



SW 617, Section 001

Death, Loss, and Grief

Winter, 2021

Thursdays 2:00-5:00 p.m. Online

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She, her, hers

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Please put SW617 in the subject line. My intent is to respond to emails within 24-48 hours Monday-Friday. Email is not monitored regularly on weekends.

Online Office Hours: I welcome communicating and connecting with each of you throughout the semester. I am happy to make individually scheduled phone/zoom appointments to ensure that you have access to talk with me to discuss any class interests, feedback, questions or concerns. Due to public health guidelines, in-person appointments in private offices are not recommended.

WELCOME: Thank you for being in this class

Death, loss and grief are universal aspects of the human experience. Thank you for choosing to invest your valuable elective hours in developing competencies to more fully understand why and how humans grieve and how grieving is affected by many mediators. I believe that much of the work we do, at its core, is about loss and grief. Thus, this course content will be universally relevant and applicable to your professional practice. Exploring and increasing your understanding of death, loss and grief can facilitate responding with compassion and competence in interactions with your clients, colleagues, workplaces, and communities.

I come to this course believing it will be very meaningful for you in a variety of contexts, both professionally and personally. My goal is that together will we create a class community that provides space that is a *safe space* to be open and vulnerable, to feel included and to “not know” as well as a *forward space* that anticipates discomfort, encourages stretching and commits to personal growth and learning while assuming the best in one another. **I look forward to what we will experience and learn together.**

The syllabus serves as our guiding contract agreement for the term. Students are responsible for reading the syllabus by our first class session. Student are also responsible for reading assignment instructions/grading rubrics and self-monitoring assignment due dates. Please initiate questions early in the term to ensure you understand our class plan including assignments and due dates. Syllabus changes may be made as appropriate at any time at the instructor’s discretion to meet class needs. Course assignments, PowerPoints and other relevant documents can be found on Canvas at <https://canvas.umich.edu>

COVID-19

For the safety of all students, faculty, and staff on campus, it is important for each of us to be mindful of safety measures that have been put in place for our protection. By returning to campus, you have acknowledged your responsibility for protecting the collective health of our community. Your participation in this course on an in-person/hybrid basis is conditional upon your adherence to all safety measures mandated by the state of Michigan and the University, including maintaining physical distancing of six feet from others, and properly wearing a face covering in class. Other applicable safety measures may be described in the [Wolverine Culture of Care](#) and the [University's Face Covering Policy for COVID-19](#). Your ability to participate in this course in-person/hybrid may be impacted by failure to comply with campus safety measures. Individuals seeking to request an accommodation related to the face covering requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the [Office for Institutional Equity](#). If you are unable or unwilling to adhere to these safety measures while in a face-to-face class setting, you will be required to participate on a remote basis. I also encourage you to review the [Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) and the [COVID-related Addendum to the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#).

The health of an individual is connected to the health of others and that we are all in this together. We commit to caring for one another and for the members of the communities in which we live, work, and learn. We are all invited to actively demonstrate a compassionate spirit by intentionally and consistently following these and other health guidelines and requirements.

Health-Related Class Absences

Please evaluate your own health status regularly and refrain from attending class and coming to campus if you are ill. You are encouraged to seek appropriate medical attention for treatment. School of Social Work students who miss class due to illness of any kind will be given opportunities to access course materials online or provided with alternative learning opportunities. Please notify me by email about your absence as soon as practical, so that I can make accommodations. Please note that documentation (a doctor's note) for medical excuses is *not* required.

Student Cameras

Students are invited and expected to turn and leave their cameras on. Having cameras on is a way to increase engagement and can help faculty assess student understanding. For students worried about showing personal environments, we suggest enabling a [virtual background](#). **Please speak with me individually if you have circumstances which may interfere with you meeting this expectation.** Study areas are available within the SSWB for students to participate in online courses if they lack stable or reliable internet access.

Zoom login

Please be sure that you sign-in to your licensed UM Zoom Account with your UM credentials rather than simply accessing Zoom via other methods. This will decrease problems with login to class Zoom meetings. **Please log in through Canvas Zoom.**

Watch this video for details. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rziSpZNhfl>
If you had a free Zoom account prior to coming to UM, you will need to be sure you use your UM licensed account for class related thing. You can merge your Zoom accounts through this link: <https://documentation.its.umich.edu/zoom-account-switch>

Also please **regularly update your Zoom account** to ensure access to new features that may be used in class.

This course will also have a password for safety and this is noted in the Zoom invitation. Please note passwords have to be typed EXACTLY as written including any capitalization. A common error is having a space before or after the password which makes it invalid.

For IT Assistance contact: Please keep contact available for easy access should you have any difficulties with log in or other IT needs.

<https://its.umich.edu/help>

SYLLABUS TABLE OF CONTENTS

My syllabus is indeed long, but please don't let that scare you. I believe in providing detailed information to help your succeed in reaching your learning goals. I also value providing many invitations for learning in these pages. My syllabus is intentional and I hope it will be a helpful resource for you to guide you through our time together.

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Learning is in service to our clients.

We commit to take responsibility to talk to each other rather than about each other.

1. Course Statement

a. Course description

This course addresses the theoretical framework of human loss and grief from culturally and philosophically diverse perspectives. It seeks to provide information about why and how humans grieve and how grieving is affected by many mediators including not limited to the type of loss, socioeconomic and cultural factors, individual personality and family functioning.

Various types of loss are discussed from an individual, family and socio/cultural perspective. Attention is given to life span development and the meaning of death and loss at different ages. 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 various mediators in integrating loss. The formation and practice of rituals, and diversity in cultural, religious and spiritual experience as a component of coping with loss will be discussed.

b. Course objectives and competencies

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 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

c. Course design

This course is an online course done synchronously (in real time) via Zoom with online attendance expected. You will need access to a computer during each in class session to participate in activities which involve accessing, entering information and uploading documents to Canvas.

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, guest speakers, readings, in-class application exercises, clinical scenarios, videos and written assignments.

Understanding along with the ability to apply core class concepts will be a focus.

d. Relationship to social work ethics and values

Social work ethics and values will be addressed in this course. Sources of guiding ethical and value-based principles include the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>, the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) Code of Ethics <https://www.nabsw.org/page/CodeofEthics> and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Global Social Workers Statement of Ethical Principles <https://www.ifsw.org/global-social-work-statement-of-ethical-principles/>.

This course will increase awareness of the medical-ethical issues and decision making at end of life and death and dying. In addition, students will evaluate ethical issues involved in death and loss assessment and interventions, and discuss the impact of the social workers values and reactions to these issues.

e. Focus on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice (PODS)

This course integrates PODS content and skills with emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, anti-racism and inclusion, and illuminate injustices and oppression that impact loss and grief and support evidence-based approaches to reduce disenfranchised grief.

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.

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 but not limited to 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>

<https://ssw.umich.edu/news/articles/2020/07/27/61832-center-for-equitable-community-family-well-being-launches-website>

2. MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

2.1 Learning is in service to our clients.

2.2. Relationship focused partnership

You are invited to enter into a mutual learning commitment as active partners.

Many times learning experiences can be approached from expectations of what one 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 intentional learning philosophy used as the foundation for this course.

2.3 Intentionality

Intentional learning is not passive, but rather is focused on actively pursuing your learning goals. It involves intentionally choosing: **what** you want to achieve in this class, **why** these goals are important to you and **how** you engage and invest to reach these goals.

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. My commitment is to provide organized, meaningful course material and intentionally designed opportunities for learning.

2.5 How we communicate 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. 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.**

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

Guiding Principles and Commitments for Learning are provided in a **Canvas document**. **These principles illuminate our commitments to each other in this class** and you are responsible for reading and demonstrating these behaviors in this class.

3. EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

3.1 Demonstrate School of Social Work Technical Standards

[These technical standards](#) acknowledge that given the ethical responsibilities of professional social work practice to promote and protect the well-being of the clients and communities we serve, that the following abilities and attributes are essential for the profession and apply in the classroom, field placements, our school, university and community.

Communication

- Communicate effectively, responsibly, and in a timely manner in interactions with other students, faculty, field instructors, staff, clients and client systems, and other professionals they might come in contact within their student role.
- Demonstrate the capacity to use effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills, including the ability to listen objectively and interpret nonverbal communication.
- Communicate clearly through written products at a level appropriate for their stage of education.

Intellectual and Cognitive Skills

- Think critically and apply problem solving skills.
- Acquire knowledge and process experiences to inform practice.
- Demonstrate a willingness to continually reflect on their own values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, biases, current and past experiences, and consider how these factors affect their thinking, behavior, interactions and relationships.
- Take responsibility for their own actions and consider the impact of these actions on others.
- Be punctual and dependable, prioritize responsibilities, manage time, and attend class and field in accordance with relevant policy.
- Observe deadlines, and conscientiously arrange and keep appointments.
- Navigate transportation to attend field and classroom requirements.
- Integrate new and changing information obtained from the classroom and practice environment.
- Accept and integrate into practice constructive feedback received in both the classroom and field settings.

Emotional and Behavioral Readiness

- Seek appropriate help to insure that personal issues do not interfere with professional and academic performance.
- Demonstrate the ability to tolerate demanding workloads, adapt to changing environments and situations.
- Maintain respectful relationships with peers, faculty, field instructors, staff, clients and client systems, and other professionals.
- Show the capacity to successfully complete required field practicum hours and demonstrate positive progress in the required social work competencies

3.2 Personal accountability in learning

Personal Accountability shifts the focus from being solely about what one is taught, to self-determination and about what one consciously chooses to learn.

Students are invited to be active and engaged partners in the learning process by coming to class **prepared, engaged, willing and able to contribute to meaningful discussion and learning**. Your learning is not just about academic learning but also involves learning and improving life skills and **professional use-of-self**. Students are

invited to take **personal responsibility** and be committed to their own learning experience by **being active and response-able** members of each class session.

3.3 Professional 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 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.**

3.4 In-class application of NASW Code of Ethics

The NASW Code of Ethics outlines a set of core values that form the basis of the Social Work profession's purpose and perspective. 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, 2.01a and b)
- 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, deep 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.

3.5 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. Any form of cheating 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 and will **result in a failing grade for the relevant assignment and is grounds for expulsion.**

Examples of cheating include: copying/use of someone else's work, obtaining or sharing tests from previous semesters, re-use of assignments from other classes, having others to your assignments and/or aiding and abetting academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating (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) **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.

3.6 Attendance and presence

a. 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.

b. 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 regarding portable technology (laptop computers, phones, etc.) confirms that these devices can be a supportive learning 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, 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 encouraged for those who find this beneficial. **If you must monitor email and text messages, you are respectfully asked to do so whenever possible during breaks.**

Presence is a professional use-of-self skill. Therefore, 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 demonstration of presence and class participation..

c. Participation

Beyond physical presence through attendance, **class participation is vital** to the learning experience of this course and focuses on being emotionally and intellectually present and engaged in class each week. Active engagement and sharing of your diverse ideas, perspectives and experiences are highly valued and invited.

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, and /persuasion skills, as well as the ability to listen effectively. Thus, verbal participation in class is an opportunity to practice and develop skills even when it can be sometimes challenging and/or uncomfortable.

Participation is not simply about frequency, but also about the level and quality of preparedness and thoughtful and integrative analysis and application of concepts. Students are expected to **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.

Ways to contribute to our class learning include your valuable suggestions, appropriate amplifications, alternative interpretations and perspectives, constructive criticism and relevant observations (see related Canvas document for more ideas). **Students are expected to have read assigned readings in order to actively participate in pair/share and small group activities/breakout rooms with preparation and intention 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:

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

We will utilize a variety of strategies to encourage safe spaces, engagement and mutual accountability for all voices to be heard in this class.

d. Attendance and absence policy

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 on learning and demonstrating competencies in service to our clients. **Therefore, grades are based on points earned through demonstration of competency and class participation.**

Students have requested that their educational experience provide preparation for professional practice environments. Thus, our attendance policy seeks to prepare one for practice by addressing professional behavior and impact when absent. Life happens and each individual may have absences from personal choices made regarding prioritization of competing demands, as well those due to uncontrollable events and circumstances. [Professional behavior in academic and professional practice environments involves taking initiative to communicate with the instructor regarding absences and to initiate taking responsibility for what is missed when absent in service to our clients.](#)

e. Absences

In this class, **absences ARE NOT determined as “excused” or “unexcused”** but rather as a reality that may occur. Students are asked to demonstrate professional behavior by providing the instructor with **advanced notification** for known planned absences, and notification when reasonably able to do so after an unanticipated absence.

As relevant preparation for professional practice, **students are responsible for class readings, assignments and in-class competence learning that occurred in their absence.** Therefore, an opportunity is given for students to [take initiative for class content missed when absent for any reason](#) by completing a competency make-up assignment. Remember, learning competencies is ultimately in service to the client, not to the class.

f. Competency demonstration make-up assignments for all absences

Completion of Competency Make-Up Assignments **is a choice** students have after any absence for any reason. It is up to the student to initiate Competency Make-Up Assignments.

Standard Competency Make-Up Assignment instructions for **all absences** are provided in Canvas and must be completed no later than the second class following the absence (unless pre-negotiated for a different date with the instructor) by submitting via Canvas to Competency Make-up Assignment area. Make-up assignments will be graded as Pass-Fail.

Competency Deduction for Absences without Student Initiated Make-Up

NOT submitting Competency Make-up Assignments for any absence within the required make-up timeframe will result in a 2 point competency deduction per each class missed.

Please note that established course assignments are due as scheduled even if absent.

g. Partial absences

Promptness in attendance is 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 can negatively impact learning and can result in decreased demonstration of class participation. **A partial absence may 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.

f. More than 3 absences

More than three absences represent a significant percentage of the course which cannot be sufficiently addressed with established competency 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. It is the student's responsibility for initiating discussion to address absences. If no communication and plan has been agreed upon by the last day of class, grades will be given based on current completed work and absentee policy. **This level of absence may result in an incomplete grade, a course grade deduction and/or non-passing grade.**

4.TEXT AND CLASS MATERIALS

4.1 Course Readings

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

Grades of A will require completion of all assigned readings.

The quality and preparedness of responses illustrating completion of the readings will be used as a part earned grades 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.**

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.

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

Two Required Course Texts

The COVID-19 crisis has impacted access to the library's physical collection. Please check their website as policies and services continue to evolve.

<https://www.lib.umich.edu/about-us/access-during-covid-19/borrowing-and-access-collections>

Barnes and Noble Textbook service is the University of Michigan preferred textbook provider. The course textbooks can be obtained through www.umichtextbook.com

Students often compare textbook prices on Amazon, Chegg, etextbook and other book suppliers for purchase and/or renting. **There are other options to gain access to the texts described below.**

1. DeSpelder, L. & Strickland, A. (2020). *The last dance: Encountering death and dying (11th 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:

[HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Service](#)

DeSpelder and Strickland text (possibly an older edition) may be available through this site. HathiTrust Digital Library is a collaborative of academic and research libraries with a collection of 17+ million digitized items and 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](#).

This text is also available through [VitalSource](#) for electronic rental for 3 months for about \$50. You will need to create an account and then go to MyBookshelf to purchase the rental.

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 UM inter-library loan:

4.2 Application of Required Readings

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.

5.0 ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS AND RUBRICS

Students are responsible for reading the assignment instructions and grading rubrics and to self-monitor due dates. **You are encouraged to initiate asking questions regarding assignments and grading prior to completion and submission.**

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.

5.1 Assignment expectations

Writing and communication skills are essential to effective professional practice. As professionals, we will be continually assessed and have outcomes impacted by our ability to express ideas clearly and professionally on behalf of our clients, our organizations, our profession and ourselves.

Graduate level writing and communication skills are encouraged in this course including 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](#) (734) 763-6259; ssw-cso@umich.edu).*

Writing labs are also available through the Sweetland Writing Clinic: <https://lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/graduates/writing-workshop.html> and the English Language Institute Graduate Writing Clinic <https://lsa.umich.edu/eli/language-clinics/graduate-writing-clinic-for-international-students.html>

APA format is a 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/elecref.html>

5.2 Submission of Written Assignments

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

All assignments are to be typed and submitted via Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on the night before our scheduled class.

Please note that WORD documents are preferred and that Canvas does not interface well with .pages files.

5.3 Late Completion Of Assignments

Meeting deadlines, planning ahead and timeliness in completing tasks are all important in demonstrating competencies. Fairness goals guide consistent application of expectations for all students. Therefore, late assignments will be accepted with deduction after the due date/time. Late deductions will be one point each day/partial day after the due date/time.

6. 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" based on demonstration of competencies rather than "given" or based on effort alone.* While this course has been designed to provide information and learning experiences, **what you ultimately gain will largely depend on your use-of-self, your**

engagement in the class and your commitment to take responsibility for your individual learning.

Graduate school standards anticipate that for every 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, that meaningful learning can still occur.**

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 (e.g. 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

Final Grades will be based on individual demonstration of course competencies including the quality of the work, demonstration of completion of assigned readings, ability to apply concepts, 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. 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 as follows:

A grades	A (95-100), and A- (90-94)	Exceptional, superior mastery
B grades	B+ (87-89), B (84-86), B- (80-83)	Adequate mastery
C grades	C+ (77-79), C (74-76) and C- (70-73).	Limited mastery
D grades	Below 70 Carries no credit	Deficient mastery
E 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. In fairness to all students, incomplete grades will NOT be given based on requests for time extensions to complete assignments without sufficient justification beyond common life experiences of having limited time and 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 a student has more than 3 total absences (full or partial combined), an incomplete grade may be considered in unusual situations, 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 completed assignment that was submitted on time by the original due date when a student initiates this request to redo the paper to better demonstrate their learning and learning goals.

The MSW Student Guide provides 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.

Assignment Overview and Schedule

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 of assignments in evaluating workload, but also the total deliverables. **Please read assignment descriptions at the beginning of the semester so you are clear them and have ample time ask questions and discuss any concerns.**

Assignments total 100 points of written work and two quizzes.

Assignment	Due Date*	Point Value
Read syllabus, guiding principles and assigned article	Jan. 21	Completed/not completed
Competency Quiz 1	Feb. 11	8
RTAN Journal 1	Feb. 18	8

Competency Quiz 2	March 4	12
Insight Interview Paper	March 18	14
RTAN Journal 2	March 25	10
Diversity Article & Presentation	April 1	20
RTAN Journal 3	April 8	12
RTAN Journal 4	April 22 (exam week)	6
Use of Self/Participation Rating Form*	April 22 (exam week)	10

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

* 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 you are clear about what is expected and how you are being evaluated for Professional Use-of-Self.**

7.0 CLASS RECORDING and DISTRIBUTION of COURSE MATERIALS

7.1 Audio and video recording

Audio and video recordings of in-class lectures and discussions is prohibited without the advance written permission of the instructor. Students with an approved accommodation from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities permitting the recording of class meetings must present documentation to the instructor in advance of any recording being done. The instructor reserves the right to disallow recording for a portion of any class time where privacy is a special concern. If the instructor chooses to record a class, they will decide which classes, if any, are recorded, what portion of each class is recorded, and whether a recording is made available on the course management website. On days when classes are recorded, students will be notified a recording is occurring. Class recordings and course materials may not be reproduced, sold, published or distributed to others, in whole or in part, without the written consent of the instructor.

7.2 Class PowerPoints

Class PowerPoints may not be shared, reproduced, distributed to others, sold or published in whole or in part, without written consent of the instructor.

8.0 ADDITIONAL POLICIES, INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

If you are in need of any accommodations, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such. [Additional information about accommodations for students with disabilities, as well as a list of appropriate accommodation forms, is available here.](#) *For more*

information, contact: **Services for Students with Disabilities**

Phone: (734) 763-3000; **Email:** ssdoffice@umich.edu

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*

Weekly Class Schedule on next page



Course Schedule and Assigned Readings and Assignment Due Dates

See Canvas Weekly Modules for more details regarding Question of the Week and assignments due.

**Jan. 21
#1** **QUESTION OF THE WEEK IN-CLASS DISCUSSION PREPARATION**
Read the syllabus and class guiding principles prior to class and come prepared with questions you have and your thoughts about the assigned Pomeroy article.

Today's Topics

Overview of Course

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 (in Canvas)

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 1

**Jan. 28
#2** **QUESTION OF THE WEEK IN-CLASS DISCUSSION PREPARATION**
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)

**Feb. 4
#3** **QUESTION OF THE WEEK IN-CLASS DISCUSSION PREPARATION**
Which of theoretical approaches discussed in the readings do you find most useful in understanding grieving? Be prepared to provide a rationale for your choice as well as articulating the strengths and weaknesses you see in each model?

Today's Topics

Grief Models and Theories

Required Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 9 (pp. 335-347)

Worden: Chapters 2 & 3; Appendix (pp. 283-284)
Worden Introduction (pp. 1-11) (Optional)

Feb. 11
#4

QUIZ 1 In-Class (See Competency Quiz Document)

QUESTION OF THE WEEK IN-CLASS DISCUSSION PREPARATION

Be prepared to present an example of complicated grief you have seen or read about (you 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.

Today's Topics

Complicated Grief Reactions

Theories of Complicated Mourning

Definitions, Symptoms, and Syndromes and Clinical Interventions

Required Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 9 (pp. 347-363)

Worden: Chapters 5

Feb. 18
#5

RTAN 1 DUE (Please see assignment document in Canvas)

QUESTION OF THE WEEK IN-CLASS DISCUSSION 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 might be viewed in the U.S.?

Today's Topics

Loss and Grief in Adulthood

Models of Adult Bereavement; Life Stage Issues

Required Readings:

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 11

Feb 25
#6

QUESTION OF THE WEEK IN-CLASS DISCUSSION PREPARATION

Be prepared to discuss an example you have observed of children responding to death. Consider your own experience, clinical experience, movies, books, news story, etc. Be prepared to illustrate your ability to apply the theory regarding

children and loss/death discussed in the readings to this example.

Today's Topics

Loss and Grief in Childhood and Adolescence

Developmental Considerations

Counseling Principles in Facilitation Grief and Clinical Interventions

Required Readings:

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 2 (pp. 51-67) and Chapter 10

Mar. 4
#7

In-Class COMPETENCY QUIZ 2 (Please see Competence Quiz document in Canvas)

QUESTION OF THE WEEK IN-CLASS DISCUSSION PREPARATION

Identify an example of ambiguous grief and be prepared to share and discuss it in class.

Ambiguous Loss and Grief

Required: WATCH Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F10w9n4hZfU>

Mar. 11
#8

QUESTION OF THE WEEK IN-CLASS DISCUSSION 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. 364-368)

Worden: Chapter 4

Worden Chapter 6 and 8 (Optional)

Mar. 18
#9

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

QUESTION OF THE WEEK IN-CLASS DISCUSSION PREPARATION

What impacted or surprise you most about today's readings regarding violence in our world today? What insights can you share about various forms of other traumatic losses discussed

in the readings (i.e. suicide, terrorism, etc.)? What ideas do you have about reducing violence?

What impacted or surprised you most about the discussion of suicide in today's readings? What are risk factors and assessment areas to consider?

Today's Topics

Suicide Loss and Grief
Violence, PTSD

Required Readings:

DeSpelder & Strickland: Chapter 12 and 13
Worden: Chapter 7 (pp. 179-187)

**Mar. 25
#10**

RTAN 2 DUE (Please see assignment document in Canvas)
QUESTION OF THE WEEK IN-CLASS DISCUSSION PREPARATION
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 choice of 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. 152-168) and Chapter 6

**April 1
#11**

DIVERSITY AWARENESS ARTICLE DISCUSSION AND PAPER

Today's Topics

Grief with Diverse Losses and Populations

Required Readings:

Self-Selected Article of Choice

**April 8
#12**

RTAN JOURNAL 3 DUE

(Please see assignment document in Canvas)

QUESTION OF THE WEEK IN-CLASS DISCUSSION 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 may be useful in grieving losses other than death?

Today's Topics

Honoring the Dead: Rituals and Funerals
Meaning Making: Spirituality and Grief

Required Readings:

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 8

DeSpelder and Strickland: Chapter 14 (Optional)

**April 15
#13**

QUESTION OF THE WEEK IN-CLASS DISCUSSION 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" apply to you? 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?

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

**April 22
Exam
Week**

RTAN JOURNAL 4 DUE (See assignment document in Canvas)
"USE OF SELF" RATING RUBRIC FORM Due (See form in Canvas)

THANK YOU and CONGRATULATIONS on a MEANINGFUL SEMESTER!