

Crisis and Disaster Interventions

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Course Meets: Web and by appointment
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description (from the University Bulletin)

This course will provide students with foundational knowledge about crisis intervention and disaster interventions. Students will learn about empirically supported models and best practices of psychological interventions during disasters, taking into context cultural and trauma-specific contextual information. Students will be trained in basic crisis intervention skills and psychological first aid and practice crisis case handling. Students will learn about how to handle specific crisis situations and how to handle issues of burnout, vicarious traumatization, and compassion fatigue in disaster and crisis situations. By the end of the course, students will be able to describe clinicians' roles and responsibilities as members of an interdisciplinary emergency response team during a local, regional, or national crisis, disaster, or other trauma-causing event and know the skills needed to provide crisis intervention services. Students will also learn how to differentiate between diagnosis and developmentally appropriate reactions during crisis, trauma, and disaster using appropriate assessment and diagnosis. Students will be given the opportunity to practice crisis assessment and intervention, as well as learn how assessment, diagnosis, and treatment may be influenced by crisis, trauma, and disasters.

Course Overview and Goals:

- Understand the counselors' roles and responsibilities as members of an interdisciplinary emergency management response team during a local, regional, or national crisis, disaster or another trauma-causing event.
- Understand crisis intervention and suicide prevention models, including the use of psychological first aid strategies.
- Understands the impact of crises, disasters, and other trauma-causing events on people.
- Understands the operation of an emergency management system within clinical mental health agencies and in the community.
- Understands the principles of crisis intervention for people during crises, disasters, and other trauma-causing events on people.
- Demonstrates the ability to use procedures for assessing and managing suicide risk.
- Screens for addiction, aggression, and danger to self and/or others, as well as co-occurring mental disorders.
- Understands appropriate use of diagnosis during a crisis, disaster, or other trauma causing event.
- Differentiates between diagnosis and developmentally appropriate reactions during crises, disasters, and other trauma-causing events.

Required Texts:

James, R. K., & Gilliland, B. E. (2017). Crisis intervention strategies (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Cengage.

Supplementary Readings: Additional handouts, articles, exercises, or other readings will be assigned throughout the semester. Supplementary materials will be posted on Canvas.

** Please note that the following information is accurate to the best of my ability. It may be subject to change during the semester. If a change does need to be made, I will make an announcement in-class and on Canvas.*

Course Website and Communication Plan

My primary way of communicating to everyone will be through Canvas. I will post any announcements regarding class or assignments on Canvas. Please check each day before class for any announcements. Additional materials, such as course syllabi, readings, homework, discussion boards, quizzes, and/or other material will be made available on the web site throughout the semester. In addition, I will post the grades to the web site grade book.

The site address is <https://psu.instructure.com>. Look for the course in which you are enrolled. You will need a valid Penn State Access Account in order to gain access to the site. Please see me if you need additional help and I will walk you through the validation procedure. You may also call the campus computer consultants at 814-898-6415 or email them at bditHELP@psu.edu. Helpdesk staff assists with computing questions and computer hardware/software problems.

Please utilize your Penn State email account when contacting me via email. Make sure the class number and section number, as well as your last name, are in the subject line. If you do not include these in the subject line I may overlook the email. I generally receive about 100 emails a day and have an active junk filter on my email, so please follow these instructions.

I generally respond to emails within a 24-hour period (except some weekends when I am away and during scheduled holidays and breaks). If you do not receive a reply message within that time frame, please resend your message, as there must have been either A) a technical error in the retrieval process or B) I am trapped under something heavy and cannot get to a computer. Since in most cases, the answer will not be B, please resend it! Also keep in mind that if you are sending me a message of an urgent nature regarding technical issues, please recheck your email or Canvas account shortly thereafter about any instructions that I may provide to assist you. You may miss a window of opportunity for any resubmissions if you are not checking your Penn State email and/or Canvas account on a regular basis. Please get into the habit of checking both accounts for important messages that I may send throughout the semester.

Grading and Assignments

Note: I do not assign grades to students; students earn grades. As such, you are the person responsible for ensuring that you obtain the grade that you desire in this class, not me. Your performance both in-class and on assignments allows you to earn a certain grade in this class. This course is designed in such a way that your attendance, preparation, and work outside of class will earn you a favorable grade.

EVALUATION

Discussions (15 points each; 195 total points): There will be 13 applied discussion opportunities. These are required and are worth 15 points each. For each applied discussion, you can earn up to 5 points for the quality of your initial post. You will also be required to respond to the posts of others, and you can earn up to 10 points for the quality of your responses to two of your classmates.

Module Quizzes (15 points each; 195 total points): There are 13 quizzes. Quizzes consist of 15 multiple choice questions and will be completed online through Canvas. You may retake each quiz as many times as you want during the availability period; however, the questions will change each time you take it. Your highest score will be recorded. I strongly encourage you to take the quizzes early and frequently! Do not wait until the last

minute to give yourself enough time to retake them if you are not happy with your scores. You can begin each quiz from any location that has access to Canvas and you will have 30 minutes to complete each quiz. Please note that once you begin you cannot stop and restart, so please make sure you are in a location that is conducive to quiz-taking. Please see the class schedule for availability and due dates. Quizzes will be open at midnight the day they open and close at 11:59 pm on the end date.

Movie crisis paper (100 points): Watch a movie that depicts a crisis and write a five (5) page paper (using APA style):

1. Identify who is in crisis (may be more than one, but primary one),
2. The nature of the crisis (discuss whether the response is developmentally appropriate),
3. The course of the crisis and an initial diagnosis,
4. Apply a crisis intervention model,
5. Identify potential resources needed,
6. Discuss the person's attempts at coping with the crisis,
7. Identify potential issues that might need to be addressed if the person is referred for counseling (and explain why).

A minimum of five peer-reviewed, recent (within the last 10 years) journal articles are required to support aspects of the paper.

Culture and Crisis Intervention Paper (200 points): Students are to complete a 12–14-page, double-spaced research paper on the role of culture in crisis intervention response. This could include how poverty increases the risk of experiencing trauma or how culture influences psychological or environmental resources after crisis. Please have your paper topic approved by the instructor. The paper should be written in APA style, with at least 10 references. Papers will be graded according to the following: form, organization, clarity of writing, content, and relevance of references.

Personal Assessment Paper (100 points): To evaluate your own potential to effectively perform crisis intervention counseling. In this approximately 5-page paper, you will identify and discuss personal attitudes, values, behaviors, and experiences that can impede or enhance your ability to do crisis work. Your paper must reflect accurate knowledge of effective crisis worker characteristics and the dynamics of counselor burnout, vicarious traumatization, and compassion fatigue. You will use the course readings, and at least 5 professional journal articles dealing with counselor burnout, vicarious traumatization, or compassion fatigue as references. Cite all references, using APA format.

In preparing to write your paper, consider the following:

1. What personal qualities or characteristics might enhance your ability to be an effective crisis worker?
2. What personal qualities or characteristics might impede your ability to be an effective crisis worker?
3. How might crisis experiences in your own life increase the potential for countertransference?
4. When working with clients who have experienced similar forms of trauma and crisis?
5. What steps might you take to lessen the potential for and therefore manage countertransference in these situations?
6. What attitudes, values, behaviors, and experiences might contribute to your risk for vicarious traumatization or compassion fatigue?
7. What feelings, attitudes, motives, and/or expectations might increase your risk for burnout?
8. What are some preventative and restorative measures for burnout that are a good match for your needs?

Written Assignments

All assignments must be typed, proofread, and properly formatted in APA style. If you need assistance with APA style, please visit the library, the Learning Resource Center, or see the instructor. When you are asked to

submit work as an attachment, you must use Microsoft Word and save your work in Word files for electronic submissions. Be sure to submit an assignment via the method(s) specified in class (e.g., on Canvas course page, hard copy, etc.). For example, if an assignment is to be turned in on Canvas, email would not be an acceptable form of submission. *Turning in an assignment via an incorrect method will be considered equivalent to not submitting the assignment.*

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a crucial element in the counseling and psychology profession, and it should be recognized and practiced in class as well. As a result of the nature of this course, self-disclosure may occur during role-plays, discussions, etcetera and sensitive issues may arise. It is also common that students may have personal experience with topics discussed in class. Therefore, confidentiality in this class is crucial. An atmosphere of trust must always exist in the class and what is discussed in class must stay in class.

Grading Summary: Discussions (195 points), Quizzes (195 points), Movie Crisis Paper (100 points), Personal Assessment Paper (100 points), and the Culture and Crisis Intervention Paper (200 points).

The following grading scale will be used to determine final grades.

*As there are many ways provided to improve your grade, I do not engage in the rounding of grades at the end of the semester.

Grading System

| Numerical Grade | Letter Grade |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 93% and above | A |
| 90-92.9% | A- |
| 87-89.9% | B+ |
| 83-86.9% | B |
| 80-82.9% | B- |
| 77-79.9% | C+ |
| 70-76.9% | C |
| 60-69.9% | D |
| Below 60% | F |

General Expectations and Information

First, you can expect this course to be challenging, interesting, and at times demanding. This course is designed to include different activities for learning and hence may challenge everyone in different ways. Though the **tried and true standard of textbook reading will be necessary, it will not alone be sufficient to succeed in this course.**

Second, please expect that some topics covered in the course will invoke new or difficult thoughts and/or feelings. Remember to be respectful of other's thoughts, opinions, and experiences. It is expected that students do not engage in the perpetuation of **stereotypes, discrimination, prejudice, or other forms of bias and intolerance.** Please see your instructor if you have further questions or concerns regarding this expectation.

Preparation for Class. Class meetings will involve discussion and participation by all members of the class (not just me). This type of active participation is both a better way to learn and a lot more interesting (and fun)

than simply listening to lectures. To facilitate learning, it is important for you to prepare as much as possible for class activities by **conscientiously completing the assignments before the start of class**. While doing the assigned readings, actively search for the information relevant to the learning objectives. Some of this material is difficult and a certain degree of confusion, uncertainty, or misinterpretations is to be expected (in addition, in some cases there won't be 'right' or 'wrong' answers, just points of view). So, do not be afraid to be wrong.

Note that you are responsible for all information relevant to the learning objectives that is presented in the assigned material. Assessments will include questions from the reading, lecture, and assignments. Therefore, if you feel confused or uncertain about any material it is your responsibility to let me know so that I can clarify that material for you. This can be done in class and/or by coming to see me during office hours.

I strongly encourage you to talk with me individually throughout the semester if you have any questions concerning course material or about how you are doing in the class. If you are having problems in the course, do not wait too long to talk with me; come early in the semester while there is still time to improve. Of course, you are also welcome to come speak with me even if you are not having difficulties but are just interested in the material and would like further information. If you cannot make my posted office hours, I will be glad to make an appointment for another time. To make an appointment, just see me in class or send an email.

The Learning Environment

Please cooperate with me and your fellow students to create an environment that fosters learning and communication. We all should be respectful in our behavior and comments and should eliminate disruptions that might be distractions.

No late work will be accepted. "My computer/disk isn't working" is **not** an acceptable excuse. I see it as the new "My dog ate my homework." There are enough computers on this campus that you should be able to find one from which you can submit work if you plan ahead. Save your work early, often, and in multiple locations.

Academic Dishonesty

This course will strictly adhere to the University policies regarding individual academic integrity. Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights, and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts.

Academic integrity includes a commitment by all members of the University community not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others. The University defines academic integrity very clearly at: <https://behrend.psu.edu/for-faculty-staff/faculty-resources/academic-integrity>

All students are expected to visit, review, and know the contents of this important University site. Dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Any violation of academic integrity will receive academic and possibly disciplinary sanctions, including the possible awarding of an XF grade which is recorded on the transcript and states that failure of the course was due to an act of academic dishonesty. All acts of academic dishonesty are recorded so repeat offenders can be sanctioned accordingly.

Additionally, students are expected to abide by the Penn State Principles, to act appropriately, and to be considerate of other students always. This means behaving in ways that are non-disruptive and are conducive to a vibrant learning environment. Failure to observe these policies or violation of any section of University Policy is punishable by receiving a failing grade, suspension from class, or other actions as outlined in University policies.

Disability Accommodation

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. Student Disability Resources (SDR) website provides contact information for every Penn State campus (814-898-7101). For further information, please visit Student Disability Resources website (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/>).

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: See documentation guidelines (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/guidelines>). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodation.

Educational Equity/Report Bias

Penn State takes great pride in fostering a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity via the Report Bias webpage (<http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/>).

Mental Health and Counseling Assistance

As a college student, there may be times when personal stress interferes with your academic performance and/or negatively impacts your daily life. If you or someone you know is experiencing mental health challenges at Behrend, please contact the Personal Counseling Office located in Reed 1 or call 814-898-6504. Services are free and confidential. Students may also contact the Penn State Crisis Line (24/7) at 1-877-229-6400, or use the Crisis Text Line (24/7) Text "Lions" to 741741

I Stand for State.

Because I know reducing the number of people on this campus who get hurt by interpersonal violence requires everyone to do their part, I pledge to be an active bystander, support survivors of violence and proactively reinforce campus prevention activities. Ask me how you can get involved too. My classroom and office are safe places. Please know you will be supported and heard if you have experienced any form of violence. If you or someone you know experience stalking, partner violence, sexual assault, or other forms of power-based violence, please know you are not alone. There are resources that can help:

- Health and Wellness: 814-898-6217
- Personal Counseling: 814-898-6504
- Student Affairs and Residence Life: 814-898-6111
- Police Services: 814-898-6101 (non-emergency)
- Crime Victim Center: 814-455-9414
- SafeNet: 814-455-1774

Emergency Procedures

Faculty, staff, and students may need to evacuate campus buildings for several reasons (fire or alarm activation, discovery of a suspicious object, etc.). The following points provide guidance on emergency evacuations:

- Be familiar with evacuation maps posted within the building. Know the location of at least two exits and the corresponding evacuation routes from the classroom.
- Exit the building as quickly and calmly as possible using the nearest safe exit if prompted to do so. Do not use any elevators.
- Move to the building's "Designated Meeting Site", or another safe location outside the building.
- Do not re-enter the building until you have been instructed to do so by public safety officials. The silencing of alarms does not necessarily mean that the emergency is over.
- You are strongly encouraged to watch the "StaySAFE" video located at <http://StaySAFE.psu.edu>

Any student who may require assistance when evacuating the building should notify the instructor so that arrangements can be made to ensure their safety during an emergency.

PSYC 845
Tentative Schedule (5/5/23 Version)

| Date | Topic | Assignments |
|----------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Week 1 | Crisis Intervention Theory and Application | Chapter 1 |
| Week 2 | Culturally Effective Helping in Crisis | Chapter 2 |
| Week 3 | Intervention and Assessment Models | Chapter 3 |
| Week 4 | Crisis Case Handling | Chapters 4 & 5 |
| Week 5 | Crisis Case Handling (cont.) | Chapters 6 & 15 |
| Week 6 | Acute and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder | Chapter 7 |
| Week 7 | Suicide & Death | Chapters 8 & 12 |
| Week 8 | Sexual Assault | Chapter 9 |
| Week 9 | Partner Violence and Family Crisis | Chapters 10 & 11 |
| Week 10 | Chemical Dependency | Chapter 18 |
| Week 11 | Violent Behavior in Schools and Organizations | Chapters 13 & 14 |
| Week 12 | Disaster Response | Chapter 17 |
| Week 13 | Burnout, Vicarious Trauma, and Compassion Fatigue | Chapter 16 |