



MHS 6421
**Foundations of Play Therapy with Children &
Adolescents**
90852 901
Fall 2026

Instructor Name

Eric Davis

University Course Description

Focuses on the use of play and expressive arts in counseling children and adolescents. Theoretical orientations, foundations, practice, and assessment of play therapy are key elements of the course. Play materials, including puppets, miniatures, art, music, games, and sandtray are included as part of the course curriculum. Didactic and experiential activities serve as the primary methods of instruction of the theory and practice of play counseling. Both directive and nondirective play therapy experiences are addressed in the course.

Course Requisites

Prerequisite(s):

Corequisite(s):

Course Format

The class will focus on a balance between assigned readings and experiential activities. The class will include the integration of content, group discussions, and

play counseling experiences. For many students, the study of Play Counseling represents a theoretical and conceptual shift from the orientations with which they are most comfortable. The philosophy at the root of play counseling is based on the idea that children are innately able to grow and heal through the therapeutic relationship, which is based on positive regard, respect, and the genuine interest of the counselor. In this course, students are required to participate in play counseling experiences with a child. Students are expected to prepare themselves by immersing themselves in the course material and reflective learning. Students will have the opportunity for supervision.

Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning objectives are aligned with the APT's Professional Play Therapy Competencies and tri-phasic play therapy education guidelines. APT designates that a 1-hour graduate level course in play therapy provides 22.5 play therapy instruction hours. This 3-hour course provides 67.5 of the required 150 play therapy instruction hours required for application as a Registered Play Therapist (RPT)/School-Based Registered Play Therapist (SB-RPT).

Student Learning Outcomes	
Student Learning Outcomes	Evaluation
Compare and contrast play therapy pioneers, theorists, and organizations that shaped the history of the profession of play therapy through a historical and multicultural/social justice lens.	"Create Your Own" Play Counseling Intervention Midterm/Final Examination Reflective Journal
Identify developmentally and theoretically appropriate play therapy toys and materials from diverse representation for the purposes of both assessment and treatment.	Play Therapy Practice Session and Evaluation "Create Your Own" Play Counseling Intervention Midterm/Final Examination Reflective Journal

Student Learning Outcomes	
Demonstrate an understanding of the role of the play therapist and play therapy in the context of the child's comprehensive ecological and systemic world, which includes considerations for family, school, community, social groups, diversity factors, strengths and risk factors, and mental health/psychiatric factors.	Play Therapy Practice Session and Evaluation “Create Your Own” Play Counseling Intervention Midterm/Final Examination Reflective Journal
Demonstrate basic play therapy skills (with non-clinical volunteers) including (but not limited to) structuring, tracking, reflection of content and process, returning responsibility, facilitating self-advocacy, and limit setting.	Play Therapy Practice Session and Evaluation “Create Your Own” Play Counseling Intervention Midterm/Final Examination Reflective Journal
Compare and contrast the legal and ethical issues that are unique to play therapy and those shared with other modalities, i.e., documentation, competence, informed consent, confidentiality, boundaries, and duty to warn and protect, use of touch.	Play Therapy Practice Session and Evaluation “Create Your Own” Play Counseling Intervention Midterm/Final Examination Reflective Journal

Course Objectives

MHS 6421: Play Counseling and Play Process with Children aligns with the follow 2024 CACREP Standards:

1. history and philosophy of the counseling profession and its specialized practice areas (CACREP 3.A.1).
2. strategies for adapting and accommodating the counseling process to client culture, context, abilities, and preferences (CACREP 3.E.11).
3. counseling strategies and techniques used to facilitate the client change process (CACREP 3.E.10).
4. professional counseling credentialing across service delivery modalities, including certification, licensure, and accreditation practices and standards for all specialized practice areas (CACREP 1.A.7).
5. counselors' roles, responsibilities, and relationships as members of specialized practice and interprofessional teams, including (a) collaboration and consultation, (b) community outreach, and (c) emergency response management (CACREP 3.A.3).
6. interviewing, attending, and listening skills in the counseling process (CACREP 3.E.9).

7. strategies for adapting and accommodating the counseling process to client culture, context, abilities, and preferences (CACREP 3.E.11).
8. culturally sustaining and responsive strategies for establishing and maintaining counseling relationships across service delivery modalities (CACREP 3.E.7).

Required Texts and/or Readings and Course Materials

Kottman, T., & Ashby, J. S. (2024). *Play therapy: Basics and Beyond* (3rd ed.). ACA. ISBN 10:1556204213 ISBN 13: 978-1556204210

Play Materials Starter Kit including the following items:

Baby doll with baby bottle
Selection of 2-3 food items
Play-Doh (4)
Markers/Crayons and Paper
Variety of miniature figures (4)
Variety of miniature vehicles (4)
Variety of miniature animals
Cape with mask
Toy soldiers
Crown with a wand
Container (e.g., bag, plastic bin, etc.)

How to Succeed in this Course

I recommend the following strategies to optimize your performance in this course:

1. Read the syllabus carefully and refer to it throughout the course.
2. Do not procrastinate (i.e., do not wait until “the last minute” to complete an assignment).
3. Take notes on key concepts and terms when reading the textbook and attending class.
4. Block off time in a calendar or planner to complete your coursework and treat those blocks of time like appointments.
5. Unless otherwise indicated, do not treat readings and videos in the modules as optional.
6. Information from them may appear in quizzes, exams, and written assignments!
7. Use spell check and grammar-check functions before submitting assignments.
8. Pay attention to any emails from the instructor or any announcements posted in Canvas.

Grading Scale

Grading Scale:

94 – 100 A

90 – 93 A-

87 – 89 B+

84 – 86 B

80 – 83 B-

77 – 79 C+

74 – 76 C

70 – 73 C-

67 – 69 D+

64 – 66 D

60 – 63 D-

0 – 59 F

Grade Categories and Weights

1	Play Therapy Practice Session and Evaluation	20	100
2	“Create Your Own” Play Counseling Intervention-handout	30	150
3	Midterm Exam	15	75
3	Final Exam	15	75
4	Reflective Journal Entries	20	100 (10 points each)
	Total	100%	500

Major Topics and Course Schedule

Date	Major Topics	Assignment
Date	Reading	Assignment
Week 1: 8/25	Chapter 1: Introduction to Play Therapy	
Week 2: 9/1	Chapter 14: Working with Parents and Teachers Appendix B: Handout for Parents	Proof of Liability insurance Due Reflective Journal 1 Due
Week 3: 9/8	Chapter 4: Logical Aspects of Play Therapy	Reflective Journal 2 Due
Week 4: 9/15	Chapter 5: Tracking Chapter 6: Restating Content	Reflective Journal 3 Due Reflective Journal 4 Due
Week 5: 9/22	Chapter 7: Reflecting Feelings Chapter 8: Setting Limits Create Your Own Intervention Discussion and Demonstrations	Reflective Journal 5 Due
Week 6: 9/29	Chapter 9: Returning Responsibility Chapter 10: Dealing with Questions	Reflective Journal 6 Due Reflective Journal 7 Due
Week 7: 10/6	Chapter 11: Integration of Basic Skills	Midterm Exam
Week 8: 10/13	Chapter 12: Recognizing and Communicating Through Metaphors	Session & Evaluation Due
Week 9: 10/22	Chapter 3: Theoretical Approaches to Play	Reflective Journal 8 Due

Date	Major Topics	Assignment
Week 1 0: 10/ 27	Chapter 13: Advanced Play Therapy Skills	Review Sessions in Groups
Week 1 1: 11/ 3	Chapter 2: History of Play Therapy Appendix D: Play Therapy Certification	Review Sessions in Groups
Week 1 2: 11/ 10	Chapter 15: Professional Issues in Play Therapy	Reflective Journal 9 Due Review Sessions in Groups
Week 1 3: 11/ 17	Create Your Own Intervention Discussion and Demonstrations	Create Your Own Intervention Due Review Sessions in Groups
Week 1 4: 11/ 23	Thanksgiving Break	
Week 1 5: 12/ 2	Wrap up and review	Reflective Journal 10 Due
Week 16: 12/9	N/A	Final Week

USF Core Syllabus Policies

USF has a set of central policies related to student recording class sessions, academic integrity and grievances, student accessibility services, academic disruption, religious observances, academic continuity, food insecurity, pregnancy and related conditions, and sexual harassment that **apply to all courses at USF**. Be sure to review these online:

<https://www.usf.edu/provost/faculty-success/resources-policies-forms/core-syllabus-policy-statements.aspx>

Student Recordings

Florida Statute 1004.097 Free Expression on Campus

Students may, without prior notice, record video or audio of a class lecture for a class in which the student is enrolled for their own personal, educational use (USF Policy 10-048). A class lecture is defined as a formal or methodical oral presentation as part of a university course intended to present information or teach enrolled students about a particular subject. Recording class activities other than class lectures, including but not limited to lab sessions, student presentations (whether individually or part of a group), class discussion, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving student participation, test or examination administrations, field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty member is prohibited. Recordings may not be used as a substitute for class participation and class attendance and may not be published or shared without the written consent of the faculty member. Failure to adhere to these requirements may constitute a violation of the USF Student Conduct Code.

Course Policies: Grades

Late assignments will be accepted for 24 hours beyond the due date without penalty.

Assignments submitted after the 24 hours will receive a grade of 0 unless discussed with the professor. Missed exams may be made up only if a documented emergency situation exists. Whether or not a situation constitutes an emergency will be determined by the instructor.

Grades of "Incomplete"

An Incomplete grade ("I") is exceptional and granted at the instructor's discretion only when students are unable to complete course requirements due to illness or other circumstances beyond their control. The course instructor and student must complete and sign the "I" Grade Contract Form that describes the work to be completed, the date it is due, and the grade the student would earn factoring in a zero for all incomplete assignments. The due date can be negotiated and extended by student/instructor as long as it does not exceed two semesters for undergraduate courses and one semester for graduate courses from the original date grades were due for that course. An "I" grade not cleared within the two semesters for undergraduate courses and one semester for

graduate courses (including summer semester) will revert to the grade noted on the contract.

Campus Free Expression

It is fundamental to the University of South Florida's mission to support an environment where divergent ideas, theories, and philosophies can be openly exchanged and critically evaluated. Consistent with these principles, this course may involve discussion of ideas that you find uncomfortable, disagreeable, or even offensive.

In the instructional setting, ideas are intended to be presented in an objective manner and not as an endorsement of what you should personally believe. "Objective" means that the idea(s) presented can be tested by critical peer review and rigorous debate, and that the idea(s) is supported by credible research.

In this course you may be asked to engage with complex ideas and to demonstrate an understanding of the ideas. Understanding and engaging with an idea does not require you to believe it or to agree with it.

Course Policies: Technology and Media

Every newly enrolled USF student receives an official USF e-mail account that ends with "mail.usf.edu." Every official USF correspondence to students will be sent to that account. Go to the USF Information Technology website at <http://www.it.usf.edu/email> to learn more about email services and to activate their USF student email account. Additionally, this course utilizes Canvas and thus students are expected to access the system on a regular basis to keep abreast of additional course materials, communications, and grades. It is my goal to respond to email communications within 24 hours.

For any potential virtual meetings, students **MUST** have their cameras on for the duration of class, be dressed appropriately, and be in a setting free of distraction.

Course Policies: Student Expectations

Health and Wellness

Your health is a priority at the University of South Florida. We encourage members of our community to look out for each other and to reach out for help if someone is in need. If you or someone you know is in distress, please make a

referral at www.usf.edu/sos so that the Student Outreach & Support can contact and provide helpful resources to the student in distress. A 24-hour licensed mental healthcare professional, offered through the counseling center, is available by phone at 813-974-2831, option 3. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, please dial 9-1-1.

Title IX Policy

USF is committed to fostering a safe and respectful learning environment, free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment, in accordance with Title IX and USF Policy 0-004. If a student shares an experience of sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, or relationship violence with a USF employee (including faculty), that employee will notify the Title IX Office. This allows the Title IX Office to send the student an email with information about support resources and options—if it is safe to do so. Students are not required to respond to this email. The Title IX Office is a private resource. Information is shared only on a need-to-know basis to provide students with support measures. To speak to a confidential resource, students may contact USF Center for Victim Advocacy at 813-974-5757. Confidential resources do not notify the Title IX Office unless the student requests it. For more information about Title IX, available resources, or to make a report, please visit www.usf.edu/title-ix.

Course Hero / Chegg Policy

The USF Policy on Academic Integrity specifies that students may not use websites that enable cheating, such as by uploading or downloading material for this purpose. This does apply specifically to Chegg.com and CourseHero.com – almost any use of these websites (including uploading proprietary materials) constitutes a violation of the academic integrity policy.

Professionalism Policy

Per university policy and classroom etiquette; mobile phones, iPods, etc. must be silenced during all classroom and lab lectures. Those not heeding this rule will be asked to leave the classroom/lab immediately so as to not disrupt the learning environment. Please arrive on time for all class meetings. Students who

habitually disturb the class by talking, arriving late, etc., and have been warned may suffer a reduction in their final class grade.

Turnitin.com

In this course, turnitin.com may be utilized. Turnitin is an automated system which instructors may use to quickly and easily compare each student's assignment with billions of web sites, as well as an enormous database of student papers that grows with each submission. Accordingly, you may be expected to submit all assignments in both hard copy and electronic format. After the assignment is processed, as instructor I receive a report from turnitin.com that states if and how another author's work was used in the assignment. For a more detailed look at this process visit <http://www.turnitin.com>.

Netiquette Guidelines

- Act professionally in the way you communicate. Treat your instructors and peers with respect, the same way you would do in a face-to-face environment. Respect other people's ideas and be constructive when explaining your views about points you may not agree with.
- Be sensitive. Be respectful and sensitive when sharing your ideas and opinions. There will be people in your class with different linguistic backgrounds, political and religious beliefs or other general differences.
- Proofread and check spelling. Doing this before sending an email or posting a thread on a discussion board will allow you to make sure your message is clear and thoughtful. Avoid the use of all capital letters, it can be perceived as if you are shouting, and it is more difficult to read.
- Keep your communications focused and stay on topic. Complete your ideas before changing the subject. By keeping the message on focus you allow the readers to easily get your idea or answers they are looking for.
- Be clear with your message. Avoid using humor or sarcasm. Since people can't see your expressions or hear your tone of voice, meaning can be misinterpreted.

Email and Discussion Board Guidelines

- Use the subject line effectively by using a meaningful line of what your email or discussion is about.
- Keep your emails and postings related to the course content. You should not post anything personal on a discussion board unless it is requested by the instructor.

- Any personal, course or confidential issues should be directly communicated to the instructor via email. The discussion boards are public spaces; therefore, any issues should not be posted there.

End of Semester Student Evaluations

All classes at USF make use of an online system for students to provide feedback to the University regarding the course. These surveys will be made available at the end of the semester, and the University will notify you by email when the response window opens. Your participation is highly encouraged and valued.

Food and Drink Policy (for in-campus sessions only).

Please adhere to the firm policy of no beverages (other than bottled/capped water), food, tobacco products, or like items in the classroom. Your understanding of the necessity for this policy and cooperation will be greatly appreciated. This policy will be strictly enforced.

Learning Support and Campus Offices

Academic Accommodations

Students with disabilities are responsible for registering with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) in order to receive academic accommodations. For additional information about academic accommodations and resources, you can visit the SAS website.

[SAS website for the Tampa campus and Sarasota-Manatee Teachout site.](#)

[SAS website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

Academic Support Services

The USF Office of Student Success coordinates and promotes university-wide efforts to enhance undergraduate and graduate student success. For a comprehensive list of academic support services available to all USF students, please visit the [Office of Student Success website.](#)

Canvas Technical Support

If you have technical difficulties in Canvas, you can find access to the Canvas guides and video resources in the “Canvas Help” page on the homepage of your Canvas course. You can also contact the help desk by calling 813-974-1222 in Tampa or emailing help@usf.edu.

[USF IT Services](#)

Center for Victim Advocacy

The [Center for Victim Advocacy](#) empowers survivors of crime, violence, or abuse by promoting the restoration of decision making, by advocating for their rights, and by offering support and resources. Contact information is available online.

Counseling Center

The Counseling Center promotes the wellbeing of the campus community by providing culturally sensitive counseling, consultation, prevention, and training that enhances student academic and personal success. Contact information is available online.

[Counseling Center website for the Tampa campus and Sarasota-Manatee Teachout site.](#)

[Counseling Center website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

Tutoring

The Tutoring Hub offers free tutoring in several subjects to USF undergraduates. Appointments are recommended, but not required. For more information, email asctampa@usf.edu.

[Tutoring website for the Tampa campus and Sarasota-Manatee Teachout site.](#)

[Tutoring website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

Writing Studio

The Writing Studio is a free resource for USF undergraduate and graduate students. At the Writing Studio, a trained writing consultant will work individually

with you, at any point in the writing process from brainstorming to editing. Appointments are recommended, but not required. For more information or to make an appointment, email: writingstudio@usf.edu.

[Writing studio website for the Tampa campus and Sarasota-Manatee Teachout Site.](#)

[Writing studio website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

Student Ombuds Office

Florida Statute 1006.51 and Florida Board of Governors Regulation 6.011 require that all public institutions provide ombuds services to students. The Student Ombuds Office at USF is a confidential, impartial, informal, and independent resource for students experiencing challenges related to the university. Ombuds can help students safely explore options, clarify processes, and consider next steps. [Learn more or make an appointment at usf.edu/student-ombuds.](https://usf.edu/student-ombuds)