

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education and Human Development**  
**Counseling and Development**

EDCD 797.002 – Introduction to Gestalt Counseling  
1 Credit, Spring 2017  
Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup> & Sunday, March 26<sup>th</sup> 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM  
Robinson Hall Room 249 – Fairfax

**Faculty**

Name: Dr. Jesse A. Rabinowitz  
Office Hours: Professor lives out of town, so office hours by appointment, remotely  
Office Location: Krug Hall Suite 202  
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Email Address:

**Prerequisites/Corequisites**

Admission to the CNDV program, EDCD 603

**University Catalog Course Description**

Advanced topics in education

**Course Overview**

This course will provide students with an introduction to the theory, principles, and practices of Gestalt Therapy. The course will be a balance of lecture and experiential work, with an emphasis on the here-and-now experimental approach for which Gestalt Therapy is known. Students will be invited to participate in self-exploration in a safe group environment in order to maximize their felt-grasp of the principles beyond a simple cognitive understanding. The course will cover the gestalt model of holistic/holarchic organization of the person/environment field, homeostasis and imbalance in humans, the need/awareness/excitement/contact/withdrawal cycle, the facilitation of, and impediments to, healthy contact, the gestalt therapeutic environment and client/therapist relationship, the principles that guide the therapy process, the use of here-and-now attention and experiments to illuminate, explore, and improve contact, and how gestalt can be integrated into different practice settings & populations.

**Course Delivery Method**

This course will be delivered using a workshop format.

**Learner Outcomes or Objectives**

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Understand the rudiments of Gestalt theory and practice
2. Experience and practice Gestalt working processes

3. Understand how Gestalt therapy can promote healing with a variety of populations and issues
4. Conceptualize how they might incorporate Gestalt theory and practice into their own unique approaches and styles of counseling.

### **Professional Standards (CACREP)**

EDCD 797 is a special topics course and meets the requirement that all master's students take 2-3 credits of special topics course work. This 1-credit course will contribute to counseling students' knowledge of a particular population of clients.

EDCD 797 fulfills the requirements of the following professional organizations

Virginia Department of Education requirement for school counseling licensure that candidates understand the knowledge, skills and processes of individual counseling. Virginia Department of Health Professions requirement that Licensed Professional Counselor candidates complete graduate study in theories and techniques of counseling and psychotherapy. Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) core requirement described in Section II.K.e: Helping relationships: An understanding of counseling and consultation processes. American Counseling Association Code of Ethics requirement that counselors establish counselor education and training programs that integrate academic study and supervised practice.

### **Required Texts**

Students will be provided with an extensive handout covering the course material, as well as additional documents and links.

### **Course Performance Evaluation**

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, Tk20, hard copy).

- **Assignments and Examinations**

Unless otherwise noted, the assignments for the course are to be submitted in an electronic form to the professor's email address (jrabinow@gmu.edu).

#### **I. Gestalt Theory Paper (40% of total grade)**

Articulate:

A definition of gestalt therapy

The gestalt model of holistic/holarchic organization of humans in their environments

The need/awareness/excitement/contact/withdrawal cycle

An understanding of good contact and how psychopathology is described in gestalt terms

A description of the therapeutic environment and working methods of gestalt therapy

#### **II. Self-Reflection Paper (30% of total grade)**

Describe your experiences of the class, what you noticed freshly about yourself and how you noticed it, your reactions to the work and to gestalt therapy, noteworthy experiences that

occurred for you during the class, and how you think this class may have altered your ideas about therapeutic work.

### III. Participation (30% of total grade)

Students are expected to demonstrate a high level of participation consistent with graduate-level education. Students are expected to: be on time and present for the duration of the class; demonstrate engagement (ask questions, share thoughts); be respectful and attentive; and demonstrate preparedness for each class meeting. Although self-exploration and process work are not required of any participant, students are invited to view the class as an opportunity to work on themselves individually, in dyadic pairs, and in the larger group.

- **Other Requirements**

**Attendance:** In accordance with the policies of the Counseling and Development Program, on-time attendance at every class meeting is expected. Late arrival to class will be considered an absence. Due to the short nature of this class, **any unexcused absences will result in loss of course credit.** Attendance is required for all classes. Excused absences are permitted for illness, religious holidays, or emergency situations only; documentation is required for the absence to be considered excused. Work-related absences are not considered excused.

**Course Requirements:** Each student is expected to: (1) attend each class, (2) arrive on time and stay for the entire class period, (3) participate in discussions and in-class exercises (4) submit assignments by the end of day on the Sunday one week after the class.

- **Grading**

A = 95-100   A- = 90-94   B+ = 87-89   B = 83-86   B- = 80-82   C = 70-79   F = < 70

An “A” paper is one that:

- Is clear, well written, and well organized.
- Demonstrates thoughtful reflection on the assigned topic.
- Demonstrates integration of knowledge from the course and your own experiences/interests.

All CEHD undergraduate and graduate students are held to the university grading policies as described in the Academic Policies section of the current catalog, which can be accessed at <http://catalog.gmu.edu>. Those students enrolled in a CEHD Licensure Graduate Certificate program, however, must earn a B- or better in all licensure coursework. A degree-seeking graduate student will be dismissed after accumulating grades of F in two courses or 9 credits of unsatisfactory grades (C or F) in graduate courses. A 3.0 grade point average is required for completion of the graduate degree.

**Professional Dispositions**

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

Given the workshop nature of the course, students are expected to maintain confidentiality about material shared by one another.

## Class Schedule

Class	Date	Topic(s)	Assignment Due
1, Sat.	March 25, 2017	Gestalt theory and principles: Holism/Holarchy Needs Attainment Awareness & Contact	
2, Sun.	March 26, 2017	Gestalt Process: Therapeutic Process Therapeutic Relationship Experiments in Contact Integration of Gestalt into student's practice	Assignments 1 & 2 due April 2, 2017

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

## Core Values Commitment

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

## GMU Policies and Resources for Students

### *Policies*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).

- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

### *Campus Resources*

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursesupport.gmu.edu/>.
- The Writing Center provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing (see <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>).
- The Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance (see <http://caps.gmu.edu/>).
- The Student Support & Advocacy Center staff helps students develop and maintain healthy lifestyles through confidential one-on-one support as well as through interactive programs and resources. Some of the topics they address are healthy relationships, stress management, nutrition, sexual assault, drug and alcohol use, and sexual health (see <http://ssac.gmu.edu/>). Students in need of these services may contact the office by phone at 703-993-3686. Concerned students, faculty and staff may also make a referral to express concern for the safety or well-being of a Mason student or the community by going to <http://ssac.gmu.edu/make-a-referral/>.

**For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/>.**