SW 617, Section 001  
Death, Loss, and Grief  
Spring/Summer, 2013  
Room SSWB 3752  
Tuesdays 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

Instructor: Debra Mattison  
Phone (H): 734-995-3517  
Confidential messages can be left on phone.

Email: debmatt@umich.edu  
Please allow 24 hours for email response  
Monday-Friday. Email is not monitored on weekends. Please put SW617 in the subject line.

Office Hours: I am available in the class room prior to and after class to discuss questions and concerns. I am happy to make individual appointments by contacting me by phone or email.

Course Description
This course addresses the theoretical framework of human loss and grief from a culturally and philosophically diverse perspective. It seeks to provide information about why and how humans grieve and how grieving is affected by type of loss, socioeconomic and cultural factors, individual personality and family functioning. Attention is focused on life span development and the meaning of death and loss at different ages. Various types of loss are discussed from an individual, family and socio/cultural perspective. The importance of understanding trauma and its relationship to grief and loss will be addressed. Coping and resiliency in loss are explored, emphasizing the diversity of human response and focusing on the significance of social groups in integrating loss. The formation and practice of rituals, and diversity in religious and spiritual experience as a component of coping with loss will be discussed.

While some interpersonal practice methods will be discussed, this course is not designed nor designated by the School of Social Work as a methods class.

Course Objectives
Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the implications for practice and policy of the changing patterns of death/dying in the U.S., regarding socioeconomic status, age, gender, and cultural/ethnic patterns.
2. Understand the different meanings of loss and the impact of loss on those grieving, caregivers, and larger social groups.
3. Identify and describe responses and reactions of the various caregivers (including social workers) to death and loss and the impact of these reactions on client systems.
4. Demonstrate increased awareness of the medical ethical issues in death and dying.
5. Summarize the different theoretical models for understanding bereavement and grieving.
6. Identify the practical issues and problems that arise for individuals and families following a death or major loss in the family and the significance of social groups in bereavement.
7. Examine the variables impacting mourning (e.g. ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status,
national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation) in the experience and expression of grief for the family and/or person facing death and bereavement.

8. Discuss the ways in which violence affects the experience of death or loss, and the impact of layered loss when continually exposed to loss or violence.


10. Discuss dominant themes of complicated mourning, including multiple losses, traumatized loss; disenfranchised and stigmatized loss, cultural genocide, and historical transmission of loss.

11. Discuss typical ethical concerns related to death, loss, and grief.

**Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes**

- *Multiculturalism and Diversity* will be addressed through the discussion of worker-client differences and power/privilege differentials based on culture, ethnicity, race, gender, age, and social class. Social system and case examples, possible interventions, and readings will reflect this theme.

- *Social Justice and Social Change* will be addressed through discussion of differences between problems that are responsive to interpersonal practice interventions and those which result from poverty, discrimination, and disenfranchisement and require systemic as well as individual intervention.

- *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation* will be addressed through identification of ways to provide early intervention, guidance, and advocacy within systems, methods of preventing or mitigating later problems in loss and bereavement, and discussion of intervention theories and health care and social policies which support adaptive responses to loss that enhance later adjustment.

- *Behavioral and Social Science Research* will inform this course, especially current research in the following areas: bereavement and complicated mourning attachment and developmental requirements, response to trauma and maltreatment and resiliency/coping/adaptation.

**Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values**

Social work ethics and values will be addressed in this course using the NASW Code of Ethics. This course will increase awareness of the medical-ethical issues and decision making in death and dying. In addition, students will evaluate ethical issues involved in death and loss, and discuss the impact of the social worker’s values and reactions to these issues.

**Intensive Focus on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice (PODS)**

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students developing a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward social justice processes, apply intersectionality and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self knowledge and self awareness to facilitate PODS learning.
Class Norms
1. Attendance and participation are vital to the learning experience and are expected. In order to receive full credit for attendance, you must arrive on time and stay until the end of the class. If absent, you are responsible for what is covered and any class announcements or additional assignments.
2. We will begin class promptly and resume class promptly after the designated break, based on mutually agreed upon times to be discussed in the first class session.
3. Approximately one-half to two-thirds of the class will be didactic presentation by the instructor or guest speakers. The remainder will consist of discussion and experiential activities in which academically sound participation is encouraged and expected.
4. Use of personal computer and phones in the classroom will be limited to course related activities.
5. You are responsible for reading the syllabus and assignment instructions and keeping class folder materials for your use throughout the course. Class information is also posted on C-Tools.
6. Typed hard copies of all written assignments should be submitted at the beginning of class with all pages stapled together including relevant additional materials as assigned. Assignments not submitted in class will be considered late. Non-stapled assignments run the risk of pages being lost and will be returned for re-submission with late penalties.
7. Other norms important to the class will be discussed and incorporated.
8. School of Social Work Class Attendance Policy 5.03: It is expected that students attend classes and instructors are encouraged to monitor attendance. Instructors are asked by the school to notify the Associate Dean for Educational Programs if a student has two unexcused absences in a row.
9. Further specific expectations regarding attendance, class participation and professional use of self are provided in separate handouts.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Students needing accommodation for a disability should notify the instructor during the first week of class to ensure needs are met in a timely way. Resources are available (i.e. adaptive technology computing site, Services for Students with Disabilities, etc). Students with disabilities may contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 734-763-3000 or in Room G664 Haven Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations. To the extent permitted by law, information will be treated as private and confidential.

Religious Observations and Military Service
Students who will be absent during the semester due to religious observance and/or military services should notify me during the first week of class to facilitate appropriate accommodations and arrangements to obtain class materials and coordinate make-up class activities and assignments.

Three Required Course Texts
**Additional Readings:**

The amount of required text reading has been designed to provide you with a basic foundation while giving you freedom to individualize supplemental readings. YOU ARE EXPECTED AND ENCOURAGED TO DO LITERATURE SEARCHES AND ADDITIONAL READING IN AREAS OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND IN ORDER TO COMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS AND TO PURSUE YOUR AREAS OF INTERESTS. In addition, handouts may be distributed in class for reading. For those interested in an additional diversity text, you may want to consider: Parry, J. K., & Ryan, A. S. (Eds.) (1995). *A cross-cultural look at death, dying and religion*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall-Publishers.

**Relevant Journals and Organizations:**

OMEGA, Journal of Death and Dying
Baywood Publishing
26 Austin Ave. P.O. Box 337
Amityville, NY 11701
800-638-7819

Mortality
Taylor & Francis Ltd.
4 Park Square
Milton Park
Abingdon, OX14 4RN UK
www.tandf.co.uk/journals

The Thanatology Newsletter
c/o Health and Nutrition Sciences
Brooklyn College
Brooklyn, NY 11210-2889
718-951-5553

Bereavement Magazine
5125 N. Union Boulevard, Suite 4
Colorado Springs, CO 80918-2956
719-266-0006

Centering Corporation
Grief Digest
P.O. Box 4600
7230 Maple Street
Omaha, NE 68104
402-553-1200

Journal of Social Work in End of Life and Palliative Care
Haworth Press
800 Haworth
www.haworthpress.com/web/JSWEL

Illness, Crisis and Loss
American Journal of Hospice & Palliative Medicine
Sage Publication
P.O. Box 5084
Thousand Oaks, CA 91359
800-818-7243

Journal of Near Death Studies
Human Sciences Press
233 Spring Street
New York, NY 10213-0196
212-620-8000

Center for Loss & Life Transition
3735 Broken Bow Road
Fort Collins, CO 80526
970-226-6050

Compassion Books
477 Hannah Branch Rd.
Burnsville, NC 28714
828-675-5909
www.compassionbooks.com

Journal of Trauma & Loss
Death Studies
Bereavement Care
Taylor & Francis Journals Dept.
325 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
800-354-1420 x 216
www.sample-1at@taylorandfrancis.com

Bereavement Care
Taylor and Francis
www.tandf.co.uk/journals/bereavementcare
Additional books and reference materials specific to class topics will be discussed throughout the term. Please refer to Internet list and grief and loss resource catalogs provided for additional reference materials.

**Assignments and Grading**
Grades are the outcome of student efforts and demonstration of competency. While this course has been designed to provide information and learning experiences, what you ultimately gain will largely depend on your use of self, your engagement in the class and your commitment to take responsibility for your individual learning. Academic standards matter to our clients and the responsibilities with which we are entrusted in our work with and on behalf of them. Graduate school standards anticipate that for every hour spent in the classroom, students will need to spend 2-3 hours outside of the class room to complete reading and assignments at a level of mastery (i.e. 6-9 hours outside of class for a 3 credit course).

Assignments are designed to use a variety of evaluation methods including written papers, oral presentations, classroom discussions and in class quizzes to allow opportunities to address strengths and preferences of diverse individual students.

The goal of the course assignments and grading system is to promote integration and meaning of the material and to promote competency in services provided to clients. You are empowered to self-direct your learning and assignments and to choose topics of interest to you. Hard copies of written assignments are to be submitted at the beginning of the class on the date due. If you are unable to submit written assignments, please make other arrangements to get a hard copy of your paper to class. **Late completion and submission of assignments will result in grading deductions as defined in assignment descriptions.** In the interest of fairness to all students, modeling professional practice expectations and strengthening advanced planning and time management skills, excused extensions for assignments without point deductions will be given only in **rare and extraordinary circumstances** (i.e. hospitalization, death in the family) and will **not** be provided for commonly occurring life experiences (i.e. multiple demands/busy schedule, traveling, computer problems, sickness on the day of class assignment, etc.).

**REQUIRED READINGS**
Readings are considered a foundation of the course and **you will be expected to know the content of the readings and to incorporate this knowledge into your assignments.** It is expected that assigned readings will be completed **prior** to each class (including the readings listed for each date) to enhance discussion and interaction. **Grades of A will require completion of all assigned readings. SCANNING the readings does not meet the definition of completing the readings.** In addition to weekly assigned readings, additional literature review and readings will be necessary to complete some written assignments. Students should be prepared to be called on in class to contribute their understanding, ideas and reactions from readings in weekly class discussions including from RTAN written and class discussion questions. The engagement and quality of these responses will be used as a part of grading for class participation.

**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**
Written skills are essential to effective social work practice and as professionals we will be continually assessed and judged on our ability to express ideas clearly and professionally on behalf of our clients, our organizations, our profession and ourselves. Graduate level writing skills will be expected in this course including appropriate grammar, in-text citations, references, organization of thought, clarity of expression and creativity in your writing. Writing labs are available through the Sweetland Writing Clinic in Angel Hall (http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/). The SSW Career Center offers writing assistance services for MSW students including proofreading, spelling edits and addressing basic argument flow issues. To make an appointment, contact ssw-cso@umich.edu. APA format is the definitive source for standardized writing in the behavioral and social sciences and is required with assignments requiring referencing. Deductions will be made for failure to
follow this format. Please refer to the APA Style manual in various UM libraries or the following sites:

http://guides.lib.umich.edu/content.php?pid=39340 ;
http://apastyle.apa.org/manual/
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Ethics and Plagiarism
Social Work students are held to the highest standards of academic and professional conduct. Plagiarism in academic papers is unacceptable and inconsistent with the NASW Code of Ethics and the Code of Academic and Professional Conduct which applies to all students enrolled in the School of Social Work. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the relevant assignment and is grounds for expulsion. You are responsible for understanding the meaning for plagiarism and can refer to the Student Guide to the Master’s in Social Work Degree Program for further information.

Distribution of Papers to Students
The federal informational privacy act prohibits anyone other than the student access to that student’s papers. This means that papers cannot be left where anyone can have open access. Papers should be returned by the instructor directly to or mailed to the student. During the semester, papers will be returned directly to students. Papers submitted at the end of the term may be returned by mail to the student, if the student supplies a self-addressed, self-stamped envelope to the instructor no later than the last day of class for return by U.S. Mail.

Application of NASW Code of Ethics
The NASW Code of Ethics outlines a set of core values that form the basis of the Social Work profession’s purpose and perspective. These core values are: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity and competence. These values will be applied to classroom interactions and comportment. As emerging professionals, social work students are expected to maintain confidentiality and respect differences. Students are also expected to take personal responsibility for timely attendance and consistent commitment to their own learning experience by being active and responsible members of each class session. For further elaboration of the values and ethical standards inherent in social work, students are encouraged to access the Code of Ethics at: http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp
For further discussion of class participation and use of self expectations, please see separate document on this topic.

Computer, Cell Phone and Other Electronic Devices
The focus of class time is understanding and discussion of the content presented, asking questions, sharing integrative ideas, giving examples, writing notes, practicing active listening, or otherwise deepening your knowledge of the material in some way. Checking email, texting, searching the net, etc. are not acceptable in class as these behaviors equate to talking/interrupting while someone else is talking and to consciously not being present and active in class. Students who engage in non-class related computer/phone/electronic device usage will be considered as absent from class which impacts attendance and class participation grades.
WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS
Typed hard copies of written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned due date. If you are absent from class, you will need to make arrangements to get a hard copy of your assignment turned in. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU READ THE ASSIGNMENT INSTURCTIONS AND GRADING CRITERIA.

1. Written application & discussion assignments 5 assignments /20 points total
   1 point deduction for late completion
   RTAN Assignments: Read/Think/Analyze/Notice
   These written assignments are designed to help integrate course readings and class
discussions. Students should be prepared to be called on to share ideas and reactions
from RTANS in weekly class discussions. Please see separate sheet for specific RTAN
assignment topics and questions.

2. Insight Interview 20 points (3 points deduction for late completion)
   This assignment gives you the clinical opportunity to interview someone about a loss in his/her
life while applying and integrating your understanding of course concepts along with your
personal insights and awareness into a 5-7 page paper. Specifics of this assignment are detailed
in a separate document.

3. Community Awareness Written Assignment& Class Discussion 20 points (3 points for late completion)
   This assignment focuses on increasing awareness of loss and grief in community around us.
   This assignment involves a 5-7 page double spaced paper as well as a 5 minute brief
presentation/discussion of your topic/experience with the class. Specifics of this assignment are
detailed in a separate document.

4. Three In-Class Competency Quizzes Total of 20 points
   This is your opportunity to demonstrate reading and understanding of course concepts and your
ability to apply them. The quizzes will cover concepts from the readings and class discussions.
Please see separate handout for details.

5. Diversity Awareness Role 10 points
   Students will be given an assigned “diversity awareness role” for which they will be responsible
for raising issues and providing information in class discussions related to their assigned area.
Details of this assignment are provided in a separate handout.

6. Class Participation, Class Attendance and Professional Use Self 10 points
   Class attendance, participation and professional use of self are core behaviors that are highly
valued in this class and are a part of the learning experience which has relevant application to
future professional practice. As social workers and other helping professionals, it is important
to be able to speak out to advocate for clients and to address issues. A silent worker can have
little impact. Class participation involves sharing and discussing class concepts and their
application to our work. Participation is not simply talking and sharing your opinions. The
quality of participation is important and effectively comes from reading the assigned texts,
analyzing theories and concepts and then noticing how to apply them to working with clients
and organizations. Expectations regarding these are detailed below as well as in a separate
handout/grading rubric.
Guidelines for Evaluating Class Participation

**Outstanding Contributor (10):** Contributions in class reflect exceptional preparation. Ideas offered are always substantive and provide thoughtful insights which significantly contribute to new ideas for class discussion. Integrative ideas and questions are well substantiated, persuasively presented with excellent comportment and respect for others. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished markedly. Exemplary behavior in experiential exercises demonstrating on target behavior in role plays, small group discussions, and other activities.

**Good Contributor (9):** Contributions in class reflect thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive and provide good insights which contribute new ideas for class discussion topics. Integrative ideas and questions are well substantiated, often persuasive, and presented with excellent comportment and respect for others. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished. Good activity in experiential exercises demonstrating behavior that is usually on target in role plays, small group discussions, and other activities.

**Adequate Contributor (8):** Contributions in class reflect satisfactory preparation. Ideas offered are sometimes substantive and provides generally useful insights that occasionally contribute new ideas for class discussion. Ideas and questions are sometimes presented, fairly well substantiated, and are sometimes persuasive with good comportment and respect for others. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished somewhat. Adequate behavior in experiential exercises demonstrating adequate engagement in role plays, small group discussions, and other activities.

**Infrequent Contributor (7):** Contributions in class reflect partial preparation. Integrative ideas offered are infrequently substantive and infrequently provide insights for discussion. Ideas and questions are sometimes presented, and are sometimes persuasive with adequate comportment and respect for others. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished slightly. Behavior in experiential exercises is occasionally sporadically on target demonstrating inconsistent engagement in role plays, small group discussions, and other activities.

**Non-Active Participant (6):** This person says little or nothing in class but appears to be listening and observing. Preparation for class is unknown due to lack of active participation. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would not be changed. Listens attentively, but is silent and does not actively participate in exercises, small group discussion and other class activities.

**Unsatisfactory Contributor (5 or less):** Contributions in class reflect inadequate preparation. Ideas offered are seldom substantive; provide few if any insights and never a constructive direction for class discussion. Integrative ideas and questions are absent. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the class discussion would not be changed. Does not engage in exercises and which detracts from the experience of others.

7. **Final Grades** will be based on individual personal effort and performance. The total accumulation of points earned (please refer to Cumulative Point Grading Sheet) reflect competencies demonstrated in the context of normal life challenges regarding time, obligations,
multiple demands and the choices each student makes. Letter grades defined by the School of Social Work as follows:

**A grades**  
Given for exceptional individual performance and superior mastery of the material. The use of A+ (100), A (95-99), and A- (90-94) should distinguish the degree of superiority.

**B grades**  
Given to students who demonstrate mastery of the material.  
B+ (87-89) indicates performance just above the mastery level but not in an exceptional manner.  
B (84-86) indicates mastery and B- (80-83) indicate just below the mastery level.

**C grades**  
Mastery of the material is limited.  
C- is the lowest grade which carries credit. C+ (77-79), C (74-76) and C- (70-73).

**D grades**  
Indicate deficiency and carry no credit.  (below 70)

**E grades**  
Indicate failure and carry no credit.

**I grades**  
Incomplete grades can be given in rare situations in which significant unforeseen, extraordinary and compelling reasons prevent completion of work AND there is a definite plan and date for completion pre-approved by the instructor. If more than one-third of the required course work is incomplete, an incomplete grade will not be given and credit for the course is not possible. In fairness to all students, incomplete grades will not be given based on requests for time extensions to complete assignments without a compelling reason and sufficient justification provided beyond common life experiences of having limited time or multiple class deadlines. Students are responsible for initiating advanced contact with the instructor to request an incomplete grade and to establish a plan for completion. If no contact has been initiated by the student with the instructor regarding incomplete work and/or no plan has been established to complete work by the last day of class, a grade will be given based on the completed work submitted thus far. This may potentially result in a grade which carries no credit.

8. **Written assignment descriptions and grading rubrics have been provided to clearly explain assignment expectations and point values. Please review these prior to completing and submitting your assignments to help you meet assignment criteria.**

**Course Outline and Assigned Readings**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>May 14 #1</th>
<th>Diversity Awareness Assignments</th>
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<td>Our Attitudes About Death and Dying</td>
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<td>Historical Perspective and Present Views</td>
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<td>Factors Impacting Attitudes</td>
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**Required Readings:**
DeSpeldner and Strickland: Chapter 1; Chapter 3 (85-103)  
Irish: Chapter 1
May 21
#2
WRITTEN RTAN #1 DUE
The Dying Process
Living with Dying: Life Threatening Illness
Care of the Dying
Health Care Systems

Required Readings:
DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 5 (177-204) and Chapter 7
Irish: Chapter 2

May 28
#3
NON-WRITTEN RTAN DISCUSSION QUESTION AND IN-CLASS DEBATE
Community Awareness Project PROPOSAL DUE
The Experience of Grief and Mourning
Process and Tasks of Mourning
Variables Influencing Grief

Required Readings:
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 9
Irish: Chapter 3
Worden: Chapters 1, 2 & 3

June 4
#4
Community Awareness Project: In-Community Time (No In-Class Meeting)
There will be no in-class meeting this week, to provide time to spend in the community on this assignment. It is expected that an equivalent amount of class time will be spent in the community related to this assignment.

Diversity Perspectives on Death; Applying a Socio-cultural Perspective Variation in the Experience, Expression and Understanding Grief

Required Readings:
DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 2 (78-82); Chapter 3 (103-130)
Irish: Chapter 12

June 11
#5
Community Awareness Paper Due/Class Presentation and Discussion
WRITTEN RTAN #2 DUE
Ethics and Legal Issues
Medical Ethics and Technology
Rights and the Dying

Required Readings:
DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 4 (144-174); Chapters 5 (178-182) & 6
Irish: Chapter 13
June 18  
#6  
NON-WRITTEN RTAN DISCUSSION QUESTION
COMPETENCY QUIZ 1
Complicated Grief Reactions
Theories of Complicated Mourning
Definitions, Symptoms, and Syndromes

Required Readings:
Worden: Chapters 5 & 6
Irish: Chapter 7

June 25  
#7  
NON-WRITTEN RTAN DISCUSSION QUESTION
INSIGHT INTERVIEW PAPER DUE
Death and Grief in Childhood and Adolescence
Developmental Issues

Readings:
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 2 (47-78); Chapter 10
Irish: Chapter 6

July 2  
#8  
WRITTEN RTAN #3 DUE
Death and Grief in Adulthood
Life Stage Issues

Required Readings:
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 11
Irish: Chapter 5

July 9  
#9  
NON-WRITTEN RTAN DISCUSSION QUESTION AND IN-CLASS
DEBATE
COMPETENCY QUIZ 2
Clinical Assessment and Intervention with Grievers
Find Meaning and Spirituality
Counseling Principles in Facilitating Grief

Readings:
Worden: Chapters 4 and 8; Appendix (pp. 283-284)
Irish: Chapter 8

July 16  
#10  
WRITTEN RTAN #4 Due
Violence, Disasters, War, Genocide, Terrorism, Traumatic Death
Special Types of Loss: Suicide, Pregnancy Loss

Required Readings:
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 12; Chapter 4 (133-143); Chapter 13
Worden: Chapter 7
Irish: Chapter 9 and 10
July 23
#11

WRITTEN RTAN 5 DUE
FINAL COMPETENCY QUIZ 3

Coping Mechanisms for Survivors
Rituals and Funerals; Honoring the Dead
Personal and Professional Issues Related to Death, Loss, and Grief
Caring for Self; Compassion Fatigue and Resilience

Required Readings:
DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapters 8 & 14; Chapter 5 (205-208) & Chapter 15
Worden: Chapter 9
Irish: Chapters 4 and 11

END OF TERM GRADING DOCUMENTS DUE:
Diversity Awareness Role Documentation and Grading Sheet
Class Participation Self-Assessment Grading Rubric