COUN 140: TRAUMA-INFORMED TEACHING IN K-12 EDUCATION

Citrus College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Fall 2026
Credits:	3
Total Contact Hours:	54
Lecture Hours :	54
Lab Hours:	0
Hours Arranged:	0
Outside of Class Hours:	108
Total Student Learning Hours:	162
District General Education:	D2. Behavioral Science, E4. Counseling
Transferable to CSU:	Yes
Transferable to UC:	Yes - Proposed
Grading Method:	Standard Letter, Pass/No Pass

Catalog Course Description

This course introduces students to the principles and practices of trauma-informed teaching within K–12 educational settings. Students examine how trauma affects children's learning, behavior, and emotional development, and explore strategies that promote safety, connection, and resilience. Emphasis is placed on understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), equity and cultural responsiveness, and the educator's role in creating a healing-centered classroom environment. Students will develop tools to support student well-being and academic growth while maintaining their own emotional health and professional boundaries. 54 lecture hours.

Course Objectives

- Explain how trauma impacts brain development, learning, and behavior in children and adolescents.
- Identify and apply trauma-informed classroom strategies that foster psychological safety and belonging.
- Examine how culture, identity, and systemic inequities shape the experiences of trauma and recovery.
- Evaluate collaborative approaches between educators, families, and school professionals that promote resilience.
- Reflect on educator self-care practices and strategies for managing secondary trauma and burnout.
- Differentiate between trauma-informed, trauma-sensitive, and traditional classroom management approaches, explaining how each influences student engagement and teacher-student relationships.
- Assess the role of school policy, community partnerships, and support services in creating trauma-informed systems that promote student well-being and academic success.
- Apply restorative and resilience-building practices that support emotional regulation, positive behavior, and inclusive participation among diverse K–12 learners.

Major Course Content

1. **Introduction to Trauma-Informed Teaching**
    a. Definitions, core principles, and importance in modern education
    b. The shift from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?"
    c. Core definitions & scope
        i. Trauma vs. stress vs. adversity; acute, chronic, complex trauma
        ii. Trauma-informed vs. trauma-specific services; whole-school approach
    d. Why schools? Why now?
        i. Prevalence in K–12; impacts on attendance, behavior, learning, relationships
    e. Principles of trauma-informed education
        i. Safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment, cultural humility
    f. Roles & boundaries
        i. Teachers as *first responders* to behavior, not therapists; when/how to refer
    g. Ethics & confidentiality
        i. FERPA basics; mandated reporting; documentation do's/don'ts
2. **Understanding the Science of Trauma**
    a. Neurological and physiological effects of trauma on children
    b. Toxic stress, brain development, and executive functioning
3. **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**
    a. The ACEs framework and long-term effects
    b. Original 10 ACEs; expanded ACEs (community violence, discrimination, houselessness)
    c. Intergenerational and community trauma
    d. School-relevant patterns
        i. Attendance/avoidance, perfectionism, shutting down, oppositional behavior
4. **Behavior as Communication**
    a. Interpreting classroom behaviors as adaptive responses
    b. De-escalation and empathetic response strategies
5. **Creating Safe and Supportive Learning Environments**

a. Physical, emotional, and relational safety in the classroom
b. Predictability, structure, and trust-building
c. Skill-building routines
    i. Check-ins, mood meters, breathing practices, mindful transitions

6. **Cultural and Equity Perspectives in Trauma**
    a. The role of race, culture, and identity in trauma and healing
        i. Cultural humility & identity
            1. How race, language, immigration status, disability, gender, and faith shape trauma experiences and help-seeking
    b. Addressing bias, inequity, and culturally responsive care
    c. Trust-building communication
    d. Interpreters, accessible formats, trauma-sensitive conferences
7. **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Resilience Building**
    a. Integrating SEL frameworks (CASEL competencies) into teaching
    b. Empowering students through self-regulation and reflection
8. **Restorative Practices in Education**
    a. Building community through restorative circles
    b. Repairing harm and strengthening relationships
9. **Recognizing and Responding to Mental Health Needs**
    a. Identifying early warning signs of anxiety, depression, or suicidal ideation
    b. Referral and collaboration with school counselors or mental health professionals
10. **Collaboration with Families and School Staff**
    a. Effective communication with caregivers
    b. Working as part of a multidisciplinary support team
11. **Educator Wellness and Self-Care**
    a. Understanding secondary trauma and compassion fatigue
    b. Mindfulness and boundary-setting for educators
12. **Capstone: Implementing a Trauma-Informed Teaching Plan**
    a. Integrating course concepts into a classroom or school setting
    b. Reflecting on growth as an empathetic, resilient educator

Suggested Reading Other Than Required Textbook

Brunzell, T., & Norrish, J. (2021). Creating Trauma-Informed, Strengths-Based Classrooms. Routledge

Examples of Required Writing Assignments

Research Brief on Current Issues: Students research a current topic such as the youth mental health crisis, ACEs data, restorative justice, or SEL initiatives in California schools, and summarize their findings in a 2–3 page brief or infographic. Capstone Writing Component: Trauma-Informed Teaching Plan: As part of the final project, students produce a written plan (4–6 pages) outlining trauma-informed classroom strategies, community resource integration, and educator self-care practices

Examples of Outside Assignments

Observation or Interview Activity: Students observe a classroom, after-school program, or youth setting (in person or virtually) and write a short analysis identifying trauma-sensitive practices and opportunities for improvement. Alternatively, students may interview a teacher, counselor, or school administrator about how trauma-informed strategies are used in their school. Community Resource Mapping Project: Students identify and evaluate local school, community, or mental health resources that support students experiencing trauma, summarizing contact information, services offered, and accessibility in a brief annotated list or Google Map.

Instruction Type(s)

Lecture, Online Education Lecture