

**CO5670 Application of Counseling and Theology**  
**Reformed Theological Seminary - Jackson**  
**Spring 2026**  
**One (1) Credit Hour**

### **Instructor**

Michael Hillerman, PhD, LPC-S

#### **Contact Information**

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#### **Class meeting times**

Tuesday 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

#### **Office hours**

Open-door Policy or By Appointment

### **Course Description**

This course is designed to help students demonstrate their ability to integrate and consolidate their thinking and positions on a variety of issues related to counseling. It will also familiarize students with critical topics, questions, and issues in arenas of both Christian worldview informed and nonfaith-based counseling settings. The intent is to prepare students to be able to respond to commonly asked questions they may have to answer in job interviews, from referral sources, or clients.

### **Course Objectives**

Students will:

- CO1.** Have organized their thinking and responses to issues and common questions often raised from within the church or from those within the field of professional counseling.
- CO2.** Be able to state their positions on counseling-related issues in a concise and understandable manner in language that will be understood by the church and the academy.
- CO3.** Be able to engage respectfully with other students on positions relating to topics and people in the field of counseling.
- CO4.** Have gained confidence in their ability to articulate their personal philosophy of counseling.

### **Methods of Instruction**

This course will be conducted in a seminar format. Class meetings will be used for the presentation and discussion of various counseling questions as they relate both to the church and the field of professional counseling. All students will participate in the research and writing of short summary papers on assigned questions. It is expected that all students will participate actively in order to help each other sharpen their understanding and ability to articulate relevant information on each topic presented. **Students should be physically present at each class (no Zoom attendance without instructor permission).**

## Assignments (Student Performance Evaluation Criteria)

### A1. Class attendance (*10% of grade*)

To address the many unique issues and questions that will be covered over the semester, it is imperative that students be in class on time and ready to engage in conversation promptly at the start of class. Students will lose attendance points each time they are late to class (this means in a seat, computer on, and ready to talk). Students will lose 1/3 of their overall letter grade for each class they miss.

### A2. Participation in roundtable in-class discussions (*20% of grade*)

The course format is completely dialogue-based. Interactive discussion of the assigned questions is the purpose of the class, so all students are expected to participate in the conversations. These discussions will help students: 1) consolidate their positions on the various questions, 2) be prepared for the oral exams during finals week, and more importantly, 3) be able to give cogent answers to questions they will likely face from pastors, employers, referral sources, and clients. **Students are expected to contribute significant comments each class period.**

### A3. Counseling issue papers (*30% of grade*)

Each student will be assigned several questions from the list of Christian counseling and mental health counseling issues and topics per the course schedule (see the addendum at the end of the syllabus for the complete set of questions). For each question assigned to the student, they will research and write brief (1-2 page) position paper.

***Many of these questions can trigger negative feelings in RTS MAC students.*** In answering the question, use the “CARE + STEEL” Response Model outlined at the end of this syllabus. Temporarily suspend judgment and assume the best of the heart of the person asking the question (as opposed to assuming the worst). Find the reasonable part of the question being asked and state it clearly. For Christian Worldview questions, reference biblical texts the question may be pointing to. For Mental Health questions identify any ethical codes or principles the question is referring to.

These papers should be concise, thoughtful, and informed by reading and research the student has been exposed to in their coursework throughout the MAC program. In-text citations and a minimum of three references are required for all papers [at least one scholarly (theological / psychological), meaning the source is a book or peer-reviewed article, as opposed to online or popular resource like Psychology Today, TGC, Wikipedia, etc.]. Use of the Bible is encouraged, but is not to be counted as one of the sources in the bibliography. The papers should reflect your integrated thoughts in writing and should not simply be cited quotes (do not overuse quoted material) or copy and paste material (this is plagiarism) from other writers.

**Upload your papers to the Canvas Discussion Forum corresponding to the Discussion Question addressed by your paper.** It is critical that these are submitted on time because your classmates are required to read these prior to attending class. ***Assignments turned in late will be deducted 1 letter grade for each late day.***

After the class has discussed your position paper, revise the paper based on the feedback you receive in class. The revised Position Papers must be submitted to both: (a) the Canvas assignment (e.g. Issue Paper A), and (b) the Canvas Discussion forum for this question (e.g.. Question 1).

#### **Formatting Your Papers:**

- Use the question number (the number only) as the file name (e.g. “8.docx”), title of your paper on the APA-style cover page of the paper, *and* at the top of the first page (e.g., “Question 8”).
- Use the question itself as the first line of text at the beginning of your paper. Indent this line like you would a paragraph (e.g., “What is Christian counseling?”)
- Use APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition formatting for your papers (use the APA template for this course provided on Canvas). These papers are used to demonstrate your overall academic learning throughout the MAC program and therefore, standard academic writing is expected.

#### **A4. Reading and Discussion Forum (20% of grade)**

Students will review the discussion questions assigned for the next class meeting. Students are expected to spend a minimum of 10 minutes responding to each question. For each question, students will participate in an online discussion forum on Canvas.

The goal of this online discussion is to help the author of the position paper. Here are some examples of things to consider:

- Help define what the assumptions are underlying the question. Assume the best (as opposed to assuming the worst) of the heart of the person asking the question. Find the reasonable part of the question being asked. For Christian Worldview questions, are there biblical texts the question is pointing to? For Mental Health questions, are there ethical codes the question is referring to?
- Has this question been addressed in a prior RTS course discussion, assignment, or reading? If so, where? What was the answer provided in the course?
- How would you answer the question, or what elements would a good answer include?

Students will then read the position papers (4 papers per week) written by classmates **prior** to attending class on Tuesday. Issue papers may be accessed in the Canvas Discussion forum assigned to the specific question and will be posted no later than the day before class. Each of the four papers will be discussed in class.

#### **A5. Oral exams (20% of grade)**

For the final exam, students will be examined orally by several professionals- faculty member(s) along with outside professional counselors and/or pastors. Students will be asked to give verbal responses to chosen questions from the issues or topics presented and discussed in class during the semester. The assumed setting for the exams will be that of a job interview. You will be graded on three areas in the final exam: subject knowledge, skill of presentation, and disposition. Quality and thoughtfulness of your responses will be key factors in determining your final grade for the exam. The following rubric will be used in the grading of the final exam:

Score	1	2	3	4
	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>Near expectation</b>	<b>Meets expectations</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>	Grave lack of relevant information and/or Insufficient mastery of the subject matter.	Limited and/or inconsistent mastery of the subject matter.	Proficient mastery of the subject matter	Exceptionally strong mastery of the subject matter.
<b>Skill</b>	Disorganized or unclear presentation of the information.	Inconsistently or poorly organized presentation of the information.	Sufficiently organized to present the information clearly.	Exceptionally well organized and concise
<b>Disposition</b>	Ungracious or lacking winsome attitude toward and/or understanding of the views of persons who hold other views.	Inconsistently gracious and winsome attitude toward and/or understanding of the views of persons who hold other views.	Consistently gracious and winsome attitude toward and/or understanding of the views of persons who hold other views.	Exceptionally gracious and winsome attitude toward and/or understanding of the views of persons who hold other views

#### **A6. Course Evaluation (0% but completion required to pass the course)**

Course evaluations are crucial for assessing and improving the MAC program. Therefore, each MAC course includes an assignment to complete an anonymous online course evaluation. You will verify whether you have completed the evaluation through a quiz in Canvas. This will not count toward your grade, but it is necessary for successful completion of the course.

#### **Required Course Materials**

The only assigned reading for this course is that are the position papers submitted by classmates for each week's class discussion (see A4 above). However, students will obtain whatever reading resources they need on their own as part of their research in writing their papers and studying for the oral exams.

#### **Policies and Important Information**

**Written Work Format.** All written work must conform to current American Psychological Association (APA) style unless otherwise specified. If a student does not have a copy of the APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition manual, one should be purchased, or students may use one of the many APA style websites available online, for example: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/index.html)

Assessment of papers will include how well students represent their thoughts on paper, craftsmanship in writing, and organization of all written work.

**Disability Accommodation Policy.** If you have a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects your academic performance) and would like to receive academic accommodations, please inform your instructor prior to the start of this course. You must provide a letter from the Dean of Students that verifies your disabled status. The instructor and student will

discuss the available accommodations for the course. If the student with a disability does not disclose that s/he has a disability, then the student is agreeing to take full responsibility for any related consequences that may occur.

**Access to Research Database.** RTS provides MAC students with access to the EBSCOhost *Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection* and *APA PsycArticles*. Links to the databases are available from the [RTS library website](#). If logging in from a computer away from the RTS campus, please follow the link below and log in with the username and password provided by the MAC program.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com/>

**Use of Artificial Intelligence.** You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. You may use AI programs (e.g. ChatGPT) to help generate ideas and brainstorm. However, be aware that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material (with due consideration for the quality of the reference, which may be poor). Any plagiarism or other form of cheating will be dealt with severely under relevant RTS policies. Of course, there are many cases where I may not be able to tell if you cheated or not. Note however that, for any reason, including doubts about whether the paper was written with external help, any student can be required to come in for an oral examination on their paper. In such a case, a grade for the oral examination will replace that for the paper.

**Submission of work.** All assignments should be submitted on the Canvas course webpage.

**Late work.** All assignments are due as scheduled regardless of attendance unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor. Assignments turned in late will be deducted 1/3 letter grade for each late day (A lowered to A-, B+ lowered to B).

**Return of work.** All work will be returned to students via Canvas. Additionally, if students would like additional feedback, they may set up time before or after class to meet with the professor.

#### **Grading Scale**

A = 97-100%	B- = 86-87%	D+ = 75-77%
A- = 94-96%	C+ = 83-85%	D = 72-74%
B+ = 91-93%	C = 80-82%	D- = 70-71%
B = 88-90%	C- = 78-79%	F = below 70%

**Attendance Policy.** Regular attendance is expected and required. Excessive absences (more than 1 class meetings) will result in the loss of points equal to one letter grade per absence. If serious illness or an emergency prevents a student from attending any class, please notify the instructor before the class begins. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain any materials handed out or presented during the missed class from a classmate.

**Class Participation.** Students are expected to participate in all components of the class. Each student is expected to read all the assigned materials in advance for each class and have prepared written comments and questions for class discussion. Contributions should reflect knowledge of the reading assignments or other sources.

## Course Process and Schedule

Due Date	Assignment / Class Topic	Assignment Due	Student
1/27	<b>Class:</b> Introduction to course		
1/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion Forum posts due Thursday this week.</li> </ul>	A3. Q. 1 A3. Q. 2	Boylan
2/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Position Papers due Monday by 11:59pm (post in Forum)</li> </ul>	A3. Q. 3 A3. Q. 4	Burke Clement Collins
2/3	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers Q 1-4		
2/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion Forum posts due Thursday this week.</li> </ul>	A3. Q. 5 A3. Q. 6	Gibson
2/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Position Papers due Monday by 11:59pm (post in Forum)</li> </ul>	A3. Q. 7 A3. Q. 8	Green Jackson Jefcoat
2/10	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers Q 5-8	Revised Issue Papers Q 1-4 (Post in Canvas Issue Paper # and Forum)	
2/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion Forum posts due Thursday this week.</li> </ul>	A3. Q. 9 A3. Q. 10	Jenkins
2/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Position Papers due Monday by 11:59pm (post in Forum)</li> </ul>	A3. Q. 11 A3. Q. 12	Karnes Marchant Mikels
2/18	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers Q 9-12	Revised Issue Papers Q 5-8 (Post in Canvas Issue Paper # and Forum)	
2/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion Forum posts due Thursday this week.</li> </ul>	A3. Q. 13 A3. Q. 14	Mills
2/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Position Papers due Monday by 11:59pm (post in Forum)</li> </ul>	A3. Q. 15 A3. Q. 16	Milner Phillippi Rayborn
2/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers Q 13-16	Revised Issue Papers Q 9-12 (Post in Canvas Issue Paper # and Forum)	
2/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion Forum posts due Thursday this week.</li> </ul>	A3. Q. 17 A3. Q. 18	Sellers
3/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Position Papers due Monday by 11:59pm (post in Forum)</li> </ul>	A3. Q. 19 A3. Q. 20	Ufot Wallace Warnick
3/3	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers Q 17-20	Revised Issue Papers Q 13-16 (Post in Canvas Issue Paper # and Forum)	
3/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion Forum posts due Thursday this week.</li> </ul>	A3. Q. 21 A3. Q. 22	Watkins
3/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Position Papers due Monday by 11:59pm (post in Forum)</li> </ul>	A3. Q. 23 A3. Q. 24	Weitz Young Boylan
3/10	<b>Spring Break, No Class</b>		
3/17	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers Q 21-24	Revised Issue Papers Q 17-20 (Post in Canvas Issue Paper # and Forum)	

Due Date	Assignment / Class Topic	Assignment Due	Student
3/19	• Discussion Forum posts due Thursday this week.	A3. Q. 25	Burke
3/23	• Position Papers due Monday by 11:59pm (post in Forum)	A3. Q. 26 A3. Q. 27 A3. Q. 28	Clement Collins Gibson
3/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers Q 25-28	Revised Issue Papers Q 21-24 (Post in Canvas Issue Paper # and Forum)	
3/26	• Discussion Forum posts due Thursday this week.	A3. Q. 29	Green
3/30	• Position Papers due Monday by 11:59pm (post in Forum)	A3. Q. 30 A3. Q. 31 A3. Q. 32	Jackson Jefcoat Jenkins
3/31	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers Q 29-32	Revised Issue Papers Q 25-28 (Post in Canvas Issue Paper # and Forum)	
4/2	• Discussion Forum posts due Thursday this week.	A3. Q. 33	Karnes
4/6	• Position Papers due Monday by 11:59pm (post in Forum)	A3. Q. 34 A3. Q. 35 A3. Q. 36	Marchant Mikels Mills
4/7	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers Q 33-36	Revised Issue Papers Q 29-32 (Post in Canvas Issue Paper # and Forum)	
4/8	• Discussion Forum posts due Thursday this week.	A3. Q. 37	Milner
4/13	• Position Papers due Monday by 11:59pm (post in Forum)	A3. Q. 38 A3. Q. 39 A3. Q. 40	Phillippi Rayborn Sellers
4/14	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers Q 37-40	Revised Issue Papers Q 33-36 (Post in Canvas Issue Paper # and Forum)	
4/16	• Discussion Forum posts due Thursday this week.	A3. Q. 41	Ufot
4/20	• Position Papers due Monday by 11:59pm (post in Forum)	A3. Q. 42 A3. Q. 43 A3. Q. 44	Wallace Warnick Watkins
4/21	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers Q 41-44	Revised Issue Papers Q 37-40 (Post in Canvas Issue Paper # and Forum)	
4/23	• Discussion Forum posts due Thursday this week.	A3. Q. 45	Weitz
4/27	• Position Papers due Monday by 11:59pm (post in Forum)	A3. Q. 46 A3. Q. 47 A3. Q. 48	Young Green Phillippi
4/28	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers Q 45-48	Revised Issue Papers Q 41-44 (Post in Canvas Issue Paper # and Forum)	
5/1		Post final revised Position Papers Q 45-48 in Canvas Issue Paper # and Forum	
TBD	<b>Oral Exam</b>	A5. Exam	

## **Addendum with Question Paper Topics**

### ***Christian Worldview Informed Counseling Questions***

*(Imagine a pastor, elder or other Christian is talking to you and asks one of the questions below. Assume they have sincere concerns underlying their question.)*

1. What is Christian counseling? How does your Christian faith inform what you do in the counseling room practically?
2. What is your understanding of the sufficiency of scripture, particularly as it relates to counseling?
3. Explain the concepts of common grace and general revelation. What is the significance of these to the counseling process?
4. Why do people need to deal with their pasts in counseling, especially considering a passage like Philippians 3:13-14: “But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”?
5. Doesn’t much of psychology simply justify people’s sin instead of calling sin “sin”? When is mental illness sin and when is it not?
6. Why do Christian counselors focus so much on feelings or emotions, when the Bible seems to focus more on truth, repentance, and obedience?
7. Do people need to forgive themselves? Do people need to love themselves? Are those biblical concepts?
8. Conceptually and practically speaking, how is counseling a non-Christian different from counseling a Christian? What does evangelism look like in the context of counseling a non-Christian?
9. How do you justify counseling outside of the church; that is, outside the authority of a pastor or elder board? Aren’t counselors just circumventing the role of authority of the pastor or church leadership in this kind of situation?
10. How can a Christian counselor justify charging so much money for discipling someone?
11. The counseling concept of confidentiality seems to go against the authority of the church and church discipline. How do you justify keeping information away from the very body of leaders God ordained to deal with shepherding his people? How can Christian counselors partner with pastors in caring for the body of Christ?
12. How would you respond to a client that says, “I’m depressed and praying against a demon of depression,” and then quotes Ephesians 6:12: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”
13. A pastor asks: “It seems like Christian counselors are more concerned with state requirements for licensure and secularly defined ethical roles than truly biblical ethics of care.” How would you respond?

14. The ordinary means of grace are the Word of God, fellowship (including the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper), and prayer. How do you incorporate the means of grace into your counseling?
15. How would you define emotional health and spiritual health? Justify biblically/theologically how these are the same or different?
16. What are the important elements of your theology of change in the context of counseling?
17. A person who has been faithfully following Christ for 20 years yet still struggles with "X" sin asks you, "Do people ever really change?" What is your response? What hinders or stops people from changing?
18. What is the significance of grieving, lamenting, and mourning in a Christian view of healing?
19. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the counseling process?
20. What are your counseling goals in working with a person navigating concerns regarding their sexual identity, orientation, and/or attractions?
21. In the context of a counseling session, an adult female client reports being lured into a sexual relationship with a pastor or elder in your church. How would you respond to the client? What ethical issues are at play?
22. A client is struggling with abuse from her past. She feels guilty because she feels angry with God but thinks this is sinful. How do you respond to her concern?
23. What is the role of forgiveness in counseling? What does forgiveness look like when a person has been deeply wounded by another person? What is the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation?
24. What is the role of psychotropic medication in counseling? When, if ever, is it appropriate for Christians to use medication for mental health issues, and how does this relate to a biblical view of suffering and change?
25. From a Christian perspective, evaluate the role of 12-step programs in healing from substance abuse disorders. For Christian clients, would you recommend Celebrate Recovery rather than AA/NA?

### ***Mental Health Counseling Questions***

*(Imagine you are interviewing for a counseling position in a secular setting or interviewing for a secular PhD program.)*

26. How does (or doesn't) your religion inform your professional work? How do you prevent any potential bias?
27. Describe your theory of counseling. Discuss the counseling model(s) and concepts from which you draw conceptually and practically, and how you integrate them together.
28. What does it mean to have an eclectic or integrative approach to counseling theories? Do you consider your approach to counseling to be "eclectic?"
29. Does a person need to address their past history in order to be healthy/grow? Why or why not?
30. What are the important elements of a treatment plan? How does it continue to inform your ongoing work?
31. How does crisis counseling differ from typical counseling?

32. If a client told you that he or she was romantically attracted to you, how would you respond? If you found yourself romantically attracted to a client, how would you address this?
33. Would you use social media to: (1) communicate with clients, or (2) advertise your counseling practice? Why or why not?
34. What ethical and clinical considerations should be addressed when deciding if a client is appropriate for telemental health services?
35. What makes a counselor culturally competent and responsive? How have you sought to improve your cultural competence and responsiveness?
36. Discuss the skill of broaching the subjects of race, ethnicity, and culture during the counseling process.
37. Exposing, without imposing, clients to the counselor's values is an ethical cornerstone of counseling. Discuss the counseling skill of *value bracketing* in your response. Choose an example and share how you have addressed a value conflict with a client.
38. What is a gender and sexual minority (GSM)? What ethical considerations are at play when you provide counseling to gay or other gender or sexual minority clients seeking help in their partner/spousal relationships?
39. How do social justice and client advocacy fit into your role as a mental health counselor?
40. How would you counsel a client seeking help to come out to their family as a sexual minority?
41. How would you counsel a woman who reports a history of having had one or more abortions, or presents with an unwanted pregnancy? What ethical issues would you consider?
42. You are assigned a client that works with your spouse/partner. What issues would you consider as to whether you should see this person for counseling? If you decided to meet with the person for counseling, would you address his/her connection to your spouse/partner? If so, how?
43. What are the benefits of and problems with making DSM-5-TR diagnoses? What are the three dimensions of determining a client's diagnosis?
44. Is medication important for clients to progress in their counseling? How should you handle discussions of client medications as a part of your work as a counselor?
45. Regarding assessment tools: (a) what is your rationale for their use, (b) when is it clinically appropriate to use them, and (c) what are guidelines for offering feedback of results to clients. Give a brief example of how you have used an assessment tool with a client.
46. What are the legal and ethical guidelines for assessing the neglect or abuse of a child (or vulnerable adult) and appropriate procedures for reporting neglect or abuse to the Department of Child Protective Services?
47. How would you assess a client's level of suicide ideation? What ethical and clinical procedures would you follow given a report of suicidal ideation (either active or passive)?
48. In a secular setting, how would you handle a client who expresses that religion has been harmful to them (e.g., spiritual abuse, guilt from religious upbringing), or who identifies as atheist/agnostic?

## The “CARE + STEEL” Response Model

### 1. C = Comprehend the real concern

- Listen for the underlying fear or value, not just the surface objection.
- Example: “You’re worried that therapy will make me blame my parents or abandon my faith” instead of just hearing “Therapy is anti-Christian.”

### 2. A = Acknowledge & Affirm the legitimate part

- Start with agreement or empathy on whatever is valid. This lowers defensiveness and shows intellectual honesty.
- “You’re absolutely right that some therapists have been hostile to religion in the past, and it’s reasonable to want a counselor who respects your beliefs.”

### 3. R = Reframe accurately (correct the misconception gently)

- Give a short, clear, evidence-based clarification without sounding condescending.
- “Today the field actually has ethical guidelines and research showing that integrating a client’s spiritual values usually leads to better outcomes.”

### 4. E = Evidence / Example

- Offer one quick piece of research, a licensing fact, or a concrete example. Keep it under 15 seconds.
- “APA guidelines since 2007 require respect for religious diversity, and studies (e.g., Worthington, APA Division 36) show religiously accommodated therapy has higher retention and better results for religious clients.”

### 5. S = Steelmanning bridge

- Briefly state the strongest version of their worry and answer that, not the strawman. This is the single most powerful critical-thinking move in these conversations.
- “If someone had a therapist who mocked their faith, that would be harmful to the client and unethical—and that’s exactly why I sought seminary-based training.”

### 6. TEEL = Turn + Empathetic End Link

- Turn the question back into a positive or collaborative close.
- “That’s why I’d love to work with you to find an approach that lines up with what matters most to you.”

**Example:** “Isn’t therapy just paying someone to be your friend?” CARE + STEEL response: “That’s a totally understandable concern—friendship is free and therapy can be expensive. The difference is that friends usually want to cheer you up or agree with you; counselors are trained to notice patterns you might miss and to stay objective so they can actually help you change them. Research on therapeutic alliance shows the counseling relationship is ‘friend-like’ in warmth but deliberately one-directional so it stays safe and focused on your goals. Would it feel different if we framed it as hiring a highly trained professional who is warm and friendly?”



### Course Objectives Related to MAC\* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: CO5670 Application of Counseling and Theology  
 Professor: Michael Hillerman, PhD  
 Campus: Jackson, MS  
 Date: Spring 2026

<b>MAC* Student Learning Outcomes</b>		<b>Rubric</b>	<b>Mini-Justification</b>
<p><i>In order to measure the success of the MAC curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MAC outcomes.</i></p>			
<b>Professional Counseling Orientation &amp; Ethical Practice</b>	Understands and applies the basic knowledge needed to be an effective counselor including: the history and philosophy of counseling, ethical standards of practice, personal career development, advocacy for clients, consultation & collaboration, and a Reformed, biblical and theological framework for counseling.	Moderate	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their understanding of professional orientation and ethical practice.
<b>Social &amp; Cultural Diversity</b>	Understands and demonstrates how living in a cultural/global society affects clients who are seeking counseling and clinical mental health services, as well as the effects of sin such as racism, discrimination, sexism, and oppression on one's own life and career and those of the client.	Moderate	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their understanding of racial, ethnic, and cultural issues.
<b>Human Growth &amp; Development</b>	Understands and applies knowledge of various theories of individual and family development, and factors affecting human development. To include biological, neurological, physiological, systemic, and environmental factors, addiction, and effects of crisis, disasters, and traumas.	None	
<b>Career Development</b>	Understands and applies theories and models of career development, counseling, and decision making.	None	
<b>Counseling &amp; Helping Relationships</b>	Understands and applies theories and models of counseling, strategies for understanding and practicing consultation, and developing relevant counseling treatment and intervention plans.	Moderate	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their understanding of a variety of counseling models and techniques.
<b>Group Counseling &amp; Group Work</b>	Understands and applies theories and models of group counseling and group work, dynamics of the group process and development, and therapeutic factors that contribute to group effectiveness.	None	
<b>Assessment &amp; Testing</b>	Understands and applies clinical knowledge effectively, including various models and approaches to clinical evaluation and their appropriate uses. To include diagnostic interviews, mental status examinations, symptom inventories, and psychoeducational and personality assessments, and is sensitive to the complications of diagnosis and interpretation of formal and informal evaluation.	Minimal	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their awareness of commonly used assessment tools.

<b>Research &amp; Program Evaluation</b>	Demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate research through a biblical worldview and integrate it into counseling practice. Understands the process of program evaluation and its integration into the practice of counseling and clinical mental health counseling.	Minimal	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their understanding of the application of evidence-based practice in counseling.
<b>Clinical Mental Health Counseling</b>	Demonstrates the knowledge and skills necessary to address a wide variety of circumstances within the context of clinical mental health counseling.	Moderate	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their understanding a wide variety of circumstances with the context of CMHC.
<b>Integration (Biblical/Theological)</b>	Knowledge of and integration of Reformed, biblical and theological concepts with counseling practices.	Strong	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their integration skills.
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the triune God.	Moderate	Students apply their biblical and theological knowledge