and discussion, demonstration, videos, and readings.
2. Clinical Experiences: Role-play and case study examination.

### Evaluation and Grade Assignments

1. **Attendance, Preparation, and Participation (15%):** Attendance in all classes is mandatory. More than two absences can result in administrative withdrawal from the class or may result in failing the course. Consideration for more than two absences will be provided under extenuating circumstances only and will be at the discretion of the instructor. An alternate course plan would be created for the student in such situations. Students are expected to engage in class room discussion by actively participating along with their peers. **Participation** is crucial to this course and minimal or no participation may result in poor participation grades. **Preparation** in terms of reading the assigned material is essential and will be gauged through student ability to articulate the reading material through in-class discussions.

2. **Counseling Role-Play Assignment (25%):** Students will form a dyad. For ten minutes in class, each student will demonstrate a counseling session illustrating an issue in the domain of this course. One student will role-play the counselor, and the other student will role-play the client. Students will then change roles and demonstrate another counseling session role play (10minutes) illustrating an issue in the domain of this course.

   Students will demonstrate that they can use micro-skills effectively. Level III reflection of content and feeling, paraphrasing, summarizing, and probing with declarative sentences will be demonstrated. Each student will have the opportunity to role play the counselor, and each student will have the opportunity to role-play the client. After each session, shared observations, evaluation, and reflection will occur led by the professor and colleagues.

   You (the student) will write a two-page reflection on the day following your role-play. The first page is for your reflections as a client, and the second page is for your reflection as a counselor. You (the student) will write a formal title page. You will use the title **Client Reflections or Counselor Reflections.** Guidelines for the role play and reflection paper will be
given in class. The body of the paper will be in Times New Roman (font), double spaced with font being 12 pitch in size. This assignment will be due by Saturday midnight of the same week the role play was presented and will be sent electronically via email.

Empathic Rating Scale

The following is the empathic rating scale. A Level 3 response is a helpful response. Level 2 is not helpful and not hurtful. Level 1 is hurtful.

**Level 1:** Hurtful. Counselor is overtly, implicitly, or subtly destructive to the counseling process. Counselor is inappropriately attending, disruptive of the client’s flow, attacks the client, or discounts information. “You shouldn’t feel that way,” or “Everything will be all right,” belongs here.

**Level 2:** Subtractive. Counselor misses content or feeling. Counselor is detracting slightly from what the client has been saying even though on the surface the session appears to be moving ahead. No harm has been done, but the client has not been helped either. Counselor responses take away from what the client says or minimize client statements.

**Level 3:** Accurate. This is the minimal helping response and required for masters level work. Counselor reflection of content and feeling are interchangeable with the client; that is, they are accurate. Included here are accurate counselor paraphrasing or timely summarizing that catches the essence of what the client has said. Appropriate self-disclosure and helpful probing with declarative sentences also belong here.

**Level 4:** Additive. Includes inferences. Counselor is truly additive; that is, counselor is adding something beyond an interchangeable response. In addition to an accurate paraphrase or reflection of content and feeling, the counselor adds an interpretation or a probing declarative sentence or interpretation that, not only catches the major meaning of the client, but adds something new to facilitate growth or exploration. Inaccurate use of level four returns the exchange to level two. The more one uses the influencing skills of level four the greater the possibility of reducing the response to Level 2. Level 4 is not better than Level 3; it is used when appropriate.

**Level 5:** Action. Counselor is truly acting intentionally. Counselor is integrating attending and influencing skills in the context of empathy, genuineness, and respect. Concreteness and immediacy are obvious in the exchange. Counselor is intentionally present with the client in moving the client toward action. Level 5 is not better than Level 4 or Level 3; it is used when appropriate.
3. **Movie Review (20%)**: As a requirement of this course, students will review a movie that displays through story crisis in life of the central character. A list of movies will be provided on the first day of class. Students will choose the movie from the list, watch the movie, and complete a 2 page double spaced paper. The paper would articulate the insights and/or hypotheses you developed from the movie about the character and crisis. This assignment is due by 5:00pm on Nov 11th, 2015.

4. **Weekly Oral/Written Assignment (20%)**: You (the student) must write a paper on a current issue or trend in counseling (2 page report excluding the title page, APA style). Topics relating to current issues in counseling can be found in journals, magazines, newspaper, TV, or other popular sources of information. Students must use a minimum of 3 peer reviewed articles to cite relevant information. The prevalence of this topic as a subject of discussion will be clear. Examples are cyberbullying, suicide, internet addiction, unemployment, etc. **Students may NOT choose the same topic.** Students will sign up for this assignment on the first day of class. **Topics should be finalized by week two.** The 2 page report will be due by 5:00pm on the assigned day. The assignment should be sent electronically via email.

5. **Web Course (20%)**: As a part of their finals, students will take a six hour Psychological First Aid (PFA) Online Course created by The National Child Traumatic Stress Network and the National Center for PTSD. Student will go to [http://www.nctsn.org/content/psychological-first-aid](http://www.nctsn.org/content/psychological-first-aid) and enroll in PFA Online, register themselves, and take the course at their convenience. On completion of the course student will email the copy of completion certificate to the instructor by 5:00pm on Dec 9th 2015.

**Grading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance, Preparation, and Participation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling Role-Play Assignment</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie Review</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Oral/Written Assignment</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Course</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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**Final Grade Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78-79%</td>
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</table>
Criteria for Grading Written Work

- Addresses the topic with accuracy and insight.
- Writing skills are expected to be at a graduate school level.
- Follows directions.
- Presents material in a clear and logical manner.
- Gives evidence of ability to synthesize information from various sources to support the topic.
- Uses elements of form such as grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation correctly.
- Is on time. Late work results in grade reduction.

The following APA guidelines must be used for all written papers

- Times New Roman
- Font 12
- Indent new paragraphs five spaces or tab
- Double space the entire paper
- Margins - 1” top, bottom, left and right
- Cover page addressing your name, assignment, and name of the university
- Header and heading according to APA standards.
- Reference page

Tentative Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Day/Date</th>
<th>Instructional Focus</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oct 14th</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Syllabus discussion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assignment directions and sign-up</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group/Dyads Formation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>APA requirements</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Part I Basic Training: Crisis Intervention Theory and Application</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Approaching Crisis Intervention</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Oct 21st</td>
<td>Part I Basic Training: Crisis Intervention Theory and Application</td>
<td>Chapters 3, and 4 Role Play Presentation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Intervention and Assessment Models</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-The Tools of the Trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Chapters</td>
<td>Assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 28th</td>
<td>Part I Basic Training: Crisis Intervention Theory and Application</td>
<td>5, 6, 8</td>
<td>Role Play Presentation Weekly Oral/Written Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Crisis Case Handling</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Telephone and Online Crisis Counseling</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Part II Handling Specific Crisis: Going Into the Trenches</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Crisis of Lethality (Suicide Section)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 4th</td>
<td>Part II Handling Specific Crisis: Going Into the Trenches</td>
<td>7, 9</td>
<td>Weekly Oral/Written Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Weekly oral assignment will be due today, but presentation will be due the following week)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Sexual Assault</td>
<td></td>
<td>Online Class Schedule (TCA Conference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 11th</td>
<td>Part II Handling Specific Crisis: Going Into the Trenches</td>
<td>12, 13</td>
<td>Role Play Presentation Weekly Oral/Written Assignment Movie Review Due</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Personal Loss: Bereavement and Grief</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Crisis in Schools</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 18th</td>
<td>Part III On the Home Front: Crisis in the Human Services Workplace</td>
<td>14, 16</td>
<td>Role Play Presentation Weekly Oral/Written Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Violent Behavior in Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Human Service Workers in Crisis: Burnout, Vicarious Traumatization, and Compassion Fatigue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 2nd</td>
<td>Part IV No Man’s Land</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Weekly Oral/Written Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Disaster Response</td>
<td></td>
<td>Role Play Presentation Web Course Due on Dec 9th, 2015</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Course Wrap Up</td>
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Note: The syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check announcements made while you were absent.
Current Issues in Counseling
Assignment Rubrics

Attendance, Participation, and Preparation (15 points)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Component</th>
<th>Below Average (1 point)</th>
<th>Average (2 points)</th>
<th>Good (3 points)</th>
<th>Very good (4 points)</th>
<th>Excellent (5 points)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Three excused absences</td>
<td>Two unexcused absences</td>
<td>Two excused absences</td>
<td>One excused absence</td>
<td>Virtually no absences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attended four classes</td>
<td>Attended five classes</td>
<td>Attended five classes</td>
<td>Attended six classes</td>
<td>Attended all seven classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Lack of participation in all class discussions.</td>
<td>Minimal participation in two to three class discussions</td>
<td>Occasional participation in four to five class discussions.</td>
<td>Student participates regularly and meaningfully in six class discussions.</td>
<td>Regular, meaningful and thoughtful participation in all class discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Student has not read assignments for any class.</td>
<td>Student has read and can articulate some understanding of assigned readings in two to three classes</td>
<td>Student has read and can articulate some understanding of assigned readings in four to five classes</td>
<td>Student is well prepared for most classes, showing in class discussions careful reading of primary source texts and secondary works</td>
<td>Student is always well prepared for all classes, and their comments show excellent understanding of primary and secondary sources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role Play Reflection (25 points)

- **Counselor Role-Play Reflection**
  - My Experience as a Counselor (3 points)
  - Difficulties and Challenges I Encountered (3 points)
  - What I Learned as a Counselor (4 points)

- **Client Role-Play Reflection**
  - My Experience as a Client (3 points)
  - My Thoughts on the Counselor (3 points)
  - What I Learned as a Client (4 points)

- **In Class Role Play (5 points)**
**Movie Review (20 points)**

While writing the movie review, I DO NOT need a summary of the movie. Please write the paper, addressing the following sections:

- In a small paragraph briefly provide an overview of the film (2 points).
- Discuss the central character (2 points).
- The crisis situation (2 points).
- How does the movie resonate to this course (3 points).
- Discuss your insights/hypothesis you developed about the crisis situation (4 points).
- Possible intervention approach as a crisis interventionist (4 points).
- Overall learning experiences (3 points).

**Weekly Oral/Written Assignment (20 points)**

The written assignment 2 page report will include the following factors:

- **Introduction** of the current issue. Students will briefly introduced the topic and what interested them to choose this topic (3 points).
- **Importance** of the issue being discussed. Students would discuss why this current issue is important and the relevance of the topic to this course (3 points).
- **Interventions** that could be implemented. Based on readings and class room discussions students will discuss the possible strategies or interventions that could be implemented to address the current issue (3 points).
- **Insight** in relation to the current issue. Students will discuss their learned insight about the topic and briefly discuss their role as it pertains to a crisis interventionist (3 points).
- **APA Format:** Your paper will be written in Times New Roman, double spaced, left margin, and 12 pitch font. Your paper will need a formal title page, with running head, and page numbers (2 points).
- **Peer Reviewed Articles:** Students would incorporate a minimum of three peer reviewed article for this assignment (2 points).

The weekly oral will include:

- **Presentation:** Students will give a short in class presentation and share their experiences about the current issue, what they learnt in the process of writing the paper, and how the issue could be addressed (4 points).