Course title: Essentials of Interpersonal Practice  
Course #/term: SW506 002  
Times and Place: Thursdays 9 AM - 1 PM, in-person, SSW B798  
Credit hours: 4  
Prerequisites: Curiosity and humility  
Instructor: Paige Walker  
Pronouns: she/hers  
Contact info: Email: vpwalker@umich.edu Phone (734) 623 9585  
Office: TBA  
Office hours: By appointment, just send an email requesting an appointment  

You may expect a response within 48 hours of sending an email.

Course Statement

a. Course Description

This course presents knowledge and skills essential to interpersonal practice while considering the community, organizational, and policy contexts in which social workers practice. Students learn how to perform various social work roles (i.e. counselor, group facilitator, mediator, broker, and advocate), recognizing that these roles must be based on the adherence to social work values and ethics. All phases of the IP treatment and prevention process (i.e. engagement, assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and termination) will be presented with attention to how they are applied to work with individuals, families, and small groups. Using an evidence informed approach, students will learn to assess problems in clients' lives that relate to attributes of the client (e.g. age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability and spirituality) as well as situational and environmental factors relevant to the client's social functioning.

Students will understand patterns of functioning, to assess strengths and limitations, and to plan, implement and monitor change strategies. Students also learn how self-awareness and the conscious use of self affect the helping relationship and how to apply practice skills such
active listening, empathic responding, contracting, problem-solving, critical and creative thinking in practice. Students learn how to apply various evidence-informed strategies in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of change efforts based on whether their implementation enhances the client's capacity for self-determination and the system's capacity for justice.

b. Course Objectives and Competencies

- Apply inclusive engagement, assessment, and intervention strategies with diverse clients with empathy and cultural humility, based on an intersectional analysis of systems of power, privilege, and oppression in interpersonal practice settings (Essential 11, 13, 14, 15; EPAS 2, 6, 7, 8).
- Articulate social work values and ethics in all interpersonal practice strategies to address client issues. (Essential 9, 40, 44; EPAS 1, 5, 6)
- Assess client needs using a biopsychosocial spiritual and ecological frameworks to effectively identify and address client and environmental change strategies including in high risk situations such as suicide, interpersonal violence, substance abuse and trauma. (Essential 2, 4, 7, 16; EPAS 4, 7, 8, 9)
- Develop intervention plans that incorporate evidence informed practice with diverse clients based on an intersectional analysis of systems of power, privilege, and oppression in interpersonal practice settings that can target environmental as well as intra and interpersonal levels of change. (Essential 18, 20, 21, 27; EPAS 4, 7, 8)
- Practice engaging, assessing, intervening and evaluating with client systems using evidence informed strategies in each phase of intervention. (Essential 22, 23, 27; EPAS 4, 6, 7, 8, 9)
- Demonstrate effective communication to document services and intervention and facilitate interprofessional collaborative practice. (Essential 12, 17; EPAS 6, 8)
- Apply anti-racist frameworks to social work practice and utilize skills to intervene, disrupt, and undo racism. (Essential 1, 11, 14, 22, 44, 45; EPAS 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9)

c. Course Design

I hold the belief that learning happens best in a supportive, engaged environment. To that end, we will use various methods such as individual exercises, class discussion, and small group work to examine the material presented. We will use PowerPoint, videos, movie clips and song clips to illustrate topics.

My hope is that you will glean basic techniques even within the classroom experience. I will try to highlight basic techniques of reflective listening, attunement and asking questions. Because we will be exploring topics that can raise strong feelings, it is important that you practice listening to and respecting others, especially when strong and/or opposing opinions are offered. Your contributions to a supportive learning environment will be much appreciated. All students will be expected to contribute visually (attending to others) and verbally (talking and listening).
d. Rigorous Focus on Pods: This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students developing a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward social justice processes, apply intersectionality and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self-knowledge and self-awareness to facilitate every aspect of professional interpersonal practice.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE COURSE TO FOUR CURRICULAR THEMES

1. **Multiculturalism and Diversity** will be concentrated in the topics of relationship building, communication, assessment, intervention, termination and evaluation. These topics will explore how the differences between worker and client impact and shape these critical dimensions of social work practice. Critical consciousness about power imbalances between children and their broader systems, children/client and interventionist and between client and agency will also be explored.

2. **Social Justice and Social Change** will be central to the topic of various roles assumed by social workers and in clienthood. The focus of the course is on small system change (individual, families, and groups) but the larger social context and implications for change will be embedded in person in the environment (PIE) ecological assessment, and in the experience of applicants as they enter social agencies. These themes will be integrated into this course through the use of case examples and case scenarios that will be selected by the instructor to exemplify skills in practice.

3. **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation** will be themes reflected in various purposes and models of contemporary social work practice. In addition, this course will emphasize skills that can be implemented with promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation as practice goals and outcomes.

4. **Behavioral and Social Science Research** will be presented in this course to support practice methods, skills and assessment procedures. Planning, decision-making and intervention procedures will be directly borrowed from the behavioral and social sciences.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE COURSE TO ETHICS AND VALUES

Social work ethics and values will be addressed within the course as they pertain to issues related to working with clients and colleagues. The NASW Code of Ethics will be used to give students direction about these ethical issues. In particular, this course will focus on client issues, such as confidentiality, privacy, rights and prerogatives of clients, the client’s best interest, proper and improper relationships with clients, interruption of services, and termination. In addition, issues that arise when working with colleagues, such as referral, consultation, dispute resolution, and mediation will be addressed.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that The University of Michigan, named for Michigami, the world's largest freshwater system and located in the Huron River watershed, was formed and has grown through connections with the land stewarded by Niswi Ishkodewan Anishinaabeg: The Three Fires People who are the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi along with their neighbors the Seneca, Delaware, Shawnee and Wyandot nations.
Course Structure

a. Synchronous
We will meet weekly in live, synchronous in-person sessions. Generally, these will be for 3 hours, rather than 4, and will be interactive, using exercises, small group discussions and other methods, rather than being primarily lectures.

b. Asynchronous materials
Each week we will have online materials to watch and read, ahead of class time and or between class time to be prepared for the class sessions.

c. Simulation pedagogy
A core pedagogy for the class will be working with simulated client characters to engage in therapy sessions with as well as creating clients and or using fictional characters to practice completing biopsychosocial assessments as well as clinical sessions.

d. Ongoing student feedback
I will be sending out regular post-class surveys to get your feedback about how class is going for you. Our learning environment is enhanced when everyone takes responsibility for helping to shape it and sustain it. I welcome feedback about any aspect of the class. I strive to receive critical feedback openly and appreciatively, and to incorporate it in my role as instructor.


Philosophy on Classroom Learning and Teaching

I value personal and collective reflection, and the notion that we are all teachers and learners. I am challenged by the need to balance teaching within the confines of the University, itself an oppressive system, and by my commitment to working against institutional oppression and towards liberation. I believe that transparently and directly articulating this, alongside a clear set of expectations and values, supports a productive learning environment. We will speak in more detail about our classroom guidelines. Below are a few of the philosophies I use to teach that I would like to highlight:

• All of us come to this course with various experiences, skill sets, backgrounds and values. No one set of experiences is “better” or “worse” than any other. It is important that we listen to and consider diverse opinions and perspectives, even those we strongly disagree with.
• Curiosity is the root of growth and learning. Being intellectually curious often means taking risks, asking uncomfortable questions, and engaging deeply with the course material. I expect and encourage us to have open and respectful disagreements and difficult conversations.
• Intellectual integrity and honesty matter. I expect you to use course readings and other learning material to frame and contextualize your opinions. I expect you to build thoughtful and cogent arguments to support your positions.
• The course material will affect each of you in different ways. While I don’t often offer trigger warnings, some of you may experience moments that recall a prior personal, painful, negative or traumatic memory. If you are able, I encourage you to stay with the conversation and the class when these challenging moments occur. If you are not, I encourage you to let me know and/or take care of yourself when these moments occur. ● I expect that each of you will be cognizant of the impact of your words on your classmates. I expect each of you to assume that your fellow classmates are not intending to purposefully harm or offend with certain language, actions, etc. I know this isn’t always easy.
This course functions best with open and honest communication. Please don’t hesitate to reach out with questions, comments and concerns.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/5</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course and Social Work Interpersonal Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/12</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course and Social Work Interpersonal Practice</td>
<td>SEE CANVAS FOR READINGS AND ASYNCHRONOUS MATERIALS AND FOR EACH WEEK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/19</td>
<td>Ecosystems; Strength-based, Socioculturally Relevant, Multi-Level Biopsychosocial Assessments Critical Consciousness, Critical Intersectionality, and Social Justice</td>
<td>SEE CANVAS FOR READINGS AND ASYNCHRONOUS MATERIALS AND FOR EACH WEEK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>Helping Processes; Goal Setting and Planning, Motivation and More on Cultural Formulation</td>
<td>SEE CANVAS FOR READINGS AND ASYNCHRONOUS MATERIALS AND FOR EACH WEEK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>Engagement: Relationship-Building, Listening and Empathic Responding</td>
<td>SEE CANVAS FOR READINGS AND ASYNCHRONOUS MATERIALS AND FOR EACH WEEK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>Multidimensional Biopsychosocial Spiritual Assessment (BPSS)</td>
<td>SEE CANVAS FOR READINGS AND ASYNCHRONOUS MATERIALS AND FOR EACH WEEK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/16</td>
<td>Risk Assessment; Intervention, Goals, and Contracting; Sustaining Relationships</td>
<td>SEE CANVAS FOR READINGS AND ASYNCHRONOUS MATERIALS AND FOR EACH WEEK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>Evidence-Informed and Anti-Oppressive Practices for Social Justice Week B</td>
<td>SEE CANVAS FOR READINGS AND ASYNCHRONOUS MATERIALS AND FOR EACH WEEK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/9</td>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>SEE CANVAS FOR READINGS AND ASYNCHRONOUS MATERIALS AND FOR EACH WEEK</td>
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a. **Assignments**

Detailed instructions for each assignment and points for credit for each are listed on Canvas. Due dates may be changed but I will never make it earlier than is listed here on the syllabus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media Engagement Client Assignment</td>
<td>Jan 26</td>
<td>See canvas for description and instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simmersions</td>
<td>TBD 1)</td>
<td>Gender Affirmative Therapy: Intake with Jemm</td>
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<td>Suicide Prevention: Assessing Risk with Tay</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CBT-Introduction with Tanisha Mosley</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brief Motivational Intervention with Gabe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Engagement Interview</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>See canvas for description and instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Biopsychosocialspirtual (BPSS) Assessment and Intervention Project</td>
<td>March 30</td>
<td>See canvas for description and instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>See canvas for description and instructions</td>
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1) Media Engagement Client Reflection - 4-5 typed pages

Write a paper about working with a character from one of the selected movies (or other with approval from instructor) as a client.

In this paper, you will:
1) identify and reflect on how you would feel about working with this client prior to the first encounter, what feelings and thoughts you may experience while you are observing their story, and what difficulty, if any, you may experience;
2) discuss how you might deal with the above inside and outside the session;
3) examine what strengths you bring to working with this client;
4) explore what reactions your client may have toward you, and how you might address them; and
5) discuss what new insight, if any, have you developed about your positionalities as you worked on this assignment.

Movies: - Moonlight, Minari, Beasts of the Southern Wild, 8th Grade, Everything Everywhere All At Once
All are available and on hold in the Askwith Media library on the 2nd floor of Shapiro Undergraduate Library and can be checked out for a few hours to watch in a room in the library.

Think about what challenges may be present in your work together given your positionalities. First, based on the Social Identity Group/Positionality Grid (handout) and in-class discussions, you explore what type(s) of client(s) might pose great challenge for you and imagine how you would work with them. They may be individuals who are very different from or similar to you.

Some helpful tips:

• Focus on yourself. Provide only a VERY BRIEF description of your imaginary client. You do not need to summarize the character or back-story of this client; however, you do need to include specific elements of the character or the story as they relate to your reflections.

• Applying the PIE (person-in-environment) perspective and locate yourself in the environment. Your positionalities interact with those of your client in the specific socio-cultural, political, and historical context.

• You are strongly encouraged to explore many dimensions of your positionalities, especially those that you have not been given much attention or thought before. Some of your positionalities are familiar to you, and others, not so familiar. You may not have thought of some of them as important dimensions of you as a person and/or as a social worker. Some give you varying degrees of privilege, and others are associated with experiences of oppression and discrimination. Importantly, you do have feelings about many of these positionalities, which may get triggered in various social work practice contexts whether you are aware or not.

• Listen to yourself, and reflect on your thoughts and feelings, and be candid about what you feel (what you think would feel) in working with your imaginary client.

• Refrain from intellectualizing your feelings although it is tempting. You are encouraged and expected to write about your feelings and thoughts in the first person account.

• You are encouraged to refer to the readings and class discussions when/where you can.

2) SIMmersions

In accordance with the school-wide requirement that “all SW506 courses need to include 4 simulations,” you will complete the following four simulation modules in SIMMersion*:
1) Gender Affirmative Therapy: Intake with Jemma
2) Suicide Prevention: Assessing Risk with Taye
3) CBT-Introduction with Tanisha Mosley
4) Brief Motivational Intervention with Gabe

* The SIMmersion are virtual practice sessions with a ‘character’ (portrayed by an actor) that you can engage with by asking them questions or making statements. You will attempt to utilize specific intervention models and skills to engage with these virtual clients. Through these simulations, you will learn about a specific intervention approach while strengthening skills in engagement, collaboration, empathic communication, assessment, planning, and contracting.

Each round lasts for 15-20 minutes. You will try each module at least 3 times (of course you can attempt as many times as you like). Research has shown that the more students try, better and more they learn.

First attempt is due by class where that material is discussed (see above for specific dates). Remaining attempts can be spread out.

You will receive performance scores (e.g., 60%, 80%) each time you try a module, but do NOT focus on getting a higher score. Instead focus on learning about and practicing skills in specific intervention models/approaches. No minimum score is required.

Each simulation module contains a set of reading resources about the intervention modes/approach. It is important, and highly recommended, that you read them before you “launch” the simulation that will help you practice the skills.

As the course instructor, I will see the number of attempts, time spent, and scoring, so that I know how everyone is progressing.

This may feel overwhelming. We will use class time to familiarize ourselves with the Simmersion. You can visit the School’s information page: https://sites.google.com/umich.edu/simmersion/ (Note: this site is likely to be updated in coming weeks).

3) Client Engagement Interview: Practice and Reflection on Engagement

1. Conduct a recorded interview with a classmate, friend or family member who agrees to participate.
   a. Record the interview and focus on active engagement
   b. The engagement stage builds the foundation of the worker-client alliance. Engagement entails actively listening to the person’s perspective on presenting concern(s), reason(s) for seeking help, treatment, and desired outcome(s) of the interview.

   c. What interviewing techniques did you utilize to build trust and rapport with the interviewee? How did the interviewee respond to your attempts to establish a safe and supportive alliance?
      i. e.g. empathic responding, open-ended questions, affirmations, reflections, summaries (OARS)
      ii. use non-verbal cues that convey warmth and understanding, including facial expressions and body language
      iii. Avoid judgment, be aware of how implicit biases may impact the alliance, and remain open-minded, validate the interviewees experiences, and actively acknowledge client strengths/resilience

2. How did yours and the interviewee’s positionalities/intersectionalities affect engagement?
a. What skills did you incorporate in the interview process that aimed to acknowledge and understand the critical role that culture plays in the interviewee's life? Were you able to foster a culturally congruent environment?

b. Explore aspects of interviewee's culture: family, home, values/beliefs/customs, education, health, communication, decision-making, and more

3. Incorporate impact of your own self-awareness as the practitioner, particularly focusing on relevant identities and how assumptions, responses, and potential biases that may show up within the client-practitioner dynamic among other social/structural power/oppression dynamics to integrate PODS
   a. Recognize, set and maintain appropriate client-practitioner boundaries

4. Issues in engagement
   a. Can you identify any specific challenges that came up while engaging with the interviewee?
   b. Would you have done anything differently?

5. Consider what information may be left out, overly focused on, or issues you may have overlooked
   a. What improvements could you make to foster engagement in the therapeutic alliance?

If you are completing this assignment as part of an annotation of an interview video, label your annotations to make it clear that you have completed each part of this outline. If you are completing this assignment as a reflection paper, the paper should be 6 double spaced pages or about 1500 words.

4) Biopsychosocialspiritual (BPSS) Assessment and Intervention

This assignment gives students beginning exposure to the core elements of a comprehensive bio-psycho-social-spiritual assessment and intervention plan and beginning practice in conceptualizing and documenting a case example. More information will be provided.

5) Class Attendance & Participation

You need to come to class well-prepared, which means doing all the assigned readings and learning activities before the class. You are expected to actively participate in class discussions, small group discussions and various in-class exercises (e.g., role-plays).

Occasionally, you will write and submit a short reflection of your learning at the end of the class. Some of the reflections will be shared anonymously in the class to aid mutual learning.

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Guidelines for Written Assignments

All written assignments will be evaluated for organization, clarity, and written quality, as well as for substantive content. In addition, they must:
- Be typed, single- or double-spaced, and saved as a Word document.
- Page number on each page.
- Be submitted via CANVAS unless otherwise indicated.
- Be submitted on/before the due date/time; late papers will result in the deduction of 1/2 a letter grade.
- Follow APA formatting, an established academic convention for organization, pagination, footnoting, and bibliographic references. Review the MLibrary APA Citation Guide as needed. The Purdue Owl website is another helpful resource for assistance with APA formatting. Papers that do not comply with an established convention will be returned, and a penalty for late submission will apply.
- Make sure you are citing others' work appropriately and not committing plagiarism. More information on academic integrity policies can be found in the MSW Student Guide.
- Contact SSW Writing Assistance, if/as needed: phone: (734) 763-6259; email: ssw-cso@umich.edu
d. **Attendance and Class Participation**

This class involves a wide range of experiential learning exercises, and therefore, class attendance and participation are critical to achieving the full impact of the course. You are expected to actively participate in class discussions, small group discussions, and various in-class exercises, some of which will require submitting a written report at the end of the class.

If you have difficulties participating in discussion for linguistic, cultural or other reasons, let’s discuss them individually and explore ways in which you may become a more active participant in class. Class attendance will be taken at random, and any unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction. You need to inform the instructor of your absence as soon as is practically possible. Please review Policy on Class Attendance found in the MSW Student Guide.

**Use of electronic devices:** You are expected to be engaged and participating in class activities. Students are asked to turn off cell phones during class sessions. If you are utilizing an electronic device (e.g., a laptop computer), it is assumed that it is relevant to the class content and process. If not, the instructor reserves the right to request that the student not use a laptop during class.

**A Note on Scholarly Discourse:** What we will discuss in class involves controversial issues, such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, immigration, and sexual orientation. All of us come to this course with various experiences and values, as well as assumptions, prejudices, and stereotypes. Disagreements are expected and even welcomed as long as we respect diverse opinions and perspectives and refrain from attacking one another personally. Let us strive to remain open to diverse perspectives, which may conflict with our own.

e. **Grading**

We will be using a mastery-based, not a competitive, grading system. In other words, the grade you get will not depend on how well others in the class have done but on how well you have mastered the materials.

Letter grades ranging from “A” to “E” are earned, with “+” or “-” distinguishing the degree of performance. Specific expectations for each assignment are provided in a later section of this syllabus.

**Incompletes:** Incompletess are given only when it can be demonstrated that it would be unfair to hold the student to the stated time limits of the course. The student must formally request an incomplete from the instructor prior to the final week of classes.

Please review the MSW Student Guide for policies on grades and grievance procedures.

f. **Accommodations**

If you are in need of any accommodations for a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please let me know as soon as possible. Any information you provide about a disability and/or accommodation is private and confidential and will be treated as such. For more information and resources, please contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD, http://ssd.umich.edu/) at (734) 763-3000 / ssdoffice@umich.edu.
G. Class Recording and Course Materials

Audio and video recording 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.

h. COVID-19 Statement

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. Your participation in this course is conditional upon your adherence to all safety measures mandated by the state of Michigan and the University, including properly wearing a face covering in class and compliance with the University COVID-19 Vaccination Policy. Other applicable and additional safety measures may be described in the Campus Maize & Blueprint. Your ability to participate in this course 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 and those seeking an exemption related to the vaccination requirement should submit an exemption request through WolverineAccess. 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.

i. 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.

j. Academic Integrity

We adhere to high standards of academic integrity. The Library Research Guide on Academic Integrity in Social Work is available at http://guides.lib.umich.edu/swintegrity. Plagiarism is prohibited in any academic writing at the University of Michigan. Any student caught plagiarizing or cheating in any way will earn a failing grade in this course and may be expelled from the University of Michigan. More information on academic integrity policies can be found in the MSW Student Guide. Other forms of Academic and Professional Misconduct include a wide range of behaviors, such as abuse of confidentiality and obstruction of the academic activities and scholarly research of another (e.g., harassment, intimidation, or tampering with data, records and notes).
k. **Self and Group Care**

The course topics and materials have the potential to elicit distress, anxiety, a sense of helplessness, rage, and other strong and/or traumatic reactions. While these reactions are common and natural, they may be intense and may interfere with your personal and academic life. It is important to recognize your reactions - in other words, do not deny them, but explore and develop ways to process them. We as a group will acknowledge and address our reactions through class discussions, reflective activities, and other means. I hope we can create a mutually supportive learning environment for all of us in the class.

Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here: [https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources](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