



Course Syllabus: COUN 5603 Psychopharmacology
Gordon T. & Ellen West College of Education
COUN 5603
Summer I, June 1- July 2, 2026

***Important! This course's weeks start on Monday and end on Sunday, except for the last week, which ends on Thursday.**

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Brandi M. Smith, Ph.D., LPC-S
Optional Zoom Meeting on Monday Evenings from 7 pm to 8 pm on the following dates: June 1st, June 8th, June 15th, June 22nd, and June 29th, 2026
Office phone: (940) 364-1053; feel free to call or text
E-mail: brandi.smith@msutexas.edu

Course Description

The purpose of counseling individuals and psychopharmacology is to provide students an overview of the basic classifications, indications, and contraindications of commonly prescribed psychopharmacological medications for individuals so that appropriate referrals can be made for medication evaluations and so that the side effects of such medications can be identified.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Sinacola, R. S. (2020). *Basic Psychopharmacology for Mental Health Professionals*. Pearson.

Course Objectives

Knowledge and Skill Learning Outcomes: CACREP Standards

Upon successful completion of this course, students will learn:

Section 3.A.10. ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling across service delivery modalities and specialized practice areas

Section 3.B.10. guidelines developed by professional counseling organizations related to social justice, advocacy, and working with individuals with diverse cultural identities

Section 3.E.4. consultation models and strategies

Section 3.E.13. developmentally relevant and culturally sustaining counseling treatment or intervention plans

Section 3.H.2. identification and evaluation of the evidence base for counseling theories, interventions, and practices

Section 5.C.10 etiology, nomenclature, diagnosis, treatment, referral, and prevention of mental, behavioral, and neurodevelopmental disorders

Section 3.G.12. procedures to identify substance use, addictions, and co-occurring conditions

Section 3.E.18. classification, effects, and indications of commonly prescribed psychopharmacological medications

Section 5.C.3. legislation, government policy, and regulatory processes relevant to clinical mental health counseling

Learning Objectives

1. Identify examples of psychotropic medications that are used in the clinical treatment of commonly diagnosed psychological conditions of individuals and describe impact on symptoms.
2. Identify principle classes of psychoactive drugs, the typical sites, mechanisms of action, the concepts of tolerance and dependence, and how drugs are distributed throughout the body, how they are metabolized, and eliminated
3. Increase awareness of drug interactions, side-effects, symptoms, and possible impact of recreational drugs on individual functioning.
4. Understand the ethical parameters and role of non-medical mental health professionals in regard to what can and cannot be discussed with individuals.
5. Understand the role of counselors in talking with individuals who have questions about psychotropic medications, advocating for the individual, and the individual advocating for themselves.
6. Be able to articulate the current debate about the appropriateness of psychotropic medications for children, the relationship between pharmaceutical companies, the FDA, managed care, and the consumer.
7. Be able to articulate basic findings of ethnopharmacotherapy and pharmacoeconomics.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

Course Grade - List all graded assignments with their point value and or percentage of total grade. Letter Grade Scale indicate the overall points or % to letter grade scale for example 1270 to 1137 = A.

Table 1:

Assignments	Points
Online Assignments and Comments	75
Psychopharmacology Research Paper	20
Psychopharmacology Case Study Paper	20
Final Exam	35
Total Points	150

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	135 to 150
B	120 to 134
C	105 to 119
D	90 to 104
F	Less than 90

Homework

Discussion Board, and Class Participation: (75 pts.) Students are required to answer questions or complete assignments regularly related to the weekly topic. Almost every week students will be required to answer questions about the reading, topic or be asked to reflect on a particular internship experience for that week. Students may also be required to engage in short creative projects instead of questions about the readings. If there is a discussion, students are required to participate and comment on at least one other person's thread. *The assignments and weekly comments are due by Sunday at 11:59 pm at the end of the week, aside from the last week. Follow directions to get full points each week. Late work will not be accepted **See Appendix A for Rubric) 3.A.10., 3.B.10., 3.E.4., 3.E.13., 3.H.2., 5.C.10, 3.G.12., 3.E.18., 5.C.3.**

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Projects Required

Psychopharmacology Research Paper (20 pts): Students will write a paper discussing the importance of understanding psychopharmacology as a clinical mental health provider, the impact that biological/neurological mechanisms have on medication and mental health, ethical, legal, and cultural considerations when dealing with psychopharmacology issues, and will discuss professional organizations that could be a good resource for psychopharmacology issues. Students will utilize the outline located within Appendix B as well as the template located within D2L shell. Students will write their paper in APA 7 formatting, using appropriate grammar, and academic writing. **(Appendix B) 3.A.10., 3.B.10., 3.E.4., 3.E.13., 3.G.12., 3.E.18., 5.C.3.**

Psychopharmacology Case Study Paper (20 pts): Students will create an in-depth case study on a client in a TV show or a movie. Students will discuss diagnoses, a comprehensive treatment plan, including possible medications, and a plan for consultation with medical professionals regarding the medications. Students must back up their ideas with resources. Students will address multicultural counseling competencies, and address any concerns with their media client of choice. Within the treatment plan, students will be sure to identify evidence-based counseling theory and techniques within the theory or theories that they would utilize with the media client. Students will utilize the outline located within Appendix C as well as the template located within D2L shell. Students will write their paper in APA 7 formatting, using appropriate grammar, and academic writing. **(Appendix C) 3.B.10., 3.E.13., 3.H.2., 5.C.10, 3.E.18.**

Mid-Term Exam

No mid-term.

Final Exam

Final Exam: (35 pts.) See examples on Appendix D. Students will complete the final exam. You will have 120 minutes to complete. Each student has two attempts, the best of the attempts will be kept. The content of the exam will

come from chapters 1-19 of the course textbook (**See Appendix D**). **3.A.10., 3.B.10., 3.E.4., 3.E.13., 3.H.2., 5.C.10, 3.G.12., 3.E.18., 5.C.3.**

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit offered in this course.

Late Work

All papers and assignments must be turned in the day they are due. ***No exceptions.** If you have an emergency, please let me know in advance, and/or email me your assignment the same day it is due. Any late papers will be lowered ***-2pts per day.** Late papers can only be turned in before the deadline for the following assignments. Please observe that your assignments are worth a considerable number of points and skipping even one assignment will most likely significantly lower your grade. Please begin planning your semester schedule accordingly.

Make Up Work/Tests

All papers and assignments must be turned in the day they are due. ***No exceptions.**

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes: June 17, 2026 Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).

Deadline to file for graduation: June 22, 2026. Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" June 17, 2026. Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Attendance

Class attendance is crucial to successful completion of this course since much of the training cannot be learned in textbooks. Therefore, GRADUATE STUDENTS are expected to be on time and to attend ***every** session online and all required face to face classes. Tardiness, leaving early, and absences are considered evidence of lack of dependability, and are taken seriously.

Online Computer Requirements

Taking an online class requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to

have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ****Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ****Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!*** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world which is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations however they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Instructor Class Policies

Department of Counseling students are expected to demonstrate appropriate classroom behavior, consistent with their counselor-in-training roles. Counselors-in-training are expected to convey attentiveness and respect in all professional and classroom settings. Specifically, these include:

- Avoiding tardiness and late arrival to class.
- Being attentive and participative in class and online.
- Not using cell phones and text messaging during class.
- Not surfing the web, emailing, tweeting, or using instant messaging (IM) during class.
- Minimizing eating and disruptive snacking during class.
- Avoiding personal conversations with students during class, which are disruptive to fellow students and the learning environment.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch

the video entitled "Run. Hide. Fight." which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: ["Run. Hide. Fight."](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule:

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 1 6/1 to 6/7	Class Introductions, Syllabus Review, and Class Instructions. Read Chapters 1 through 8	Discussion Board, Post and Comment by 6/7
Week 2 6/8 to 6/14	Psychopharmacology Research Paper due.	Do Discussion Board, Post and Comment Complete Psychopharmacology Research Paper due 6/14 by 11:59 pm on D2L.
Week 3 6/15 to 6/21	Read Chapters 9 through 19	Do Discussion Board, Post and Comment Read Chapters 9 through 19
Week 4 6/22 to 6/28	Psychopharmacology Case Study Paper due.	Do Discussion Board, Post and Comment Complete Psychopharmacology Case Study Paper due 6/28 by 11:59 pm on D2L

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 5 6/29 to 7/2	Final Exam	Do Discussion Board, Post and Comment Complete Final Exam due by Thursday. July 2 by 11:59 pm on D2L.

APPENDIX A

DISCUSSION BOARD POSTS

Rubric of Online Assignments and Comments (Possible 75 Pts.)

Week	Points Earned
Week 1 Discussion Board Posts	15 Points Possible
Week 2 Discussion Board Posts	15 Points Possible
Week 3 Discussion Board Posts	15 Points Possible
Week 4 Discussion Board Posts	15 Points Possible
Week 5 Discussion Board Posts	15 Points Possible
Total Points Earned	75 Points Possible

Collaboration is more important in the online learning environment. With that in mind, it is critical that we get to know one another when communicating online. *To promote community, we will be utilizing this forum to create a community during this course.

Each week you will be required to write your own post and at least one substantive response to a peer. In this program's courses, we use the discussion board as a way to "attend" weekly. During the course, we will be using the discussion board to share our learning and experiences. *For your post each week, you must write at least three academic paragraphs, at least five sentences each paragraph. Please make sure to create an original post each week and comment on at least one other student's post. If you use resources in your post, please be sure to appropriately cite them in-text and put them as a reference at the bottom of your post in proper APA 7 formatting.

*Responses to peers must be substantive and be a minimum of one paragraph made up of 5-7 sentences. Replying "Great post" to a peer is not substantive, and will result in loss of credit.

APPENDIX B

PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY RESEARCH PAPER

Psychopharmacology Research Paper (20 pts): Students will write a paper discussing the importance of understanding psychopharmacology as a clinical mental health provider, the impact that biological/neurological mechanisms have on medication and mental health, ethical, legal, and cultural considerations when dealing with psychopharmacology issues, and will discuss professional organizations that could be a good resource for psychopharmacology issues. Students will utilize the outline located within Appendix B as well as the template located within D2L shell. Students will write their paper in APA 7 formatting, using appropriate grammar, and academic writing. **CACREP: 3.A.10., 3.B.10., 3.E.4., 3.E.13., 3.G.12., 3.E.18., 5.C.3.**

Components of the Paper

- APA 7 Cover Page
- Introduction to the Assignment
- Understanding Psychopharmacology
- Impact of Neurobiology
- Ethical, Legal, and Cultural Considerations
- Professional Organizations
- Summary
- References Page

Outline of the Paper

*Be sure to use the following headings for your paper and please use the MSU APA 7 paper template located within D2L for guidance.

- Understanding Psychopharmacology
- Impact of Neurobiology
- Ethical, Legal, and Cultural Considerations
- Professional Organizations
- Summary

Psychopharmacology Research Paper Rubric (Possible 20 Points)

Criteria	1 Improvement Needed	2 Developing	3 Proficient	4 Accomplished
Introduction to the Assignment and Summary	Student does not write an introduction to the assignment section or a summary section.	Student vaguely writes an introduction to the assignment section and/or summary section.	Student appropriately writes an introduction to the assignment section and summary section.	Student exceptionally writes an introduction to the assignment section and summary section.
Understanding Psychopharmacology	Student inaccurately describes understanding psychopharmacology. Student does not use academic resources to back up ideas. Student does not use appropriate in-text citations.	Student appropriately describes understanding psychopharmacology, but lacks academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations.	Student appropriately describes understanding psychopharmacology, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has some academic writing, grammatical, or APA errors within the section.	Student exceptionally describes understanding psychopharmacology, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has little to no academic writing, grammatical, or APA errors within the section.
Impact of Neurobiology	Student inaccurately describes the impact of neurobiology. Student does not use	Student appropriately describes the impact of neurobiology, but lacks academic resources,	Student appropriately describes the impact of neurobiology, and utilizes academic	Student exceptionally describes the impact of neurobiology, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has little to no academic writing, grammatical, or APA

Criteria	1 Improvement Needed	2 Developing	3 Proficient	4 Accomplished
	academic resources to back up ideas. Student does not use appropriate in-text citations.	or appropriate in-text citations.	resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has some academic writing, grammatical, or APA errors within the section.	errors within the section.
Ethical, Legal, and Cultural Concerns	Student inaccurately describes ethical, legal, and cultural considerations. Student does not use academic resources to back up ideas. Student does not use appropriate in-text citations.	Student appropriately describes ethical, legal, and cultural considerations, but lacks academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations.	Student appropriately describes ethical, legal, and cultural considerations, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has some academic writing, grammatical, or APA errors within the section.	Student exceptionally describes ethical, legal, and cultural considerations, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has little to no academic writing, grammatical, or APA errors within the section.
Professional Organizations	Student inaccurately describes professional organizations. Student does not use academic	Student appropriately describes professional organizations, but lacks academic resources, or	Student appropriately describes professional organizations, and utilizes academic resources,	Student exceptionally describes professional organizations, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has little to no academic writing, grammatical, or APA

Criteria	1 Improvement Needed	2 Developing	3 Proficient	4 Accomplished
	resources to back up ideas. Student does not use appropriate in-text citations.	appropriate in-text citations.	or appropriate in-text citations. Has some academic writing, grammatical , or APA errors within the section.	errors within the section.

APPENDIX C

PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY CASE STUDY PAPER

Psychopharmacology Case Study Paper (20 pts): Students will create an in-depth case study on a client in a TV show or a movie. Students will discuss diagnoses, a comprehensive treatment plan, including possible medications, and a plan for consultation with medical professionals regarding the medications. Students must back up their ideas with resources. Students will address multicultural counseling competencies and address any concerns with their media client of choice. Within the treatment plan, students will be sure to identify evidence-based counseling theory and techniques within the theory or theories that they would utilize with the media client. Students will utilize the outline located within Appendix C as well as the template located within D2L shell. Students will write their paper in APA 7 formatting, using appropriate grammar, and academic writing. **CACREP: 3.B.10., 3.E.13., 3.H.2., 5.C.10, 3.E.18.**

Components of the Paper

- APA 7 Cover Page
- Introduction to the Assignment
- Introduce the Fictional Media Client
- Diagnosis
- Treatment Plan
- Consultation
- Multicultural Concerns
- Summary
- References Page

Outline of the Paper

*Be sure to use the following headings for your paper and please use the MSU APA 7 paper template located within D2L for guidance.

- Diagnosis
- Treatment Plan
- Consultation
- Multicultural Concerns
- Summary

Psychopharmacology Case Study Paper Rubric (Possible 20 Pts)

Criteria	1 Improvement Needed	2 Developing	3 Proficient	4 Accomplished
Introduce the Fictional Media Client	Student does not write an introduce the fictional media client section.	Student vaguely writes an introduce the fictional media client section.	Student appropriately writes an introduce the fictional media client section.	Student exceptionally writes an introduce the fictional media client section.
Diagnosis	Student inaccurately describes the diagnosis section. Student does not use academic resources to back up ideas. Student does not use appropriate in-text citations.	Student appropriately describes diagnosis section, but lacks academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations.	Student appropriately describes diagnosis section, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has some academic writing, grammatical, or APA errors within the section.	Student exceptionally describes the diagnosis section, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has little to no academic writing, grammatical, or APA errors within the section.
Treatment Plan	Student inaccurately describes the treatment planning section. Student does not use academic resources to back up ideas. Student does not use appropriate in-text citations.	Student appropriately describes the treatment planning section, but lacks academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations.	Student appropriately describes the treatment planning section, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has some academic writing, grammatical,	Student exceptionally describes the treatment planning section, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has little to no academic writing, grammatical, or APA errors

Criteria	1 Improvement Needed	2 Developing	3 Proficient	4 Accomplished
			or APA errors within the section.	within the section.
Consultation	Student inaccurately describes the consultation section. Student does not use academic resources to back up ideas. Student does not use appropriate in-text citations.	Student appropriately describes the consultation section, but lacks academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations.	Student appropriately describes the consultation section, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has some academic writing, grammatical, or APA errors within the section.	Student exceptionally describes the consultation section, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has little to no academic writing, grammatical, or APA errors within the section.
Multicultural Concerns	Student inaccurately describes the multicultural concerns section. Student does not use academic resources to back up ideas. Student does not use appropriate in-text citations.	Student appropriately describes the multicultural concerns section, but lacks academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations.	Student appropriately describes the multicultural concerns section, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has some academic writing, grammatical, or APA errors within the section.	Student exceptionally describes the multicultural concerns section, and utilizes academic resources, or appropriate in-text citations. Has little to no academic writing, grammatical, or APA errors within the section.

APPENDIX D

FINAL EXAM INFORMATION

Final Exam: (35 pts.): *Before you begin, please take 10-30 minutes utilizing mindfulness techniques to create a positive and safe enough space to take your exam. Please see breathing and grounding techniques below. Students will complete the final exam. You will have 120 minutes to complete. Each student has two attempts, the best of the attempts will be kept. The content of the exam will come from chapters 1-19 of the course textbook (Sinicola, 2020). **CACREP: 3.A.10., 3.B.10., 3.E.4., 3.E.13., 3.H.2., 5.C.10, 3.G.12., 3.E.18., 5.C.3.**

Chapters Covered

- Chapter 1 Why Study Psychopharmacology
- Chapter 2 Basic Neurobiology
- Chapter 3 Psychopharmacology and Pharmacokinetics
- Chapter 4 History Taking and Assessment Techniques
- Chapter 5 Treatment of Unipolar Depression
- Chapter 6 Treatment of Bipolar Disorder
- Chapter 7 Treatment of Anxiety Disorders
- Chapter 8 Treatment of Psychotic Disorders
- Chapter 9 Treatment of ADHD and Disorders of Attention
- Chapter 10 Treatment of Cognitive Disorders
- Chapter 11 Treatment of Sleep Disorders
- Chapter 12 Treatment of Personality Disorders
- Chapter 13 Treatment of Chemical Dependency and Co-Occurring Conditions
- Chapter 14 Treatment of Comorbidity and Other Disorders
- Chapter 15 Case Vignettes: Children
- Chapter 16 Case Vignettes: Adolescents
- Chapter 17 Case Vignettes: Early Adulthood
- Chapter 18 Case Vignettes: Middle Adulthood
- Chapter 19 Case Vignettes: Older Adulthood