

WYCLIFFE COLLEGE
Adolescents at Risk
May 30 – June 3, 2016

Professor: Dr. Marv Penner
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The landscape is all too familiar for those of us who work with teenagers...addictions, eating disorders, self injury, destructive sexual choices, media saturation, sexual abuse, family breakdown, anxiety, depression and suicide – the dark realities that mark the lives of so many young people today. This class is designed to explore and address some of these contemporary behavioral, emotional, and relational issues faced by today's adolescents. It is meant to prepare the student for increased ministry effectiveness through a deeper awareness of underlying issues, behavioral choices and relational realities faced by students today. It is designed to result in a greater level of freedom to address and discuss these issues with both adolescents themselves and the adults who intersect with the adolescent world. The class will consist of a series of lectures, discussions and interactive exercises addressing the topics described in the Course Schedule section. It is intentionally designed to deliver practical equipping to frontline ministry practitioners in both church and para-church ministries.

This course is designed to prepare the student for the complexities of youth ministry in today's world, by exploring and responding to the typical problems youth workers face. Students are expected to apply their total practical, theological and Biblical education to contemporary youth ministry situations

COURSE OBJECTIVES

For ministry:

Upon completion of this course successful students should...

- Feel a growing freedom and confidence in discussing difficult topics with an adolescent.
- Be equipped to address biblically the issues faced by teenagers in the new millennium.
- Be prepared to deal with an adolescent in crisis e.g. suicide, pregnancy, etc.
- Be able to equip parents of teens with a deeper understanding of the world in which their children are living.
- Be articulate in the legal ramifications of various adolescent issues.
- Be comfortable assisting an adolescent in developing Biblically based evaluative skills relative to the cultural influences in his/her life - particularly with regard to the media.
- Have developed a personal approach to counseling with teenagers that reflects sensitivity to the reality of the pressures and stresses they face.
- Be able to minister much more effectively in the complex adolescent culture of this generation.
- Have a much clearer sense of the place that ministry to adolescents will have in his/her future.
- Commit to a ministry posture which includes the priority of staying abreast of trends in current popular culture.

For scholarship:

- Identify the major relational, emotional and behavioral issues faced by adolescents today.
- Identify and evaluate the major cultural influences in the life of an adolescent.
- Acknowledge and understand the complexity of the etiology of a number of these issues. (It is not expected that the student will be an expert in every area.)
- To be able to use primary and secondary sources in the process of developing a comprehensive ministry plan

COURSE RESOURCES (*RECOMMENDED)

*note: Students are encouraged to read broadly and submit a reading log. It is not required that students purchase the following books.

Borgman, Dean. Hear My Story. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2003

Clark, Chap. Hurt 2.0. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012

Hersch, Patricia. A Tribe Apart. New York, Fawcett Columbine, 1998

Penner, Marv. Help My Kids re Hurting. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2007

Santrock, John W. Adolescence. Madison, Wisconsin: Brown and Benchmark, 2015

Taffel, Ron. The Second Family. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001

Van Pelt, Rich and Jim Hancock. The Youth Worker's Guide to Helping Teenagers in Crisis. Grand Rapids, 2005

COURSE OUTLINE

Section One: Introductory Thoughts

- Course Expectations and Syllabus Review
- Foundational Philosophical Presuppositions
- Welcome to a World of Hurt

Section Two: Being the Kind of Person Who can Help

- Exploring Helping Styles
- What Does Healthy Helping Look Like
- When Helping Hurts

Section Three: Understanding Adolescence – A Look “Under the Hood”

- Physiological Transitions – Everything is Changing
- Social Development – It's a Whole New World
- Cognitive Chaos – What are they Thinking Now?
- The Adolescent Brain – New Research Makes Sense of it All!

Section Four: Diagnosis and Labeling

- DSM – A Catalogue of Disorders
- Multi-axial Assessment – Make it Second Nature
- Pros and Cons of our Diagnostic/Labeling System

Section Five: Issues Related to Adolescent Sexuality

- Dangerous Liaisons – It's Not just Puppy Love
- Adolescent Pregnancy, Abortion, Single Parenthood
- Pornography – Not Just for Guys Anymore
- Gender Identity – The Elephant in the Youth Room

Section Six: Sexual Abuse Recovery

- Facts, Stats, Definitions
- The Invisible Damage
- The Visible Expressions
- The Unlikely Road to Healing

Section Seven: Non Suicidal Self Injurious Behavior

- Understanding the etiology of SIB – Exploring the Mysterious Why
- Hope and Healing for Kids Who Cut

Section Eight: Eating Disorders – Dying to be Thin

- Diagnostic Criteria and Medical Realities
- What can a Youth Worker Do?

Section Nine: When Families Are Broken

- Broken, Beat-Up, Blended Families
- Ministry to Single Parents and Re-Constituted Families
- The Faith Community as Family

Section Ten: Suicide Intervention – When it Seems All Options are Gone

- Why Do Kids Contemplate, Attempt and Complete Suicides
- Suicide Intervention
- Working with Survivors
- Funerals That are Tough to Do

Section Eleven: Counseling Issues with Teens and Families

- Dealing with Confidentiality
- Legal Obligations
- When and How to Refer

Section Twelve: Final Thoughts

- Understand Your Role - Apprentice to the "Wonderful Counselor"

COURSE MARK BREAKDOWN

Assignment 1	A Purposeful Pre-Course Conversation.	10 %
Assignment 2	Reading	15 %
Assignment 3	Media Critique	25 %
Assignment 4	"Adolescents at Risk" Research Portfolio:	40 %
Assignment 5	Class Participation	10 %

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignment 1. A Pre-Course Case Study. 10%

Based on your personal experience, reading, and/or interactions you may have had with young people and their families, create a case study that addresses or illustrates a specific contemporary youth issue (refer to the Class Content section to get some ideas) Paint a picture of the presenting problem (behavioural, relational, emotional) the family dynamics, the progression of the issue, the unintended outcomes of issue. If you desire, you may do this assignment autobiographically and share your own story. 4 or 5 pages should suffice. The case studies will be presented in small groups for in-class discussion - be prepared! Each presenter will be responsible for guiding the discussion related to their case study. The papers will also be handed in for grading - please provide an extra copy for the instructor.

Due: May 30, in class

Assignment 2. Pre-course Reading 15%

Choose an issue that represents a behavioural, relational, emotional or spiritual challenge for young people today. It could be related to mental health, addiction, family dynamics, the media, etc. Read 300-400 pages on that specific topic. Read a minimum of four different authors and make sure at least a third of your reading is from the "secular" perspective. Submit a reading log and write a 2-3 page summary of your findings and observations. Choose a topic other than the one you will choose for your research project

Due: May 30

Assignment 3. Media Critique 25% (This assignment should not be done before taking the course)

Part of our class time will be given to viewing a current teen-targeted movie. Students will work in critiquing teams of 4 with each team member viewing the movie from a different perspective (e.g. family messages, friendships and peer pressure issues, maleness and femaleness and sexual expression, moral decision making, etc.) A group discussion will form the basis for a paper to be written to evaluate the underlying messages of the movie from a biblical perspective.

The paper should be 6 - 10 pages and should address the following questions...

- What are the blatant messages of the movie to teens?
- What are the subtle messages that may be even more damaging?
- What might the adulthood of a teenager look like if they embrace the values, beliefs and lifestyles being promoted by this movie?
- What will be your approach as a youth worker in helping students evaluate the impact of the media on their spiritual journeys and helping them make wise decisions in their media consumption?

Due: September 5

Assignment 4. "Adolescents at Risk" Research Portfolio: 40%

THIS PROJECT IS NOT MEANT TO BE A TYPICAL TERM PAPER. Think of it more as a "package" of gathered data, written material and ministry tools related to the topic you choose. The project should reflect significant effort in an area of personal interest. Choose your topic from the wide range of issues that place adolescents at risk. Submit a one page proposal of your topic and an overview of your project intentions before Thursday of our class week. Failure to submit a proposal will result in a 5 point loss on the project grade.

Your package COULD include..... a literature review, charts, graphs, illustrations, case studies, the results of interviews or surveys you put together or find in your reading, video or audio segments, a Biblical perspective, the outline of a talk you would do to teens on the subject, an annotated bibliography of the topic, etc. I expect a fairly comprehensive look at the topic you choose and the evidence of some practically helpful material in dealing with the issue. (A typical package would include 10 pages of your own writing and 10 - 15 pages of "cut and paste" or downloaded material, relevant media, etc...) Include accurate APA references for all material.

Your package MUST include - a TWO PAGE abstract of key "tidbits." This document will be a summary collection of the "highlights" of your project - key quotes, important statistics, crucial resources, key graphs or charts, etc. Feel free to present it in a creative format if you like.

Due: September 5

Class Participation: 10%

This will be based on your level of engagement in the class and your level of participation in the exercises that are assigned as part of the hands-on learning which is an integral part of the class. More specific criteria for evaluation will be provided at the beginning of our week together.

Due: June 3