



Department of Applied Psychology
Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP)
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey

Clinical Interviewing and Assessment Fall 2025

18:820:531:02 Credits: 3

Monday 3:35-6:00

Nelson Biology Laboratories (NH-D302)

Instructor:

Eric J. Podchaski, PhD

eipod@gsapp.rutgers.edu

Rutgers University Land Acknowledgment: We acknowledge that the land on which we stand is the ancestral territory of the Lenape People. We pay respect to Indigenous people throughout the Lenape diaspora – past, present, and future – and honor those who have been historically and systemically disenfranchised. We also acknowledge that Rutgers University, like New Jersey and the United States as a nation, was founded upon the exclusions and erasures of Indigenous peoples.

Rutgers University Mission: As the premier comprehensive public research university in the state's system of higher education, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, has the threefold mission of:

- providing for the instructional needs of New Jersey's citizens through its undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education programs;
- conducting the cutting-edge research that contributes to the medical, environmental, social, and cultural well-being of the state, as well as aiding the economy and the state's businesses and industries; and
- performing public service in support of the needs of the citizens of the state and its local, county, and state governments.

Each component of the university's mission reinforces and supports the other two.

As the University of New Jersey®, Rutgers is dedicated to teaching that meets the highest standards of excellence, to conducting research that breaks new ground, and to providing services, solutions, and clinical care that help individuals and the local, national, and global communities where they live.

GSAPP Mission: The mission of GSAPP is threefold: education, research/scholarship, and public service. Its goal is to prepare well-educated, qualified, and competent direct-service

psychologists who have a special commitment to direct community involvement and to underserved populations--professionals who can integrate scientific knowledge with innovation in the delivery of psychological services to individuals, families, groups, and organizations. Professionals receiving a doctoral degree in psychology should be capable of extending psychological knowledge and exhibiting the high level of analytic skills and theoretical understanding needed to use existing and emerging psychological knowledge.

Core Values: We are guided by four core values that are apparent in our learning environment, centers, and clinics:

1. **Academic excellence** in preparing students for careers in clinical and school psychology.
2. Commitment to **social justice** and helping **underserved populations**.
3. **Diversity** of students trained, approaches used, theoretical orientations followed, and populations served.
4. **Knowledge generation and dissemination** using contemporary research approaches.

Applied Psychology Statement: The Applied Psychology Department embraces the mission of the school by offering instruction that has an emphasis on civic and global citizenship, social justice, and cultural diversity. Our programs provide students with knowledge needed to understand individual and collective behaviors; develop quantitative and qualitative statistical analysis and research design needed to analyze the corresponding physical and environmental contributors to human behavior; and a beginning understanding of the analysis and treatment of behavior problems and disorders.

Our programs prepare students with the requisite theoretical knowledge; critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed to successfully participate in employment or scholastic activities. Students will have opportunities to pursue scholarly activities that prepares them to successfully compete for admissions into doctoral level psychology and related academic programs and pursue Master level career pathways through available concentration and certificate. In general, students will acquire a knowledge base grounded in psychological theory and experiential learning (research or practicum) designed to further advance their personal and professional career development.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate competency in clinical interviewing skills, knowledge of strategies utilized to establish engagement, and identifying goals for therapy
2. Demonstrate self-awareness of clinician strengths and growth areas
3. Understand the ethics, legal concerns, and cultural humility in clinical interviewing

Course Description:

This course provides an in-depth exploration of clinical interviewing as the foundational skill in mental health assessment and treatment. Students are introduced to strategies on how to build

therapeutic rapport, gather data related to psychosocial history, conduct mental status exams and utilize evidenced based interviewing techniques.

Readings:

Sommers-Flanagan, J. and Sommers-Flanagan. (2023). *Clinical Interviewing (7th ed)*. Wiley Publications.

Please see Canvas for additional readings and schedule.

Methods of Evaluation

Rubrics will be used to evaluate performance in all areas. All rubrics will be available in Canvas and reviewed ahead of time. Student feedback on assessment process and rubrics is welcome and appreciated.

Category	Weight of Grade
Skill demonstration and reflection	40%
Class discussion/participation and short assignments.	30%
Case write up	30%
Canvas will calculate a weighted average and display this average under the Total score. Assignments in each category area will be weighted equally.	

Details on Evaluation Methods

Skill demonstration

There will be informal and formal practice of interviewing skills.

- Informal practice will happen in many class sessions and is not graded. This is an opportunity to practice, share insights, and support each other.
- Formal practice will be graded using a rubric and will be an opportunity to build confidence, receive support, and feedback to improve skills.
- Students will be asked to keep track of their progress and write a brief reflection about their skills towards the end of the semester. Format will be discussed in class and posted in Canvas.

Participation in Class Discussion

- Most classes will involve an opportunity for discussion.
- A rubric is in Canvas to review the grading criteria.
- The lowest **two (2)** discussion grades will be dropped from the grade calculation in Canvas.

Short Assignments

- Two brief assignments will be given during the course. These will be scoring and write up of different mental status exams or practice of writing up interview data.

- A scoring rubric will be available in Canvas and feedback will be given for any non-passing grade (and likely passing grades as well).

Case Write Up

- The case write up provides an opportunity to review and integrate case information into a coherent picture of how the client is functioning at the present time. It is a capstone assignment where the student will integrate concepts from class and present them as a completed intake evaluation.
- Format will be discussed in class and posted in Canvas.

Grading:

A	90-100	Outstanding
B+	87-89	Intermediate Grade
B	80-86	Good
C	70-79	Does not count towards graduation credits
F	0-69	

Program requirement: All students in Applied Psychology courses must achieve a grade of B or better and maintain a GPA of 3.0, or academic remediation will be enforced.

Course Structure:

Each week we will cover specific topics related to clinical interviewing and assessment. Each class is broken down into two halves with a short break in-between.

Week	Lecture Topics*
	*see Canvas for tentative schedule of readings for each week
Sept 8	Intro to course, interviewing, and psychological assessment
Sept 15	Interview Basics – set up, multicultural awareness, structure, ethical behavior.
Sept 22	Listening Skills

Sept 29	Listening Skills II and relational foundations
Oct 6	Mental status exam and screening tools Practice with administration, scoring, and interpretation ¹²
Oct 13	Intake interview and writing Role play interviewing and writing practice ¹²
Oct 20	Suicide risk assessment
Oct 27	Role play interviews with discussion ¹
Nov 3	Challenging situations w/discussion APA Ethics in practice
Nov 10	Telehealth and Digital Mental Health Working with younger clients
Nov 17	Diagnosis and treatment planning Case Write Up assignment reviewed in class
Nov 24	Article and/or video discussion/critique
Dec 1	Mock interviews with feedback ¹
Dec 8	Finish mock interviews ¹ and final discussion
Dec 15	TBA

¹ Interviewing/assessment skills graded on this date

² Short assignments assigned on this date, due the following week.

Due Dates

Skill Demonstration graded on: Oct 6, Oct 13, Oct 27, Dec 1 (Dec 8 if needed)

Reflection on skills assignment: Dec 1

Short assignments (assigned dates are noted above): due 10/13, 10/20,

Case Write Ups due anytime Dec 1 – Dec 14 @ 11:59pm in Canvas

Late Assignment Policy

Best advice here is to turn everything in on time and **PLEASE contact me** if you are having trouble with keeping up with the work and deadlines. I'm more than happy to work with you to the degree I can and that cannot happen if I don't hear from you. The policies for the specific evaluations apply if severe extenuating circumstances (e.g. missing many weeks to months of class for documented issue) are not present.

Skill demonstrations and class participation will be difficult to make up, but we will figure something out if needed. All written assignments (e.g. skill reflection, short assignments) other than the case write up have a 24-hour grace period. That is, they can be turned in within 24 hours of the due date without impacting your grade. Turning in anything later than that without any contact with me may result in penalties up to 20% if accepted. The final case write up is due in two week window and must be turned in no later than Dec 14 at 11:59pm.

Additional Course Information:

1. **Email communication phone access:** Email is the best way to contact the instructor (ejpod@gsapp.rutgers.edu) Typically, I will respond to your emails within 48 hours (about 2 days) during the work week. If you did not receive a response within this period, please resend your message. In addition, Canvas tools will be used for communication throughout the semester.
2. **Commitment to EDI:** Our diverse identities, shape the perspectives we all bring to the classroom. Together, we will work to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion, because EDI principles promote excellence, innovation, and justice. Imperfections in our growth and practice of EDI values are acknowledged, are encouraged to be called in and addressed and reports of racial abuse will be addressed.
3. **Personal disclosures:** It is recommended that you do not discuss personal histories when discussing thoughts and reactions to the material presented. If anyone feels particularly distressed by anything discussed/assigned, I am requesting that you make this known to me. If necessary, I can make referrals for further services. However, if personal issues are accidentally revealed, it is expected that members of the class will maintain confidentiality.
4. **Reasonable Accommodation:**
GSAPP is firmly committed to reasonable accommodation of disability-related needs. Students entitled to this accommodation are encouraged to request assistance from the Office of Disability Services, and to provide the department, and instructors, with paperwork and communication from that office. See: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>
5. **Academic Integrity and Student Code of Conduct:**
All GSAPP students are responsible for knowing, and conforming to, principles of academic integrity, as specified in: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/> and [University Code of Student Conduct | Student Conduct - Division of Student Affairs | Rutgers University-New Brunswick](#)
6. **Writing Assistance:**
The university provides resources for students who feel they need assistance in improving their writing. It is your responsibility to make use of this help, should you need it. You can contact: Shawn Taylor, Ed.D. College Avenue Learning Center Academic Building Room 1247 15 Seminary Place 848-932-1662 sktaylor@rutgers.edu
7. **Classroom Etiquette:**
Please refrain from using electronic devices for non-class related material during class.