

Course Syllabus

Midwestern State University
Robert D. & Carol Gunn College of Health Sciences
Wilson School of Nursing

Course Information

Course Title: Special Topics in Graduate Nursing

Course Number: NURS 6911

Credit Hours: 1

Clinical Hours: None

Semester/Year: Spring 2026

Instructor: Kristina Halberg, DNP, RN, FNP-C

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description

This course is designed to advance the Nurse Practitioner student's knowledge and skills in clinical assessment across the lifespan. Emphasis is placed on developing diagnostic reasoning, refining advanced health assessment techniques, and integrating evidence-based practice into primary care decision-making.

Course Communication

The preferred method of communication is through Brightspace (D2L) email. Please contact the course faculty through Brightspace (D2L). Please note if the email is received Monday through Thursday, it will be returned within 24 hours. If an email is received after 3 p.m. on Friday, or over the weekend, it will be returned within 48 hours. Faculty will also have after hours contact information and availability for issues or emergencies which will be determined and released by each individual faculty member.

Course Objectives

1. Demonstrate proficiency in comprehensive and focused health assessments across the lifespan.
2. Apply diagnostic reasoning and clinical decision-making.
3. Integrate evidence-based guidelines into health promotion and disease prevention strategies.
4. Accurately document patient encounters using accepted standards for advanced practice.
5. Exhibit professionalism and effective communication with patients, families, and interprofessional teams.
6. Critically reflect on clinical experiences to identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth.

Required Texts & Resources

- Bickley, L. S. Bates' Guide to Physical Examination and History Taking
- American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) guidelines
- U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) screening recommendations

Objectives	AACN Essentials	NONPF Core Comp	NONPF Pop Focused
Analyze clinical applicability of selected major health promotion / wellness theorists.	V: 1, 2 VII: 3	Scientific Foundations 4	
Evaluate the impact of major health / illness trends on health care costs and the legal ethical issues across the life span.	IIA: 1,3,4,9; IIC: 1, 3; III: 1,2	Leadership 1,2,3,4,5 Quality 2,3,4 Policy 1,2,3,4,5,6 Ethics 1,2,3	Leadership 1,2,3,4
Explore current wellness / health maintenance guidelines in the context of clinical practice across the life span including pre-natal to the frail elderly	VI: 3,5; VII: 1-4; VIII: 1-8; X: 2, 5, 6	Quality 1,5 Health Delivery System 1,2,3,4,5,6,7	
Interpret the role of the nurse practitioner in the health promotion / health maintenance arena.	IIA: 9; IIB: 3; III: 6; IV: 3,4,6,7	Practice Inquiry 1,4,5 Independent Practice 1,2,3a-e	Independent Practice 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11, 12,14,15,16,17,18,19,2 0,21,22,23,24,25

Design, implement, and evaluate a health promotion / maintenance teaching programs that are relevant to the physical and mental health of patients and families	I: 6; IV: 3; V: 2; VI: 2,3,5,6; VII: 2-4; VIII: 8; X: 5-7	Practice Inquiry 2,3 Technology & Information Literacy 1,2,3	
Demonstrate competency in the practitioner roles of clinical judgment and management in the delivery of primary care across the life span including prenatal to the frail elderly populations	IIB: 2; IIC: 4-6; IV: 1,2; VI: 3-6; VII: 2; VIII: 1,6-8; IX: 1-3; X: 5	Technology & Information Literacy 4,5 Health Delivery System 1,2,3,4 Independent Practice 1,2,3a-3 4a-d	Independent Practice 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11, 12,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Numerical Value
A	90-100
B	80-89
C*	74-79
D*	65-73
F*	64 and below

*A grade of 80% must be earned to obtain a Pass Credit for this course. If the student earns less than 80%, the student will repeat the course and will not progress in the cohort. If this is the second failure in a course in the Master's program, then the student will not progress in the program.

Special Topics – Course Schedule & Major Assessments

The following schedule outlines required assessments, examinations, and major assignment deadlines for the Special Topics course. Students are responsible for adhering to all posted deadlines and monitoring course announcements for updates.

I am making the quizzes and midterm/final exam open book/open note. These are a direct review of Assessment from the Summer and are intended to aid you as you move forward in the nurse practitioner program.

Quizzes

Quiz 1 – Due by February 15

Quiz 2 – Due by February 15

Quiz 3 – Due by February 15

Quiz 4 – Due by February 15

Quiz 5 – Due by April 27

Quiz 6 – Due by April 27

Quizzes are designed to reinforce course concepts and assess comprehension of evidence-based content. All quizzes must be completed by the posted deadlines.

Examinations

Midterm Examination – March 15

Final Examination – April 27

The midterm examination covers course content through Quiz 4. The final examination is comprehensive, with emphasis on post-midterm material.

Clinical Decision-Making (CDM) Assignment

CDM Assignment Due – April 1

Students must complete a comprehensive Clinical Decision-Making assignment following provided guidelines. The official grading rubric must be attached at submission. Late submissions are subject to program policy.

Required Live Session

Clinical Decision-Making Discussion & Review

March 10 at 6:00 PM (Central Time)

Zoom Meeting

This live session will review CDM expectations, clinical reasoning strategies, and common areas of difficulty. Attendance is strongly encouraged to support successful completion of the assignment.

Additional Notes

All deadlines are firm unless otherwise stated. Students should allow sufficient time to complete assessments and written assignments. Course policies regarding late work, grading, and academic integrity apply as outlined in the syllabus.

Methods of Evaluation

- CDM: 40%
- Zoom Meeting – CDM Work-through: 9%
- Quizzes: 21%
- Midterm: 10%
- Final: 10%

Grading Scale:

A = 90–100%

B = 80–89%

C = 70–79%

F = <70%

Student Responsibilities and Coursework Requirements

Students must have a valid license to practice as a Registered Nurse in Texas or a compact licensing state to participate in clinical activities. Students are accountable for policies regarding graduate nursing programs and completion of requirements for all graduate students as stated in the catalog and student handbook.

Assigned work must be submitted on time. **Students are expected to submit assignments by the time they are due. Assignments submitted after the due date and time will receive a deduction of 10% of the total points possible for that assignment for each 24 hours the assignment is late starting immediately after the dropbox deadline. Assignments will be accepted, with penalty as described, up to a maximum of 72 hours late, after which point a zero will be recorded for the assignment.**

All assignments must be uploaded to D2L in the appropriate drop box section by the due date. If the student has computer problems during submission, the student must put in a work order with D2L helpdesk. If the local Internet server is down due to weather, this must be documented by the Internet server and the student is responsible for notifying the course coordinator or clinical advisor by phone or other communication as soon as possible.

Naming Files

All files uploaded to D2L for assignments will contain the last name of the student along with the assignment title. Example: HalbergSOAP1.doc

Failure to name files and include student's last name will result in the assignment not being graded or ten (10) points deducted for inappropriate file name. You also must attach appropriate grade rubric on the last page of your assignment, failure to do so will result in ten (10) points deducted off the assignment.

Classroom Etiquette

Students are expected to act respectful to all peers, faculty, and guests during face-to-face lectures, in clinical settings, and in the online environment. Cell phones and pagers must be turned off or placed in silent mode before class begins. Should emergency communication need to be made, the student must step outside of the classroom.

Course Policies

Attendance & Clinical Hours: Students are required to complete all 40 clinical hours. Missed hours must be made up with faculty approval. More than one unexcused absence from clinical may result in course failure.

Standards of Professional Conduct

Professionalism: Students must adhere to program dress code, confidentiality standards, and professional behavior expectations. Violations may result in removal from clinical placement.

Students are expected to uphold standards of professional conduct in the classroom, online, and in clinical settings. Failure of a course and/or clinical is given to students who fail to uphold standards of professional conduct, fail to maintain patient safety, or students who fail to complete clinical hours.

Behaviors that will result in a failure of the course and stop progression in the program include, but are not limited to:

- Failure of the clinical component of a course or failure to complete all assigned clinical hours
- Arriving to a clinical setting unprepared or inappropriately dressed;
- Unprofessional/inappropriate language or gestures;
- Unprofessional/inappropriate behavior such as eye rolling, being disrespectful, chewing gum, using tobacco products in a non-smoking areas, disruptive behavior, failure to comply with a written or verbal instruction, or failure to maintain clinical compliance;
- Non-compliance with the policy to obtain written approval before attending clinical;
- An error in care or negligence that does not result in harm
- Cheating, collusion, and/or plagiarism.

Behaviors that will result in dismissal from the MSN or post-graduate certificate program include, but are not limited to:

- Falsifications, omissions, and/or lying about a patient care situation, including patient's current health status and/or patient documentation;
- Testing positive for alcohol, illegal drugs, or unprescribed controlled substances;
- Negligence of a patient or an error in patient care that results in harm to the patient;
 - HIPAA violations;
 - Failure to report a patient care error; or
 - Physical or verbal abuse of a patient, patient's family member, faculty, staff, or other students.
 - Failure to report any activity on the RN license and/or any stipulations or restrictions placed on the RN license
 - Falsification of clinical documents, preceptor signatures, and/or clinical hour logs.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic Integrity: Cheating, plagiarism, or falsification of clinical logs will result in disciplinary action per program policy.

All students are expected to pursue their scholastic careers with honesty and integrity. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test or other course work, plagiarism (Offering the work of another as one's own), and the unauthorized collaboration with another person. Students found guilty of dishonesty in their scholastic pursuits are subject to penalties that may include suspension or expulsion from the University.

All written work submitted for evaluation is to be the work of the student who submits it. Citations and references are to be used and documented using APA 7th Edition. The faculty considers collaboration during examinations or obtaining previous test questions from past students as cheating and cheating is in violation of Midwestern Policy. A score of zero (0) will be given for students participating in collaboration of tests, examinations, Clinical Modules, discussions, and SOAP notes.

The first violation to the cheating/plagiarism policy will result in a zero (0) for the assignment. Subsequent violations will result in a failure (F) for the course and may be subject to dismissal from the program.

Unless otherwise specified, the use of Automated Writing Tools, including chatGPT and similar artificial intelligence (AI) tools, is strictly prohibited in this course, even when properly attributed. The use of automated writing tools is considered plagiarism (as defined by SRRR 9.3) and will be handled in accordance with existing policy."

By enrolling in this course, the student expressly grants MSU a "limited right" in all intellectual property created by the student for the purpose of this course. The "limited right" shall include, but shall not be limited to, the right to reproduce the student's work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, and for educational purposes.

American with Disability Act (ADA)

Midwestern State University does not discriminate on the basis of an individual's disability and complies with section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act in its admissions, accessibility, and employment of individuals in programs and activities. MSU provides academic accommodations and auxiliary aids to individuals with disabilities, as defined by law, who are otherwise qualified to meet academic requirements. For assistance, call (940) 397-4618 or (940) 397-4515, TDD. Please see the instructor outside of class to make arrangements involving special accommodations. It is the student's responsibility to declare any disabilities. After declaration, preferably at the beginning of each semester, the student needs to contact their individual instructors to determine any reasonable accommodations that may be required.

Adding and Dropping Courses

A student who wishes to change his/her schedule by either dropping or adding a course must first consult with the FNP Program Coordinator. Refer to the Graduate Catalog for additional information on adding and dropping courses. **It is the student's responsibility to know drop dates.**

Drug Screen/Substance Abuse Screening:

Policy: The Wilson School of Nursing at Midwestern State University shall assure compliance with conditions for drug screen/substance abuse screen as specified in agency contracts with the Clinical Affiliates where students engage in courses with a clinical/lab component. Therefore, the Wilson School of Nursing and Clinical Agencies require a drug and alcohol screening for all students.

This is to be completed during the semester immediately prior to the beginning of courses with a clinical/lab component. Students who are under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol are deemed to be impaired and, therefore, incompetent to provide care to patients.

Impairment or suspected impairment of a nurse's practice by drugs or alcohol or mental illness will be reported under Chapter 467, Health and Safety Code, and the Board for investigation (Tex. Occ. Code Ann. §301.401; 301.402; 301.410; & 301.452).

Students may be required to complete additional drug screen/substance abuse screening during their course of study, dependent upon specific agency policies. Such requirements are beyond the control of the WSON.

Drug screen/substance abuse screening of a 10-panel urine drug screen will be performed by a third-party company selected by the WSON. The expenses of all drug screen/substance abuse screening are the responsibility of the student. Students will be given instructions regarding processes by the appropriate Program Coordinator and are expected to follow instructions for the online drug screen/substance abuse screening process. As a part of the process, students will authorize the third-party screening company to release results to the Wilson School of Nursing through the office of the appropriate Program Coordinator.

Failure to meet deadlines established by the Wilson School of Nursing may negatively affect clinical placements. Failure to complete the background check will preclude entry into clinical courses and can result in dismissal from the program. The Program Coordinator will administratively remove noncompliant students from all clinical courses.

This is to be completed during the semester immediately prior to the beginning of courses with a clinical/lab component. **Students who evidence behaviors consistent with substance abuse shall be subject to for-cause drug screening. Any student with a positive drug screen will be dismissed from the nursing program if the positive finding cannot be related to a prescription held legally by the student.**

Notice

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

Miscellaneous Required Materials

Each student must purchase a MSU graduate nursing name tag through BJD Engraving by calling 940-322-1014 to be worn during all clinicals and any organized MSU graduate nursing activities or classes. It is the student's responsibility to order the name tag and provide payment. Name tags can be ordered over the phone and mailed to the student. The information on the name tag will include:

First name Last name, credentials (RN, BSN) or (RN, MSN) Student Status: FNP Student, PMHNP Student

Special Topics – Quizzes & Exam Content Aligned to Prior Course Calendar

The following schedule aligns Special Topics quizzes and examinations with content previously covered in NURS 6911. Assessments are review-based and intended to reinforce foundational assessment knowledge as students progress through the Nurse Practitioner program.

Assessment Schedule & Content Alignment

Assessment	Due Date	Aligned NURS 6911 Content	Primary Bates Chapters
Quiz #1	February 15	Foundations for clinical proficiency; interviewing and health history; beginning the physical examination	Ch. 1–5, 25
Quiz #2	February 15	Behavior and mental status; skin, hair, nails; head and neck	Ch. 8–14, 25
Quiz #3	February 15	Thorax and lungs; cardiovascular system; peripheral vascular system	Ch. 15–17, 25

Quiz #4	February 15	Breasts and axillae; abdominal assessment	Ch. 18–19, 25
Midterm Examination	March 15	Cumulative review of Quizzes 1–4 and foundational assessment concepts	Ch. 1–19
Quiz #5	April 27	Musculoskeletal assessment	Ch. 23, 25
Quiz #6	April 27	Neurologic system; assessment of the older adult	Ch. 24, 27
Final Examination	April 27	Comprehensive assessment review with emphasis on post-midterm content	Ch. 23–27

Notes for Students

- All quizzes and examinations are open book and open note.
- Assessments are review-based and reflect content previously introduced in NURS 6911.
- Students are encouraged to review Bates readings, videos, and prior course materials.
- The Clinical Decision-Making (CDM) assignment is separate from quizzes and exams and serves as the primary graded assignment for this course.