Graduate School of Public Health
Department of Human Genetics
GENETIC COUNSELING INTERNSHIP
HUGEN 2036
Thursday 2:00-3:55 PM
2121C Pitt Public Health
Credit Hours: 4.0
Fall Semester 2021

Instructors and Contact Information

Andrea Durst, DrPH, LCGC (she/her)  
Office: 3129 Public Health  
Phone: 412-624-3190 (work)  
502-974-3014 (cell)  
Email: adurst@pitt.edu  
Office hours: By appointment

Robin E. Grubs, PhD, LCGC (she/her)  
Office: 3138 Public Health  
Phone: 412-624-4695 (work)  
412-260-7460 (cell)  
Email: rgrubs@pitt.edu  
Office hours: By appointment

Jodie M. Vento, MGC, CGC (she/her)  
Office: 3136 Public Health  
Phone: 412-624-5390 (work)  
412-913-1932 (cell)  
Email: ventojm@pitt.edu  
Office hours: By appointment

Goal of the Course

The goal of this course is to provide students with the knowledge and clinical experience necessary to be well prepared to enter the workforce as a genetic counselor.

Course Description

Students will participate in supervised genetic counseling clinical rotations throughout this course in a variety of settings including prenatal, pediatric, cancer, adult, primary care, and specialty genetics. During clinical rotations, feedback will be provided to students by the clinical rotation supervisors to help them build their genetic counseling skills, knowledge and competencies as well as develop their personal genetic counseling style. Students will be involved in the direct care of patients, as well as additional administrative work related to patient care and operations of the genetic counseling clinic.

The purpose of the lectures and activities in the classroom setting is to familiarize the genetic counseling intern with topics relevant to clinical genetics and counseling.
Learning Objectives

1. To describe how genetic counselors can collaborate with other health care professionals when working with clients.
2. To explain the clinical characteristics of a variety of genetic conditions as well as testing options for these conditions.
3. To describe the characteristics of effective counselors.
4. To employ attending skills, active listening, and empathetic responding.
5. To demonstrate self-evaluation skills, writing skills, and critical thinking skills.
6. To integrate theoretical and experiential learning to develop your own personal model of the counseling process.
7. To assess your own qualities that support and hinder your attempts to being therapeutic for others.

Recommended Texts


Course Format and Delivery

This class utilizes Canvas for class content and grading. Notifications will be sent regarding course content throughout the semester. Please make sure to set up your Canvas to receive email notifications from Canvas and please check for announcements and notifications on a regular basis.

For the first two weeks of the semester, students will have the option of attending class in person or using Zoom for remote course access. It is expected that after this two-week period, class will take place in person. However, due to the shifting nature of the pandemic, it may be necessary to alter the delivery of the course. Any changes will be shared with students via announcements on Canvas. Given the pandemic, it is important that students abide by public health regulations and University of Pittsburgh health standards and guidelines. For example, at this time, face coverings are required indoors for everyone regardless of vaccination status. For the most up-to-date information and guidance, please visit https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/. If you are sick, please do not come to class in-person. Please email all course instructors, and we will determine the most appropriate make-up plan for class depending on the content.

We plan on recording most classes to make them available on Canvas. We recognize that some guest lecturers may prefer to not be recorded and we will communicate this information during the semester. Recordings will only be available for the semester and should not be distributed for non-class purposes.
**Academic Integrity**

All students are expected to adhere to the school’s standards of academic honesty. Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. The Graduate School of Public Health’s policy on academic integrity, which is based on the University policy, is available online in the Pitt Public Health Academic Handbook [www.publichealth.pitt.edu/home/academics/academic-requirements](http://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/home/academics/academic-requirements). The policy includes obligations for faculty and students, procedures for adjudicating violations, and other critical information. Please take the time to read this policy.

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor(s) and Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Disability Resources and Services is also available to consult with students regarding accommodations in the clinical setting

**Sexual Misconduct, Required Reporting and Title IX Statement**

The University is committed to combatting sexual misconduct. As a result, you should know that University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence, to the University’s Title IX office so that the victim may be provided appropriate resources and support options. What this means is that as your professors, we are required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to us, or of which we are somehow made aware.

There are two important exceptions to this requirement about which you should be aware:

A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here: [https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/civil-rights-title-ix/make-report/report-form](https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/civil-rights-title-ix/make-report/report-form)

An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as part of an academic project, classroom discussion, or course assignment, are not required to be disclosed to the University’s Title IX office.

If you are the victim of sexual misconduct, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:
- Title IX Office: 412-648-7860
- SHARE @ the University Counseling Center: 412-648-7930 (8:30 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F) and 412-648-7856 (AFTER BUSINESS HOURS)

If you have a safety concern, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Police, 412-624-2121.
Diversity Statement

The University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health considers the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff to be a strength and critical to its educational mission. Pitt Public Health is committed to creating and fostering inclusive learning environments that value human dignity and equity and promote social justice. Every member of our community is expected to be respectful of the individual perspectives, experiences, behaviors, worldviews, and backgrounds of others. While intellectual disagreement may be constructive, no derogatory statements, or demeaning or discriminatory behavior will be permitted.

If you feel uncomfortable or would like to discuss a situation, please contact any of the following:
- the course director or course instructors;
- the Pitt Public Health Associate Dean responsible for diversity and inclusion;
- the University’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion at 412-648-7860 or

Student Performance Evaluation and Grading

Your grade for the course is based upon the midpoint and final grades you receive in your clinical rotations. The clinical rotation grades will be assigned based upon your mastery of the genetic counseling practice-based competencies. The following is the grading rubric:
- A: student exceeds expectations for the majority of competencies
- B: student meets expectations for the majority of competencies and exceeds expectations of some
- C: student meets expectations for some competencies and needs improvement in a number of competencies
- F: student does not meet the expectations for the rotation for reasons including, but not limited to: insufficient progress towards the development of competencies, insufficient progress on a remediation plan, incomplete assignments, and/or issues with professionalism. Please see extension/remediation paragraph below.
- G (unfinished course work): student needs additional time to complete the rotation due to extenuating personal circumstances that resulted in absence or leave from the rotation and/or incomplete assignments. A student with a G grade in any individual rotation will also receive a G grade for the course until the work is completed. Please see extension/remediation paragraph below.
- I (incomplete): student needs additional time to complete the rotation beyond the end of the
semester if it is determined the student would benefit from additional cases to successfully
demonstrate one or more of the practice-based competencies. A student with an I grade in
any individual rotation will also receive an I grade for the course until the work is completed.
Please see extension/remediation paragraph below.
• Some rotations, such as optional rotation sites, choose to give a pass/fail grade rather than a
letter grade. A passing grade is rendered when a student fulfills expectations for a C grade or
higher. A failing grade is given when a student does not meet the expectations of the rotation
and does not meet expectations for the majority of competencies.

Extensions and Remediation: Students given an F, G, or I grade for any rotation will have a plan for
completion and/or a remediation plan developed by the Program Leadership and site supervisor(s)
with input from the student. Additionally, remediation plans may be required for students who have
earned other letter grades in rotations and at any time during rotations if Program Leadership and/or
site supervisors recognize that additional support is needed to help students meet one or more of the
practice based competencies or other rotation requirements.

The rotation grades from your first six rotation blocks that you receive will be combined to determine
your grade for this course. The rotation grades from your last six rotation blocks will be combined to
determine your grade for the Genetic Counseling Internship course in the Spring semester. The thesis
block will not contribute to the grades in either semester.

There are no examinations or projects required for this class. However, class attendance is required.
Attendance will be tracked and when a session is missed, a student should alert the instructors to the
absence and indicate when the recorded class was viewed. If you miss more than two classes, you
must write a paper on a topic selected by the instructors.

Copyright Notice

Course material may be protected by copyright. United States copyright law, 14 USC section 101, et
sec., in addition to University policy and procedures, prohibit unauthorized duplication or
retransmission of course materials. See Library of Congress Copyright Office and the University
Copyright Policy.

Schedule of Sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Topic</th>
<th>Lecturer(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 1: 9/2</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Andrea Durst, DrPH, Robin Grubs, PhD, Jodie Vento, MGC, Juliann McConnell, MS</td>
<td>Intro to course, Overview of the Comprehensive Exam, Structure and expectations of the NSGC Conference A review of syndromes commonly encountered by GCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syndromes that all GCs Should Know</td>
<td>Julianne McConnell, MS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 2: 9/9</td>
<td>Interpretation of</td>
<td>Laura Jenkins, MS</td>
<td>A “hands-on” class to interpret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Instructor(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/16</td>
<td>Complex Genetic Test Results</td>
<td>Marianne McGuire, MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9/30</td>
<td>Counseling for Neuromuscular Disorders</td>
<td>Lauren Morgenroth, MS, Andrea D’Alessandro, MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Class NSGC: 9/23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10/7</td>
<td>Counseling for Hemoglobinopathies</td>
<td>Natasha Berman, MA, MS, MPH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10/7</td>
<td>Counseling Issues in Cancer Genetics</td>
<td>Darcy Thull, MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10/14</td>
<td>Risk Communication</td>
<td>Elizabeth Felter, DrPH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10/21</td>
<td>Health Literacy</td>
<td>Elizabeth Felter, DrPH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Genetic Counseling for Patients with Intellectual Disabilities</td>
<td>Jodie Vento, MGC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10/28</td>
<td>Insurance Panel</td>
<td>Jodie Vento, MGC, Julia Stone, MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>11/4</td>
<td>Counseling Skills-Guilt and Shame</td>
<td>Robin Grubs, PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11/11</td>
<td>Counseling Skills-Advanced Empathy</td>
<td>Robin Grubs, PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11/18</td>
<td>Comprehensive Exam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11/25</td>
<td>No Class Thanksgiving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11/28</td>
<td>Delivering Difficult</td>
<td>Naomi Grodin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/2</td>
<td>News: Considerations and Strategies</td>
<td>Robin Grubs, PhD</td>
<td>Family’s experience of receiving a difficult diagnosis. In addition, a review and practice of strategies and approaches for delivering difficult news to patients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 13:</td>
<td>Counseling Skills-Self-Disclosure</td>
<td>Jodie Vento, MGC</td>
<td>A review of the psychosocial aspects of self-disclosure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>