



**Missouri State**  
U N I V E R S I T Y

**Group Counseling Through Play (COU 757)  
Fall, 2023**

**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:**

Instructor Name: Karrie Swan, PhD, LMHC (WA), LPC (ID), CCPT-T/S,  
CPRT-T/S Tuesdays 5-7:50

Office Hours: Tuesdays: 5:30-7:30; Thursdays: 10-12; Also by appointment and available  
via Zoom during office hours.

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**STUDENT SUCCESS AND INCLUSIVITY**

At Missouri State University we are committed to your success and the creation of an environment where all students are welcome. As a community of learners, we acknowledge the value in the engagement and exchange of ideas with individuals, whose backgrounds may be different than our own.

A key element to your success as a student is to actively engage in the course activities, with your peers, and me - your instructor. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers during the course, contact me right away so we can discuss options for addressing those barriers.

Missouri State University (as an institution) and I (as a human being and instructor of this course) are committed to full inclusion in education for all persons. Services and reasonable accommodations are available to persons with temporary and permanent disabilities, to students facing mental health or other personal challenges, and to students with other kinds of learning challenges. Please let me know if there are circumstances affecting your ability to participate in class. Some resources that might be of use include:

- [Disability Resource Center](#)
- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Multicultural Center](#)
- [Academic Advising & TransferCenter](#)

**COUNSELING PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

***Knowledge.*** Students will demonstrate appropriate breadth and depth of knowledge and comprehension in the areas of culturally relevant service, prevention, treatment, referral, and program management associated with the broader field of counseling as well as the selected specialty (i.e., mental health or school counseling).

***Clinical Skills.*** Students will demonstrate meaningful, therapeutic alliances that utilize culturally sensitive appraisal and assessment techniques for working with individuals and groups in a culturally pluralistic world.

***Research and Appraisal.*** Students will demonstrate analytical knowledge and skills for appraising and contributing to professional counseling literature and program evaluation in selected specialty areas ((i.e., mental health or school counseling).

**Professional Dispositions.** Students will conduct themselves in accordance with the highest ethical standards and values of professional counseling and develop an understanding of oneself and the use of self in the counseling process.

**Specialty Areas.** Students will demonstrate appropriate breadths and depth of knowledge and skills in their respective specialty areas (i.e., mental health or school counseling).

### **DEFINITION OF COUNSELING**

Recently ACA and 28 other Counseling Organizations adopted the following definition: “Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals.”

### **REFLECTIVE COUNSELING PRACTICE**

The Counseling Programs are committed to providing students with opportunities for self-reflection as those practices are congruent with the beliefs of the Professional Education Unit at Missouri State University and constitute the cornerstone of modern professionalism. Self-reflective practice requires openness, awareness, honesty, self-analysis, problem solving, conflict resolution, tolerance, and responsibility. These personal attributes and skills are crucial to the development of excellence in our schools and community agencies serving a diverse, multicultural society.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Introduction to group therapy methods and techniques appropriate to an elementary school or mental health setting. Emphasis is placed upon foundational group therapy skills in general for all ages, and on play therapy modalities in particular, that are appropriate for elementary-age children. Groups in an elementary setting, utilizing Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and play therapy and applications to diverse populations, will be included.

### **GOAL OF COURSE**

This course is designed to assist those who work with children in obtaining an understanding of the philosophy and rationale for groupwork with children, preadolescents, and families. This course will focus on the goals of group play/activity therapy, the role of the play therapist, screening and selection of group members, the developmentally responsive use of play and other expressive/creative arts and activities with children and pre-adolescents, planning and structuring of sessions with emphasis on principles as well as application of methods and skills. Adaptation of the use of play/activity therapy with adolescents and families will also be explored.

### **METHODS OF INSTRUCTION**

This course is structured using a “flipped design” wherein content delivery is moved outside of the classroom, allowing for class time to be utilized actively. Methods involved in this form of student-centered approach include small group discussion, problem-based learning, reflective writing, and contemplative work as well as skills practice and supervision.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

Sweeney, D. S., Baggerly, J., & Ray, D. C. (2014). *Group play therapy: A dynamic approach*. Routledge.

## **COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

**Attendance and Engagement Policy:** I ask that you attend each class and be a consistent, appropriate, and knowledgeable participant in class discussion. Unexcused absences, excessive excused absences as well as repeated tardiness or leaving class early, will result in lowering of your final course grade. Given the nature of this course, students who miss more than two classes will be dropped from the course and will be encouraged to take the course at its next offering. Everyone learns differently, and it is important to me to honor a variety of learning styles and ways of knowing. If you are unsure how you are engaging in the class, please set up a meeting with me and we can discuss perceptions. Engaged and contemplative engagement can be demonstrated by the following:

- verbal contributions in larger classroom discussion
- verbal contributions in small group discussions
- clear demonstration of course content knowledge in assignments
- introspection of course content
- voicing dissenting thoughts in a respectful way to course content
- asking questions/adding comments which indicate thoughtful reflection on material
- gaining and compiling resources outside of what is required for the course
- engaging in advocacy outside of course

**Technology:** The use of technology is a part of our everyday lives at the university and there is important information you should know about your own computer's capabilities, Internet access, Blackboard, and other technology tools whether you are participating in a classroom on campus or taking an online class. For information on the basic computer requirements to be successful in class visit the [Knowledge Base for Computer Requirements](#) on the Missouri State University website. It is strongly recommended that, in addition to your standard means of access, you have an alternative plan for acquiring course materials, should your computer fail to function, or your Internet connectivity becomes disrupted. The MSU campus library is an excellent option if it is nearby; otherwise, most public libraries offer Internet access. If you have a laptop computer, then familiarity with local "hotspots" might also serve you well. It is your responsibility to actively and proactively address technical problems, therefore, develop a plan to address technical problems before they arise. If you need assistance with Blackboard the MSU helpdesk can be reached by phone at 417-836-5891 or by emailing [HelpDesk@MissouriState.edu](mailto:HelpDesk@MissouriState.edu). You can also visit the [Help Desk website](#) for a live chat option.

**Blackboard.** We will utilize Blackboard throughout the semester. I will use the announcements tool to post information about the course as the semester progresses. All course assessments will be submitted through Blackboard (this includes any written assignments, quizzes, tests, etc.), and should be **uploaded in PDF format only**. You will also have access to view your grades through the My Grades link so you can stay up to date on how you are doing in the course. If you are unfamiliar with how to use Blackboard, I recommend reviewing the [Blackboard Basics for Students](#) on the Computer Services Knowledge Base. **Blackboard Ally:** To help ensure you have access to your digital learning materials in formats that work for your different devices, learning needs, and preferences, Blackboard includes a new tool called Ally. Explore the [Accessibility website](#) to learn more.

**Classroom Expectations for Students using Digital Learning Platforms:** Students using a digital learning platform (Zoom, Blackboard, Teams) should maintain professional, focused behavior while in class. Be aware that the instructor and other students are observing your behavior. Successful students find that consistently using a distraction-free, well-lit, “study area” works best. Unprofessional behavior such as attending class while driving, lying in bed or stretched out on the couch, eating, playing with children or pets; or multi-tasking including texting, or working with other documents or apps while attending class using Zoom or Teams contributes to poor performance and is unprofessional. Students who engage in unprofessional behavior while using Zoom or Teams technology will be reminded of these expectations privately one time. If the behavior continues, this will be reflected in assessment of their professional dispositions, and related grading policies for participation will apply.

### **Digital Delivery Netiquette**

- I. Make sure you have a camera so that you can be seen through video when possible. Experiment with your lighting so that your face can be seen, especially for breakout sessions.
- II. Be aware of what/who is behind you and any other sounds in the area. Choose the quietest space available and mute yourself when you are not talking. Use earphones or buds when feasible.
- III. All participants should dress appropriately, as you would for class.
- IV. Use the chat box for comments, and the Q&A section for questions, or raise your hand for questions that involve discussion with the entire class.
- V. Please do not engage in other activities on your computer during class, since research shows that our brains cannot multitask.

**Participation in Asynchronous and Synchronous Learning:** Participation in experiential learning, case studies, and class discussions is required. Each student is expected to treat each person with respect, even when there are differences in experiences or viewpoints. Participation points will be awarded based on class participation and in some weeks, student questions demonstrating grasp of materials to be handed in at the end of class. (Substantive contributions based on readings and class experiences, raising questions that demonstrate either the student’s areas of confusion or the depth of the student’s understanding and a furthering of the topics at hand.) Each person has something important to contribute to the collective learning in our class experience, so it is the expectation that each student will participate in class discussions. Here are some “ground rules” participation:

1. Breathe and settle your body when conversations are tough. A Mindful approach to learning has been correlated with an increase in cultural consciousness (Anderson & Blisard, 2013).
2. Be open to learning, perhaps from a new perspective than you have previously considered, especially when it comes to systems-level analysis of our society. Try to move outside your comfort zone.
3. Be fully present and be an active participant. Use “I” language and speak from your own experience.
4. Respect each person’s right to be heard and to have their own experience that may differ from yours.

5. Listen to others before responding.
6. Don't mistake your discomfort of feeling ideas challenged as a lack of safety—we will aim for “Brave” space of mutual respect for each other’s humanity while we strive to understand the impact of individual and group experiences as future counselors.
7. Be responsible for your own growth and development. Notice your own reactions and become curious about them as a source of deeper understanding.
8. Do not judge another person’s feelings, and do not mistake your feelings for “fact”; the goal is truly hearing and understanding. Be soft on people and hard on the barriers to understanding.
9. Be gentle with yourself and others as we all learn and grow.

**Student Engagement:** Participation and questions are expected in class discussions. It is the responsibility of each of us to treat each other with respect, even when there are differences in experiences or viewpoints. Participation points will be awarded based on class participation and in some weeks, student worksheets or exit tickets demonstrating grasp of materials will be handed in at the end of class or posted to Blackboard. Student engagement and understanding attained from worksheets or exit surveys should demonstrate your depth of understanding of the material and a furthering of the topic at hand.)

**Expectations for Written Work .** Students are expected to have read required materials prior to class. These readings are complementary and cumulative and will be used as a basis for all class activities, including quizzes. My expectation is that we will build upon the readings and develop higher-order applications of the concepts: analyzing, evaluating, creating (Anderson, Krathwol & Bloom, 2001), rather than simply review the readings, so your preparation is critical. We will have guest speakers, watch films and have discussions or participation activities (graded) meant to build on the readings. If you don't understand concepts in the book or want discussion, it is up to you to initiate that conversation!

All written projects are expected to adhere to the proper use of grammar, spelling and word choice, use of nonsexist and culturally sensitive language, as well as proper acknowledgment of quotations and citations. Journals are less formal stylistically but should use proper grammar and respectful language. Assignments in this class do not require APA style for formatting sections. Instead, please use the assigned prompts in the paper itself (single spaced) and write your response below them (double spaced). All written work should demonstrate graduate-level thought and analysis (see comments regarding Bloom’s revised taxonomy in #7 above), and should reflect understanding and integration of course materials and process. If you need assistance, please don't hesitate to consult the Missouri State University writing lab and the “Bear Claw” in the library. For help with APA style: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html)

Plagiarism or cheating of any form will not be tolerated (see Academic Integrity and all other University policies [here](#)):

## **STUDENT OUTCOME TOOLS**

**Note Review:** Students are responsible for reading all assigned readings and participating in class discussions. The participation grade reflects student's preparation for class and participation in class. Each reading assignment should be accompanied by notes taken by the student. For each class Note Review, students will share their take-aways from the posted content and readings with a small group and subsequently with the instructor through uploading a Note Review in Blackboard. Participation in class is demonstrated through participation in discussion and active participation in activities.

**Micropracticum (2.5.a, h):** Students will participate in a group play therapy micropracticum to be held during the last class session.

**Self-Assessment (2.5.f; 2.6.c):** Students are required to complete a paper on personal significant learnings at the end of the semester. The format for this paper is attached to this syllabus.

## **COURSE GRADING**

A total of 100 points can be earned in this course. Your final grade is determined by the total number of points you earn for each of the course activities (breakdown listed in the Grading Scale Table below).

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Total Points</b>
<b>Note Review</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Micropracticum</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Self-Assessment</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## **GRADING SCALE**

Final grades will be determined using the total points you earned during the semester:

93.00% or higher = A; 90.00% to 92.99% = A-; 87.00% to 89.99% = B+; 83.00%-86.99% = B; 80.00% to 82.99% = B-; 77.00% to 79.99% = C+; 73.00% to 76.99% = C; 70.00% to 72.99% = C-; 67.00% to 69.99% = D+; 60.00% to 66.99% = D; 59.99% or lower = F

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

The purpose of the [University Syllabus Policy Statements](#) is to support teaching and learning on the Missouri State campus. The established policies are in place to ensure that students, faculty, and staff may pursue academic endeavors with as few obstacles as possible. As a student at Missouri State University, you are a part of the university community therefore, you are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the [University Syllabus Policy Statements](#). These policies cover topics such as nondiscrimination, disability accommodation, academic integrity, among many others. For program and course specific policies please refer to the individual course syllabus provided by your instructor.

## **COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING**

Class lectures are protected by copyright law and constitute the intellectual property of the faculty member. Accordingly, students are not permitted to record lectures or other class activities unless they have received an approved disability accommodation authorizing such recording, or they have obtained permission from the faculty member prior to recording. Distribution or sale of recordings or other course materials is prohibited without the written permission of the instructor and other students who are recorded. Distribution without permission is a violation of copyright law and the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities (Sections 4.6, 4.8, 4.9). The faculty member, however, reserves the right to record lectures or other class activities, and may make any such recordings available to student who have missed a lecture or activity due to illness or another excused reason.

## **SUICIDE PREVENTION, AVAILABLE SUICIDE PROGRAMS AND RELATED PROCEDURES:**

In accordance with Missouri law (Mo. Rev. Stat. §173.1200), Missouri State has established a new policy regarding Suicide Prevention, Available Suicide Programs and Related Procedures. The Suicide Prevention Resource Policy can be found at the following link: [https://www.missouristate.edu/policy/Op1\\_08-suicide-prevention-available-suicide-programs-and-related-procedures.htm](https://www.missouristate.edu/policy/Op1_08-suicide-prevention-available-suicide-programs-and-related-procedures.htm)

## **COPYRIGHT & FAIR USE STATEMENT**

This course may contain copyrighted material, the use of which may not have been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. This material is available in an effort to explain issues relevant to the course or to illustrate the use and benefits of an educational tool. The material contained in this course is distributed without profit for research and educational purposes. Only small portions of the original work are being used and those could not be used easily to duplicate the original work. This should constitute a ‘fair use’ of any such copyrighted material (referenced and provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law). In other cases, materials reflect the instructor’s original intellectual work, including games, models and other educational tools. These have implied copyright whether previously published or not. If you wish to use any material from this course for purposes of your own that go beyond ‘fair use’, you must obtain expressed permission from the copyright owner.

## **DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION POLICY FOR STUDENTS**

MSU perceives students with disabilities as a valued identity group and integral to our campus diversity. We strive to proactively create usable, equitable, inclusive learning environments. However, due to the design of a University course or program, students with disabilities may experience barriers to their full and meaningful participation. When this occurs students should request an environmental or course adaptation through the process outlined below. It is the policy of Missouri State University to comply with all applicable federal and state laws prohibiting disability discrimination.

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the University office responsible for the evaluation and implementation of reasonable accommodations based on a disability. The DRC provides resources and collaborates with all students with disabilities. The DRC is the entry point for all

disability resources and accommodations for the Springfield Campus. Students interested in receiving a reasonable accommodation must contact the DRC information: Meyer Library, Suite 111, 417-836-4192 (voice) or 417-836-6792 (TTY), [MissouriState.edu/Disability](https://MissouriState.edu/Disability). On the West Plains and Mountain Grove Campuses, students should contact the Advisement and Academic Coaching Center for Empowering Student Success (AACCESS), 128 Garfield, 417-255-7222, [WPAACCESS@MissouriState.edu](mailto:WPAACCESS@MissouriState.edu).

### **Requesting Accommodations**

Students with disabilities who experience or anticipate barriers to their participation are encouraged to request accommodations by going through the following process. Students should request accommodations as soon as a barrier to participation is anticipated as accommodations cannot be provided retroactively. Distance learning students should follow this same accommodation process. Students with disabilities should contact the DRC for an appointment. The purpose of the appointment is to discuss the barriers the student has experienced or anticipates. Students should then complete the online [request for accommodation form](#) and submit it. Students may also fill out a hardcopy form through the appropriate resource office.



**COURSE CALENDAR: TOPICS, ASSIGNMENTS AND CACREP STANDARDS**

**Statement of Flexibility:** Please note that the course calendar, my office hours, etc. are subject to change due to inclement weather, student needs, instructional delays, etc. I will communicate any changes that may occur through the course announcements on Blackboard.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
1	10/21	Sweeney et al., Ch 1, 4, 5	Introductions, Overview, Rationale, Play Materials & Facilities, Selection & Composition, Multicultural Considerations (2.2.d.f; 2.6.e)	
2	10/28	Sweeney et al., Ch 2, 3, & 6	Therapist Role, Therapist Responses (2.6.b.c.d)	Note Review
3	11/4	Sweeney et al., Ch 7, 13, 15	Parents Settings & Populations (2.5.c; 2.6.f)	Note Review
4	11/11	Sweeney et al. Ch 8	Introduction to Expressive Arts (2.5.a, h)	Note Review
5	11/18	Sweeney et al. Ch 9, 10, 11	Structured Activities (2.5.a, h)	Note Review
6	11/15	Sweeney et al. Ch 12, 14	Structured Activities (2.5.a, h)	Note Review
7	12/2	Review Sweeney et al., Ch 2, 3, & 6	Micropracticum (2.5.a, h)	
8	12/9	None	Final Class/Termination (2.5.a, h)	Self-Assessment (5.f, 6.c)

## Self-Assessment Final

**Answer the following questions in a narrative format. Your answers should be written in detail, exposing as much of your learning and feelings as you feel comfortable. Wherever possible, relate your experiences with something you read or learned about in class.**

1. Discuss your experience in leading your play therapy group. Discussion should include your thoughts, feelings, experiences, reactions, and behaviors as the play therapist in a group format.
2. Discuss the experience of your children in your play therapy group. What did you notice about their interactions with one another?
3. Discuss your overall feelings and thoughts about group play therapy, children in group play therapy and your competence/comfort level as a group play therapist.