

**SW 617**  
**Death, Loss, and Grief**  
**Summer, 2020**  
**Online Course via Zoom**  
**Tuesdays 6:00-10:00 p.m.**

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

**Online Office Hours: I welcome meeting with any and all of you throughout the semester** and am happy to make individually scheduled appointments to ensure you have access to talk with me to discuss any class questions or concerns. So feel free to schedule a time to meet that works best for you.

### **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 the work we do is, at its core, about loss and grief and that this course content will be universally relevant and applicable to your professional practice. Exploring and increasing your understanding of death, loss and grief will facilitate responding with compassion and competence in interactions with your clients, colleagues, work places and communities. I come to this course believing it will be very meaningful for you in a variety of contexts, both professionally and personally. **I look forward to what we will experience and learn together.**

**The syllabus serves as our guiding contractual agreement for the term. You are responsible for reading it by the beginning of our second class session. Students are responsible for also reading assignment instructions/grading rubrics and monitoring assignment due dates.**

**Please feel free to initiate asking questions early in the term to ensure you understand the plan for the course including assignments and due dates. Changes may be made in the syllabus as appropriate at any time at the instructor's discretion.**

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**All assignments are due and should be submitted to Canvas no later than 11:59 p.m. on the night BEFORE the relevant in-session class.**

## Overview of Assignments

| Assignment   | Due Date       | Point Value |
|--|----------------|-------------|
| <b>Competency Quiz 1</b>                               | <b>June 2</b>  | <b>8</b>    |
| <b>RTAN 1</b>  | <b>June 8</b>  | <b>10</b>   |
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| <b>RTAN 2</b>  | <b>July 6</b>  | <b>10</b>   |
| <b>RTAN 3</b>  | <b>July 13</b> | <b>15</b>   |
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| <b>Participation in activities and breakout groups</b> | <b>Ongoing</b> | <b>10</b>   |

**You are advised to read the detailed assignment instructions and grading rubrics prior to completing assignments. Assignments are due no later than 11:59 p.m. the night before the relevant class meeting.**

***Learning is in service to our clients.***

***We take responsibility to talk WITH each other rather than ABOUT each other.***

## ABOUT THE COURSE

### 1.1 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 you will learn concepts that will inform and impact clinical practice, it is important for you to know this course is NOT designated by the School of Social Work as a methods class.**



### 1.2 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 Research-informed Practice

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

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

## **1.3 COURSE DESIGN FORMAT**

This course uses **a relationship-based engaged approach to learning**. A variety of collaborative learning methods will be used to promote skill development including interactive lectures with active student participation, readings, in-class application exercises, quizzes, videos, guest speakers and written assignments. **Understanding core class concepts and the ability to apply these concepts will be emphasized.**

### **Note Taking:**

I share the following evidence-based abstract with you for your consideration regarding note taking.

*“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

**Given this research, while I will provide PowerPoint files on Canvas prior to class, you are strongly encouraged to take you own lecture notes.**

## 1.4 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 on the grieving process. 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.

## 1.5 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 and inclusion, illuminate injustices and oppression and are consistent with evidence-based 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.

## 1.6 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.

## 2. MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

### **2.1 LEARNING IS IN SERVICE TO OUR CLIENTS.**

## 2.2 RELATIONSHIP FOCUSED PARTNERSHIP: MUTUAL LEARNING COMMITMENT

Many times learning experiences can be approached from expectations of what we will **get** from them. This approach focuses on the professor **giving** information and the student **getting** information. *Relationship-based learning* focuses instead on mutually “**giving, getting and growing**” **together** as we learn *with* and *from* each other. This will be the learning philosophy used as the foundation for this course. My commitment is to provide organized, meaningful course material and opportunities for learning.

## 2.3 INTENTIONALITY

Intentional learning is not passive, but rather is focused on actively pursuing your learning goals. It happens when one intentionally chooses: **what** they want to achieve in this class, **why** these goals are important to them and **how** they engage and invest to reach these goals.

**I invite you to enter this class with the intention that you are going to engage and invest in this intentional experience of learning.**

## 2.4 INCREMENTAL SKILL BUILDING AND LEARNING

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



## 2.5 HOW WE COMMUNICATE AND INTERACT WITH EACH OTHER

It can often be easier to talk about people than talking with them. Talking with people often requires taking the risk to be honest, courageous and humble. Providing feedback is a core competency all social workers need and we will use this class to further develop this skill.

**We take responsibility to talk WITH each other rather than ABOUT each other.**

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 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 with your class colleagues and myself as they arise.**

### **Guiding Principles and Commitments for Learning**

1. Our commitment to learning is in service to our clients.
2. We commit to maintaining a confidential space for open discussion and keep what is shared in class by a specific individual confidential and do not repeat classroom remarks that link a person with his/her/their identity.
3. We seek to replace assumptions with curious questions and invitations to share and listen.
4. We seek to diminish fear, shame and blame that immobilizes the learning process.
5. We find ways to be curious and humane in our interactions.
6. We expect to make mistakes and will honor this as a valuable part of the learning process.
7. We view the challenges of not yet “knowing” as a part of life-long learning and as preferable to stagnation and ignorance.
8. We validate that there is a difference between being uncomfortable and being unsafe.
9. We seek mutual growth, learning and benefit from sharing with each other.
10. We respect even when we disagree or have conflict. Disagreeing, not disconnecting.
11. We recognize and honor that each person is at a different point in their life learning and experience.
12. We will not assume or pre-judge the intent or motivation of others.
13. We will explore multiple perspectives on a topic, trying to understand and practice empathy, and respect that others may have a different lens than our own. We also understand that different perspectives may be attached to different positions of power.
14. We acknowledge that sexism, classism, racism, heterosexism, and other forms of discrimination (religion, age, ability, language, education, size, geographic location etc.) exist and may surface from time to time.
15. We recognize the differences between intent and impact and acknowledge the implications of both.
16. We acknowledge and take appropriate responsibility for the impact of our behaviors and actions.
17. We will practice forgiveness as we are learning and growing. However, we acknowledge are not entitled to someone’s forgiveness and it should not be presumed.
18. We will be aware of what we carry into the classroom space with us-- our mood, energy, experiences, beliefs, values...and what we carry out.
19. We will notice our preferences and resistances.
20. We will commit to moving outside our comfort zones to our learning edges. We may experience conflict, feel annoyed, anxious, angry, confused or defensive or some other feeling that may be uncomfortable. We will use these as a part of the learning experience to expand our knowledge and understanding.
21. Others you would like to add.....

\*Sources: CRLT; Forward Space Guidelines by Zaharaa Hadi and Aubree Sepler, UM Program on Intergroup Relations.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

***“The University of Michigan cannot be excellent without being diverse in the broadest sense of that word. We also must ensure that our community allows all individuals an equal opportunity to thrive.” -Mark Schlissel, President***

At the University of Michigan, our dedication to academic excellence for the public good is inseparable from our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. It is central to our mission as an educational institution to ensure that each member of our community has full opportunity to thrive in our environment, for we believe that diversity is key to individual flourishing, educational excellence and the advancement of knowledge.

**Diversity:** We commit to increasing diversity, which is expressed in myriad forms, including race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language, culture, national origin, religious commitments, age, (dis)ability status and political perspective.

**Equity:** We commit to working actively to challenge and respond to bias, harassment, and discrimination. We are committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status.

**Inclusion:** We commit to pursuing deliberate efforts to ensure that our campus is a place where differences are welcomed, different perspectives are respectfully heard and where every individual feels a sense of belonging and inclusion. We know that by building a critical mass of diverse groups on campus and creating a vibrant climate of inclusiveness, we can more effectively leverage the resources of diversity to advance our collective capabilities.

**Learn more about SSW DEI and how to get involved**

<https://ssw.umich.edu/about/diversity-equity-inclusion/toolkit>  
<https://diversity.umich.edu/about/defining-dei/>

## 3. EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

### 3.1 PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN LEARNING

Personal Accountability shifts the focus from not solely being about what one is taught, to self-determination and 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.

**Students are invited and expected to be active and engaged partners in the learning process by coming to class prepared, ready, willing and able to contribute to meaningful discussion and learning.**

To fully engage in the course topic and become a competent and skilled social work practitioner, it is expected that students will **complete all required readings** posted for each week prior to each class as these will serve as the foundation for class discussions, activities and assignments.

An optimal individual learning experience is one that is **active, self-directed** and requires **engagement**.

### 3.2 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 while also being willing to stretch past our comfort zones
- ✓ 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 own beliefs and values, that **we do not commit the very acts of aggression, devaluation, marginalization, disenfranchisement and dismissal of others we are trying to prevent and advocate not happen to others or ourselves.**

### 3.3 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 treat colleagues with respect...” “Social workers should avoid unwarranted negative criticism of colleagues in verbal, written and electronic 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, Standard 2)
- 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 in the UM SSW Student Guide or at

[https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ms\\_ArtLqzel%3D&portalid=0](https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ms_ArtLqzel%3D&portalid=0)

### 3.4 CLASS PRESENCE

**Showing up for class is not enough.** Presence is about how you show up, who you demonstrate you are in the class and what attitude and intention you bring.

**Presence is a professional skill.** Being present is more than just “showing up.” It involves attention and intention. 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.

**Presence is crucial** 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. Our colleagues and guest speakers who share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with us have a right to anticipate and receive our presence and demonstration of professional use-of-self.

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 both oneself and the class as a whole.

### 3.5 PARTICIPATION AND PROFESSIONAL USE-OF-SELF

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 are expected to verbally contribute in class** and should be prepared each week to initiate and to be invited to contribute knowledgeable sharing of their understanding, ideas, reactions and applications from readings and integration across progressive weeks of class.

**Participation is not simply about frequency, but also about the level and quality of preparedness** and thoughtful and integrative analysis and application of concepts. Some may feel uncomfortable speaking in class. **In service to our clients, we must learn to use our voices on their behalf.** Class participation provides the opportunity to develop speaking, advocacy and discussion/facilitation/persuasion skills, as well as

the ability to listen effectively. Thus, verbal participation will be an opportunity to practice and develop skills even when it can be sometimes challenging and/or uncomfortable.

**Ways to contribute** to our class learning include your valuable suggestions, appropriate amplifications, alternative interpretations and perspectives, constructive criticism and relevant observations. **Students are expected actively participate in and take pair/share and small group activities seriously as each student's learning is dependent upon each other's engagement.**

In addition to responding to questions and discussions in class, there are a number of ways **to prepare** to speak in class which may make it less uncomfortable including:

- Prepare a response to share in weekly check-ins
- Preparing a comment about the assigned readings
- Bring an example, experience, observation of how course material applied to real life
- Prepare and raise a question you have been pondering to the whole class
- Prepare a response to share in weekly check-out

### **DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP: USE OF PHONES, COMPUTERS AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES**



The concept of “digital citizenship” is a complex topic that has become increasingly important and will continue to evolve as we explore the impact of technology on individuals and communities. In this class, we will be intentional about digital etiquette and respectful and ethical use of electronic devices for professional use. Research conducted at the University of Michigan regarding portable technology (laptop computers, phones, tablets, 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 disruption of 40% or more of students as well as loss of time spent on non-course tasks (i.e. emails, texting). [\*\(CRLT Occasional Papers, No. 30 Use of Laptops in the Classroom: Research and Best Practices\)\*](#).

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, taking 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 supported 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.**
- Audio and/or video recording in class of lecture and/or class discussion is prohibited without written permission of professor.
- Use of non-class related computer/phone/electronic devices/reading materials during class **will be considered as the equivalent of being absent from class** and will impact attendance and class participation grades with automatic associated deductions.

### **3.7 CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY: Please be here and be present.**

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. The [Policy on Class Attendance](#) can be found in the MSW Student guide.

Class grades include evaluation of attendance, class participation and engagement to support learning and demonstration of competencies in service to our clients.

#### **3.7.1 Absence Competency Demonstration Make-up Assignments**

**Life happens** and each individual may have absences due to personal choices made regarding prioritization of competing life demands as well due to uncontrollable events and circumstances. You are responsible for all content, discussion and in-class distributed information when absent. **Absences ARE NOT determined as "excused" or unexcused"** but rather as a reality that may occur, while also acknowledging the reality that an absence impacts competence learning and service to clients. **Therefore, an opportunity is given to learn and demonstrate missed competencies for absences for any reason up to three absences.**

#### **Competency Deduction for Absences**

Since course grades are based on demonstration of competency, students who choose to take the opportunity to successfully complete an Absence Competency Demonstration Make-Up assignment ANY absence (up to three total absences) within the designated make-up period will have no absence deduction. Those who do NOT choose to complete the competency make-up assignment within the required make-up timeframe will receive **a 3 point competency deduction per each class missed**. Please see Canvas for Absence Competency Demonstration Make-Up assignment details.

#### **3.7.2 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 grade deduction. **A partial absence include any of the following:** Lack of engaged

presence due to 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.

**3.7.3 More than 3 absences represent a significant percentage of the course which cannot be made up with standard make-up assignments. This level of absence will require further discussion with the instructor to explore options for demonstration of course learning knowledge and objectives. This process may potentially result in the need for an incomplete grade, a course grade deduction and/or non-passing grade for the course depending on the percentage of the course missed.**

### **3.8 ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND HONESTY**

UM 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 or sharing tests from previous semesters, re-use of assignments from other classes, **accessing non-allowed materials during quizzes**), 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 academic 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> and <https://guides.lib.umich.edu/swintegrity> for further information.

## **4. Additional Policies, Information and Resources**

Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here: <https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources>. They include:

- Safety and Emergency Preparedness
- Mental Health and Well-being
- Teaching Evaluations
- Proper Use of Names and Pronouns
- Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
- Religious/Spiritual Observances
- Military Deployment
- Writing Skills and Expectations
- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

## 5. COURSE READINGS & ASSIGNMENT CRITERIA

### 5.1 COURSE 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.

To fully engage in the course and become a competent and skilled social work practitioner, it is expected that students will complete all required readings posted for each week prior to each class session as these will serve as the foundation for class discussions, activities and assignments.

Required readings have been designed to provide you with a basic foundation while giving you freedom to individualize supplemental readings. The amount of assigned reading will vary from week to week, but overall, are consistent with graduate level workload expectations.

### TWO REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS

The COVID-19 crisis has put the library's physical collection temporarily out of use. Students often compare textbook prices on Amazon, [Chugg](#), etextbook and other book suppliers for purchase and/or renting. **Barnes and Noble Textbook service is the University of Michigan preferred textbook provider. The course textbooks can be obtained through [www.umichtextbook.com](http://www.umichtextbook.com)**

1. 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. 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.*

### Several options to consider in obtaining this text:

1. This text is available through [VitalSource](#) for free rental through May 25 (it is unsure if they will be extending this date); type the title into Explore tab. The book is also available for electronic rental for 3 months for about \$50. You will need to create an account and then go to MyBookshelf to purchase it.
2. [HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Service](#)  
HathiTrust Digital Library — a collaborative of academic and research libraries with a collection of 17+ million digitized items — holds copies of many texts. Ability to “check out” a copy for a limited period of time with an auto-renew feature for books is available. Access to items is 1-1. For example, if we have two copies in our collection, two U-M authenticated users (faculty, staff, students) will be allowed concurrent access to the digital item in HathiTrust. To use the service, go to [HathiTrust](#) and log in with your U-M credentials. For step-by-step instructions about how to access HathiTrust items from our library catalog, see our guide to [Finding and Using Electronic Books](#).

**2. 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. **Available through inter-library loan:****

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

**As you are completing the required readings, actively consider the following questions:**

- How would you summarize or paraphrase the reading(s)?
- What are the author(s) main themes and take-away points of this reading?
- What did you learn from the reading(s): new concepts, theories, perspectives, theories, terminology?
- What reflections and/or questions do you have about the readings?
- How does this reading relate to other information about the topic; other course concepts we have discussed in previous sessions?
- How might the information you take from this article apply to your Social Work practice?

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)**. Superior ratings in Professional Use-of-Self will require completion of all assigned readings.

**Useful Websites are listed in Canvas in Web Resource Folder.**

**Additional relevant handouts** may be provided via Canvas. Additional reference materials specific to class topics will be discussed throughout the term.

You are expected and encouraged to do literature searches and additional reading to meet some assignments and to pursue areas of interest.

## **5.2 ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS AND RUBRICS**

Assignments are designed to use a variety of evaluation methods including written papers, classroom activities and discussions to allow opportunities to address strengths and learning 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.

Written work should incorporate critical thinking, analysis and graduate level writing. You must use and synthesize scholarly literature to support your completion of some assignments. **Do not rely on direct quotations from your sources; instead summarize them in your own words and provide appropriate citations.**

All papers must be typewritten. 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 completion and submission.**

### **5.3 ASSIGNMENT WRITING SKILLS EXPECTATIONS**

Strong writing and communication skills are essential to effective professional 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 Writing Coordinator for the School of Social Work is open to meeting with students during any phase of the writing process. The Writing Coordinator's office is housed within the Career Services Office. The Career Services Office also offers workshops, resources and individual assistance to help improve skills and confidence in written communication. *For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact: [SSW Writing Assistance Career Services](#) (Room 1696; (734) 763-6259; [ssw-cso@umich.edu](mailto:ssw-cso@umich.edu)).*

Writing labs are also available through the Sweetland Writing Clinic in Angel Hall: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/> and the English Language Institute <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/eli>

**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 MLibrary APA Citation Guide as needed. The Purdue Owl website is another helpful resource for assistance with APA formatting. Referencing internet sources: <http://www.apastyle.org/electref.html>

#### **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 paper text (i.e. Jones (2012) states...)

Reference page with all sources at the conclusion of the paper

All direct quotes must be referenced with source and page number

### **5.4 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 after the due date/time. Late deductions will be one point each day/partial day after the due date/time.

### 5.5 SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Students are responsible for reading the assignment instructions/grading rubrics and to self-monitor due dates. **All assignments are to be submitted via Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on the night before our in-session class.**

## 6.0 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.**

I will provide feedback and often pose questions and comments to encourage reflection, different perspectives, etc. Please let me know if you have questions and reactions to my comments and wish to discuss them. I am always happy to meet with you.

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

- Address specific assignment criteria defined in instructions and grading 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/time

Graduate school standards anticipate that for every credit hour spent in the classroom, students will spend additional time outside of the classroom to complete readings and assignments at a level of mastery. Time constraints are validated as a part of life. We acknowledge that while **not every assignment may be completed at the exceptional mastery level of an A grade depending on individual situations, goals and/or choices, that 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 and professional use-of-self and class participation as defined in course documents 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. 8 out of 10 points earned), think of the score as points earned rather than an overall course percentage. For example, an 8 out of 10 on an individual assignment is **not** an 80% overall course grade but a loss of 2% of the available 100 points earned.

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

|                 |                                       |                                      |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>A</b> grades | A+ (100), A (95-99), and A- (90-94)   | <b>Exceptional, superior</b> mastery |
| <b>B</b> grades | B+ (87-89), B (84-86), B- (80-83)     | <b>Adequate</b> mastery              |
| <b>C</b> grades | C+ (77-79), C (74-76) and C- (70-73). | <b>Limited</b> mastery               |
| <b>D</b> grades | Below 70 Carries no credit            | <b>Deficient</b> mastery             |
| <b>E</b> grades | No credit                             |                                      |

### **6.1 Grades of Incomplete**

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 by the last scheduled day of the course**.

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 well before the last day of class with the instructor to request consideration of an incomplete grade and to establish a specific plan for completion.** If more than one-third of required course assignments are incomplete and/or more than 3 classes are missed, an incomplete grade may be considered, but is not guaranteed.

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.

## 6.2 Assignment Revisions for Additional Competency Credit

I am open to discussing the possible option of accepting a revision of a regular written assignment that was submitted on time by the original due date when a student initiates this request and provides sufficient rationale for the request.

The MSW Student Guide policies on [Grades in Academic Courses and in Field Instruction](#) as well as [Student Grievance procedures](#) and the [policy for grading in special circumstances](#) provide further details on grading policies. Here are also some resources regarding [testing and grading from CRLT](#).

## 6.3 DISTRIBUTION OF PAPERS TO STUDENTS

The federal informational privacy act prohibits anyone other than the student access to that student's papers. Hard copy papers may be returned by mail to the student, if the student supplies a self-addressed, self-stamped envelope to the instructor for return by U.S. Mail. Any uncollected hard copy papers will be destroyed at the end of the semester/grading period through confidential methods provided by the SSW.

## 7. ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE AND OVERVIEW

**Class material can often be emotionally dense and incremental learning can be helpful to allow time to process smaller sections of our learning goals.** Class assignments are intentionally 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. So, please consider not simply the number/frequency of assignments in evaluating workload, but also the total deliverables.

**Assignments total 100 points of written work and two in-class quizzes.**

| Assignment   | Due Date*      | Point Value |
|--|----------------|-------------|
| <b>Competency Quiz 1</b>                               | <b>June 2</b>  | <b>8</b>    |
| <b>RTAN 1</b>  | <b>June 8</b>  | <b>10</b>   |
| <b>Competency Quiz 2</b>                               | <b>June 23</b> | <b>12</b>   |
| <b>Insight Interview Paper</b>                         | <b>June 29</b> | <b>15</b>   |
| <b>RTAN 2</b>  | <b>July 6</b>  | <b>10</b>   |
| <b>RTAN 3</b>  | <b>July 13</b> | <b>15</b>   |
| <b>RTAN 4</b>  | <b>July 20</b> | <b>10</b>   |
| <b>Use of Self/Participation Rating Form</b>           | <b>July 20</b> | <b>10</b>   |
| <b>Participation in activities and breakout groups</b> | <b>Ongoing</b> | <b>10</b>   |

**\*11:59 p.m. night before relevant in-class meeting.**

## 1. WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

**RTAN Assignments: Read/Think/Analyze/Notice** **Total of 45 points**  
**4 journals**

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 Assignment Folder for EACH SPECIFIC RTAN assignment topics and questions.**

**2. Participation in Breakout Discussions and In-Class Activities** **10 points**

Small group breakout discussion groups will be a vital part of our course. Presence and active engagement and participation with in-class activities will focus on deepen our understanding of course concepts and real-world application.

**3. Insight Interview and Reflection Paper** **15 points**

Please see separate Canvas Assignment Folder for more detailed instructions.

**4. Two In-Class Competency Quizzes** **Total of 20 points**

**YOU MUST BE PRESENT TO TAKE THE QUIZ SO PLAN AHEAD.**

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 Canvas folder for details and dates of the quizzes**

**5. Professional Use of Self and Participation** **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 use our voice to speak out to advocate for clients and to learn on their behalf.**

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 defined in a separate Canvas Professional Use of-Self folder with Use of Self grading rubric. **Please read these at the beginning of the semester so that you are clear about how you are being evaluated for Professional Use-of-Self.**

# Learning is in Service to our Clients.

## Course Schedule and Required Readings

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

**May 12**      **IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION(S) PREPARATION**  
**#1**            **Why did you take this class and what do you hope to contribute to it and take away from it?**

### **Today's Topics**

Our Attitudes toward Death and Dying  
Historical Perspective and Present Views on Death and Dying

### Required Readings:

Pomeroy, E. C. (2011). On grief and loss. *Social Work*, 56(2), 101-105.

**May 19**      **NON-WRITTEN IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION(S)**  
**#2**            **What is your understanding of the distinctions between palliative care and hospice care?**

### **Today's Topics**

Dying Process  
Health Care Systems, Palliative Care and Hospice Care

### Required Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapters 5 and 7  
Worden: Chapter 1 (Optional)

**May 26**      **IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION PREPARATION**  
**#3**            **Which theoretical grief model 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)

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

**June 2  
#4**

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

**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.

**Today's Topics**

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

Required Readings:

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

**June 9  
#5**

**RTAN 1 Due: Loss History (Please see Canvas assignment document)**

**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. by various diverse groups?

**Today's Topics**

Loss and Grief in Adulthood  
Models of Adult Bereavement; Life Stage Issues

Required Readings:

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 11

**June 16  
#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.

**Today's Topics**

Loss and Grief in Childhood and Adolescence: Developmental Issues  
Clinical Interventions and Counseling Principles in Facilitating Grief

Required Readings:

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

**June 23  
#7**

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

**Today's Topics**

Clinical Intervention and Counseling Principles in Facilitating Grief

Required Readings:

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

Worden: Chapter 4

Optional: Worden Chapter 8

**June 30  
#8**

**INSIGHT INTERVIEW REFLECTION PAPER DUE (See Canvas)**  
**IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION(S) PREPARATION**  
What impacted or surprised you the discussion of suicide in today's readings? 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**

Ambiguous Loss

Suicide, Violence, Disasters, War, Genocide, Terrorism, PTSD

Required Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 12 and 13

Worden: Chapter 7

**July 7  
#9**

**RTAN JOURNAL 2 DUE: AD/DPOA**  
**(Please see assignment document in Canvas)**  
**IN-CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTION(S) PREPARATION**  
Applying 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?

**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 14  
#10**

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

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

What 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?

**Today's Topics**

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

Required Readings:

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 8

Optional: DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 14

**July 21  
#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 SUBMIT "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

**THANK YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS  
ON A MEANINGFUL SEMESTER  
LEARNING TOGETHER!**

