

Lewis and Clark College
Graduate School of Education and Counseling
Summer 2009

CPSY 590: Expressive Arts Therapy



“When I let go and can allow myself to imagine, I’m actually coming back to myself because they’re always projections...fantasy gives us an access to our own real experience.”

Violet Oaklander

Peter Mortola, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Counseling and School Psychology

Office: Rogers Hall 323, Phone: 768 6072

pmortola@lclark.edu

Office hours: Tuesday 2:00–4:00 p.m.

2 Semester Credits

Class meetings: Fridays, 12:30 to 4:30 pm, SCCC 101

Required Class Texts

- 1) Oaklander, V. (1988) *Windows to our Children*, Gestalt Journal Press, NY (0939266067)
- 2) Mortola, P. (2006) *Windowframes: Learning the art of Gestalt play therapy the Oaklander way*, GestaltPress, NJ (0881634638)

Course Description

The importance of mediating higher-level, conceptual work with more concrete referents has been well documented in the literature on development, education and psychology. Piaget called for the use of wooden blocks – or “manipulatives” – in order to aid the child in literally “grasping” the more abstract concepts of addition, subtraction and number. Vygotsky noted the importance of “scaffolding” and building up to more abstract linguistic concepts by first ensuring the understanding of more fundamental ones. Werner developed the concept of “microgenesis” in order to describe the importance of physical and sensorial processes in more conceptual problem solving. Lakoff and Johnson also describe the way in which all higher-level conceptualization is related to the use of visual and tactile metaphors.

This class is designed for mental health practitioners interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the theory and practice of the use of the mediating properties found in the expressive arts in therapy and counseling as applied to clinical and school settings with children, adolescents, and adults. The International Expressive Arts Therapy Association (IEATA) defines the expressive arts in the following way:

The expressive arts emphasize an interdisciplinary or intermodal approach to creative endeavour. The field is grounded not in specific techniques or media but in how the arts can respond to the multitude of human experience from life challenging situations to self-realization. Expressive arts professionals, such as therapists, consultants/educators, and artists work with symbols, text, movement, sound, and other various media grounded in the body and imagination. Expressive arts practitioners are sensitive to individuals' needs during the creative process and are committed to fostering a compassionate environment for listening, speaking and witnessing.

In this course, we will be exploring the uses of drawing, clay, sand tray, puppets, musical instruments, and picture cards to understand their utility and application as “mediating tools” in the counseling and therapeutic context as applied to individuals and groups of all ages. We will focus on the work of one particular author, Dr. Violet Oaklander, an early pioneer of expressive arts and Gestalt play therapy. Dr. Oaklander’s 1978 text *Windows to our Children: A Gestalt Therapy Approach to*

Children and Adolescents presented a model of working with children and adolescents in the therapeutic setting using the expressive arts that has since influenced practitioners worldwide. Presently, this text is published in eleven languages – English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Serbo-Croatian, Croatian, Russian, Chinese, Hebrew, Korean and German. *Windows to our Children* is a popular textbook used in counseling programs at universities and colleges around the world, including Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Brazil, Israel, Canada, the United States, and many countries in Europe. In exploring Dr. Oaklander’s work, we will be focusing on accomplishing the following goals for the course:

- 1) understanding the developmental theory underlying the use of the expressive arts in counseling and therapeutic contexts.
- 2) gaining an understanding of and experience with multiple expressive media
- 3) developing a repertoire of approaches for the application of expressive arts in counseling and therapeutic contexts
- 4) determining which expressive media provide the best fit for you as practitioner

Course Requirements

Regular class attendance, completion of all class readings, and active participation in class discussions and exercises are expected and necessary to make this a rich and dynamic learning experience for all involved. Due to the brevity of our meeting time together, more than one absence from class over the term may result in a failing or incomplete grade. I will expect you to contact me prior to class sessions or due dates regarding any absences from class or problems with assignment deadlines. If you miss an entire class session (or more than two hours of a class session) I will expect a make-up writing assignment, due at the beginning of the next class period: A three page paper in which you compare and contrast two additional readings (journal articles or book chapters) on the activity of the week with the class readings for that week.

Each week, the class will be divided into five sections. Expectations for participation in each individual class session are described below as I outline the basic five-part structure that each class will contain:

Opening check-in

I will open each class session with a check-in that in some way utilizes the expressive arts. The function of each check-in is two-fold: First, to model such exercises that can be applied to therapeutic contexts with children, adolescents, and adults, and, second, to help us “arrive” as a group and be present for class time.

Reading discussion

During this period, you will be expected to draw upon your close readings of the course materials in order to contribute to the discussion by first sharing a passage from the reading that caught your interest and then sharing your reflections/questions/concerns sparked from that passage. Such individual contributions will be noted as a way for me to gauge your overall participation in the class. Because we will be meeting for two fewer hours this term overall, you will be required to go to the Watzek Library to view (by 5/29 and 6/5) two videos that are listed in the *course weekly overview* below. Please view the entire videos, take notes, and come to class ready to discuss them.

Expressive arts experience

In this portion of the class, I will facilitate a “hands on” experience with varying media. I will also usually demonstrate with an individual or small group how such media can be used therapeutically. Your active and willing participation with each experience and media is expected in order to increase your own knowledge, likes and dislikes of various expressive arts materials. Your participation as part of the demonstration with me in front of the group is voluntary and will not be counted as part of your grade.

Teamwork with media

After I have demonstrated how to work with the media with an individual or small group, it will be your turn to practice this work. We will break up into small groups of three in which you will take on the roles of client, therapist and observer. While you are in the role of the therapist, you will audiotape your work with the client. These audiotaped practice sessions will provide you with data to be used in your final class paper (described below).

Activity discussion

In this closing activity of each class session, we will regroup to discuss our experience with these materials and in these different roles. Like the “reading discussion” described above, your participation in these discussions will be noted as a way for me to gauge your overall participation in the class. Comments that link the activities of the day with the class readings will be particularly appreciated.

“Practicing the Expressive Arts” Final Paper

One week after the final class, you will be expected to turn in a 5-7 page paper which will serve as a summary of your experiences and learnings in the class. In this section I describe both the big picture and the small details of this paper.

One of my main tasks as a professor is to help you better integrate your thoughts, feelings and actions regarding your personal learning and your professional practice. To me, clear writing plays a big part in accomplishing this goal. That is, good writing reflects a conscientious and sustained effort to make clear and visible your thoughts, feelings and experiences about a relevant topic and how you should act in your professional role as a consequence of these reflections. In this way, writing is an important “expressive art” and means of helpful communication that we will be focusing on in this course as well.

Clear writing is a result of a process, not a one-time venture. Your paper should therefore be proofread by a qualified second reader. In your final version, you should have a paragraph on the bottom of the last page as to who proofread previous versions, what changes were made, and what you learned in this process. Any paper that contains numerous errors in punctuation, spelling, grammar or clarity will be graded accordingly. The *Grading Guidelines* (below) detail the criteria by which your papers will be graded. Please attend to these carefully as you compose your paper.

“Practicing the Expressive Arts” Final Paper: Grading Guidelines

1. The paper contains a cover page that includes the title, course number, and author contact information (name, phone, and email).
2. The paper is printed, double-spaced, page-numbered, stapled (no covers), and turned in on time.
3. The paper contains effective use of spelling, punctuation, and grammar in communicating ideas, resulting in clear writing. Quotations of over 40 words are indented in block form.
4. The paper contains effective construction for meaning at all levels (sentence, paragraph and whole paper) with helpful and thorough transitions between each provided.
5. The paper contains each of the following sections and is outlined in the following way:

Introduction

Describe what you intend to do in this paper and why. The opening should be an overview of the “ground” you will cover in the paper and should be written last upon completion of the rest of your paper.

Work samples

The body of this paper should contain approximately five transcribed work samples from your in-class practice that are linked to relevant course readings as well as reflected upon in terms of your learning. I include two examples below:

Example one: Show how you help (or did not help) the client better differentiate/ become aware of/bring into clear figure some aspect of their experience and then integrate/accept/make sense of that experience.

Example two: Show how your prompts help the client to “be it” better, immersing herself in the expressive arts experience before later emerging from and reflecting on how this experience might “fit” for her own life.

Summary and closing

The closing section should contain two things: 1) an overall summary of the paper and a review of the ground you have covered; 2) a set of overall reflections of what you learned both as a person and as a professional from the class, the experiences, the readings, and the discussions as well as what you will take with you from this class to apply to your professional role.

Proofreading paragraph

The proofreading paragraph should describe who read your paper (at least one other qualified person), what changes you made to your writing through the proofreading process, and what you learned from in the proofreading process overall.

Course grading summary (300 points total)

Attendance	100 points possible
Participation	100 points possible
Final Paper	100 points possible

Course weekly overview

Meetings	Readings/Assignments	Activities/Media
1 (5/15)	Syllabus (in class reading)	Drawing check-in Syllabus review Safe place drawing Team work with drawings Activity and video discussion (Billy)
2 (5/22)	Oaklander: Ch. 1 Fantasy Ch. 2 Drawing Mortola: Foreword and Introduction Ch 1 Building a relationship	Card check-in Reading discussion Clay experience Team work with clay Activity discussion
3 (5/29)	Oaklander: Ch. 3 My working model Ch. 4 Making things (Clay) Mortola:	Drawing check-in Reading and video discussion: Therapy process in action (Carlos) RJ505.G47 T44 1993 Rosebush Drawing experience

	Ch. 2 Making contact (Safe place) Ch. 3 Self work	Team work with drawings Activity discussion
4 (6/5)	Oaklander: Ch. 5 Storytelling, poetry, puppets Ch. 6 Sensory experience Mortola: Ch. 4 Aggressive energy, anger Ch. 5 Music experience	Puppet check-in Reading and video discussion: Gestalt Therapy with Children (Blake) RJ505.G47 G476 2001 Puppet work Team work with puppets Activity discussion
5 (6/12)	Oaklander: Ch. 7 Enactment Ch. 8 Play therapy (sand tray) Mortola: Ch. 6 Sand tray day Ch. 7 Stories, metaphors, puppets	Sand tray figures check-in Reading discussion Sand tray example Team work with sand tray Activity discussion
No class (6/19)	No class	
6 (6/26)	Oaklander: Ch. 9 Therapy process Ch. 10 Specific problem behaviors Mortola: Ch. 8 Practicum day Ch. 9 Self nurturing work	International check-in Reading discussion South Africa presentation (Sima) Demon Drawing Whole group work with drawing Activity discussion
No class (7/3)	No class	
7 (7/10)	Oaklander: Ch. 11 Other considerations Ch. 12 A personal note Mortola: Ch. 10 Closing activities Ch. 11 Clay, culture, age	Music check-in Music work example Group music experience Paper excerpt sharing Final drawing Course evaluations
No class (7/17)	No class	<i>Practicing the Expressive Arts</i> Paper due