



SW 617, Section 002
Death, Loss, and Grief
Winter, 2015
Room 2816 SSWB
Thursday 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Instructor: Debra Mattison
Phone: (H): 734-995-3517
(please call before 10:00 p.m.)
Confidential messages can be left on phone.

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.

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.

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 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.

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 of plagiarism** and can refer to the Student Guide to the Master's in Social Work Degree Program or <http://www.lib.umich.edu/academic-integrity/resources-students> 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. As emerging professionals, social work students are expected to maintain confidentiality and respect differences. Students are encouraged to demonstrate openness to ideas and perspectives different from one's own interests, views, belief and preferences. Students are also expected to take personal responsibility and be committed 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> and the Student Guide (Chapter 13).

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.**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance, Participation and Engagement

Class attendance, participation and engagement are 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 received exclusively from reading class materials. Therefore, attendance, participation and engagement are expectations and requirements (See Student Guide). Class grades will be negatively impacted by absences and/or lack of participation and engagement.

- School of Social Work Class Attendance Policy 5.03: It is expected that students attend classes and instructors are encouraged to monitor attendance and to notify the Associate Dean for Educational Programs if a student has two unexcused absences in a row.
- **Each absence of an entire class will result in a two point deduction** per missed class. Exceptions will be made for excused absences without deduction **ONLY for rare and extra-ordinary** situations.
- Promptness in attendance is also valued 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. A partial absence is defined as any one of the following: (1) late arrival after class start time, (2) late return from break after class has resumed or (3) early departure before class ends. **Each partial absence will result in a one point deduction.**
- **3 or more absences for any reason will require additional assignment completion** to ensure mastery of class content missed.
- **4 or more absences for any reason will result in non-credit for the class.**

2. 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.

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)**.

3. Professional Use of Self

Respect for Others

Students are encouraged to demonstrate openness to ideas and perspectives different from one's own interests, views, belief and preferences. Listening and learning require a safe place. Sharing differing ways of thinking and seeing the world is not about changing someone's mind, but about a way of being with others that fosters curiosity and a desire to see and hear another's point of view. *We will be mindful that in our desire to advocate for our beliefs and values, that we do not commit the very acts of aggression, devaluation, marginalization, disenfranchisement and dismissal of others that we are trying to prevent.*

Guiding Principles and Commitments

We seek mutual growth, learning and benefit from sharing with each other in this class.

We respect even when we disagree or have conflict.

We do not assume the intent or motivation of others.

We seek to replace assumptions with curious questions and invitations to share and listen with others.

We seek to diminish fear, shame and blame that immobilizes the learning process.

We view mistakes and not yet “knowing” as a part of life-long learning and as preferable to stagnation and ignorance.

We find ways to be curious and humane in our interactions.

Personal Accountability

Students are expected to take **personal responsibility** and be committed to their own learning experience by being active and responsible members of each class session. An optimal individual learning experience is one that is **active, self-directed** and requires engagement. It is not solely about what **one is taught**, but also about what **one consciously chooses to learn**.

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 materials, 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/reading materials will be considered as the equivalent of being absent from class and will impact attendance and class participation grades with associated **automatic deductions**.

4. Assignments

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 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 with some opportunities to choose areas of interest. **You are responsible for reading the syllabus and assignment instructions** and keeping class folder materials distributed on the first day of class for your use throughout the course. Class information is also posted on C-Tools.

Paper copies of written assignments are to be **submitted at the beginning of the class** on the date due with all pages stapled together including relevant additional materials as assigned. If you are unable to submit written assignments, **please make other arrangements to get a paper copy of your paper to class or to my SSW mailbox #90 by the assignment due date**. **Emailed assignments cannot be accepted**.

Deadlines, planning ahead and timeliness in completing tasks are all important parts of our professional lives. Fairness requires that all students have the same expectations for assignments. Therefore, **late assignments will not be accepted without deduction** unless the circumstances are

both rare and compelling (i.e. hospitalization, death in the family) and will not be accepted for commonly occurring life experiences (i.e. multiple demands/busy schedule, traveling, computer problems). **You must be present for the three quizzes.**

Assignment Descriptions and Rubrics

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 Skills

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. 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. Writing labs are available through the Sweetland Writing Clinic in Angel Hall: (<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/>).

APA format is the definitive source for standardized writing in the behavioral and social sciences and is required for assignments requiring referencing. 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/>

5. REQUIRED READING

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 posted for each week will be **completed prior to each class** to enhance discussion and interaction. **Grades of A will require completion of all assigned readings. SCANNING the readings does not meet the definition of completion of the readings.**

Three Required Course Texts

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

This text provides a broad overview and many additional reading references. It is important to have this revised edition which includes relevant updated material and references. Should you use a previous edition, you will need to investigate updates and assigned page differences between editions. If you choose to use a different edition, please be aware that assigned page numbers will vary and you will be responsible for making these adjustments.

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

<http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/umich/docDetail.action?docID=10265308>

This text serves as a clinical practice oriented text.

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

This text helps us to think about diversity issues. While it is an older text, it offers relevant concepts for consideration. No one "diversity" text will ever be adequate to help us explore diversity and this text serves only as a springboard for further individual exploration.

For those interested in exploring 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.

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 TO PURSUE YOUR AREAS OF INTERESTS.**

Additional relevant handouts will also be distributed in class for reading. Additional books and reference materials specific to class topics will be discussed throughout the term. **Please refer to Internet list, relevant journal list and grief and loss resource catalogs provided for additional reference materials.**

GRADING

Grades are the **outcome of student efforts and demonstration of competency**. They are "earned" not "given." 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.

Final Grades will be based on individual personal performance and demonstration of course competencies and expectations. There is an opportunity to earn more than 100 points. The **total accumulation of points earned** reflect competencies demonstrated in the context of normal life challenges regarding time, obligations, multiple demands and the choices each student makes. When considering an individual assignment grade, i.e. 9 out of 10 points earned, think of the score as points earned rather than a percentage. For example, a 9 out of 10 is not a 90% overall grade. It is 9 points earned by demonstrating course competencies.

Final letter grades are defined by the School of Social Work as follows:

A grades Earned 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** Earned for 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.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

- 1. Written application & discussion assignments** **4 journals /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** (4 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** **24 points** (4 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 26 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 and will be cumulative. They will **focus on designated core course competencies**. Please see separate handout for details.

5. Class Participation, Class Attendance, Engagement & 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 are further defined in a separate /grading rubric handout.

Course Outline and Assigned Readings

Jan. 8 Our Attitudes About Death and Dying
#1 Historical Perspective and Present Views
 Factors Impacting Attitudes

Readings:

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 1
Irish: Chapter 1
On line Article Pomeroy, E. C. (2011). On grief and loss. Social Work, 56(2), 101-105. (see link below)

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/863249357/fulltext/142A4F4F9181BE29A50/3?accountid=14667#>

Jan. 15 **WRITTEN RTAN 1 DUE**
#2 The Dying Process
 Living with Dying: Life Threatening Illness
 Care of the Dying
 Health Care Systems

Readings:

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

- Jan. 22**
#3 **NON-WRITTEN RTAN DISCUSSION QUESTION**
Grief Models and Theories: The Experience of Grief and Mourning:
Process and Tasks of Mourning
Variables Influencing Grief
Readings:
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 9 (341-354)
Worden: Introduction (1-11) Chapters 2 & 3; Appendix (283-284)
Irish: Chapter 3
- Jan. 29**
#4 **NON-WRITTEN RTAN DISCUSSION QUESTION**
COMPETENCY QUIZ 1
Complicated Grief Reactions
Theories of Complicated Mourning
Definitions, Symptoms, and Syndromes
Readings:
DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 9 (355-376)
Worden: Chapters 5 & 6
Irish: Chapter 7
- Feb. 5**
#5 **WRITTEN RTAN 2 DUE**
COMMUNITY AWARENESS PROPOSAL IDEA DUE
Death and Grief in Adulthood
Life Stage Issues
Readings:
DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 11
Irish: Chapter 5
- Feb. 12**
#6 **COMPETENCY QUIZ #2**
NON-WRITTEN RTAN DISCUSSION QUESTION
Death and Grief in Childhood and Adolescence
Socialization and Understanding of Death
Developmental Issues
Readings:
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 2 and Chapter 10
Irish: Chapter 6
- Feb 19**
#7 **NON-WRITTEN RTAN DISCUSSION QUESTION**
INSIGHT INTERVIEW PAPER DUE
Clinical Intervention with Grievers; Issues in Assessment and Treatment
Counseling Principles in Facilitating Grief
Companioning Clients
Readings:
DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 9 (376-383)
Worden: Chapters 4 and 8

Feb. 26 **NON-WRITTEN RTAN DISCUSSION QUESTION**
#8

Grieving Special Types of Losses
Suicide: Risks Assessment and Impact on Grief
Pregnancy Loss, Pet Loss

Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 12
Worden: Chapter 7
Irish: Chapter 8

March 12 **CLASS COMMUNITY AWARENESS PRESENTATIONS/PAPER**
#9 **NON-WRITTEN RTAN DISCUSSION QUESTION**

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

Readings:

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 3

March 19 **CLASS COMMUNITY AWARENESS PRESENTATIONS/PAPER**
#10 **CONTINUED**

Readings:

Irish: Chapter 13

March 26 **WRITTEN RTAN 3 DUE**
#11

Ethics and Legal Issues
Medical Ethics and Technology
Rights and the Dying

Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 4 and Chapter 6
Irish: Chapter 9

April 2 **NON-WRITTEN RTAN DISCUSSION QUESTION**
#12

Traumatic Death: Violence, Disasters, War
PTSD

Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 13
Irish: Chapter 10

**April 9
#13**

WRITTEN RTAN 4 DUE

Coping Mechanisms for Survivors
Rituals and Funerals; Honoring the Dead
Spirituality and Finding Meaning

Readings:

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

**April 16
#14**

NON-WRITTEN RTAN DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FINAL COMPETENCY QUIZ 3

Class Participation Grading Rubric Due

Personal and Professional Issues Related to Death, Loss, and Grief
Caring for Self; Compassion Fatigue and Resilience

Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 15
Worden: Chapter 9
Irish: Chapter 12