CO790 Professional Standards
June 13-17, 2011 9am-12pm; 1pm-4pm
Instructor: Karen Mason, Ph.D.
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Office hours: during lunch or after class

In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing you can
do is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.
Theodore Roosevelt

When you have to make a choice and don’t make it, that is in itself a choice.
William James

Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.
Mark Twain

Course Description:
This course is designed as a review of the professional standards of counseling/therapy including
ethical standards and legal responsibilities. The course also includes discussion of several models
of ethical decision-making within the context of ethical dilemmas.

Course Objectives
As a result of this course students will be able to:
1. List ethical decision making models
2. Know their profession’s ethics code
3. Know Massachusetts law as it refers to the practice of counseling
4. Apply critical thinking to ethical dilemmas

Instructional Methods:
Instructional methods will include lecture, guided discussion, small group discussion, and case
discussion.

Required Text:

Recommended Text:
counselors. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Resources
American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists Code of Ethics (Effective July 1, 2001)

American Counseling Association (Effective 2005)

American Psychological Association Ethics Code (Effective June 1, 2003)
http://www.apa.org/ethics/
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 Public Law 104-191 (HIPAA)
http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/ or www.hipaadvisory.com

Board of Registration of Allied Mental Health and Human Services Professionals:
Mental Health Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, Rehabilitation Counselors and
Educational Psychologists
http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=ocasubtopic&L=4&L0=Home&L1=Licensee&L2=Division
+of+Professional+Licensure+Boards&L3=Board+of+Registration+of+Allied+Mental+Health
+and+Human+Services+Professionals&sid=Eoca

Massachusetts General Laws (MGL):
Chapter 13, Sections 88-90—Creation of Board of Registration of Allied Mental Health
and Human Services Professionals
Chapter 19A—Elder abuse and protection
Chapter 19C—Disabled persons abuse and protection
Chapter 119—Protection of children (section 51A—reports)
Chapter 112 Section 12CC—Inspection of records
Chapter 112, Sections 61-65, 163-172—Licensing provisions for registration of Allied
Mental Health and Human Services Professionals
Chapter 123—Mental Health
Chapter 123A—Care, treatment, and rehabilitation of sexually dangerous persons

Code of Massachusetts Regulations
262 CMR 1.00 – 9.00—Rules and regulations governing Allied Mental Health and
Human Services Professionals

Requirements
Students are expected to attend all classes and to participate actively. Students will discuss all
absences with the instructor. Students will complete all reading and other assignments ON
TIME. Discuss all late assignments with the instructor. One point will be deducted from all late
assignments per day late (including the weekend) and will not be accepted more than 1 week
late.

Assignments
1. Keep ongoing reflective journal entries for each chapter of the text, capturing your
reactions such as new knowledge or realizations, rethinking a past case, thinking about a
current case, or developing a plan for how to incorporate the principles of the chapter in
your practice, etc. Each entry should be between 150 and 250 words single-spaced. (36
points: 2 points per chapter)
2. Written ethical case study (24 points; see rubric below)
3. Open code final test on HIPAA, either the AAMFT or ACA Code of Ethics and
Massachusetts Law (40 points)

The Ethical case study will describe an actual ethical dilemma you experienced in your clinical
practice and will describe the steps and outcomes of ethical decision making using either Pope
and Vasquez’ model in Chapter 11 or using Forester-Miller and Davis’ model on the ACA website:
The ethical dilemma (4 points)
The model(s) and the application of the model(s) you are choosing to use including possible courses of action regarding the dilemma and the one(s) you should have selected including consequences of choice(s) (20 points)
DO NOT PICK “reporting child abuse.” This is not an ethical dilemma. It is a legal question of whether you have “reasonable cause to believe that a minor is suffering abuse.” The only considerations are whether what you know fits the criteria of your having reasonable cause to believe the child is suffering abuse. If you must pick this issue of reporting, you may write about the ethical issue of reporting when your supervisor tells you not to.
DO NOT PICK breaking confidentiality when a client is at risk for suicide. Again this is not an ethical dilemma. If you have reasonable cause to believe that there is a clear and present danger, then you must break confidentiality.

Course Outline with Assignments
Assignments are due on day listed.

June 13 Review of syllabus; codes, laws, and HIPAA; when spiritual beliefs and professional ethics and laws clash; ethics versus law versus best practice; models of ethical decision making, thinking critically about ethical and legal issues.
Assignments:
Read:
1. Pope & Vasquez Preface, Chapters 1-3, 11-12

June 14 Competence; referral; professional development and professional identity development; self-care
Assignments:
Read:
1. Pope & Vasquez Chapters 4-8

June 15 Responding to complaints / suits; keeping records (SOAP notes); informed consent; accessibility
Assignments:
Read:
1. Pope & Vasquez Chapters 9-10, 13

June 16 Assessment, testing, diagnosis; dual relationships
Assignments:
Read:
1. Pope & Vasquez Chapters 14-17
June 17 Diversity; maintaining and breaking confidentiality: reporting suspicion of abuse/neglect; suicide risk; homicide risk; supervision; test
Assignments:
Read:
   1. Pope & Vasquez 18-21
   2. Open code final test on HIPAA, either the AAMFT or ACA Code of Ethics and Massachusetts Law

July 15
   1. Turn in a written copy of your ethical case study
   2. Turn in Reflective Journal

June 17 4pm
Last day to submit to Registrar (not to instructor) extension requests for Summer I coursework if needed. Let the instructor know if you are applying for an extension.

Additional Resources
American Association of Christian Counselors Code of Ethics
   http://aacc.net/about-us/code-of-ethics

American Association of Pastoral Counselor Code of Ethics
   http://www.aapc.org/ethics.cfm


