

Midwestern State University
College of Health Sciences - Wilson School of Nursing
Family PMH-NP Program

NURS 6911 X11 Special Topics (Fall 2026)

Note: This syllabus is for information purposes only and is subject to change without prior notice.

Faculty

Dr. Cesar Alvarado DNP, APRN, PMHNP-BC
E-mail: cesar.alvarado@msutexas.edu

All faculty office hours are by appointment only.

Other WSON Contacts

Cathy Healey
Email: cathy.healey@msutexas.edu
Office: (940) 397-2802
Fax: (940) 397-4532

Graduate Coordinator
Dr. Catherine Pankonien
Email: catherine.pankonien@msutexas.edu

Additional Campus Details

MSU Police (Emergency Only): (940) 397-4239

Course Description

The focus of this course is on diagnosis, pharmacological and non-pharmacological management and outcomes of serious and persistent psychiatric disorders and mental health problems (including complex mental illness and addictions) experienced in individuals, families, and groups in a variety of settings.

Prerequisites:

- NURS 5043 Advanced Pathology
- NURS 5133 Advanced Pharmacology
- NURS 5112/11 Advanced Health Assessment
- NURS 5103 Nursing Theory
- NURS 5303 PMH Roles
- NURS 5322 PMH Diagnostics or Psychopharmacology

- NURS 5463/5473 PMH Advanced Practicum I
- NURS 5483/5493 PMH Advanced Practicum II

Addendums to the syllabus

Faculty reserve the right to post addendums to the syllabus throughout the semester as needed. If and when this occurs, they will be posted under “Content” of Brightspace/D2L. It is the student’s responsibility to check Brightspace/D2L daily for any updates or additional information that has been posted.

Credit Hours: 1 credit hour. There are 64 total clinical hours required.

As this is an online course and you will need access to a computer and be able to scan paperwork electronically.

Check syllabus course calendar for assignment due dates. For ease of remembering, both assignments will be due by 3 PM on the designated due dates.

Learning Modalities

Didactic Learning

- Bright Space/D2L
- Discussions (4)

• Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- **Mood Stabilizers:** Understand the indications, mechanisms of action, side effects, and contraindications of mood stabilizers, with a focus on Lithium and Divalproex sodium, and manage related complications like lithium toxicity.
- **Antipsychotic Medications:** Explore the evolution of antipsychotics, comparing first- and second-generation agents, and assess their impact on treating disorders like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, while staying updated on recent advancements.
- **ECT and TMS:** Compare the efficacy, safety, mechanisms of action, and patient experiences of ECT and TMS, including their accessibility, long-term effects, and ethical considerations in treating mental health conditions.
- **PMHNP Professional Pathways:** Outline the educational, certification, and licensure requirements for PMHNPs, understand the impact of scope of practice laws, and emphasize the importance of continuing education and staying informed on regulatory changes.

Note: The field of Family PMHNP is evolving. When new information is available we try to keep you informed. Faculty may provide you with additional materials that will be included in course content, activities, and exams.

Grading Scale

A grade of A signifies 90-100
A grade of B signifies 80-89
A grade of C signifies 74-79
A grade of D signifies 65-73
A grade of F signifies 64 and below

Evaluation

The grade for the NURS 6911 will be based upon the following criteria:

Discussion # 1 – 25%

Discussion # 2 – 25%

Discussion # 3 – 25%

Discussion # 4 – 25%

It is the student's responsibility to know their grade status. Please utilize the course calendar of this syllabus for assignment/exam due dates and times.

Student Responsibilities and Class Requirements

Students are accountable for policies regarding graduate nursing programs and completion of requirements for all graduate students as stated in the Graduate Catalog and Graduate Student Handbook. Students are responsible for making appointments with faculty concerning class assignments and clinical responsibilities as necessary and as requested by faculty.

This is an online class and students are expected to have adequate access to a computer and check the course via Bright Space/D2L daily for updates and information. Work will be submitted electronically by due date. All course requirements must be met in order to pass the course. Discussion assignments should have any necessary citations and references in APA, 7th edition, format. All written work submitted for evaluation is to be the work of the student who submits it.

Students must have a valid nursing license to practice for all states in which the student is participating in clinical activities.

Course Orientation – Bright Space/Desire to Learn (D2L)

The best way to get oriented to the course is to read the syllabus. By now, each student should be familiar with the Bright Space/D2L layout.

Contacting Faculty

All assignment questions, questions about grades, or anything pertaining to the course should be addressed via the Bright Space/D2L email within the course. The preferred method of communication is Brightspace (D2L) email. Please contact the course faculty through Brightspace (D2L). Please note if the email is received Monday-Thursday, it will be returned within 24 hours. If an email is received after 3PM on Friday, or over the weekend, it will be returned within 48 hours. Contacting faculty by cell phone should be reserved for times between 8 am and 8 pm M-F. If it is urgent and you feel you cannot wait for an email response, you may call/text faculty between times of 8 AM and 8 PM. Understand that professors will not be checking emails throughout the night, therefore should you have a question about anything including a test or assignment due the next day...you must contact your respective professor before 8PM the night before the assignment is due.

Assignment File Naming (Not required for discussions)

All assignments will be submitted through the Bright Space/D2L assignment section. *E-mailing assignments is not acceptable and may not be considered for grading.* When uploading an assignment to the assignment section of Bright Space/D2L, please use the following guidelines for naming of the files. Your last name, assignment name:
Example: Smith-SoapNote3Revised.doc.

Assignment due dates/times

Assignment due dates and times are listed on the course calendar of this syllabus.

Late Assignments

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 points for each day the assignment is late. Assignments will be accepted, with a penalty as described, up to a maximum of three days late, after which point a zero will be recorded for the assignment.

All assignments must be uploaded to Bright Space/D2L in the assignment section drop box t by the due date and time. All assignment drop boxes will be locked when due date and time expires. Failure to submit your assignments so that they can be reviewed by faculty can result in an assignment being considered late. I cannot stress this enough.

Again, as this is an online course, I strongly suggest you do not choose to wait until the last minute to submit your assignments. Computer malfunctions and glitches can occur and not being able to submit your assignments by due date deadlines because your computer is not functioning properly will not be an acceptable excuse.

If the student has computer problems, then the student should contact Distance Learning @ MSU so they can try to assist you. If after that, if you still cannot upload your assignment to Bright Space/D2L then the assignment must be submitted on time via the D2L course webmail section but **only** with prior notice to faculty and subsequent approval. This is to be used in emergency situations only.

There are no opportunities for extra credit given for any assignment.
All assignments will be due on Central Standard Time (CST).

Assignment/Exam Collaboration Policy

The faculty considers collaboration during assignments and examinations as cheating and cheating is in violation of MSU Policy. A score of zero (0) will be given for students participating in collaboration of assignments and exams. Providing a student with written assignments, or examination information from a course previously taken at MSU, is cheating. Cheating is ground for dismissal from the program.

Progression Policy

As with all graduate courses in the Nursing Programs at MSU, a B (80 or above) must be earned in order to pass the course and progress in the Family PMHNP-NP program. If a grade of C or less is earned in any graduate nursing course, the course must be repeated at the next regular academic semester during which the course is offered. A nursing course may be repeated only once. Refer to the MSU Graduate Catalog for additional information on progression.

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 PMHNP Program Coordinator (Dr. Mercer). Refer to the

graduate catalog for additional information on adding or dropping courses. Failure to notify the PMHNP coordinator may result in being removed from the program. You must follow the degree provided to you.

Academic Dishonesty

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. As a licensed registered nurse, graduate students are expected to demonstrate professional conduct as set forth in the Texas Board of Nursing rule 215.8. **In the event that a graduate student holding a RN license is found to have engaged in academic dishonesty, the college may report the nurse to the Texas BON using rule 215.8 as a guide.**

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.

NURS 6911 adheres to the *MSU Code of Student Conduct*. Academic dishonesty, however small, creates a breach in academic integrity. A student's participation in this course comes with the expectation that his or her work will be completed in full observance of the *MSU Code of Student Conduct*. Many components of NURS 6911 are designed to be highly interactive with students helping each other learn by providing a different point of view, much as would occur in a face-to-face classroom. Students are encouraged to take full advantage of the many resources available including online Desire2Learn course resources, internet sites, other textbooks and journals, faculty, and peers. This interactive collegial learning environment is conducive for life-long learning.

All components of NURS 6911 are designed to represent the efforts of each student INDIVIDUALLY and are NOT to be shared, copied, or plagiarized from other sources. When students submit their efforts for grading, they are attesting they abided by this rule.

Cheating includes, but is not limited to, (1) the use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (2) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or completing other assignments; or (3) the acquisition of tests or other academic materials belonging to the university faculty, staff, or students without permission (4) submission of your own work previously submitted in a prior course or prior assignment for a grade.

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use of published or unpublished works of another person – by paraphrase or direct quotation – without correct citation in the text

and on the reference list. The use of materials generated by agencies engaged in "selling" written papers is also plagiarism. For this course, students found to plagiarize on any assignment or discussion will receive a zero for that assignment or discussion. A second incident of plagiarism by the same student will result in a grade of "F" for this course.

American Disability Act (ADA)

Midwestern State University (MSU) does not discriminate based on an individual's disability and complies with Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act in its admission, 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 and employment requirements. For assistance call (940) 397-4618 or 397-4515. Please see the instructor outside of class to make any 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 individual instructors to determine any reasonable accommodations that may be required.

Campus Carry Policy

Senate Bill 11 passed by the 84th Texas Legislature allows licensed handgun holders to carry concealed handguns on campus, effective August 1, 2016. Areas excluded from concealed carry are appropriately marked, in accordance with state law. For more information regarding campus carry, please refer to the [University's Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#). If you have questions or concerns, please contact MSU Chief of Police Patrick Coggins at patrick.coggins@msutexas.edu.

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.

Network Etiquette (Netiquette)

In all textual online communication, it is important to follow proper rules of netiquette. What is netiquette? Simply stated, netiquette is network etiquette – that is, the etiquette of cyberspace. And "etiquette" means the social and cultural norms of communicating with others in a proper and respectful way. In other words, netiquette is a set of rules for behaving and interacting properly online. The Netiquette "Core Rules" linked below are a set of general guidelines for cyberspace behavior. They probably won't cover all situations, but they should give you some basic principles to use in communicating online. For Netiquette Core Rules visit [The Core Rules of Netiquette web page](#)

Standards of Professional Conduct

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 to complete all assigned work.
- 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;
- 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:

- 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;
- 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

In order to pass this course, you must submit all of the information by due date via the respective drop boxes on Bright Space/D2L.

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 future 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.

Required Texts

Johnson, K. & Vanderhoef, D. (2016). Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Review Manual. 4th edition. This is a board review book affiliated with ANCC.

In addition, all other required textbooks from previous semesters (Diagnostics, Advanced Practicum I and Advanced Practicum II will be utilized this semester).

Rubrics and Assignments

Discussion (25%)

Each student is responsible to respond to the discussion topics posted by faculty on the BrightSpace/D2L discussion board. These discussions take the place of classroom discussions. Each student should lead a discussion on the topic, posing challenging questions that would further or refute your position or seek solutions. These are collegial, peer review type discussions, providing evidence of both depth and breadth of the issue. Grading is based on the discussion you lead, as well as your contribution to at the minimum two (2) other students' discussions.

Pay close attention: Post your OWN assignment for the discussion 7 days prior to the scheduled assignment due date to allow time for discussion to occur. In the past we have had students wait until the last minute to post their own assignment which does not give your peers time to respond to you and therefore negates the entire idea of a discussion.

You will lose points if you wait and post less than 7 days prior to assignment due date.

For this assignment, ***you will lose 10 points for every day you post late. After three consecutive days of late discussion, your score will be ZERO.***

Cited references are required. Discussion due dates are listed in the course calendar. Do not post your discussions as attachments.

You must respond to at least TWO of your peer's initial posts (bantering back and forth with a peer about your own post is fine but will NOT count as a response to another peer's initial post). Please take note of this as points can easily be lost otherwise.

Discussion Grading Rubric

Criteria	Criteria Description	% of Grade
Content	• Discussion postings include thought-provoking input and feedback designed to enhance communication from/with other participants. • Displays a researched understanding of the specific topic or comment being discussed. • Your posting develops ideas and stimulates discussions. • Shows application of content. Responses to peers' postings reflect research, readings, and further stimulate thought.	25%
Quality of Writing	• Written responses are free of grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors. Follows APA format. • The style of writing contributes to open and honest communication and is professionally presented. • Critical thinking and content analysis demonstrated in your original posting and in your analysis of peers' posting. • Discussion arguments are well supported. • Shows integration of current literature.	25%
Participation	• Complies with established class best practices for learning (referenced, respectful, timing etc). • Proactively participates in the class. • All postings are respectful of others' ideas, opinions; assist peers in clarification of perspectives; and offer critical assessment of peers' postings. • Student consistently responds and follows the guidelines or expectations of the assignment. • Posts OWN assignment 7 DAYS PRIOR to discussion due date to allow peers adequate time to research and respond. Consistently responded to at minimum 2 peers. • Consistently posted responses by due date.	25%
Connection to professional practice	• Evidence of strong reflective thought pertaining to personal perspectives and professional development. • Reflective statements include a theoretical and researched rationale, insightful analysis, and present and stimulate creative thought. • Does not recite facts, but rather addresses and develops concepts of issues. • Postings directly advance concepts of current professional NP practice.	25%

