



SW 617, Section 003
Death, Loss, and Grief

Winter, 2015
Room SSWB 2816
Thursdays: 2:00-5:00 p.m.

Instructors:
Kathy Wade
kmwade@med.umich.edu
Phone: (W) 734-764-8052

Debra Mattison
debmatt@umich.edu
Phone (H): 734-995-3517(before 10:00 p.m.)

Office Hours: We are available in the class room prior to and after class to discuss questions and concerns and are happy to make individual appointments as needed.

Please allow 24 hours for email response Monday-Friday. Email is not monitored on weekends. Please put SW617in subject line.

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.
9. Identify post traumatic stress disorder.
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.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students needing accommodation for a disability should notify the instructors on the first day 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

Students who have conflicts with class attendance due to religious observances should contact the instructors on the first day of to make appropriate arrangements to obtain class materials and to coordinate make-up class activities and assignments.

Ethics and Plagiarism

Social work students are held to the highest standards of academic and professional conduct. The Code of Academic and Professional Conduct 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.

Application of NASW Code of Ethics and Professional Use of Self

The NASW Code of Ethics outlines a set of core values that form the basis of the Social Work profession's purpose and perspective. The Code encourages behaviors which promote professionalism and respect for clients, colleagues and employers. It is expected that all students conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Code of Ethics and demonstrate professional use-of-self behaviors in class including respect, courtesy and active listening with fellow students, the instructor and guest presenters.

Attendance

Class attendance and engagement is highly valued as it contributes to the quality of learning for the individual and the class as a whole. Classroom interactions cannot be replicated nor the benefit from these received exclusively from reading class materials. Therefore, attendance is an expectation and requirement. If absent, you are responsible for what is covered and any class announcements/additional assignments. Absences are defined as not being present and include partial absences related to late arrival or early departure from class. Class grades will be negatively impacted by absences. Absences may require additional assignment completion to ensure mastery of class content missed. Four or more absences for any reason will result in non-credit for the class. See additional handout for more details.

Promptness in attendance is also valued and expected as it conveys professionalism, respect and courtesy and creates a safe environment for sharing among one another and our guest speakers. We will begin and resume class after designated breaks promptly.

Class Participation

Beyond physical presence through attendance, class participation is vital to the learning experience of this course and focuses on being emotionally and intellectually present and engaged in class each week. Active engagement and sharing of your diverse ideas, perspectives and experiences are highly valued and expected. We encourage you to actively contribute to our focus on diversity

during the semester. Please bring relevant issues related to class content from current events in the world and your field placement to class for discussion.

Students should be prepared each week to both be called on and to initiate knowledgeable sharing of their understanding, ideas, reactions and applications from readings in weekly class discussions and integration across progressive weeks. The quality and preparedness of responses illustrating completion of the readings will be used as a part of the assignment of grading for class participation and will differentiate grades of exceptional mastery (A) from grades of mastery (B).

Use of Phones, Computers 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 for non-class related activities, reading non-class related material, etc. equate to talking/interrupting while someone else is talking and are not acceptable during class. Use of non-class related computer/phone/electronic devices will be considered as the equivalent of being absent from class and **will result in automatic deductions to attendance and class participation grades.**

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. Students should be prepared to be called on in class to contribute their understanding, ideas and reactions from readings in weekly class discussions including assigned journals. The engagement and quality of these responses will be used as a part of grading for class participation.

Assignments

You are responsible for reading the syllabus and assignment instruction. Class information is also posted on C-Tools. **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.**

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. Late completion and submission of assignments will result in grading deductions as defined in assignment descriptions.

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.

Writing Competency

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://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/brief-guide.aspx>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

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. 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.

Final Grades will be based on individual personal effort and performance. The **total accumulation** of points earned reflect competencies demonstrated in the context of normal life challenges regarding time, obligations, multiple demands and priority choices each student makes.

Grade categories are 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) 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.

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.

Special Circumstances:

I grades Incomplete grades can be given in rare situations in which significant, extraordinary and compelling reasons prevent completion of work **AND** there is a **definite plan** and **date** for completion pre-approved by the instructor. In fairness to all students, incomplete grades will not be given based on requests for time extensions to complete assignments without a compelling reason beyond having multiple deadlines and limited time. 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.

Three Required Course Texts

DeSpelder, L. & Strickland, A. (2015). *The last dance: Encountering death and dying* (10th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

Worden, J. W. (2009). *Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner* (4th edition). New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Irish, D. P., Lundquist, K.F., & Nelsen, V. J. (Eds.). (1993). *Ethnic variations in dying, death and grief*. Washington, DC: Taylor and Francis.

Recommended Reading:

Yalom, Irvin (2008). *Staring at the sun*. New York: Jossey Bass.

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 or other materials may be distributed in class or posted on C-Tool for reading.

Additional readings, online articles and reference materials specific to class topics will be discussed throughout the term.

Course Outline and Assigned Readings

Jan. 8 Our Attitudes Toward Death and Dying
#1 Historical Perspective and Present Views
Leads: Kathy and Debbie

Readings:

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 1;
Irish: Chapter 1

Jan. 15 **First Experience of Death Paper Due**
#2 Health Care Systems
 Palliative Care and Hospice Care
Lead: Kathy

Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapters 5 and 7
Worden: Chapter 1
Irish: Chapter 2

Jan. 22 **JOURNAL 1 DUE**
#3 Grief Models and Theories
Lead: Kathy

Readings:

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 9 (341-354)
Worden: Introduction (1-11); Chapters 2 & 3; Appendix (283-284)
Irish: Chapter 3

Jan. 29 **COMPETENCY QUIZ 1**
#4 Complicated Grief Reactions
 Theories of Complicated Mourning
 Definitions, Symptoms, and Syndromes
Lead: Debbie

Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 9 (355-376)
Worden: Chapters 5 & 6
Irish: Chapter 7

Feb. 5 **JOURNAL 2 DUE**
#5 Death and Grief in Adulthood
 Models of Adult Bereavement; Life Stage Issues
Lead: Kathy

Readings:

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 11
Irish: Chapter 5

Feb. 12 Death and Grief in Childhood and Adolescence
#6 Developmental Issues
Lead: Debbie

Readings:

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 2); Chapter 10
Irish: Chapter 6

- Feb. 19**
#7 **QUIZ #2**
Community Awareness Project Proposal Due
Grieving Special Types of Loss
Suicide and Pregnancy Loss
Lead: Debbie
- Readings:*
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 12; Chapter 11 (pp. 417-426)
Worden: Chapter 7
Irish: Chapter 8
- Feb. 26**
#8 **CLINICAL INTERVIEW PAPER DUE**
Clinical Intervention and Counseling Principles in Facilitating Grief-Kathy
Psychosocial-Spiritual Assessment- Debbie
Leads: Kathy and Debbie
- Readings:*
DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 9 (376-383)
Worden: Chapters 4 & 8
- March 12**
#9 **JOURNAL 3 DUE**
Legal Issues and Ethical Issues
Advanced Directives and End of Life Decision Making
Lead: Kathy
- Readings:*
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 4; Chapter 6
Irish: Chapter 9
- March 19**
#10 Risks of Death in Today's World
Violence, Disasters, War, Genocide, Terrorism,
Traumatic Death and PTSD
Lead: Debbie
- Readings:*
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 13
Irish: Chapter 10
- March 26**
#11 **CLASS COMMUNITY AWARENESS PRESENTATIONS/PAPER**
Diversity Issues: Variation in the Experience, Expression and
Understanding of Grief
Cultural and Diversity Perspectives on Death
- Lead: Class*
- Readings:*
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 3

April 2
#12 **CLASS COMMUNITY AWARENESS PRESENTATIONS/PAPER**
CONTINUED

Reading:
Irish: Chapter 13

April 9
#13 **JOURNAL 4 DUE**
Coping Mechanisms for Survivors/Rituals and Funerals
Honoring the Dead; Finding Meaning

Lead: Debbie

Readings:
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapters 8 and 14
Irish: Chapters 4 and 11

April 16
#14 **Final Quiz 3**
USE OF SELF/CLASS PARTICIPATION GRADING RUBRIC DUE

Personal and Professional Issues Related to Death, Loss, and Grief
Caring for Self; Compassion Fatigue and Resilience- Kathy
Review Activity- Debbie

Leads: Kathy and Debbie

Readings:
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 15
Worden: Chapter 9
Irish: Chapter 12