



UT Tyler COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & PSYCHOLOGY

Department of Psychology and Counseling

COUN 5380.501 Seminar in Counseling: Play Therapy Summer 2026 Course Syllabus

Meeting Times	Mondays, 11:00 AM – 1:50 PM
Room	CAS210
Instructor	Rebekah Walker, LPCS TX #71051
Office Hours	By appointment; video conferencing available
Email	rwalker@uttyler.edu (preferred method of contact)
Phone	(903) 363-3007
Canvas	All materials, assignments, and updates posted on Canvas

Course Catalog Description

This course is an introduction to the basic concepts of play therapy and child-centered play therapy (CCPT). Students will learn the attitudes and skills necessary to establish and maintain facilitative relationships with children that encourage self-expression and facilitate change. This class is also designed to give mental health professionals who desire to become Registered Play Therapists (RPT) an overview of play therapy and review the requirements for obtaining the RPT credential through the Association for Play Therapy (APT).

Course Prerequisites

None

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Develop a philosophy of and personal approach to play therapy
2. Develop an awareness of the child's world as viewed by the child
3. Understand children's play and behavior, including meaning and themes
4. Increase sensitivity to and acceptance of children and their parents/caregivers
5. Understand the organizations, people, and theorists that shaped the history and profession of play therapy
6. Review developmental stages of children and how development informs play therapy
7. Identify and compare the major theoretical models of play therapy and their common formats (individual, group, family)
8. Conceptualize a client's presenting problem developmentally and theoretically
9. Identify developmentally appropriate play therapy toys and materials for both permanent and traveling playrooms

10. Demonstrate an understanding of the play therapist's role within the child's broader clinical and non-clinical system
11. Identify elements of the play therapy relationship from intake to termination
12. Demonstrate basic play therapy skills including tracking, reflection of feelings, returning responsibility, responding to efforts, and setting limits
13. Appreciate the legal and ethical issues unique to play therapy
14. Understand issues of diversity and their impact on every facet of play therapy
15. Identify the minimal training and supervision guidelines and play therapy best practices outlined by APT

Required Texts

Landreth, G. L. (2012). Play therapy: The art of the relationship (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Kaduson, H. G., Cangelosi, D., & Schaefer, C. E. (2020). Prescriptive play therapy: Tailoring interventions for specific childhood problems. Guilford Press.

Additional required materials:

- Video recorder — equipment must be clearly visible and audible for instructor review
- Access to toys and play materials (see portable bag/box assignment)

Methods of Instruction

This course uses a combination of experiential learning, lecture, discussion, and reading. Instructional methods include:

- Readings and class discussion
- Lecture and demonstration
- Role-play with toys and hands-on practice
- Small group activities
- Video and film analysis
- Supervised play therapy sessions
- Exploratory and reflective papers
- Group supervision of recorded sessions

Course Policies

Attendance & Participation

Since this course is highly experiential, attendance and active participation are essential to your success. Please contact the instructor before class if you will be absent.

- Students who miss more than one class will not be able to earn an A in the course.
- Students who miss more than two classes will not be able to earn a B in the course.
- Arriving late counts as missing part of a class.
- Missing a supervision session or the Final Live Practicum is equivalent to two missed classes.

Electronic Devices

Voice recordings are not permitted in this class or during supervision sessions. Cell phones should remain off or on vibrate. Please do not use a laptop or tablet unless required for accommodations. Active participation is required in this group process course.

Submission of Assignments

All documents submitted must be titled: LastName – AssignmentName (e.g., Walker – PlaySession1). Assignments are due by the deadline. Late assignments will not be accepted without prior arrangement.

Canvas

Plan to check Canvas regularly. All current information, the syllabus, schedule, and resources are posted there. Changes will be communicated via Canvas and email.

Professional Dispositions

Professional disposition is an integral component of the course. The **systematic assessment** of students is required by CACREP (2016) Section 4.G.; 4.H. and ACA Code of Ethics (2014) Section F.9: F.9.a; F.9.b. The assessment is completed by the instructor based on the criteria in the table below. The Professional Dispositions component **is not calculated in the final grade**; however, the assessment is (1) part of the CMHC Committee's systematic student review and (2) will be included in the student's academic file.

Professionalism Statement

The counseling program at UT Tyler leads directly to certification, licensure, and professional practice in the field of counseling. All students are required to know and adhere to their respective professional associations (i.e., ACA Code of Ethics, 2014). Ethical violations may result in failure of the course and possibly dismissal from the program.

Course Assignments

Details to each assignment will be provided in class and can be found in Canvas with detailed grading rubric

Attendance & Class Participation (120 pts)

Students are expected to be prepared to discuss readings and actively engage in all in-class activities. Failure to prepare, as evidenced by non-participation, may result in a reduction in grade.

Child Observation (50 pts)

Observe a child aged 3–9 at play for 15-30 minutes in a public setting (park, McDonald's, Fresh Park, neighborhood playground, mall playground). Write a one-page observation paper and be ready to discuss in class.

Portable Play Therapy Bag/Box (60 pts)

In this assignment, you will build your own portable kit, bring it to class, set it up, and be prepared to talk about every item you chose. You will also create a discussion post and reply to two classmates.

Intervention Project: Group Activity (40 pts)

This activity builds creative clinical thinking, reinforces toy selection principles from Landreth, and challenges students to construct a meaningful therapeutic experience from a curated set of materials.

Bibliotherapy Assignment (45 pts)

In this assignment, you will be given a client scenario, select a children's book that speaks to that child's world, and design a simple intervention built around it, write a essay, write a parent email and share in class.

Play Sessions with a Child (160 pts total — 80 pts each)

Arrange and record two 30-minute play sessions with a typically developing child ages 4–8 (not your own child) and write a paper regarding the experience.

Final Live Practicum (100 pts)

In lieu of a traditional final exam, students will complete the Final Live Practicum at Tyler Family Counseling (TFC). Each student will conduct a 30-minute mock play therapy session with a child volunteer at the TFC playroom, under live observation by the instructor. Immediately following the session, students will participate in a brief 10-minute individual debrief with the instructor.

Final Play Therapy Self Reflection Paper (80 pts)

A final self-reflection paper (2–3 pages, APA 7th ed.) in which you reflect on your learning across the semester.

Grading

Assignment	Due Date	Points	Description
Attendance & Class Participation	Ongoing	120	Active engagement in all sessions, role plays, discussions, and group activities.
Child Observation	May 18	50	30-min observation of a child ages 3–9 in a public setting. One-page written paper. Bring to class + submit on Canvas by 11:59 PM.
Portable Play Therapy Bag/Box	June 8 and Discussion post due June 9	60	Bring to class and present. In-class presentation + Canvas discussion post (5 prompts + replies to 2 classmates). Toys from all 3 Landreth categories; culturally responsive.
Intervention Project: Group Activity	June 15	40	In-class group activity. Groups select from instructor-provided materials to design and present a play therapy intervention for an assigned client scenario.
Play Session #1 + Reflection Paper	June 29	80	30-minute session with a child ages 4–8 (not your own). Video required. One-page reflection paper due on Canvas.
Bibliotherapy Assignment	July 6	45	Short essay, parent email, and in-class book read + intervention facilitation. Scenario assigned Week 1.
Play Session #2 + Reflection Paper	July 20	80	Second 30-minute session. Demonstrates growth since Session #1. Video required. One-page reflection paper due on Canvas.
Final Live Practicum	August 3	100	30-min mock session with child volunteer at TFC under live instructor observation + 10-min debrief. Evaluated on

			session skills, theoretical alignment, and professional demeanor.
Final Play Therapy Self Reflection Paper	August 3	80	Self-reflection paper (2–3 pages APA 7th ed.) on your developing philosophy, growth as a play therapist, skill development, and future use of play therapy.
TOTAL		655	

Grading Scale:

Grade	Percentage
A	90–100%
B	80–89%
C	70–79%
D	60–69%
F	Below 60%

Course Schedule

Note: The syllabus is a guide. Due dates, assignments, and topics may be adjusted based on student needs and learning progress. The priority is to facilitate students' personal and professional development and attainment of applied skills.

Date	Topic	Content & Activities	Readings / Assignments Due
May 11	Introduction: Who Are We? What is Play Therapy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions & sand tray activity • Overview of play therapy: rationale and significance • RPT credentials and how to obtain them • History of play therapy: key figures and milestones 	Landreth Chapters 1, 2, 4; Prescriptive PT: Preface & Chapter 1 (Introduction to Prescriptive Play Therapy)
May 18	The Meaning of Play & Child Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental stages and their connection to play • Why children play: theoretical perspectives • Play as communication • Child development review (ages 3–9) 	Landreth Chapters 3 & 5; Prescriptive PT: Chapter 2 (Assessment) & Chapter 3 (CCPT); Child Observation due (bring to class + Canvas by 11:59 PM)
May 25 Memorial Day	Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core CCPT principles and the 8 basic principles • The therapeutic relationship in CCPT • Attitudes of the play therapist • Self-of-the-therapist exploration 	Landreth Chapters 6 & 7; Prescriptive PT: Chapter 4 (Adlerian PT) & Chapter 5 (CBT PT) — complete before week 4 discussion ** Watch online video and complete quiz/discussion to receive participation credit.
June 1	Prescriptive Play Therapy Discussion & Play Therapist Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of Prescriptive Play Therapy (Kaduson, Cangelosi & Schaefer) • The person of the play therapist • Self-awareness in the playroom 	Landreth Chapters 8 & 10 (pp. 145–147); APT Best Practices & Paper on Touch; Prescriptive PT:

Date	Topic	Content & Activities	Readings / Assignments Due
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal and ethical issues specific to play therapy 	Chapter 6 (Trauma-Informed PT)
June 8	Playroom, Materials & Portable Play Therapy Kit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up the playroom: structure and rationale • Toy categories (Landreth's framework) • Culturally responsive toy selection • Traveling/portable play therapy bag presentations 	Landreth Chapters 9; Consent forms due; Tote Bag/Box due — bring to class
June 15	Play Therapy Skills: Facilitative Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structuring the session • Tracking and acknowledging behavior • Reflection of content and feelings • Returning responsibility to the child • Responding to efforts • Skills practice with peers • Intervention Project: small group activity (graded) 	Landreth Chapter 10 & 11; Sign up for Final Live Practicum time slot (Canvas); Intervention Project (in class)
June 22	Limit Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationale for therapeutic limits • The ACT model of limit setting • Identifying when limits are needed • Limit-setting practice with peers • Typical problems in the playroom and how to respond 	Landreth Chapters 12 & 13; Do NOT conduct play sessions until after today's class
June 29	Group Supervision #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video presentations: Play Session #1 • Group discussion and peer feedback • Skills checklist review • Processing your experience 	Video #1 due in class; Play Session #1 Reflection Paper due
July 6	Issues in Play Therapy, Multicultural Considerations & Bibliotherapy Share Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and cultural responsiveness in the playroom • Issues in child psychopathology • Play therapy themes and stages • Children with trauma and special considerations • Bibliotherapy Share Day: each student reads their book and facilitates their intervention (classmates as "children") • Brief debrief after each share: clinical thinking, what they would do differently 	Landreth Chapters 14 & 15; Prescriptive PT: Chapter 7 (Anxiety & Fear) & Chapter 8 (Grief & Loss); Bibliotherapy Assignment due (essay + parent email + in-class share)
July 13	Parents as Partners & Filial Therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent consultation: intakes and ongoing communication • Involving parents in the therapeutic process • Introduction to Filial Therapy / CPRT • Treatment planning and clinical documentation 	Landreth Chapter 16; Assigned multicultural readings
July 20	Group Supervision #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video presentations: Play Session #2 • Group discussion and peer feedback • Reflection on growth since Session #1 • Processing termination themes 	Video #2 due in class; Play Session #2 Reflection Paper due
July 27	Play Therapy Research,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence base for play therapy • Research overview and meta-analyses • Group play therapy 	Landreth Chapter 17 & supplemental research articles; Prescriptive PT:

Date	Topic	Content & Activities	Readings / Assignments Due
	Advocacy & Advanced Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandtray therapy • Play therapy across the lifespan (adolescents, adults) • APT credentialing requirements and pathway 	Chapter 9 (ADHD) & Chapter 10 (Autism Spectrum); APT Credentialing Standards
August 3	Final Live Practicum at TFC & Course Wrap-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Live Practicum at Tyler Family Counseling (TFC) • 30-min mock session with child volunteer; 10-min debrief with instructor • Course integration and reflection • Play Therapy Reflections paper due 	Final Play Therapy Self Reflection Paper due on Canvas by 11:59 PM

Program and Departmental Policies

Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program Mission Statement

The mission of the CACREP-Accredited Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) program at the University of Texas at Tyler (UTT) is to prepare ethical and competent professional counselors. The CMHC program places a strong emphasis on preparing future counselors to work with a diverse range of client populations. Faculty members collectively aim to provide a rigorous learning environment and supportive atmosphere encouraging personal and professional development to a diverse student body. Throughout their time in the CMHC program, students are supported in developing a deep sense of self-awareness and a strong professional counselor identity integrating mental health, research, service, and advocacy. Upon successful completion of the program, students are eligible for counselor licensure in Texas and are able pursue impactful mental health careers within the community.

UT TYLER DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELING STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

<https://www.uttyler.edu/psychology/policies.php>

UT TYLER CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING STUDENT HANDBOOK

<https://www.uttyler.edu/psychology/graduate/clinical-mental-health-counseling/>

University Policies

Withdrawing from Class

Students may [withdraw](#) (drop) from this course using the [Withdrawal Portal](#). Withdrawing (dropping) this course can impact your Financial Aid, Scholarships, Veteran Benefits, Exemptions, Waivers, International Student Status, housing, and degree progress. Please speak with your instructors, consider your options, speak with your advisor, and visit the One-Stop Service Center (STE 230) or email enroll@uttyler.edu to get a complete review of your student account and the possible impacts to withdrawing. We want you to make an informed decision. UT Tyler faculty and staff are here for you and often can provide additional support options or assistance. Make sure to carefully [read the implications for withdrawing from a course and the instructions](#) on using the [Withdrawal portal](#).

Texas law prohibits students from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career*. The six courses dropped includes those from other 2-year or 4-year Texas public colleges and universities. Consider the impact withdrawing from this class has on your academic progress and other areas, such as financial implications. We encourage you to consult your advisor(s) and Enrollment Services for additional guidance.

- **CAUTION #1:** Withdrawing before census day does not mean you get a full refund. Please see the [Tuition and Fee Refund Schedule](#).
- **CAUTION #2:** All international students must check with the [Office of International Programs](#) before withdrawing. All international students are required to enroll full-time for fall and spring terms.
- **CAUTION #3:** All UT Tyler Athletes must check with the Athletic Academic Coordinator before withdrawing from a course.
- **CAUTION #4:** All veterans or military-affiliated students should consult with [Military and Veterans Affairs](#).

* Students who began college for the first time before 2007 are exempt from this law.

Artificial Intelligence Statement

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy. Refer to the About This Course section of the UT Tyler Syllabus Module for specific information on appropriate use of AI in your course(s).

Final Exam Policy

Final examinations are administered as scheduled. If unusual circumstances require that special arrangements be made for an individual student or class, the Dean of the appropriate college, after consultation with the faculty member involved, may authorize an exception to the schedule. Faculty members must maintain student final examination papers for a minimum of three months following the examination date.

Incomplete Grade Policy

If a student, because of extenuating circumstances, is unable to complete all of the requirements for a course by the end of the semester, then the instructor may recommend an Incomplete (I) for the course. The "I" may be assigned in place of a grade *only when all of the following conditions are met:* (a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all coursework or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor, and (c) the student presents these reasons before the time that the final grade roster is due. The semester credit hours for an Incomplete will not be used to calculate the grade point average.

The student and the instructor must submit an Incomplete Form detailing the work required and the time by which the work must be completed to their respective department chair or college dean for approval. The time limit established must not exceed one year. Should the student fail to meet all of the work for the course within the time limit, then the instructor may assign zeros to the unfinished work, compute the course average for the student, and assign the appropriate grade. If a grade has yet to be assigned within one year, then the Incomplete will be changed to an F, or NC. If the course was initially taken under the CR/NC grading basis, this may adversely affect the student's academic standing.

Grade Appeal Policy

Disputes regarding grades must be initiated within sixty (60) days from the date of receiving the final course grade by filing a Grade Appeal Form with the instructor who assigned the grade. A grade appeal should be used when the student thinks the final course grade awarded does not reflect the grades earned on assessments or follow the grading scale as documented in the syllabus. The student should provide the rationale for the grade appeal and attach supporting document about the grades earned. The form should be sent via email to the faculty member who assigned the grade. The faculty member reviews the rationale and supporting documentation and completes the instruction section of the form. The instructor should return the form to the student, even if a grade change is made at this level. If the student is not satisfied with the decision, the student may appeal in writing to the Chairperson of the department from which the grade was issued. In situations where there is an allegation of capricious grading, discrimination, or unlawful actions, appeals may go beyond the Chairperson to the Dean or the Dean's designee of the college from which the grade was issued, with that decision being final. The Grade Appeal form is found in the [Registrar's Form Library](#).

NOTE: The Grade Appeal Form is different from the Application for Appeal form submitted to the Student Appeals Committee, which does not rule on grade disputes as described in this policy.

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical, and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler/> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with the Assistant Director Student Accessibility and Resources/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <https://www.uttyler.edu/disability-services>, the SAR office located in the Robert Muntz Library, LIB 460, email saroffice@uttyler.edu, or call 903.566.7079."

Military and Veterans

UT Tyler honors the service and sacrifices of our military-affiliated and veterans students. If you are a student who is a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves or National Guard, or a military spouse or dependent, please stay in contact with your faculty member if any aspect of your present or prior service or family situation makes it difficult for you to fulfill the requirements of a course or creates disruption in your academic progress. It is important to make your faculty member aware of any complications as far in advance as possible. Your faculty member is willing to work with you and, if needed, put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you. The [Military and Veterans Affairs](#) has campus resources for military-affiliated students. The MVSC can be reached at MVSC@uttyler.edu or via phone at 903.565.5972.

Students on an F-1 Visa

To remain in compliance with Federal Regulations requirements you must do the following:

- **Traditional face-to-face classes:** Attend classes on the regular meeting days/times.
- **Hybrid Classes:** Attend all face-to-face classes convened by the instructor according to the schedule set for your specific course.
- **Online course:** Only one online course can count toward your full-time enrollment. Students are expected to be fully engaged and meet all requirements for the online course.

Academic Honesty and Academic Misconduct

The UT Tyler community comes together to pledge that "Honor and integrity will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do." Therefore, we enforce the [Student Conduct and Discipline policy](#) in the Student Manual Of Operating Procedures (Section 8).

FERPA

UT Tyler follows the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as noted in [UT Tyler's Policy 7.01: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#). The course instructor will follow all requirements to protect your confidential information.

Absence for Official University Events or Activities

This course follows the practices related to [Excused Absences for University Events or Activities](#) as noted in the Catalog.

Absence for Religious Holidays

This course follows the practices related to UT Tyler's [Excused Absence for Religious Holy Days](#) as noted in the Catalog.

Absence for Pregnant Students

This course follows the requirements of Texas Laws SB 412, SB 459, SB 597/HB 1361 to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting students. Part of the supports afforded pregnant students includes excused absences. Faculty who are informed by a student of needing this support should make a referral to the Parenting Student Liaison. NOTE: Students must work with the Parenting Student Liaison in order to receive these supports. Students should reach out to the Parenting Student Liaison at parents@uttyler.edu and also complete the [Pregnant and Parenting Self-Reporting Form](#).

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>.

Play Therapy Resources

Association for Play Therapy (APT): www.a4pt.org

Texas Association for Play Therapy (TXAPT): www.txapt.org

Center for Play Therapy (UNT): <https://cpt.unt.edu>

APT Credentialing (RPT): <https://cpt.unt.edu/registered-play-therapist>

Note: This course provides 22.5 of the 150 play therapy instruction hours required for RPT application (based on APT's 3-credit hour guidelines).

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change. Students will be notified of any substantive changes.