

SW 617, Section 001  
Death, Loss, and Grief  
Spring/Summer, 2017  
Room SSWB 3816  
Tuesdays 6:00-10:00 p.m.

Professor: Debra Mattison  
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Office #3838

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**Please put SW617 in the subject line.** Please allow 24 hours for email response Monday-Friday. Email is not monitored regularly on weekends.

**Office Hours:** I welcome meeting with any and all of you throughout the semester and am happy to make individually scheduled appointments.

I am available in the classroom prior to and after class and have regular office hours to discuss any class questions or concerns.

**Scheduled Office Hours:** Tuesdays 2:00- 5:00 p.m. and regularly available other times, so feel free to stop in.

**The syllabus serves as our guiding contract agreement for the term. You are responsible for reading it by the second week of class. Please feel free to ask any questions to ensure your understanding of the plan for the course including assignments and due dates.**

## WELCOME and THANK YOU FOR BEING IN THIS CLASS

Thank you for choosing to invest your valuable elective hours in developing competencies and skills to assist persons who have experienced loss and grief. I believe that much of social work is at its core about loss and grief and can think of no other topic that may be more universally relevant and applicable to your social work practice. Exploring and increasing your understanding of death, loss and grief will facilitate assessing, intervening and responding with compassion and competence in interactions with your clients, work places, colleagues and communities. I come to this course believing that it will be very meaningful for you in a variety of contexts both professionally and personally.

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### About the Course

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#### 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 given to 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 addressed, 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, 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 and legal concerns related to death, loss, and grief.

## **CSWE COURSE COMPETENCIES**

### **Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) 2015**

This course will address and support competency development in the following CSWE identified core competency areas:

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Competency 4: Engage In Practice-informed Research & Research-informed Practice

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations & Communities

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations & Communities

## **COURSE DESIGN FORMAT**

This course will consist of a variety of collaborative learning methods including interactive lectures with active student participation, guest speakers, readings, in-class application exercises, videos and written assignments. Understanding core class concepts and competencies and the ability to apply these concepts will be emphasized.

## **RELATIONSHIP OF THE COURSE TO FOUR CURRICULAR THEMES**

### *Multiculturalism and Diversity*

Will be addressed through the discussion of impact of various diversity factors including culture, ethnicity, race, gender, age, sexual orientation and social class. Case examples, readings and diversity focused assignment will reflect this theme.

### *Social Justice and Social Change*

Will be addressed through discussion of social, environmental, ethical and legal policy issues which may result in discrimination and disenfranchisement and thus impact the grieving process.

### *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 and seek to prevent complicated grief.

### *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 violence/trauma and resiliency/coping/adaptation.

## **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.

**Students are invited and expected to actively contribute from their experiences, field placement practice and knowledge of readings,** etc. to

help support and develop 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 in the context of grief and loss.

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## *My Teaching Philosophy: Learning is in Service to Our Clients*

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### **RELATIONSHIP FOCUSED PARTNERSHIP: MUTUAL LEARNING COMMITMENT**

Many times we may approach a learning experience with the expectation of what we will get from them. This model focuses on the professor **giving** information and the student **getting** information. Relationship-based learning means to me that we will be **“giving, getting and growing” together** as we learn *with* and *from* each other. My commitment is to provide organized, meaningful course material and opportunities for learning. **Students are invited and expected to be active and engaged partners in the learning process** by coming to class fully prepared, ready, willing and able to contribute to meaningful discussion and learning. I look forward to what we will experience and learn together.



### **PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN LEARNING**

*I invite you to come to this class with the intention that you are going to engage and connect with the experience of learning.*

*Accountability shifts the focus from **not solely being about** what **one is taught**, to self-determination about what **one consciously chooses to learn**.*

Your learning is not just about academic learning but also involves **learning and improving life skills and professional use-of-self**. Students are expected to take **personal responsibility** and be committed to their own learning experience by being active and response-able members of each class session. An optimal individual learning experience is one that is **active, self-directed** and requires **engagement**.

## **Guiding Principles and Commitments**

*Our commitment to learning is **in service to our clients**.*

We seek **mutual** growth, learning and benefit from sharing with each other.

*We **respect** even when we disagree or have conflict.*

We recognize and honor that **each person is at a different point** in their learning and life experience.

*We **do not assume** or pre-judge the intent or motivation of others.*

*We commit to not intentionally harm another nor to assume that harm was intended.*

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

*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 take responsibility for talking **with** people rather than **about** them.*

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

**NOTICE YOUR PREFERENCES. NOTICE YOUR RESISTANCE.**

## **PROVIDING FEEDBACK**

Please provide feedback on your learning needs, how the class is going for you and suggestions for improvement throughout the class. We will do a mid-term and final evaluation, however the opportunity to respond to **feedback is much more beneficial for the both professors and class members if it is ongoing and not just provided at the end of the term. You are encouraged to proactively address any concerns or needs as they arise.**

## **INCREMENTAL SKILL BUILDING AND LEARNING**

**The class assignments are designed to be INCREMENTAL, building and demonstrating core competencies over time with a variety of SMALLER assignments rather than focusing on only a few larger assignments.**



This class will have a total of approximately 16 pages of written pages distributed over 6 assignments and 2 in-class quizzes. Class material can often be emotionally dense. Thus, incremental learning can be helpful to allow time to process smaller sections of our learning objectives. So, please consider not simply the number/frequency of assignments in evaluating workload, but also the total deliverables.

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## *Expectations of Students*

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### **PROFESIONAL USE OF SELF**

#### **Respect for Others**

- ✓ Students are encouraged and expected to demonstrate openness to ideas and perspectives different from one's own interests, views, belief and preferences.
- ✓ Listening and learning require a safe place and we commit to provide this safe space in this class.
- ✓ Sharing differing ways of thinking and how one sees the world is not always focused on changing others' minds, but about cultivating **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 may have experienced and/or are trying to prevent.**

### **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 workers values and reactions to these issues.

### **APPLICATION OF NASW CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL USE OF SELF IN THE CLASSROOM**

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 not only for clients, but for colleagues and employers as well.

- *"Social workers should avoid unwarranted negative criticism of colleagues in communications with clients or with other professionals. Unwarranted negative criticism may include demeaning comments that refer to colleagues' level of competence or to individuals' attributes such as race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disability."* NASW Code of Ethics 2.01
- 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. See Use-of-Self documents on Canvas.

- As professionals, you are expected to maintain confidentiality and respect differences. You are asked to honor confidentiality of the information shared by professor, colleagues and guest speakers in order to support a safe atmosphere for sharing and learning.

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 UM SSW Student Guide.

### **ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND HONESTY**

Social Work students are held to the highest standards of academic and professional conduct. Cheating is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work through use of any dishonest, deceptive or fraudulent means. Plagiarism is one form of cheating and 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. Any form of cheating (use of someone else's work, obtaining tests from previous semesters, using assignments from other classes), plagiarism (verbatim copy of another's material and not acknowledging the direct quotation or unacceptable paraphrasing which does not use one's own words and structure, and failure to acknowledge that the content is not original) and/or aiding and abetting dishonesty **will result in a failing grade for the relevant assignment and is grounds for expulsion**. You are responsible for understanding the meaning of academic integrity and plagiarism. Please refer to the Student Guide to the Master's in Social Work Degree Program or see <http://www.lib.umich.edu/academic-integrity/resources-students> for further information.

### **CLASS PARTICIPATION AND PARTICIPATION**

As a graduate student, class attendance, completion of assigned readings for each class, participation and engagement are highly valued as these behaviors contribute to the quality of learning for the individual and the class as a whole. They are also critical to **our ultimate goal of service to our clients**. Predictability, reliability and consistency ("being there") are core to any strong relationship as well as being incredibly important to our clients and our employers. **Thus, "being here" with predictability, reliability and consistency is an important core competency for this class.**

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. **In service to our clients, we must learn to use our voices on their behalf and our learning is a part of using our voices for our clients.** Thus, participating in class will be an opportunity to practice and develop this skill even when it is sometimes challenging and/or uncomfortable.



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).

**ATTENDANCE and ABSENCE POLICY**  
**Please be Here and be Present.**

**You and Your Learning are Important to the Class**

A significant part of learning in this course is interactive and experiential with discussion, in-class activities and guest speakers which cannot be fully replicated or replaced by make-up work. Therefore, both your learning and the learning of your colleagues are benefitted by your attendance.

The School of Social Work Class Attendance Policy states: "It is expected that students attend classes and instructors are encouraged to monitor attendance." Attendance, participation and engagement are expectations and requirements (See Student Guide). Class grades include evaluation of attendance, participation and engagement. This class focuses learning and demonstrating competencies in service to our clients. **Grades are based on points earned through demonstration of competency and class participation.**

**Absences are not judged as "excused" or "unexcused." A Make-up option offered for missed classes.**

Life happens and each individual student may have absences from personal choices made regarding prioritization of competing demands as well due to uncontrollable events. Absences impact competence learning. Therefore, an opportunity is given to learn and demonstrate missed competencies when one is absent from class for any reason.

See Competency Demonstration Make-Up Assignments below. **More than 3 absences for any reason will result in non-credit, non-passing grade for the course due to the significance of the portion of the course missed.**

**Partial Absences**

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 promptly after designated break(s).

Partial absences also negatively impact learning and will result in class participation deduction. **A partial absence include any one of the following:** use of electronic devices for non-class related activities during class, late arrival after class start time, late return from break after class has resumed and/or early departure before class ends.



### COMPETENCY DEMONSTRATION MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS

- Students are asked to notify me of any **planned** absence with as much advanced notice as possible and provide notice of an **unanticipated absence** as soon as they are reasonably able to make contact.
- Completion of Make-up Competency Assignments **are to be self-initiated by the student who choose to do make-up work after any absence and are to be submitted no later than the second class period following the absence** unless otherwise agreed upon in advance. Make-up assignments will be graded as Pass-Marginal-Fail.
- **Since course grades are based on demonstration of competency, students who choose NOT to submit Make-Up Competency assignments for any absence within the required timeframe will receive a 3 point competency deduction per each class missed.**

### Standard Make-up Competency Assignment for All Absences

1. Complete and provide statement that all required readings for missed class were read.
2. Obtain any handouts distributed in class, class notes, announcements and any other information covered in the missed class.
3. Review class Powerpoint posted on Canvas including watching any embedded video(s).
4. Complete a 3 page double spaced typed paper addressing:
  - In-Class Discussion Question of the day listed on Syllabus
  - Integrative summary of your take-away understanding and learning/competency **application** from the assigned readings and the powerpoint and relevant handouts.

No APA referencing is needed for this make-up assignment.

### 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 assigned readings.**

The amount of assigned text reading will vary from week to week, but overall, assigned readings per week over the semester are consistent with graduate level workload expectations.

### Note Taking and Powerpoint Presentations

I share the following evidence-based abstract with you for your consideration regarding note taking. Given this research, I will not be posting powerpoints on Canvas prior to class. I will provide a note-taking outline to assist with lecture notes.

*"Taking notes on laptops rather than in longhand is increasingly common. Many researchers have suggested that laptop note taking is less effective than longhand note taking for learning. Prior studies have primarily focused on students' capacity for multitasking and distraction when using laptops. The present research suggests that even when laptops are used solely to take notes, they may still be impairing learning because their use results in shallower processing. In three studies, we found that students who took notes on laptops performed worse on conceptual questions than students who took notes longhand. We show that whereas taking more notes can be beneficial, laptop note takers' tendency to transcribe lectures verbatim rather than processing information and reframing it in their own words is detrimental to learning."* Mueller, P. (2014). The pen is mightier than the keyboard: Advantages of longhand over laptop note taking. *Psychological Science*: doi: 10.1177/0956797614524581

### USE OF PHONES, COMPUTERS AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Our colleagues and guest speakers who are sharing ideas, feelings, and experiences have a right to anticipate and receive our presence and demonstration of professional use-of-self.

**Being present is more than just "showing up." It involves presence. Presence is perhaps one of the most important interventions we offer to our clients and thus we will practice the art of presence throughout this semester in this class.**

Research regarding portable technology (laptop computers, phones, PDAs, etc.) confirms that these devices can be a supportive classroom tool when used with a clear goal (i.e. note taking, interactive exercises) while also having negative consequences such as time spent on non-course tasks (i.e. emails, texting) and disruption to others (*CRLT Occasional Papers, No. 30 Use of Laptops in the Classroom: Research and Best Practices*).

To foster an environment of safety, openness and presence, the focus of class time will center on understanding and discussion of the content presented, asking questions, sharing integrative ideas, giving examples, writing notes, practicing active listening and presence, or otherwise deepening yours and other's knowledge of the material in some way.

- Using electronic devices to assist in note taking and specifically directed class activities is encouraged for those who find this beneficial.
- **If you feel you must monitor email and text messages, you are respectfully asked to do so during breaks and/or to leave the classroom to do so.**
- *Presence is a professional use-of-self skill.* 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 an automatic associated deductions.



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## ***INFORMATION, POLICIES and RESOURCES***

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### **ACCOMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you are in need of an accommodation for a disability, please notify me during **the first week of class** and provide the appropriate accommodation recommendation documents so we can make every effort to meet your needs in a timely and effective way. Students with disabilities may contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 734-763-3000 or in Room G664 Haven Hall to coordinate accommodations. To the extent permitted by law, information will be treated as private and confidential.

### **STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

The University of Michigan and the School of Social Work is committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed and/or in need of support, there are services available. For assistance, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 734-764-8312 or <https://caps.umich.edu>; University Health Services at 734-764-8320 or <https://www.uhs.edu/mentalhealthsvsc>.

For alcohol and drug concerns and/or assistance regarding sexual assault contact <https://www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources#sexualassault>.

For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, see <http://www.umich.edu/~mhealth/students.htm> or <http://www.umcpd.org/>

### **SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

In the event of an emergency, dial 9-1-1 from any cell phone or campus phone. All University of Michigan students, faculty and staff are required to familiarize themselves with emergency procedures and protocols for both inside and outside of the classroom.

**Be Prepared.** Familiarize yourself with the emergency card posted next to the phone in every classroom/meeting room. Review the information on the emergency evacuation sign (located nearest the door) and locate at least (2) emergency exits nearest the classroom.

In the event of possible building closure (i.e. severe weather conditions, public health notices, etc.) you may contact (734)764-SSWB (7793) for up-to-date School closure information.

If you are concerned about your ability to exit the building in the case of an emergency, contact the Office of Student Services School of Social Work (Room 1748; phone: [734-936-0961](tel:734-936-0961)) and/or email [ssw-ADAcpliance@umich.edu](mailto:ssw-ADAcpliance@umich.edu)

For more information view the annual Campus Safety Statement at <http://www.dpss.umich.edu/>.

Register for UM Emergency Alerts at <http://www.dpss.umich.edu/emergency-management/alert/>.

### **Dependent Care Resources**

For students with child or parenting/elder care responsibilities, feel free to consult the Students with Children website (<http://www.studentswithchildren.umich.edu>). This site is dedicated to the needs of students at UM who juggle parenting/elder care, study and work. Resources include childcare, financial assistance, social support, housing, and health care information. The website was created by the former Committee on Student Parent Issues (COSPI). For additional information on work/life support please also visit the Work/Life Resource Center site: <http://hr.umich.edu/worklife/> and the UM Child Care gateway <https://hr.umich.edu/benefits-wellness/family/childrens-centers>

### **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 Competency Make-up assignments.

### **DISTRIBUTION OF PAPERS TO STUDENTS**

The federal informational privacy act prohibits anyone other than the student access to that student's papers. 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. Uncollected papers will be destroyed at the end of the semester/grading period through confidential methods provided by the SSW.](#)

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## ***COURSE ASSIGNMENTS***

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Assignments are designed to use a **variety of evaluation methods** including written papers, classroom activities and 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 competency in services provided to clients. You are empowered to self-direct your learning and assignments with some opportunities to choose areas of interest.

**Students are responsible for reading the syllabus and assignment instructions/grading rubrics and due dates.**

Due to vision accommodation needs of the instructor, paper copies of written assignments are to be submitted at the beginning of the class on the due date 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 assignment to class or to my office by the assignment due date and time. **Emailed assignments will not be accepted.**

## 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. You are encouraged to initiate asking questions regarding assignments and grading prior to submission.

### WRITING SKILLS

Strong writing and communication skills are essential to effective social work practice. 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 and study tips for MSW students including proofreading, spelling edits and addressing basic argument flow issues. To make an appointment, contact [ssw-cso@umich.edu](mailto:ssw-cso@umich.edu) or call 734-763-6259. 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 (6<sup>th</sup> edition) at MLibrary APA Citation Guide <http://guides.lib.umich.edu/c.php?g=282964&p=1885441>

Key components of APA format to be used in written papers include:

Title page with running head

Double spaced 12 font with 1 inch margins

Number pages except for title page in upper right corner

Indent 5 spaces for first line of every paragraph

Sources must be cited in the text of the paper (i.e. DeSpelder & Strickland (2015) state

Reference page with all sources at the conclusion of the paper

All direct quotes must be referenced with source and page number

Referencing internet sources: <http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html>

### LATE COMPLETION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Meeting deadlines, planning ahead and timeliness in completing tasks are all important parts of our professional lives. Fairness goals guide consistent application of expectations for all students. Therefore, late assignments will not be accepted without deduction unless the circumstances are both rare and compelling. Commonly occurring life experiences (i.e. multiple demands/busy schedule, traveling, computer problems) are NOT considered grounds for exceptions for late assignments without deductions.

## TWO 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. If you choose to use a different edition, please be aware that assigned page numbers will vary and you are responsible for making these adjustments by investigating updates and assigned page differences between editions.*

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

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

**The required text have been placed on reserve in the UM Shapiro Undergraduate Library.**

### Diversity Texts (not required)

For those interested in exploring diversity texts, 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.

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

### Course 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 meet some assignments and to pursue areas of interest.

**Additional relevant handouts** will also be distributed in class for reading. Additional reference materials specific to class topics will be discussed throughout the term.

Please refer to provided web resource list and the grief and loss resource catalogs provided for additional reference materials.

Changes may be made in the syllabus as appropriate at any time at the instructor's discretion.

### GRADING

*Academic standards matter to our clients and the responsibilities with which we are entrusted in our work with and on behalf of them.*



**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.

**All assignments will be graded with these criteria:**

- Address **specific assignment criteria** defined in instructions and rubric
- **Professional and academically sound writing skills** (clarity of thought, organization and flow, APA referencing as appropriate)
- Ability to **think critically and integrate concepts/content across the term**
- Demonstrate **professional use-of-self and social work values** and ethics (PODS, strengths-based perspective)
- **Integration and demonstration of completion and understanding assigned readings** and additional literature when appropriate
- **On time completion** by assigned due date

Graduate school standards anticipate that **for every credit hour spent in the classroom, students will spend 2-3 hours outside of the classroom** to complete readings and assignments at a level of mastery. Time constraints are validated as a part of life. We will seek to acknowledge that not every assignment may be completed at the mastery level depending on one's individual situation, goals and/or choices and A grades are not always possible AND meaningful learning can still occur.

Final Grades will be based on individual personal performance and demonstration of course competencies and expectations including the quality of the work, demonstration of reading and ability to apply concepts using a 100 point system. The **total accumulation of points earned** reflect competencies demonstrated in the context of one's 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 on an individual assignment is not a 90% **overall** course grade.

Final Grades will be based on individual personal performance and demonstration of course competencies and expectations including the **quality of the work, demonstration of reading and ability to apply concepts and professional use-of-self and class participation as defined in course documents.**

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 assignments are incomplete and/or 4 or more classes are missed, an incomplete grade will not be given & 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 specific plan for completion.** If no contact has been initiated by the student with the instructor regarding incomplete work and/or no specific 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.

**There will be opportunity to earn extra points on quizzes which also provides some margin to address concerns about earned grades. I am open to discussing the possible option to accept a revision of a regular assignment that is turned in on time when a student initiates this request.**

## **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

**1. Written application & discussion assignments: June 6, July 11, July 18, July 25: 4 journals /8 points each/32 points total (2 points late deduction)**

### **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 Canvas documents for specific RTAN assignment topics and questions.**

**2. Insight Interview 24 points (4 points late deduction) Due June 20**

This assignment gives you the 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 **5-6 page paper**.

**Specifics of this assignment are detailed in a separate Canvas document.**

**3. Diversity Loss Awareness and Article Integration 14 points total**  
(3 point late deduction) May 23 class time devoted to this assignment.  
**Paper Due Friday June 2**

This is an opportunity to select an area of your interest regarding grief and loss in the community and to select **a peer reviewed professional journal article** of your choice related to the same topic. You will be expected to summarize and integrate your community learning experience with the major points of your article, concepts from this course and the take-away messages you can apply to work with clients in a **3-4 page** double spaced, typed paper. You will also need to **integrate your topic into class discussion** to receive full credit. **Please turn in a print copy of your chosen article** along with your written paper. Please see specific of this assignment in Canvas document.

**4. Two In-Class Competency Quizzes Total of 20 points May 23; June 13**

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 Quiz Core Competency document for details and dates of the quizzes.

**5. Class Participation, 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 learn on their behalf. A silent worker can have limited impact.**

Class participation involves sharing and discussing class concepts and their application to our work. Participation is not simply talking and sharing your opinions. **Each week come prepared to discuss what you have read, concepts from the class that apply to your field placement, what is happening in the news and current events/TV that applies to death, loss and grief, etc.** 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 Canvas document called Profession Use-of-Self and a Class Participation Self-Evaluation Rubric document.**

## **Course Schedule and Assigned Readings**

**May 9  
#1**

### **IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION(S) PREPARATION**

Think of your earliest memory of an experience with any type of death. It may have been a pet, a person, a story you heard about death. What messages did you receive about death (both direct and indirect) through this experience? What did you observe about how others handled the death? How did diversity (think broadly about age, gender, religious, socioeconomic, etc.) and cultural issues influence these messages? What did you learn about death and loss from your earlier experience that impacts you now?

#### **Today's Topics**

Our Attitudes toward Death and Dying  
Historical Perspective and Present Views on Death and Dying  
Health Care Systems; Palliative Care and Hospice Care

#### *Required Readings:*

Pomeroy, E. C. (2011). On grief and loss. *Social Work*, 56(2), 101-105.  
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapters 1, 5 and 7

*Optional Readings:* Worden: Chapter 1

**May 16  
#2**

### **IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION PREPARATION**

**Which theoretical approach do you find most useful in understanding grieving--stages, phases, tasks, other? Be prepared to provide a rationale for your choice as well as debating the strengths and weaknesses you see in each model?**

#### **Today's Topics**

Grief Models and Theories

#### *Required Readings:*

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 9 (pp. 341-354)  
Worden: Chapters 2 & 3; Appendix (pp. 283-284)

*Optional Readings:* Worden Introduction (pp. 1-11)

**May 23  
#3**

### **IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION(S) PREPARATION**

**Be prepared to present an example of complicated grief you have seen or read about (can use your own experience, movies, news stories, clinical case examples, etc.) Apply your knowledge of the specific mediators identified by Worden you see illustrated in your example.**

### **COMPETENCY QUIZ 1 (See Competency Quiz Document)**

#### **Today's Topics**

Complicated Grief Reactions  
Theories of Complicated Mourning  
Definitions, Symptoms, and Syndromes

#### *Required Readings:*

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 9 (pp. 355-376)  
Worden: Chapters 5 & 6

**May 30  
#4**

**No In-Class Meeting: Time to work on Diversity Awareness Assignment**

**DIVERSITY LOSS AWARENESS PAPER and Integrated Chosen Article due by email or to my office #3838 no later than 5:00 p.m. Friday June 2. (Please read Assignment Instructions and Grading Rubric)**

Grief and Diversity  
Required Readings:  
Chosen Diversity Article

**June 6  
#5**

**IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION(S) PREPARATION**

**What is your reaction to the Japanese “mizuko”? What cultural, socioeconomic, and other diversity factors are involved? How might a ritual like this impact the grieving process? What factors might impact how a similar ritual or tradition might be viewed in the U.S.?**

**JOURNAL 1 WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE: Loss History (Please see assignment document in Canvas)**

**Today’s Topics**  
Discussion of last’s week’s Diversity Assignment  
Loss and Grief in Adulthood  
Models of Adult Bereavement; Life Stage Issues

Required Readings:  
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 11

**June 13  
#6**

**IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION(S) PREPARATION**

**Be prepared to illustrate reading and your ability to apply the theory regarding children and loss/death discussed in the readings to an example you have observed of children responding to death. Consider your own experience, clinical experience, movies, books, news story, etc.**

**COMPETENCY QUIZ 2 (Please see Competency Quiz Document)**

**Today’s Topics**  
Loss and Grief in Childhood and Adolescence  
Developmental Issues

Required Readings:  
DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 2 (pp. 50-66) and Chapter 10

**June 20  
#7**

**IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION(S) PREPARATION**

**Be prepared to give your rationale for which of the three philosophies you support regarding who should receive grief counseling with consideration of strengths and weaknesses, diversity considerations, cost issues, etc.**

**INSIGHT INTERVIEW WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE (Please see assignment document in Canvas)**

**Today’s Topics**

Clinical Intervention and Counseling Principles in Facilitating Grief  
Ambiguous Loss and Grief

Required Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 9 (pp. 376-383)

Worden: Chapter 4

Worden Chapter 8 (Optional)

**June 27  
#8**

**IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION(S) PREPARATION**

**What impacted or surprised you most about the discussion of suicide in today's readings? What are risk factors and assessment areas to consider? What are your thoughts on your concepts from the readings to a specific example of violence in our world today and your ideas about reducing violence? What insights can you share about various forms of other traumatic losses discussed in the readings?**

**Today's Topics**

Suicide: Theories, Influencing Factors; Risk Assessment  
Violence, Disasters, War, Genocide, Terrorism,  
PTSD

Required Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 12 and 13

Worden: Chapter 7 (pp. 179-187)

**July 4**

**NO CLASS: HOLIDAY-- ENJOY!**

**July 11  
#9**

**IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION(S) PREPARATION**

**Consider an example in which you have seen an ethical conflict in your field placement regarding one of the four key ethical principles discussed in this week's readings?**

**After today's readings, thoughtfully consider how would you define "life" and "death" and be prepared to share this in class. What might impact our definitions? How might these diverse definitions impact the grieving process?**

**RTAN JOURNAL 2 DUE: AD/DPOA  
(Please see assignment document in Canvas)**

**Today's Topics**

Ethical and Legal Issues  
Medical Ethics and Technology; Rights and the Dying  
Advanced Directives and End of Life Decision Making

Required Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 4 (pp. 151-173) and Chapter 6

**July 18  
#10**

**IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION(S) PREPARATION**

**Which funeral practices discussed in the texts resonated with you, disturbed you, raised questions and/or surprised you? What are your thoughts about how rituals impact grieving losses other than death?**

**RTAN JOURNAL 3 DUE: Funeral Planning and Life Expectancy  
(Please see assignment document in Canvas)**

**Today's Topics**

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

Required Readings:

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 8

Optional: DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 14

**July 25  
#11**

**IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION(S) PREPARATION**

**How does Worden's comment that "In addition to challenging our ability to be helpful, the experience of bereavement in others also touches the counselor personally in at least three ways."**

**What are your personal warning signs for burnout/compassion fatigue?  
What strategies do you use/plan to use to prevent burnout and deal with ongoing exposure to loss, pain, trauma, etc. in your future work?**

**RTAN JOURNAL 4 DUE: Final Reflection  
(Please see assignment document in Canvas)**

**COMPLETE AND TURN IN "USE OF SELF/CLASS PARTICIPATION"  
GRADING RUBRIC FORM  
(Please see form in Canvas)**

**Today's Topics**

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

Required Readings:

Worden: Chapter 9

Optional: DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 15

**CONGRATULATIONS ON A MEANINGFUL SEMESTER!**