Course Syllabus & Assignments

UNST 421: Learning From and About Persons with Significant Disabilities
Portland State University
Ann Fullerton, Department of Special Education, Graduate School of Education

Practicum Coordinators

Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp, Rhododendron, OR
Sessions I and II: Leann Horrocks
Sessions III and IV: Carolyn Bradley

Course Description

Human diversity includes the variety of abilities and disabilities we all experience. In this
capstone, students learn how the lives of persons with significant disabilities are similar and
different than their own. They examine the perspectives, challenges and needs of persons
with disabilities and their families in society. While working as student-counselors in a
residential camp located near Mt Hood, they expand their awareness, knowledge, and skills
for interacting with and supporting persons with a variety of disabilities. Working in smaller
groups and under the supervision of qualified staff, students use teamwork and
communication skills to support each other and campers in a range of outdoor recreation
activities.

The two-week practicum portion of the course enables students to strengthen their personal
and professional development through extensive opportunities to interact with campers,
camp staff and other counselor trainees.

Course Goals

Student counselors will:

1. Learn and apply strategies and skills to communicate with, provide personal
   assistance to, and include persons with significant disabilities in a group’s
   activities.
2. Demonstrate responsibility for the overall physical, educational, social, and
   emotional needs of camper-participants.
3. Observe and report the interests of campers in program activities and the
   strategies that facilitate participation.
4. Work cooperatively with camp and PSU staff, and with other student-counselors.
5. Demonstrate interest, initiative, and reliability in carrying out planned activities.
6. Develop a positive personal relationship with campers, staff, and other student-
counselors.
7. Become part of a team that works together and supports one another to provide a
   positive outdoor experience for campers.
8. Demonstrate a willingness to evaluate personal performance and contribute to the
   success of one’s small group and the overall program.
9. Engage in thoughtful reflection about the course readings and the counseling
   experience through discussions and writing. Examine what one had learned about
oneself, individuals with disabilities, teamwork/group process, and the broader context of disability within society.

Course Questions

In this course we will form a learning community with student-counselors, faculty, camp staff, and camper participants and ask:

1. What have I been ‘taught’ about persons with different abilities/disabilities from past experiences (or lack of experience) and from society?

2. How has my experience at Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp altered those views?

3. What have I learned about how to establish great communication and build relationship with people who have life experiences different than my own?

4. What have I learned from our camper-participants?

5. How has my experience at Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp touched/impacted my:
   - Personal growth
   - Awareness of what persons with disabilities experience in my community?
   - Thoughts about how I can advocate for and include persons with disabilities?
   - Thoughts about how I can use what I have learned through this experience in my personal life, civic life and career?

A Step-By-Step Overview of the Course:

What to do Before, During, After Your Camp Session

Before you come to camp:

1. Read your Counselor and Staff Handbook (handed out at Orientation).

2. Complete the Take Home Exam (handed out at Orientation).

3. Follow instructions below under “Pre-Camp: Reading and Written Reflection Assignment”.

4. Bring your Take Home Exam and your Pre-Camp Written Reflections to camp.
During week 1 at camp:

1. Turn in your take home exam to the University Supervisor.

2. Participate fully in Counselor Training.

3. Engage in small group discussions with other students, faculty, and camp staff. You will use your Pre-Camp Written Reflections and what you are learning as a student-counselor at camp in these discussions.

4. Perform your responsibilities as a counselor as described during counselor training and in the Counselor Expectations Checklist (CEC) in this section of the manual.

5. During meetings with your Counselor Supervisor and other students in your group, participate in problem solving and planning to support the campers and counselors in the group.

6. Describe camper’s interests and participation in camp activities on the Camper Interest and Participation Sheet (CIPS).

7. Assist camper in completion of a Camper Journal describing camp experience.

8. By 5:30pm on Thursday of week 1, complete self-evaluation using the Counselor Experience Checklist (CEC) and turn in to your Counselor Supervisor.

9. Attend conference with your Counselor Supervisor to discuss first week’s performance as a counselor. Be open to feedback and support, and set goals for Week 2.

During week 2 at camp:

10. On Sunday, the first day of week 2, arrive on time for scheduled meeting with your counselor Supervisor and group.

11. Continue to perform your responsibilities as a counselor as described in counselor training and in the Counselor Expectations Checklist (CEC).

12. Incorporate any feedback you received from your Counselor Supervisor at the end of week 1 and work toward the individual goals you set for your growth.

13. During meetings with your Counselor Supervisor and other students, participate in problem solving and planning to support the campers and counselors in the group.

14. Engage in small group discussions with other students, faculty, and camp staff. You will use your Pre-Camp Written Reflections and what you are learning as a student-counselor at camp in these discussions.

15. Describe camper’s interests and participation in camp activities on the Experience Skills Checklist (ESC).

17. Attend final conference with your Counselor Supervisor to receive and discuss final Counselor Expectations Checklist evaluation.


After you return home from camp:

19. Follow instructions below under “After Camp: Final Reflection Assignment”.

20. Follow instructions below under “Submission of Assignments” to turn in your assignments for grading by the due date (12:00 noon on the Friday after your session (see “Due Dates below).

Pre-Camp: Reading and Written Reflection Assignments

As part of your capstone or practicum, complete the following reading and written reflection assignments.

Before camp:

Read your Handbook and complete your Take Home Exam. Bring your Handbook and exam to camp. Gather your reading assignments. There are three readings as shown in chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Number</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Where available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The R-word.</td>
<td>You will receive an email from us with access to a google docs folder containing this reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Persons with Disabilities and</td>
<td>You will receive an email from</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Download from the email the “Pre-camp written reflection assignment”.

This word document can be used to write and then save your written assignment. Bring a copy of your written assignment to camp. Save a copy in your computer to submit later along with your final paper after camp.

Be sure to:
- Save them on your computer for post camp assignment.
- Include your name and your session number (I, II, III or IV) in the file name.
- AND bring a printed copy with you to camp to use in our discussions.

**Assignment Instructions**

You are now ready to complete the reflective writing and reading assignments. You will first write, read, and then write again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Write</td>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Short Write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Personal Reflection</td>
<td>Read chapters from Reading 1: Parts of Kevin Connolly’s “Double Take”</td>
<td>A look at two lives</td>
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</table>

**Step 1) Write A Personal Reflection.** Before you read the excerpts from Kevin Connolly’s “Double Take”, write the following personal reflection:

*Describe* (one or two paragraphs).
- Where did you come from (a story from kid to college student), Consider:
  - Where did you grow up?
  - Family?
  - Your differences/labels growing up (dork, geek, smart, etc..)
  - What school/community groups did you belong to?
  - What groups do you belong to now?
  - Finally, what abilities/disabilities knowledge/passions do you have?

*Analyze:* (One or two paragraphs)
- Reflecting on your story:
  - How has your life trajectory/story /values been influenced by family/community/society at large and your abilities/disabilities?
What lessons have your story taught you?

Articulate to Act: (one paragraph)
- Now what are your plans? How has your story and knowledge gained at college and through life informed your future plans?

Step 2) Now read the assigned sections from Kevin Connolly’s “Double Take” (Book jacket, Chapters 2, 4, 15, 16, epilogue).

Step 3) After you read about Kevin’s life, write the following:

Describe: (one paragraph)
- From Kevin’s story what did you learn/observe/realize that was significant?
  Consider:
  - His abilities/disabilities
  - His attitude?
  - His upbringing?
  - Relationships personal and societal?
  - Any other aspects

Analyze: (one paragraph)
- Why was this significant in your mind?
- In his memoir, Kevin (23yrs old) met challenges, stigmas, and labels in society, how was/is your story growing up in society different than his and how is it similar?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 4 Short Write</th>
<th>Step 5 Read</th>
<th>Step 6 Short Write</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How were kids with disabilities treated in my middle and high school? | Read:  
  - Reading 2: “The r-word”  
  - Reading 3: “Persons with disabilities and society” | Prepare to lead a discussion at camp |

Step 4) Think back to your teen years. Write a paragraph addressing these questions:

Articulate (one paragraph)
- How were kids with different abilities/ disabilities (learning differences) treated in middle and high school?
- What did I and other kids learn from that?

Food for thought: Your time at Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp (MHKC) will be an
opportunity to get to know persons with life experiences different than your own. The camper-participants at MHKC are highly diverse in interests, abilities, and personal challenges just like everyone else.

Most of the student-counselors who take this course, as is true for 70% of youth and young adults in the U.S. (Special Olympics survey, 2010) have not had an opportunity to get to know persons with significant intellectual, physical, or sensory disabilities, or persons with autism.

We all come to MHKC with preconceived notions about persons with disabilities. With the camper-participants as our teachers, we find ourselves questioning what we ‘know’ based on our prior experiences or what we have been ‘taught’ by society about persons with disabilities.

Step 5) Now read: “The r-word” and “Persons with Disabilities and Society”

Step 6) After you read “The r-word” and “Persons with Disabilities and Society” write a paragraph addressing the following.

Ask yourself: How have these readings broadened my understanding of persons with disabilities and their experiences in society? What questions do they raise in my mind? Write three discussion questions for you and other students to discuss at camp.

Step 7) Bring a printed copy of all four of your Pre-Camp Written Reflections with you to camp.

AND, save them on your computer, you will turn them in along with your final reflection paper after camp.

On Site at Camp: Discussion Topics

While as camp, your Practicum Coordinator and Counselor Supervisors will schedule times for small group discussions.

Bring your Pre-Camp Written Reflections to camp for these discussions.

In the discussions we will intertwine the experiences you are having as a student-counselor at camp and your thoughts and questions based on the readings.

Topic 1: What have I learned from our camper participants?

What are you learning about persons with significant disabilities from this experience? In what ways are the lives and dreams of persons with significant disabilities the same or different than your own?
Topic 2: Discussion questions from you and other students that you bring to camp.

Topic 3: How can I be an ally of persons with disabilities in my workplace and community and among my friends, family, and neighbors?

Topic 4: What am I learning about leadership, teamwork, solving problems together?

Topic 5: What am I taking from this experience to use in my life, my career, my relationships?

Student Evaluation for On-Site Portion of Course

While you are at camp, you and the 8-9 other student counselors in your group will receive support and feedback from your Counselor Supervisor and Assistant Counselor Supervisor. You and your Counselor Supervisor will use an evaluation tool we call the Counselor Expectations Checklist (CEC) during the on-site portion of the course.

The Counselor Expectations Checklist (CEC)

The Counselor Expectations Checklist (CEC) provides the primary training objectives and evaluation procedures for students during the practicum. The CEC has 16 items divided into three sections: Camper Supervision/Interaction, Program Responsibilities, and Personal/Professional.

The Counselor Expectations Checklist (CEC) and specific performance indicators for each item in the CEC are described at the end of this section of the handbook.

It is important that every counselor review the CEC and these performance indicators carefully. The camp program has developed the CEC so that counselor supervisors and other staff can communicate clearly to counselors what is expected and needed from counselors.

Procedures for Counselor Evaluation using the CEC

Week 1 evaluation: At the end of the first week, the counselor uses the Counselor Expectation Checklist (CEC) to self-evaluate their performance in all areas. The counselor meets with their Counselor Supervisor to share their self-evaluation and to receive feedback from the Counselor Supervisor. The Counselor Supervisor and counselor discuss:

- Areas of strength in the counselor’s performance thus far.
- Areas in which the counselor would like more support and training
- Areas in which the counselor can improve their performance during the second week of the program.

Week 2 and final evaluation: At the beginning of the second week, the counselor keeps in mind any areas where they intend to develop and improve their performance. The Counselor Supervisor offers support and training that they can provide. At the end of the second week, the Counselor Supervisor completes the Counselor Expectations Checklist, assigning a numeric rating for the counselor. The counselor and Counselor Supervisor meet to review and discuss the final evaluation.
After Camp: Final Reflection Assignment

The final reflection is a 3-4 page paper in which you reflect on what you learned from your experiences at camp and the course readings. The paper should be typed and double-spaced. Write your name, session # and the name of your practicum coordinator at the top of your paper.

In order to help you process/write about your experience consider the following:

1. Re-read your pre-camp written reflections.

2. Highlight and annotate new insights on the side of the page.
   a. What do you notice about yourself?
      i. Your values personality, character etc.
      ii. Your views of society, communities, different groups
      iii. Your passions/major and your future plans

3. Now write your reflection using the prompts and reflection cycles below:

   Describe:
   
   o What did I learn about:
     ▪ Myself
     ▪ Groups we see as different
     ▪ About my perspective of life after college?

   Analyze:

   o How, specifically, did I learn it? (What happened: a story)
   o Why does this learning matter, or why is it significant?

   Articulate future Action:

   o In what ways will I use this learning in order to improve my life and the lives of others in the future?
   o Do I want to be an ally for persons with disabilities? If so, how?

Submission of Assignments

1. The Counselor Expectations Checklist (CEC) must be completed by 5:30 pm Thursday of the first week at camp. The CEC must be neatly written and reflect an honest evaluation of performance, areas of success and areas needing improvement. The purpose of the self-evaluation is to assist counselors in gaining insight into specific areas that may need improvement as well as reinforcing confidence in areas of strength.
2. Email the following to: mhkc@pdx.edu by your session due date (see Due Dates below). Email subject line should be “Session number - Your Name”. For example: “Session IV - Joe Smith”.
   - Attach all of your Pre-Camp Written Reflections, name file as follows: “PC.Sess.#.Your Name”. For example: “PC.Sess.IV.Joe Smith”.
   - Attach your Final Written Reflection, name file as follow: “FR.Sess.#.Your Name”. For example: “FR.Sess.IV.Joe Smith”.

3. The Practicum Coordinator will evaluate all materials submitted for each counselor and submit the final grade for recording purposes.

| Important Note: Students seven days to complete their final paper. However, this means grades are submitted one week after the end of the grading period for the first four weeks and for the second four weeks of the summer session. Student counselors in Session II and Session IV will have a grade of “X” which means “No Basis for Grade” posted by the Registrar until papers are graded. At that time the “X” will be changed to the letter grade. So, if you are a student counselor in Session II or Session IV and see a grade of “X” for this class, don’t panic. The grade will be posted later in the summer.

**Due Dates:**

**Pre Camp and Final Reflections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practicum Coordinator</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leann Horrocks</td>
<td>Session I Practicum Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeann Horrocks</td>
<td>Session II Practicum Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn Bradley</td>
<td>Session III Practicum Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn Bradley</td>
<td>Session IV Practicum Coordinator</td>
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Grading: Overall Course Evaluation

B Grade
1. Complete Counselor Expectation Checklist (C.E.C.) by Thursday at 5:30 pm of the first week.
2. Achievement of a 75% rating from Counselor Supervisor on the Counselor Expectation Checklist following completion of week two.
3. Completion of Camper Interest and Participation Sheet (CIPS) for campers.
4. Assist camper in completion of a Camper Journal describing camp experience.
5. Completion of final paper by due date (seven days after your time at camp). See Section: “Instructions for Final Paper.” Submit both your pre-camp written reflections and your final paper by the due date.

A Grade
1. Complete CEC by Thursday at 5:30 pm of the first week.
2. Achievement of a 90% rating on the Counselor Expectations Checklist from Counselor Supervisor following completion of week two.
3. Completion of the Camper Interest and Participation Sheet (CIPS) that rates campers’ skill levels.
4. Assist camper in completion of a Camper Journal describing camp experience.
5. Completion of final paper by due date (seven days after your time at camp). See Section: “Instructions for Final Paper.” Submit both your pre-camp written reflections and your final paper by the due date.