

Guidelines to Help You be Prepared for the Oral Exam - CSJ Masters Degree

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The Introduction and Format Guidelines

Use APA format and start (after the title page) with an introduction that summarizes your central theme, or core theoretical construct and theoretical assumptions. It is also a good idea to use headings and sub-headings throughout the paper. The headings would correspond to the headings below.

Ontology (What does it mean to be human?): It has a long history in philosophy, in which it refers to the subject of existence. A science or study of being; specifically, a branch of metaphysics relating to the nature and relations of being; a particular system according to which problems of the nature of being are investigated. It is a systematic account of existence. What does being mean? What is existence? How we define what it means to exist as a human being has direct implications for how we interact with human beings.

What should you include in the paper about ontology? There should be a discussion of what it means to “exist” as a “human being”. Defend and support your point of view on the nature of human “existence” and this should include “Model of Mind” and its relation to body (and or soul). Make links to your core theoretical construct.

Cosmology (What is reality?): the branch of philosophy dealing with the origin and general structure of the universe, with its parts, elements, and laws. It includes such characteristics as space, time, causality, and freedom. It is the study of the large-scale structure of the Universe, where *‘the Universe’* means all that exists in a physical sense. This is to be distinguished from *the ‘Observable Universe’*. Cosmology deals with the world as the totality of space, time and all phenomena – from whatever point of view you may have (for example: the Biblical origin versus the scientific origin of the Universe). What is the nature of our world, the “cosmos” in which we live? It is an important concept in human services called a **worldview**, and is a term that has direct therapeutic connections.

What should you include in the paper about cosmology?

- a. There should be a discussion about the nature of reality (“cosmos”), the structure of reality and its various relationships and features.
- b. Examine this in reference to your own “worldview”.
- c. The discussion about the “cosmos” should be linked to your ontology.
- d. Make links to your core theoretical construct.

Epistemology (How do we know?): The field of study that examines how “knowing”, or how we come to know and believe things about our world. It examines the question of what is “truth” and what can be known as “false”. Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, of how we construct domains of knowledge, and ultimately asks the question, “How do we know what we know?” Whenever you seek to help another person you ultimately need to ask “How do they understand what is happening?” and, perhaps equally important, ask “How do I come to understand what is happening?”.

What should you include in the paper about epistemology?

- a. There needs to be a discussion about how we come to know, gain knowledge, understand and believe.

- b. This discussion should be linked to both your ontology and your cosmology.
- c. Make links to your core theoretical construct.

Justice: The nature of “right” and “wrong”, morality and choice (free will).

How you answer the above questions serves as a foundation for the following sections which should be a part of your oral presentation:

Abnormality*: Describe your definition of normal and abnormal, including etiology. Be sure to discuss personal distress, biology, and social norms.

Concepts of Therapeutic Change*: What is the nature of human change and how does a professional act as an agent in the change process. Include developmental theories in this discussion. In addition this section should tie in with the abnormality section.

Theorists with Similar Views*: Describe the theories of a few (more than 2) theorists (and they do not have to be limited to psychotherapy) who have views similar to yours and why.

Counseling Process*: Describe the stages of the counseling process (or the sequence/process). The minimum this should include would be intake, therapeutic alliance, goals, record keeping, referral, supervision, and termination. It is good to put this just before your case study.

* *Philosophy Relevance*: Speak to how your philosophical assumptions apply to your definitions of abnormality, change, the counseling process and theorists. Address the similarity with other theoretical views, but do this within the above four sections, NOT as a separate section as it will read more fluidly that way. It is IMPORTANT to attend to this.

Students in the school counseling program should put in a short section called "Philosophy of Education". It doesn't have to be longer than one page.

At this point you might say that you have provided the “meat” of your paper. These five sections should be clear and theoretically consistent. The second half of the paper will focus on applying what you have stated above and thus if there are errors in the first half they will show up again in the second half.

Application to a Disorder: Apply your theory to a **specific case study** in which you may refer to a given DSM disorder or to a collection of concerns that need to be addressed.

Application to Social Responsibility: Discuss how your theory can help to address some of the current social issues. Also speak to what steps you personally would take as part of your responsibility to the well being of society. **Note**: School counselors should make special mention of applications to the school environment.

Strengths and Limitations: Describe what you consider to be the strengths and limitations of your theory and its applications.

Once you have the document written then ask for feedback from professors. Integrate that feedback into a new document and then go on to making your oral presentation.

Presentation Tips:

- 1) Make sure that your presentation covers all of the points outlined above.
- 2) Be sure that your presentation can fit within one hour.
- 3) Make good eye contact, vary the speed of delivery and the vocal tone.
- 4) Do not overload your powerpoint slides with words.
- 5) Add in graphic art.

Tips to Be Better Prepared for the Professor Question Hour:

Be ready to defend everything in your presentation.

- 1) The best tip is to remain composed, externally even if you don't feel it inside.
- 2) Take a breath, a pause, before answering.
- 3) There is no way you can anticipate every question that you might be asked, but there are some questions which seem to occur with regularity:

- a. Why is the mind distinctly different from the brain?
- b. Do we have free will?
- c. How does empathy (or therapeutic alliance) contribute to change?
- d. How is this uniquely your theory?
- e. What role does spirit (or soul) play?
- f. What is the nature of reality?
- g. What does it mean to be human?

Complete answers to these may, or may not, be contained within your presentation. In addition you may have scattered fragments of information related to an answer which you have not yet clearly articulated. Often the professors will find these scattered fragments and ask about them. It is advisable to know clearly why you have stated EVERYTHING in your presentation.