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| **Course Overview** |

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| In the practice of forensic psychology, ethical dilemmas are almost guaranteed to arise at some point. Some would argue that ethical dilemmas are an inherent characteristic of practicing forensic psychology. Even practitioners who choose not to do forensic work are sometimes thrust into the legal arena, for example, if they are served a subpoena to testify about a therapy client, and may face ethical dilemmas.In this course, you will learn about the guiding ethical principles for psychology professionals and for specialists working in the field of forensic psychology.You will learn to apply models of ethical decision making to ethical dilemmas you may face in your careers. You will explore methods or processes for determining how to apply professional ethics in the procedures you follow. You will also learn what to do when you perceive professional misconduct and learn a method for deciding what action or actions to take in such instances. |
| **The Legal System** |

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| In this course, you will come to better understand how legal decisions are made, the adversarial nature of the legal system, and the role of expert witnesses in legal cases.The legal system is an adversarial one in which two "sides" argue for one viewpoint (e.g., guilty or not guilty, competent or not competent, and insane or not insane). You will get a better sense of this environment to also argue one side or another and to learn how to support your arguments with appropriate references. There are several assignments in which you are instructed to choose a side, take a position, and argue for why it is the "right" one.Cases are usually not "black and white." And there is a lot of ambiguity in the area of ethics. Throughout the course, you will be applying the ethical principles you learn to hypothetical case scenarios and to some actual cases. Often, there is not really a right or wrong choice. You are encouraged, however, to think in terms of defensible choices. You should be able to support your position by citing appropriate ethical guidelines or other sources. There can be more than one logical, supportable position.You should be open to the positions of your classmates. You are expected to be respectful of them and their opinions and recognize that there can be more than one right answer. You are also expected to critically evaluate your classmates' ideas in a respectful way. A healthy debate over ideas and arguments is an excellent tool for learning and thinking critically. A debate can help push your thinking to new levels. |
| **Module 1 Overview** |

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| In **Module 1**, you will be introduced to the guiding sets of ethical principles relevant to forensic psychology. In addition, you will learn about a model of ethical decision making (a process by which one decides on an appropriate course of action that adheres to a code of conduct and is justifiable).APA most recently revised its ethical guidelines and code of conduct in 2010. All members of the organization, which can include students of psychology, are required to follow the APA Ethics Code.In addition, many state licensing boards have adopted, or at least adapted, these ethical guidelines. Therefore, even if a psychologist is not a member of the APA, he or she is often required to follow these or similar guidelines.Licensing boards and professional associations for other professionals, such as professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, and social workers, have ethical codes as well. There is a lot of overlap between these and the APA guidelines.You will also begin working on your course paper (the LASA) by beginning your literature review. The course paper will focus on the therapeutic and forensic roles of forensic psychology professionals and explore the issue of whether the two roles can professionally coincide.Provides the learning outcomes on which the readings and assignments for this week are based.* Integrate the APA Ethical Principles for Psychologists and the APA Code of Conduct into areas of research and information gathering, identifying distinctions between clinical, legal, and ethical issues as they apply to the field of forensic psychology.
* Analyze and apply models of ethical decision-making processes to forensic professional settings.
* Compare and contrast the multifaceted roles of the forensic practitioner working in forensic settings.
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| **Ethical Dilemmas** |

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| You have been treating someone for depression for a year. You receive a subpoena for your testimony in a case against your client. What do you do?You evaluated a woman as part of a custody dispute. Now, she would like you to provide psychotherapy for her daughter. Should you treat the child?You are evaluating a criminal defendant for competency to stand trial (CST). He or she tells you that he or she has been pretending to be "crazy" in order to avoid going to trial because he or she will kill himself or herself if he or she goes to prison for something he or she did not do. What do you do with this information?You overhear a psychologist tell an inmate that he or she will make sure that the inmate doesn't get parole unless he or she agrees to participate in a research project. What do you do?In the practice of forensic psychology, ethical dilemmas are almost guaranteed to arise at some point. Some would argue that ethical dilemmas are an inherent characteristic of practicing forensic psychology. Even practitioners who choose not to do forensic work are sometimes thrust into the legal system and may face ethical dilemmas, as pointed out in the first example. |
| **Ethical Decision Making** |

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| While the APA Ethics Code and the forensic specialty ethical guidelines are invaluable in guiding your choices when you face ethical dilemmas, they do not cover all of the possible dilemmas that mental health professionals may face. For example, it is not always clear what to do when ethical guidelines and legal requirements conflict or when two ethical guidelines conflict with one another (e.g., maintain confidentiality yet keep from harm). This is when it is helpful to have a systematic way of deciding an appropriate course of action when faced with an ethical dilemma.The model of ethical decision making in forensic psychology proposed by Bush, Connell, and Denney (2006) outlines a process for deciding what to do in situations where the appropriate course of action is not obvious. In this module, you will learn about this model. In later modules, you will apply this model to specific cases or situations. |
| **General Ethical Principles** |

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| The APA Ethics Code has five guiding principles:* Principle A: Beneficence and Nonmaleficence
* Principle B: Fidelity and Responsibility
* Principle C: Integrity
* Principle D: Justice
* Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity

The guiding principles are historically rooted in biomedical ethics. These guiding principles are different from specific ethical standards, as expressed in the remainder of the APA Ethics Code. The guiding principles are aspirational in nature. They are not clear standards for expected behavior, and the APA does not base any disciplinary actions on "violations" of the guiding principles. Psychology professionals are expected, however, to strive toward the highest level of professionalism, including ethical idealism.The principle of beneficence and nonmaleficence espouses that psychology professionals should "do no harm."The principle of fidelity and responsibility essentially purports that psychology professionals should take responsibility for their work and establish professional relationships based on trust.The principle of integrity refers to psychology professionals' goal of acting with integrity—being honest, truthful, and accurate in their behavior and representations of information.The principle of justice promotes equity and fairness as well as equal access to the services that psychology offers.The principle of respect for people's rights and dignity espouses that individuals have a right to be treated with dignity and their rights should be protected. |
| **Ethical Standard of Competence** |

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| The APA Ethics Code and the forensic specialty guidelines promote competence. Psychology professionals are expected to only work in those areas in which they are competent and to perform those duties in a competent manner. Competence in an area is gained through appropriate education, training, and experience (supervised and professional). In addition, psychology professionals are expected to maintain their competence through continuing education, be aware of any issues that may be preventing them from being competent, and take appropriate action to address such issues.Breaches of competence can occur at any level—from a student to a licensed professional. Examples of breaches of competence include using a therapeutic technique without having been trained in the use of that technique and administering a test designed in one language to an individual who speaks another language (Fly, van Bark, Weinman, Kitchener, & Lang, 1997). Fly et al. cited these specific examples with regard to graduate students, but they can just as easily have occurred with licensed professionals.The best way to ensure competence is to be as informed as possible in your field, for example, by regularly reading peer-reviewed journals in your professional area and seeking consultation, training, and supervised experience before broadening your area of practice. It is also important to ensure that you only work with populations for which you have been trained and ensure that any individuals you supervise or to whom you delegate work are also competent.**Reference**:Fly, B. J., van Bark, W. P., Weinman, L., Kitchener, K. S., & Lang, P. R. (1997).           Ethical transgressions of psychology graduate students: Critical incidents           with implications for training. *Professional Psychology: Research and           Practice*, *28*(5), 492–495. |
| **Conclusion** |

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| There are two sets of ethical guidelines that apply to forensic psychology professionals. One is the APA Ethics Code, comprising five guiding principles and multiple specific ethical standards. The second is the specialty guidelines for forensic psychology. Those working in the area of psychology, and especially in the area of forensic psychology, are likely to face ethical dilemmas. An ethical decision-making model is useful in formulating a plan of action when you face an ethical dilemma as it pertains to the practice of psychology.Professionals and those training to be professionals are expected to uphold the standards and strive to adhere to the general principles of ethical practice. One of these expectations is to perform professional duties only in areas one is competent in and with populations one is trained to treat. Competence is gained through adequate and sufficient training and experience.By taking courses in this master's program in forensic psychology, you are gaining the necessary knowledge to contribute competently to the field. It is important to note, however, that earning a master's degree in forensic psychology is not itself a guarantee of competence in any specific area or with any specific population. You must remain aware of the limitations of your competence and, as said earlier, work only in those areas that you have sufficient training and experience in and with only those populations that you are trained to treat. |