

**San José State University
Department of Psychology
PSYC 298: Special Problems, Fall 2022**

**Demonstration of Learning in
Second Year Comprehensive Exam**

Instructor:	Jennifer Gregg, Ph.D.
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Office Hours:	Tues 12:00 - 1:30pm and by appointment
Class Days/Time:	TBD
Classroom:	
Prerequisites:	Admission to MS Clinical Program and student in good standing; advancement to second year of program

Grading: Credit/No Credit

3 unit course: Please note, you are required to register for this class both Fall and Spring semester of your second year in the program, and you must register for **3 units each time (for a total of 6 units)**.

Course Description

From the SJSU Catalog: Advanced work in areas not covered in any regular course offering.

The course is attached to the **second year comprehensive project**. To receive credit for the course in Fall, you will need to satisfactorily complete a practice comprehensive exam write-up by the end of the semester. To receive credit for the course in Spring, you will need to satisfactorily complete your final comprehensive write-up and oral exam.

This yearlong two-semester course taken in your second year in the MS Clinical program is intended to provide structure and training during your master's project (also known as the Second Year Comprehensive Exam). The course requires you to develop

a detailed single case design study of one client during each semester of supervised training. The culminating project, a 30 to 40-page paper, that you develop is based on an extensive case conceptualization paper and oral presentation and defense of a client you have treated during the course of your training. It is designed to demonstrate your competency as a therapist in multiple areas including case formulation, ethical treatment of clients, the inclusion of central contextual variables (including but not limited to culture, gender, and family issues), assessing and collecting data, utilizing supervision, and providing an accurate diagnosis.

To clarify, the purpose of the comp is to show your ability to conceptualize a case from within a theoretical perspective, to show how you employ evidence based practice (including using the literature and tracking data), to demonstrate ethical practice, to show an understanding and appreciation of contextual features, and to show how you made use of supervision. In the oral portion of the exam, the purpose is also to demonstrate how you can respond to questions about your case based on your presentation.

This must be a case you have not written about or received graded feedback in another context. It is (of course) acceptable to have discussed such cases in supervision and fieldwork. The cases chosen and written up as comps must be different cases for the two semesters; you cannot use the same comp for Spring as used for Fall. Details of the paper are provided below.

The Role of your Faculty Consultant

Your faculty consultant for this course will evaluate and provide feedback on the practice second year comp in the Fall and the final second year comp in the Spring, including the oral exam.

In the Fall, faculty may grade and give feedback on written sections of the second year comp exam as they are written and when the case is turned in at the end of the semester.

In the Spring, faculty may discuss the case and comp related questions with students but cannot provide feedback on written material until the final comp is submitted. A student is given feedback about their writing and whether they passed the comp after the full write up has been evaluated. If the student successfully passed the written section, they are allowed to move to the oral portion of the exam.

In order to receive course credit, the student must pass both the written and oral section of the final second year comp in the Spring semester.

Learning Outcomes

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

CLO1: Develop an ability to present in written format a formal case conceptualization from a developed theoretical position utilizing both the empirical and theory-based literature and produce a written product.

CLO2: Develop a written account of and present data using both nomothetic and idiographic measures of relevant client data.

CLO3: Identify, present, and discuss essential ethical concerns, dilemmas, and resolutions to those problems seen in actual clinical practice.

CLO4: Develop skills to present a case orally in a succinct manner.

CLO5: Respond effectively to queries and suggestions to a case presentation in both written and oral formats.

You will complete a practice comprehensive exam product in the Fall semester. This is considered a practice comp, but it is evaluated using the same criteria for the final comp in the Spring semester of the second year. It is expected that there will be a learning curve to this process for students, and students are expected to take the Fall semester written comp seriously. There is no oral exam in the Fall semester.

There are expectations that sections of the comp will be completed throughout the term. The schedule for this will be set by the consultation group leader. For example, you may thoroughly develop your case formulation section, before attempting the ethics portion, begin the supervision portion while working on the data gathering for the client, continue to address the cultural and other contextual variables of the case through both research and other aspects of client advocacy, and so on.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of the Master of Science in Clinical Psychology program...

1.1: Students will demonstrate breadth of knowledge of a variety of psychotherapy theories and in-depth knowledge of one chosen theory of intervention

1.2: Students will demonstrate knowledge of empirically supported clinical interventions and evidence ability to select treatments for individual clients given this literature

2.1: Students will demonstrate effective integration and communication of clinical case material

2.2: Students will demonstrate the ability to synthesize contextual and cultural variables into presentations of client materials

2.3: Students will effectively respond to queries about clinical material and engage in discussions about their clients with supervisors and peers

2.4: Students will be able to think and discuss cases other than their own, applying theories, principles, and relevant empirical findings to those cases

3.1: Students will demonstrate understanding of different assessment devices and strategies for assessing client outcome over the course of treatment including standardized nomothetic and idiographic approaches

4.1: Students will demonstrate depth and breadth of understanding in areas including, but not limited to, psychotherapy theory, service delivery, ethics, assessment, research methods, family therapy, cultural diversity, psychopharmacology, and issues relevant to adult and child clinical populations. Students will be able to apply this knowledge to clinical cases

5.1: Students will demonstrate fulfillment of coursework and other pre-degree licensing requirements outlined by the Board of Behavioral Sciences

As a culminating experience, this course is designed to meet PLOs 1 - 4.

Licensure Learning Outcomes (LLO)

Licensing requirements for academic coursework toward the MFT and/or LPCC will be met for this course in the following way:

LLO1: For the LPCC requirements, this course is designed to fulfill category (M): Advanced counseling and psychotherapeutic theories and techniques, including the application of counseling constructs, assessment and treatment planning, clinical interventions, therapeutic relationships, psychopathology, or other clinical topics per BPC Section 4999.12

This course will also cover aspects of the additional LPCC requirements of: (d) sections (1) - (5) as follows: (1) The understanding of human behavior within the social context of socioeconomic status and other contextual issues affecting social position. (2) The understanding of human behavior within the social context of a representative variety of the cultures found within California. (3) Cultural competency and sensitivity, including a familiarity with the racial, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds of persons living in California. (4) An understanding of the effects of socioeconomic status on treatment and available resources. (5) Multicultural development and cross-cultural interaction, including experiences of race, ethnicity, class, spirituality, sexual orientation, gender, and disability and their incorporation into the psychotherapeutic process.

LLO2: For the MFT requirements, this course includes instruction in the broad range of matters and life events and all areas of study specified in BPC Section 4980.36(d)(2)(C).

This course will also cover aspects of the MFT requirements as specified in BPC code 4980.36(d)(2)(A) through (J) with a focus on (J)(iv) through (vi) as follows:

(iv) The psychotherapist-patient privilege, confidentiality, the patient dangerous to self or others, and the treatment of minors with and without

parental consent.

(v) A recognition and exploration of the relationship between a practitioner's sense of self and human values and their professional behavior and ethics.

(vi) Differences in legal and ethical standards for different types of work settings.

Required Texts/Readings

This will be determined by the faculty supervisor given the specifics of the therapist in training and the case being addressed.

Course Requirements and Assignments

You will write one practice of the second year comp in your consultation group in the Fall semester and the final comp in the Spring semester. You will discuss the comp and the progress you make in the consultation group you are assigned to, and you receive units for the product for the PSYC 298 course. The consultation group faculty member will discuss with each student in the development of the comp, but the writing will be entirely the responsibility of the student. These discussions are provided during meetings set with the faculty consultant and/or during consultation meetings.

You are expected to complete a professionally written practice comp for the Fall semester. In the Spring semester, you must complete a passing comp using the criteria listed below and in the Student Handout to earn credit for the PSYC 298 units.

In your practice comp, you will provide evidence for your writing (using accurate and appropriate references), as you would for the final comp. Although it is sometimes difficult to have a full case to write up in the Fall, all students will turn in a practice comp write up. The following represent the minimum expectations for the Fall semester comp write-up.

If a therapist has seen a client from more than 5 or 6 sessions, all sections would be expected in the Fall semester practice com. In the event that the therapist has seen a client for only a few sessions, then minimal expectations are as follows:

- Sections required include background, context, diagnosis
- The assessment section should include any and all data gathered to the time of writing. That section may include hypothesis formulation around both what data may be essential to gather and what those data may indicate across treatment.
- The theoretical formulation section should be as thorough and complete as possible but may include hypotheses about how to best intervene with the client and expectations about progress and challenges in therapy that could be anticipated.

- In the development of the conceptualization, the student should indicate what is known about the client, what the writer needs to know, and hypotheses about the case.

In either case, all sections MUST include academic references to support assertions and hypotheses as developed in the paper. The paper should maintain high levels of professionalism and evidence effective and appropriate use of grammar, syntax, and spelling.

In the Spring semester your comp will be officially evaluated as part of your culminating experience. You must earn credit for this course to graduate from the clinical program and earn your master's degree.

The following details the Written and Oral portions of the comp exam. The Written portion provides the structure you will follow in writing your comp exam.

The Written Portion

The written portion of the second year comp evidences your conceptualization, treatment development, and how you conducted professional and ethical therapy for a specific client you have seen in your training as a student in the MS program on your fieldwork placement.

To clarify, the purpose of the comp is to show your ability to conceptualize a case from within a theoretical perspective, to show how you employ evidence based practice (including using the literature and tracking data), to demonstrate ethical practice, to show an understanding and appreciation of contextual features including gender, ethnicity, and family variables, and to show how you made use of supervision. In the oral portion of the exam, the purpose is to show how you can respond to questions about your case based on your presentation including issues related to crisis management, ethical dilemmas, the use of supervision, and so on.

This must be a case you have **not** written about or received graded feedback in another context. It is (of course) acceptable to have discussed such cases in supervision and fieldwork. You cannot self-plagiarize from work done for other classes. You must thoroughly reference all of your work from resources in the literature. Remember that plagiarism is only plagiarism (read as *unethical*) when you have turned in a paper and are claiming the content as yours. If you are not sure what is acceptable and not acceptable, just ask before you turn in the assignment.

A second year comp should never contain more than a few lines of text about a theory in the absence of your client. Said more plainly, you do not write a theory section and then an application section (as may occur in some types of assignments for other courses). Instead, you will write about the theory in the context of *this* client. For example, do not provide a "book report" on cognitive therapy and then talk about your client from that perspective. You will write about your case as you understand *this* client

with *these* problems from within *this* perspective. If you try to separate these two issues, client from theory, you will not be able to demonstrate your conceptualization skills in any real way. Similarly, diagnosis and assessment as well as contextual variables (e.g., gender and ethnicity factors) and legal and ethical issues must be presented as they relate to this client with these problems. You are free to write about real applications of psychotherapy such as the use of cognitive-behavioral interventions (CBT), not “pure” cognitive or “pure” behavioral interventions. That said, be very careful about using eclectic interventions that do not allow you to show how you understand the mechanism of the problem and the mechanism of change as you approached this client with treatment.

General Guidelines

Formatting: Papers should be no more than 35 double spaced pages in length (excluding title page and references), and must be written in APA style, using a 12 pt. font. Be certain to use the most current version of the APA Publication Manual. Include a cover sheet with title, name, student identification number, and date. Your student identification number should be on the top right corner of each page as a header. Your consultation group leader will let you know how to submit the final copy (electronic or hard copy); do not submit in any type of folder. Papers with more than 2-3 typographical (spelling) errors will be returned for rewriting. Having a paper returned is grounds for failing the first attempt of the comp, so please make use of grammar and spelling check programs and proofreaders.

Case Selection: The comp will be on a client you have seen for a reasonable period in a clinical setting. The case used cannot be one used in any other write-up. The case you choose for the Spring semester comp write-up cannot be the case you use for this Fall semester. The case should be an individual client whether in the context of individual therapy or a child or adolescent seen as part of family treatment. The case should not be an individual seen in group therapy. You can choose a couple for the comp, but be certain to discuss this with your consultation group leader before beginning to write the comp. You should have seen the client for at least 6 to 8 sessions for this task.

Content Quality: The general purpose of this culminating experience project is to demonstrate your ability to write and defend a concise, yet comprehensive case study of a therapy client from a theoretical and professional perspective. Extensive reading, particularly in the theoretical orientation and discussion of contextual variables you choose to incorporate into diagnosis and treatment, will be necessary. You are encouraged to discuss general theoretical issues with faculty to enhance your level of understanding and to clarify your thinking process; however, specifics of your comprehensive exam write up will always be your own. You are encouraged to show your work to other students, solicit feedback, and discuss the case with them. Again, all writing must be yours.

Faculty may choose to give feedback on sections on the first semester write up as the student works on those sections. For the second semester comp (official culminating experience comp that is defended orally), students may discuss the write up process with faculty, but the faculty will not give feedback on any written section or the overall comp until it is turned in and evaluated.

Grading Procedures: Each written comprehensive will be read by your consultation group leader who helped develop the case. The same faculty member will serve as the student's oral examiner. A passing score of 80% on the case study is required to move to the oral exam (grading criteria are below). The student will typically be notified whether they received a passing score within two weeks after receipt of their paper.

If the student receives a failing score, typically a second faculty reader of the exam will read the written exam. This is not required for the first failure and rewrite (second attempt) of the exam. If the student fails the rewrite (second attempt) of the exam, a second reader will be assigned to confirm the failure of the written portion. If the second reader determines that the **second attempt written portion is failed, the student will receive a no credit grade for PSYC 298, will be disqualified from the program, and cannot graduate from the program.**

Due Dates: The written comprehensives will typically be due on the Monday immediately following Spring Break. The Oral Examination will follow approximately 1-3 weeks after receipt of the written exam.

Content and Scoring of the Written Portion

The following outline is required to complete the comprehensive exam. While there is room for personal judgment as dictated by your specific case, keep in mind that a comp exam will, *at the very least*, cover each of the outlined areas. The sequencing of information should follow the format below. You should identify each section with a header, but you do not repeat the entire question as listed below.

Your instructor for your Consultation Team will be the primary grader of your comps. A second reader may be used for the comps under some circumstances.

- **Background (10 pts)**
 - Include reason for referral, client demographics/identifying information, description, and history of presenting problem.
 - Do NOT include any true or actual identifying information of client, place of employment, etc.

- **Context (15 pts)**
 - Client's place in context of interpersonal and family dynamics
 - Role of gender, ethnicity, and culture for this client; socioeconomic factors
 - State how these contextual variables can impact the presenting problem and the course of treatment.

- **DSM-5 diagnosis, including differentials (15 pts)**

- **Assessment/Evaluative Data (20 pts)**
 - Include data taken at intake and assessment sessions.

- Include standardized or nomothetic AND idiographic devices used to assess problem severity and track treatment progress; illustrate with graphs/tables in appendix
 - Be sure to identify the rationale behind the selection of your measures.
 - Figures/graphs do not count in 35 page limit
- **Theoretical Formulation (50 pts)**
 - Describe and discuss your theoretical orientation in terms of what it says about mental health in the context of this client and the identified problems they have. You may have a few statements that are more generic (i.e., why are some people healthy and others not? What leads to dysfunction?), but you really need to focus on the application of statements of the mechanism of the problem (theoretical origin of that type of psychological distress) and the mechanism(s) of change in the context of this client with these problems. (20 pts)
 - State how contextual features of this case are part of your conceptualization of the problems and treatment for this client. (10 pts)
 - Identify and interpret relevant literature, including treatment outcome studies that support your approach to this case. (10 pts).
 - How would an *alternative* theoretical conceptualization of this client prove useful in your understanding or treatment? Briefly provide an example of a case formulation for this client using another theory (10 pts).
- **Describe the *process* and *progress* of treatment (20 pts)**
 - This section should include discussions of change in process and progress measures used for this case. Identify how the client changed towards the outcome goals (progress) and how you can show the client changed due to your proposed mechanism of action (process).
 - This includes what you did when components of your treatment plan did not prove effective (what modifications did you make based on theory) as well as how treatment progressed (e.g., how things went)
- **Legal and Ethical Issues (20 pts)**
 - What specific legal or ethical issues did you encounter or would you anticipate? Discuss solutions.
- **Supervision (10 pts.)**
 - Address how supervision contributed to the development and treatment of this case.
 - e.g., How did you utilize supervision? What could have been done differently with supervision?
- **Doing Things Differently (10 pts.)**
 - Describe how you might approach therapy differently now that you have done some or all of the therapy.
- **Personal Issues (10 pts.)**
 - Describe and address any personal issues raised while treating this client.
 - Address any "mistakes" you made and what you were able to learn from them.

- **Writing and References (20 pts.)**
 - Writing style, grammar, spelling, and professionalism will be evaluated.
 - Reference all materials used and be able to present this material if requested by a reader.
 - APA style **must be used** for all in-text references as well as in the reference list.
 - All references in the text must be cross-checked for being in the reference section and vice-versa.

Total Points: 200

Criteria for passing:

- All sections above must be scored at 70% or better.
- Overall score must meet or exceed 80%

Due Date: The final due date for the Fall semester comp is arranged by your consultation team leader. This is typically at the end of the Fall semester.

Note that in the Spring semester, the written portion of the comp is typically due the first Monday after Spring break.

The Oral Portion of the Exam (Spring semester only)

There is no oral exam for Fall semester comps. You are welcome to discuss the criteria for orals with your consultation team faculty member in both Fall and Spring semesters. The following details the criteria for the oral portion of the exam:

If and when students pass the minimum criteria for the written portion of the second year comp, then they will have an oral portion of the comp scheduled. The oral portion provides time for students to briefly present the same case that was described in the written portion, to interact with other students about each other's cases, and to field questions about their cases from faculty member examiners. Examiners will ask students questions about each case, initially about their own, then about other students who are also being examined that day. These questions may be to clarify what was written, to amplify specific features of the case, or to pose questions about hypothetical scenarios. The following are general guidelines for oral portion of the second year comp.

Typically two to three hours will be allotted for the oral examination, including time for feedback. Students will be notified of their pass/fail status prior to leaving the oral exam and will be given feedback on their performance.

Two faculty will serve as oral examiners. One will be your Consultation Team leader and the other will be a different faculty member. The identity of the second faculty member will not be known until after the written exam has been turned in. You should write the comp as if the entire faculty were reading it.

The second examiner will not typically pass or fail the written portion, your Consultation Team leader will primarily perform that task. Again, under some circumstances a second reader may be brought in to grade the written portion.

A passing evaluation is needed on the oral examination by both faculty members to qualify for graduation.

It is important to remember that you are writing to more than one audience when you complete the written portion of your comp exam. Certainly, your consultation group leader is one audience, but your second faculty oral examiner will also be an audience member. You will not know who this person is in advance, so your writing needs to address program goals and objectives and should not be tailored to one specific to one reader.

Evaluation of the Oral Portion

1. The oral examinations will typically be conducted in group format.
2. Between two and three hours are typically allotted for the student orals for the whole group including time for feedback.
3. The faculty oral examiners will have read and evaluated the written portion.
4. The format of the oral exam will be similar to that of a case conference or case presentation to colleagues. Students will be expected to show depth of coverage, breadth of knowledge, professionalism, understanding of ethical issues, all no obvious omissions, errors, or gross dysfluencies.
5. Criteria/Areas of Feedback.
 - a. Organization and coherence
 - b. Demonstration of maturity and non-defensiveness in case presentation including an ability to see strengths and weaknesses of how the case was conceptualized, an ability to generate alternative approaches and the strengths and weaknesses of doing so.
 - c. Demonstrate insight into any additional training that would be helpful.
 - d. Ability to answer specific questions about the case including ethical and professional questions.
6. General feedback and a pass or fail grade will be provided to student by the end of their examination hour(s).
7. Questions will be asked of (1) students' own cases and (2) other students' cases. Therefore, each student will be required to read each other's case papers before coming to the oral presentation meeting. The evaluation will be based on each student's answers about their own case write ups as well as about others' cases.
8. The Oral Exam will take place approximately 1-3 weeks after submission of the written portion of the second year comps.
9. If the oral portion is evaluated as not passing (a fail), a second faculty evaluator may be called in to sit in the oral exam second administration with the original oral examiner.
- 10. If the student fails the second oral administration, they will be disqualified from the program, will receive a no credit grade for PSYC 298, and will not graduate from the program.**

Definition of a Credit Hour

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

The credit hour is defined as the amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester.

The expectation of work for a 3-credit course is 150-minuts of direct faculty instruction and six hours of out-of-class student work each week.

Grading Policy

This class is taken as credit/no credit. Credit for Fall semester is given to the student for satisfactory completion of the practice comp, and in the Spring semester for the satisfactory completion of the final written comp and oral exam.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

Academic integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf> requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified.

Please note that plagiarism can be grounds for dismissal from the Clinical graduate program as described in the *MS Clinical MCH Graduate Student Handbook*.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. [Presidential Directive 97-03](#) requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center](#) (AEC) to establish a record of their disability.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the [Writing Center website](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>. For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook.

SJSU Counseling Services

The SJSU Counseling Services is located at the Student Wellness Center, room 300B. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit [Counseling Services website](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling>.