

**WURZWEILER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
YESHIVA UNIVERSITY
MSW PROGRAM**

**CREATIVE ARTS IN SOCIAL WORK
SWK - 6670**

Fall Semester, 2026

Office Hours: Please contact the teacher through the course Canvas or YU email

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This survey course introduces students to the theory and practice of creative arts modalities and explores how they can be integrated into clinical social work practice. Students will examine the therapeutic use of visual art, music, movement, drama, writing, and other forms of creative expression as tools for communication, exploration, reflection, and growth within the therapeutic relationship. The course will focus on foundational concepts and theories from creative arts therapies and related approaches, considering their relevance and application to social work practice.

The course emphasizes the thoughtful and ethical integration of creative arts-based approaches within the scope of social work practice. No previous art experience or particular level of artistic skill is required. Students are encouraged to approach each class with openness, curiosity, and a willingness to engage in creative exploration.

I. COURSE COMPETENCIES

This course will help students achieve the following competencies:

Competencies #1, #2, #6 and #8.

Competencies #1, #2, #6 will be measured using student outcome data.

Competency #1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession's history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social Workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in interprofessional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of lifelong learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice.

- Social workers make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context.
- Social workers use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations.

- Social workers demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication.
- Social workers use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes.
- Social workers use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

Competency Indicators 1A and 1B

1A – Practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development.

1B – Attend to professional roles and boundaries.

Competency #2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to identity formation. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power.

- Social workers apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.
- Social workers present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences.
- Social workers apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

Competency Indicators 2A and 2B

2A – Gains sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups.

2B – View themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants.

Competency #6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social

environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their ability to engage effectively with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers value principles of relationship-building and interprofessional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate.

Competency Indicator 6A

6A – Substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Competency #8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with clients and constituencies. Social workers understand how to identify, analyze, and implement evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers value the importance of interprofessional teamwork and communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, interprofessional, and interorganizational collaboration.

Competency Indicators 8A

8A – Help clients resolve problems.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and describe major theoretical approaches within the creative arts therapies and consider their relevance to referral decisions and clinical social work practice.
2. Describe the historical development of the creative arts therapies and examine the role of creative expression in understanding and responding to clients' experiences.
3. Apply selected creative arts modalities with diverse populations and recognize the importance of imagination, play, and creativity within social work practice.

III. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Learning for this course will occur through a variety of experiences:

- A. Readings addressing the history, theory, research, and practice of the creative arts therapies and related approaches.
 - B. Practical and experiential engagement with selected creative arts modalities.
 - C. Class and online discussions integrating course concepts with clinical social work practice.
- Because class discussions and experiential activities may involve sensitive material, students have the right to determine the extent of their participation in a particular exercise and the degree of personal self-disclosure.

IV. COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING

- A. Students are required to have the necessary materials for each class. Please contact the professor beforehand if certain materials are unavailable in the student's area, or if the student has other difficulties obtaining or affording the requested materials.
- B. Students are required to have read the required readings before the start of class.
- C. Student attendance is required:

Class Participation & Professional Engagement

Consistent attendance is particularly important in this course as each class builds upon the learning, experiences, and creative work of preceding classes.

Wurzweiler emphasizes the importance of attendance, engagement, and participation, noting that "Consistency in these areas offers students the best opportunity to understand course content and to think critically about the topics being covered."

In accordance with Wurzweiler School of Social Work policy, students missing more than 20% of class time may receive an "F" for the course.

In this 14-session course, three absences exceed the 20% threshold. Exceptions for excused absences are subject to Wurzweiler policy and instructor approval.

Assignments and Grading

Assignment	Grade %
Class Participation/Professional Engagement	10%
Discussion Boards	10%
Reflection Papers/Art Responses	15%
Concrete Feelings Poem	20%
Midterm Paper & Creative Response	20%
Final Paper & In-class Presentation	25%
Total	100%

Attendance: Attendance is recorded separately. Students are expected to attend class regularly in accordance with the course and Wurzweiler attendance policies.

This course includes both individual and group learning experiences. Active participation is an important component of the collaborative and experiential nature of the course.

Students are expected to come to class prepared to engage with assigned readings, course discussions, experiential and creative activities, and the perspectives of their classmates.

Participation should demonstrate thoughtful engagement with course material, openness to diverse perspectives, respectful interaction with others, and professional engagement in the learning process.

Course Readings:

All required readings are embedded in the assignments and the discussions. Additional suggested readings are provided in the "Pages" section of this course's online Canvas page, <https://yu.instructure.com/>.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Discussion Boards (4) – 10%

Students will complete four discussion boards during the semester. Discussion boards provide opportunities to engage with course readings, concepts, and creative arts approaches outside of class and to learn from the perspectives of classmates. Students are expected to respond thoughtfully to each discussion prompt and, when indicated, engage with two classmates' posts in a respectful and substantive manner.

Each discussion board is worth 2.5% of the final course grade. Specific prompts, instructions, and due dates are in Canvas.

Reflection Papers/Art Responses — 15%

Throughout the semester, students will complete a series of brief reflection papers and art responses connected to experiential activities and course material. These assignments give students opportunities to reflect on their creative process, consider their responses to different creative arts modalities, and connect personal experience, course concepts, and clinical social work practice. Specific instructions for each assignment will be provided in Canvas.

Concrete Feelings Poem — 20%

Students will complete a structured creative writing assignment that explores the use of concrete language, imagery, and sensory experience to express emotion. The assignment includes an experiential component and subsequent development of the poem. Students will reflect on the creative process and consider how this type of intervention may facilitate expression, communication, and exploration within clinical social work practice. Detailed instructions will be provided in Canvas.

Midterm Paper & Creative Response - 20%

For the midterm assignment, students will select a concept from an assigned course reading that interests them. Students will define and discuss the concept in their own words and create a two- or three-dimensional art response inspired by the concept using traditional and/or found art materials. The written component will include reflection on the materials selected, the creative process, and the relationship between the chosen concept and the resulting artwork.

The midterm is approximately two pages in length, includes a photograph of the student's art response and at least two scholarly references, and follows APA 7 guidelines. Detailed assignment instructions will be provided in Canvas.

Final Paper & In-Class Presentation - 25%

The final assignment builds upon the concept explored in the midterm. Students will examine their chosen concept through a different creative arts modality, such as bibliotherapy, drama therapy, music therapy, dance/movement therapy, or sandplay therapy, and apply it to an imagined clinical case.

Students will consider the needs and characteristics of the client, explain how the selected creative arts modality might be used therapeutically, and consider whether the intervention would be appropriate for individual and/or group work. Students will also examine how the selected modality may relate to brain functioning and identify a creative arts modality that may be less appropriate for the particular client, providing a rationale for their clinical decisions.

As part of the final assignment, students will prepare and present a brief bullet-point summary of their proposed case and clinical application in class. The in-class presentation and completed paper together constitute the Final Paper grade of 25%.

The written final paper is two to four pages in length, incorporates at least three scholarly references, and follows APA 7 guidelines. Detailed assignment instructions are provided in Canvas.

APA 7th edition format is required for the midterm and final, including in-text citations and the reference section. Some references may be taken from course readings. Not adhering to APA format and late assignment submissions will result in lower grades.

Grading Rubric for Midterm and Final Assignments

Each assignment is graded on five criteria. Each criterion is worth up to 20 points, for a total possible score of 100 points.

Grading Criteria

- Understanding of Course Concepts
- Application to Creative Arts & Clinical Practice
- Critical Thinking & Reflection
- Integration of Course Material & Scholarly Literature
- Organization, Writing & APA 7

Performance Level	Points per Criterion	Description
Excellent	18–20	Demonstrates clear, accurate, thoughtful, and well-developed work that fully addresses the criterion.
Strong	16–17	Demonstrates clear and appropriate work that addresses the criterion, with minor areas that could be further developed.
Developing	14–15	Demonstrates basic achievement of the criterion, but some areas are unclear, incomplete, or insufficiently developed.
Needs Improvement	0–13	Demonstrates limited achievement of the criterion or does not adequately address the assignment requirements.

Total possible: 100 points

VI. EVALUATION

Students are provided with an opportunity to evaluate masters courses. An evaluation form pertaining to the course and instructor will be conducted online. Evaluation is ongoing, and students are encouraged to participate.

VII. OFFICE OF DISABILITIES SERVICES collaborates with students, faculty, and staff to provide reasonable accommodations and services to students with disabilities. The purpose of reasonable academic accommodations is to assure that there is equal access to and the opportunity to benefit from your education at Wurzweiler. It is the student's responsibility to identify himself/herself to the Office of Disabilities Services (ODS) and to provide documentation of a disability. <http://www.yu.edu/Student-Life/Resources-and->

Services/Disability-Services/

VIII. E-RESERVES

Access full-text copies of most of the "on reserve" articles for a course from your home computer. You will need Adobe Acrobat to use this service. Your professor will provide you with a password. The link for e-reserves is <http://yulib002.mc.yu.edu:2262/er.php>. Most of the articles mentioned in the curriculum are available on electronic reserve (E-reserves). You can access the full-text articles from your home or from a university computer at no charge.

ACCESSING E-RESERVES

FROM CANVAS

1. Go to your class Canvas page.
2. Click the link "Library Resources & E-Reserves" (no password required)

FROM CAMPUS

1. If you wish to access e-reserves from the library home page (library.yu.edu),
2. Use "**wurzweiler**" all lower case, as the password.
3. If you have problems accessing e-reserves, email: Stephanie Gross, Electronic Reserves Librarian: gross@yu.edu or ereserves@yu.edu.

FROM OFF-CAMPUS

1. Go to the library's online resources page: http://www.yu.edu/libraries/online_resources.asp
2. Click on E-RES; you will be prompted for your *Off Campus Access Service login* and password.
3. Use "wurzweiler" all lower case, as the password for all courses in all social work programs.
4. If you have problems accessing e-reserves, email: Stephanie Gross, Electronic Reserves Librarian: gross@yu.edu or ereserves@yu.edu.

USING E-RESERVES

1. Click on "Search E-RES" or on "Course Index," and search by instructor's name, department, course name, course number, document title, or document author.
2. Click on the link to your course.
3. When the article text or book record appears on the screen, you can print, email, or save it to disk. To view documents that are in PDF format, the computer you are using must have Adobe Acrobat Reader software. You can download it FREE at www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html

IX. PLAGIARISM

All written work submitted by students is to be their own. Ideas and concepts that are the work of others must be cited with proper attribution. The use of the written works of others that is submitted as one's own constitutes **plagiarism** and is a violation of academic standards. The School will not condone **plagiarism** in any form and will impose sanctions to acts of **plagiarism**. A student who presents someone else's work as his or her own work is stealing from the authors or persons who did the original thinking and writing. **Plagiarism** occurs when a student directly copies another's work without citation; when a student paraphrases major aspects of another's work without citation; and when a student combines the work of different authors into a new statement without reference to those authors. It is also **plagiarism** to use the ideas and/or work of another student and present them as your own. It is **NOT plagiarism** to formulate your own presentation of an idea or concept as a reaction to someone else's work; however, the work to which you are reacting should be discussed and appropriately cited. If it is determined that a student has plagiarized any part of any assignment in a course, the student will automatically **FAIL** the course. The student also will be placed on Academic

Probation and will be referred to the Associate Dean for any additional disciplinary action, which may include expulsion. A student may not submit the same paper or an assignment from another class for credit. If students or faculty are concerned that written work is indeed plagiarized, they can use the following “plagiarism checker” websites, easily accessible and generally free on Google:

www.grammarly.com/plagiarism_checker www.dustball.com/cs/plagiarism.checker www.plagtracker.com
www.plagium.com/
www.plagscan.com/seesources/
www.duplichecker.com/

As a Wurzweiler student, maintaining good standing in the program is dependent on developing and maintaining high standards of ethical and professional behavior. Students are required to adhere to the Code of Ethics promulgated by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).

X. HIPAA

In line with HIPAA regulations concerning protected health information, it is important that you understand that any case information you present in class or coursework will need to be de-identified. What this means is that any information that would allow another to identify the person must be changed or eliminated. This includes obvious identifiers such as names and birth dates but may also contain other information that is so unique to the person that it will allow for identification, including diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender. If diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender is directly related to the case presentation, it can be included if it will not allow for identification.

XI. FERPA & OTHER UNIVERSITY POLICIES

- Wurzweiler’s policies and procedures are in compliance with FERPA regulations. Information about FERPA regulations can be found *here*.
- The Drug-Free University Policy can be found *here*.
- Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment, and Complaint procedures can be found *here*.
- The University’s Computer Guidelines can be found *here*.

XII. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations are asked to make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, Rochelle Kohn, Beren Campus, (646) 592-4132, rkohn1@yu.edu, Abby Kelsen, Wilf Campus, (646)592-4280, akelsen@yu.edu, during the first week of class. After approval for accommodations is granted, please submit your accommodations letter to the Disability Services Office immediately.

XIII. CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is essential for safeguarding students’ personal experiences in a learning setting. Students are expected to provide a safe environment for their peers by abiding by the ethical standards of confidentiality.

XIV. COURSE SCHEDULE

The course is organized into thematic modules that integrate theory, experiential learning, creative exploration, and application to clinical social work practice. The modules below represent the major areas of study and may extend across more than one class session. The sequence and pacing of topics may be adjusted throughout the semester in response to the learning process and needs of the class.

Specific readings, materials, experiential activities, assignment instructions, and due dates are provided in Canvas.

Module 1: Introduction to Creative Arts Therapies

Introduction to the creative arts therapies and their historical and theoretical foundations. Exploration of creativity, expression, communication, and the relationship between creative arts approaches and clinical social work practice.

Module 2: Bibliotherapy and Poetry Therapy

Exploration of written language, literature, poetry, metaphor, and storytelling as forms of therapeutic expression. Consideration of how reading and writing may facilitate reflection, communication, meaning-making, and emotional expression.

Module 3: Art Therapy

Introduction to foundational art therapy concepts and approaches. Exploration of visual expression, art materials, image-making, symbolism, and the creative process, with consideration of their relevance to clinical social work practice.

Module 4: Music Therapy

Introduction to foundational concepts in music therapy and the therapeutic use of music. Exploration of music as a means of expression, communication, connection, reflection, and emotional experience.

Module 5: Drama and Psychodrama

Introduction to drama therapy and psychodrama. Exploration of role, enactment, storytelling, perspective-taking, and dramatic processes as approaches to therapeutic exploration and expression.

Module 6: Dance/Movement Therapy

Introduction to foundational concepts in dance/movement therapy. Exploration of movement, embodiment, nonverbal communication, and the relationship between physical experience, emotion, and interpersonal connection.

Module 7: Sandplay Therapy

Introduction to sandplay therapy and the use of symbolic objects, imagery, and three-dimensional space in therapeutic work. Consideration of symbolism, metaphor, and nonverbal expression within the therapeutic process.

Module 8: Expanding the Therapeutic Language: Image, Silence, Materials, and Relationships

Exploration of creative and nonverbal approaches that expand the ways clients may communicate, experience, and make meaning within the therapeutic relationship. Topics include phototherapy and the therapeutic use of photographs, silence and nonverbal communication in therapy, water as a sensory and therapeutic material, and genograms as visual representations of family relationships, patterns, and experiences.

Module 9: Professionalism in Creative Arts Therapies

Exploration of professional identity, ethical practice, boundaries, scope of practice, and the distinctions among creative arts therapists, social workers, and other helping professionals. Consideration of the thoughtful and ethical integration of creative arts-based approaches within clinical social work practice.

Module 10: Endings

Exploration of endings, transition, separation, and termination within the therapeutic relationship. Consideration how creative processes may support endings through reflection, integration, and meaning-making.

XV. REQUIRED READINGS

Required readings provide theoretical, clinical, and research-based perspectives on creative arts therapies and their relevance to social work practice. Readings correspond to the major course modules and may include journal articles, book chapters, and other scholarly materials.

Specific reading assignments and any additional materials will be posted in Canvas. The instructor may supplement or modify readings during the semester to reflect emerging scholarship, course discussions, and the learning needs of the class.

Bilik, E. (2019). Neuropsychodrama: What is happening in our brains in psychodrama?. *Revista Brasileira de Psicodrama*, 27(2), 165-173.

Finlay, L. (2015). *Relational integrative psychotherapy: Engaging process and theory in practice*. John Wiley & Sons.

Foo, M., & Pratiwi, A. (2021). The effectiveness of sandplay therapy in treating generalized anxiety disorder patients with childhood trauma using magnetic resonance spectroscopy to examine choline level in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and centrum semiovale. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 30(3), 177.

Haslbeck, F. B., Jakab, A., Held, U., Bassler, D., Bucher, H. U., & Hagmann, C. (2020). Creative music therapy to promote brain function and brain structure in preterm infants: A randomized controlled pilot study. *NeuroImage: Clinical*, 25, 102171.

Karpati, F. J., Giacosa, C., Foster, N. E., Penhune, V. B., & Hyde, K. L. (2015). Dance and the brain: a review. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1337(1), 140-146.

Kelemen, L. J., & Shamri-Zeevi, L. (2022). Art therapy open studio and teen identity development: Helping adolescents recover from mental health conditions. *Children*, 9(7), 1029.

Lev-Wiesel, R., & Kissos, L. (2019). Using creative arts therapies in survivors of loss and trauma. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 24(5-6), 385-386.

Malik, S. (2022). Using neuroscience to explore creative media in art therapy: A systematic narrative review. *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 27(2), 48-60.

Rogers, N. (1993). *The creative connection: Expressive arts as healing*. Science and Behavior Books, Inc.

Springer, W. (2006). Poetry in therapy: A way to heal for trauma survivors and clients in recovery from addiction. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 19(2), 69-81.

Ueland, B. (1938). *If you want to write: releasing your creative spirit*. Martino Fine Books.