

# Counseling Strategies: Special Topics - Crisis Intervention PSYC 710 3 credits

Training and practice in the use of a brief and crisis intervention. *Prerequisite(s):* [PSYC 660](#), [PSYC 661](#) or permission of instructor

## Basic Course Information

This class is a 3-credit-hour introduction to the theories and techniques of brief and crisis intervention. We will cover intentional intervention practices with individuals, families, groups, and entire learning communities, including situations in which individuals and groups are in crisis. We will also address suicide prevention, outreach approaches, and disaster intervention.

**“The world breaks everyone, and afterwards, some grow strong at the broken places.”  
Ernest Hemingway**

## Required Text

Echterling, L. G., Presbury, J. H., & McKee, J. E. (2018). *Crisis intervention: Building resilience in troubled times*. San Diego, CA: Cognella.

## Online Resources

*Psychological First Aid for Schools: Field Operations Guide*

[http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/pfa/school/1-PFA\\_for\\_Schools\\_final.pdf](http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/pfa/school/1-PFA_for_Schools_final.pdf)

*Psychological First Aid Online*

<http://learn.nctsn.org/course/index.php?categoryid=11>

*Disaster Mental Health*

<http://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/trauma-disaster>.

*Resources for Educators Responding to Mass Violence*

<http://www.nctsn.org/trauma-types/terrorism>

## Purpose

The primary purpose of this course is to prepare you for dealing with the inevitable crisis situations you will encounter on a college campus. You may be helping students in telephone conversations, during one or two appointments, in ongoing support groups, through public education, or even in unscheduled encounters lasting only a few minutes.

The assumptions I am making are that you have already learned how to establish a warm, trusting, working relationship, and that you also have begun to develop your own theory of helping. This

course will go beyond relationship skills, relying on them as the foundation for the work we will be doing.

You will probably find this course to be emotionally challenging. You will have to think about painful experiences, face some difficult issues, listen to survivors share their crisis experiences, examine your own wounds and vulnerabilities, and try out new ways of helping others. All of us have been through crises ourselves, but if you currently are in an especially troubling situation, you should carefully consider if you are able right now to handle the extra stress of this course. As you monitor your own reactions, please feel free to use me as a resource.

## Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The objectives of this course are to help you:

- recognize the resilience, strengths, and resources of people in challenging situations;
- enhance your knowledge of the wide range of crises;
- work successfully with individuals, families, groups, and communities in crisis;
- respond effectively to someone who is presenting a risk of suicide;
- use the telephone effectively with a caller in emotional turmoil; and
- become familiar with the range of disaster intervention strategies.

In particular, one specific competency is the following:

8.6 Demonstrate proficiency in decision making by identifying issues, bringing problems to resolution, managing crisis situations, reaching conclusions and making recommendations.

## Format and Methods of Instruction

The class format is that of a seminar and it is based on the assumption that you are coming fully prepared to make the most of our limited time together. In other words, for every class, you will arrive having read the assigned material, completed any other assignments, and prepared to contribute. Each class will include a variety of opportunities for you to enhance your skills. You will be sharing your experiences, discussing the readings, dealing with case studies, observing videotapes, and offering one another feedback. I invite you to participate fully and contribute generously to our endeavors.

## Performance Evaluation Criteria and Procedures

Grades will be based on the following three criteria:

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|------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Class Participation | 20 points |
| 2. Reading Reflections | 40 points |
| 3. Practice Sessions   | 40 points |

A—90-100 points

B—80-89 points

C—70-79 points

D—60-69 points

F—59 points or below

## Class Participation

I am looking forward to you being a dedicated student who attends all our classes, comes prepared, is fully involved in all activities, and offers constructive comments to our discussions. I will use the rubric regarding class participation to evaluate your performance on this criterion.

### **Class Participation Rubric**

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>
Consistently engages, actively listens, and builds on the contributions of other members of the class. Arrives promptly and fully prepared at every class session. Can always be counted on to offer honest reflections, insightful observations, and supportive comments that contribute significantly to a stimulating learning environment. Brings a sense of presence that stimulates productive group dynamics without dominating the process.	Attends every class, arrives promptly, and is well prepared, having completed all assignments. Interacts respectfully and empathically with other members of the class. Regularly contributes thoughtful reflections, relevant comments, and constructive observations to class discussions. Brings a sense of presence that contributes to productive group dynamics.	Is absent or, when present, rarely interacts with other members of the class. Comes to class unprepared. Demonstrates a notable lack of interest in contributing to a positive learning environment. Brings a presence that sabotages productive group dynamics. Engages in non-verbal relational aggressive behaviors that communicate disrespect or contempt for peers and the instructor.

### **Reading Reflections**

To reflect on the text material for this course, you will complete 10 written assignments. For each assignment, write a short paper, about one double-spaced page in length, in which you briefly summarize your reflections regarding the chapter. For example, you may want to answer these questions:

1. How might you respond if you were intervening in the crisis story?
2. What concepts are especially intriguing to you?
3. What reflections do you have regarding the experiential learning activities?
4. What skills do you especially want to enhance?

Submit your written assignment to me electronically *before* the class it is due. I will provide you with feedback by email. In class, we will then discuss the chapter readings.

The following rubric will be used to evaluate your performance on all your written assignments:

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>
Written assignment is submitted prior to the class meeting and demonstrates thorough knowledge of the chapter. Contributions to the class discussion show a nuanced understanding of the text material.	Written assignment is submitted prior to the class meeting and demonstrates an adequate understanding of the chapter. Contributions to the class discussion are appropriate and productive.	Written assignment is submitted late or does not demonstrate a fundamental understanding of the chapter. Contributions to the class discussion are minimal or nonexistent.

### **Practice Sessions**

Over the semester, you will meet with your collaborative group in 5 sessions outside of class to practice assigned activities. Each time you meet, you will participate in three video recorded interactions lasting about 15-20 minutes. Take turns in performing three roles: survivor, helper, and recorder. As the survivor, you will draw upon an emotionally intense situation that you are

willing to share. It may be an event that is recent, current, impending, or one that has been a life-altering incident that you would find valuable to revisit. Keep in mind that this is not a role-play and that you are not strangers to one another, even in the telephone practice session.

As the helper, you will engage in an encounter with the survivor and practice your intervention skills. In the process, you may want to build on the strengths and resources you know from previous encounters with this person.

As the recorder, you can assist in the recording, observe the interaction, signal the amount of time remaining, and lead the feedback discussion.

Select a segment of your video recorded practice for possible presentation in class. During the semester, you will review in class at least **one or two** of your videotaped practice sessions. Also, schedule an **individual appointment** with me to go over another sample of your recorded work in my office.

When you chose a sample to process, introduce it with your specific needs for feedback on this particular recording. What parts of your work was problematic? Where did you shine? What issues were getting in the way of you doing your best in this sample? What do you want to gain from this review process? What feedback do you especially want? When were you especially effective?

**Practice Session 1.** Offering LUV and focusing on strengths, as described in Chapter 1. End with an encouragement interlude.

**Practice Session 2.** Intervening by telephone, as described in Chapter 3. End with an encouragement interlude.

**Practice Session 3.** Enhancing emotions of resolve, as described in Chapter 5. End with an encouragement interlude.

**Practice Session 4.** Promoting creative coping by offering scaling or providing a suggestion, as described in Chapter 6. End with an encouragement interlude.

**Practice Session 5.** Checking for risk factors of suicide and exploring strengths, as described in Chapter 7 of the Crisis text. This practice session is one that can involve a role-play. I will be providing possible scenarios that you can follow. Following your recorded segment, discuss the possibilities for ongoing interventions and referrals.

The following rubric will be used to evaluate the skills you demonstrate throughout the semester in these practice sessions:

### Practice Sessions Rubric

<b>3. Excellent</b>	<b>2. Acceptable</b>	<b>1. Unacceptable</b>
Demonstrates an exceptionally high degree of skills for effective crisis intervention. Arrives promptly and fully prepared at every practice session. Can always be counted on to offer honest reflections, insightful observations, and supportive feedback. Productively shares one or more recorded segments in class and one in an	Demonstrates an adequate level of essential skills for effective crisis intervention. Attends every practice session, arrives promptly, and is well prepared. Regularly contributes thoughtful reflections, relevant comments, and constructive feedback. Shares one recorded segment in class and one in an individual appointment outside of class.	Does not demonstrate the essential skills for effective crisis intervention. Is absent or, when present, rarely fulfills responsibilities in practice sessions. Demonstrates a notable lack of interest in contributing to a positive learning environment. Fails to share a recorded segment in class or in an individual appointment outside of class.

individual appointment outside of class.		
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## Counseling Programs Academic Policies

Over the years, we have deeply appreciated the tremendous sense of commitment that our counseling students have demonstrated in their work with us. As members of the James Madison University faculty, we are required to provide information in our syllabi regarding attendance, academic honesty, adding/dropping courses, inclement weather, religious accommodations, and disability accommodations. Therefore, we have adopted the following general academic policies to apply to all our Counseling Programs courses. Of course, in addition to these guidelines, individual faculty members may use their syllabi to inform you of more specific policies and expectations for particular courses.

### Class Participation

We are looking forward to you being active, contributing members of our learning community by attending every class, being fully involved in all activities, and contributing your ideas, reflections, feedback, and observations. The fundamental goal of all our courses is to prepare you to become a helping professional, a role in which your sense of presence is essential. When you are granted the sacred trust of entering into someone else's pain, you must honor that invitation with your full and absolute attention. Your class times are your opportunities to hone that skill of being fully present. If you are unable to attend class due to an emergency, we expect you to contact us as soon as possible. If you need to miss class, you are responsible for obtaining any material distributed during the class.

### Academic Honesty

It should come as no surprise that we expect you to be committed to academic honesty, which is absolutely essential for the success of any learning community, but especially one with the mission of training ethical counselors. If you are unfamiliar with the specifics of the JMU Honor Code, you can read it at <http://www.jmu.edu/honor/code.shtml#TheHonorCode>.

### Adding/Dropping Classes

As mature and conscientious students, you know that you are responsible for registering for classes and for verifying your class schedules on e-campus. Obviously, you must register for classes or drop classes before the scheduled add/drop deadline. For more details, you can refer to the Registrar's Web site at <http://www.jmu.edu/registrar/>.

### Inclement Weather

By the way, inclement weather may lead to the cancellation of a class. If you are unsure of the weather conditions on campus, you can call the JMU Weather Line at 540.433.5300. You also can listen to the JMU radio station at 1610AM for cancellation announcements. The area radio and television stations regularly inform the public when classes are cancelled. For details about JMU's cancellation policy, go to <http://www.jmu.edu/JMUpolicy/1309.shtml>. And stay safe! Don't take unnecessary risks to make it to class. We want you alive!

### Religious Accommodations

Cultural diversity enriches our learning community and is an essential component of our counselor education programs. Therefore, we are committed to providing reasonable and appropriate

accommodations for your religious observations. Please let us know at the start of a course if you expect any absences so that we can explore mutually acceptable alternatives for completing any missed activities. If you have any additional questions, we encourage you to contact the Office of Equal Opportunity at 540.568.6991 or online at <http://www.jmu.edu/oeo/>.

## Disability Accommodations

We believe that cultural diversity also includes differences based on physical abilities. Therefore, we are also committed to providing any accommodations you may need for a disability. Please contact us at the beginning of the semester so we can make any necessary arrangements. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Office of Disability Services. The office is located in Wilson Hall, Room 107. You may call 540.568.6705 or contact the office at <http://www.jmu.edu/ods/> for more information.

## Confidentiality and Title IX

Title IX addresses not only gender discrimination, but also sexual harassment and sexual violence, because they create a hostile educational environment. We are committed to creating a safe haven and an open atmosphere in this learning community. The personal information you share in your written assignments, class discussions, experiential activities, and counseling practice sessions enriches the learning experience for everyone. We want to let you know that, as educators, we are mandated by Title IX to report any suspected sexual harassment or sexual assaults of students. This mandate does not require identifying you and we are dedicated to addressing these concerns with sensitivity and consideration for your privacy and well-being. If you do want to report any event, the Title IX Coordinator is Amy Sirocky-Meck, Madison Hall 4035, [sirockam@jmu.edu](mailto:sirockam@jmu.edu), 540-568-5219. You may also file a report online at <https://www.jmu.edu/access-and-enrollment/titleIX/index.shtml>. Furthermore, we also will take necessary action to respond to any disclosures of dangerousness to self or others. For more information on resources and reporting options, refer to the Title IX website: <https://www.jmu.edu/access-and-enrollment/titleIX/index.shtml>.