RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Play Therapy Syllabus

19:910:533 Special Topics: Play Therapy: a Method for Working with Abused and Traumatized Children

Instructor:
Office:
Phone:
E-Mail:
Office Hours:

Course Overview

This course will cover elements of play therapy, which consists of the systematic use of theoretical models to establish an interpersonal process wherein social workers use the therapeutic powers of play to help children prevent or resolve psychosocial challenges and achieve optimal growth and development. The course is grounded in knowledge about trauma and will consist of basic principles of intervention as well as guidelines for assessment and treatment of traumatized children. Expressive therapies such as art, play genograms and other nonverbal and symbolic techniques which enable children to externalize and process overwhelming experiences in a nonthreatening way will be covered.

Course Objectives

Class participants will:

1. Review essential people and theorists who shaped the history of play therapy.
2. Understand the developmental stages of children and children’s play.
3. Understand the most widely accepted theoretical models of play therapy and the formats in which they are most commonly offered (individual, group and family).
4. Identify developmentally appropriate play therapy toys and materials that can be incorporated into either a permanent or traveling play room for the purposes of both assessment and treatment.
5. Be able to conceptualize a client’s presenting clinical problem(s) developmentally and theoretically.
6. Demonstrate an understanding of the role of the play therapist and the play therapy in the context of the client’s broader clinical (medical/psychiatric treatment) and non-clinical system (family, school, community).
7. Identify elements of, and stages within the play therapy relationship, from intake to termination.
8. Demonstrate basic play therapy skills (with non-clinical volunteers) including (but not limited to) structuring, tracking, reflection of content and process, returning responsibility, facilitating self-advocacy, and limit setting.

9. Understand the person of the play therapist and how it impacts on the unfolding relationship with the client. This will include issues of transference and counter-transference.

10. Appreciate the legal and ethical issues that are both unique to play therapy and shared with other modalities, i.e., documentation, competence, informed consent, confidentiality, boundaries and duty to warn and protect.

11. Be familiar with the evolving body of qualitative and quantitative play therapy research. Understand issues of diversity and how they impact on every facet of play therapy, from choice of materials to the relationship with the client.

**Instructor and Student Roles**

*The instructor plays an active part in the learning process.* Students can expect that the professor will convey clear, specific information about theory, advanced social work practice, and social work values and ethics. Assignments have been developed in a format that encourages learning, as well as provides the instructor with a means with which to evaluate the student.

*The student plays an active part in the learning process.* As with all social work classes, participating in the process of the educational experience is vital. It is expected that students will **read all required readings, attend all classes, come to class prepared to discuss the topic and complete assignments on time. Participation in class discussion is expected.**

*Note: Use of electronic devices is prohibited in the classroom at all times.* All electronic devices (e.g., cell phone, ipod, laptops) must be silenced and stored out-of-sight before class begins (See professor to discuss exceptions). Failure to comply will result in point deductions at the instructor’s discretion. Behavior in the course must also comply with the university’s code of conduct (http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~judaff/code.htm).

**Assignments**

Written assignments are **due at the beginning of class** (before the instructor begins the session). Late papers/assignments/exams will be accepted only in very unusual and compelling circumstances and only if cleared with the instructor in advance. Late papers/assignments not arranged in advance will receive a grade of zero.

Students who do not complete required assignments (including exams) will be given a failing grade on those assignments unless the instructor agrees to late receipt of the work because of serious illness or other compelling reasons, and a definite plan for completion of missing work is agreed upon in advance by the instructor and the student.

Unless otherwise specified by the instructor, written assignments must be typed, double spaced, using one inch margins, 12-point font, numbered pages, formal English, and the *American Psychological Association (Sixth Ed.)* style of documentation (unless otherwise specified by the instructor.)
Academic Integrity

All work submitted in a graduate course must be your own.

_It is unethical and a violation of the University’s Academic Integrity Policy to present the ideas or words of another without clearly and fully identifying the source. Inadequate citations will be constructed as an attempt to misrepresent the cited materials as your own. Use the citation style preferred by the discipline._

Effective September 2, 2008, a revised Policy on Academic Integrity will go into effect. The new policy is posted at [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml)

Please Note: violations of academic integrity by graduate and professional students will normally be penalized more severely than violations by first-year undergraduate students. Since all violations of academic integrity by a graduate or professional student are potentially separable under the Academic Integrity Policy, faculty members should _not_ adjudicate alleged academic integrity violations by graduate and professional students, but should refer such allegations to the appropriate Academic Integrity Facilitator (AIF) or to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. The AIF that you should contact is Antoinette Y. Farmer, 732.932.2621. The student shall be notified in writing, by email or hand delivery, of the alleged violation and of the fact that the matter has been referred to the AIF for adjudication. This notification shall be done within 10 days of identifying the alleged violation. Once the student has been notified of the allegation, the student may not drop the course or withdraw from the school until the adjudication process is complete. A TZ or incomplete grade, shall be assigned until the case is resolved.

Definition of Plagiarism

_Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be properly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgment is required when material from another source is stored in print, electronic, or other medium and is paraphrased or summarized in whole or part in one’s own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: to paraphrase Plato’s comment...and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc., need not to be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one’s general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some case, be a subtle issue. Any question about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member._
XI. Disability Accommodation

Please Note: Any student who believes that s/he may need an accommodation in this class due to a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services, Kreeger Learning Center, 151 College Avenue; dfoffice@rci.rutgers.edu; 732-932-2847.

Final grades are letter grade numerical equivalents. Listed below are the corresponding percentages/points (as defined in this course) and general definition of these grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Numerical Equivalent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-92</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>91-86</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-80</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>79-75</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>69 and below:</td>
<td>Failing</td>
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VIII. Course Evaluation

Rutgers University issues a survey that evaluates both the course and the instructor. This survey is completed by students toward the end of the semester, and all answers are confidential and anonymous. The instructor may also choose to conduct a mid-point evaluation.

Required Text Books:
