



# SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

<b>Course title:</b>	Death, Loss, and Grief
<b>Course #/term:</b>	SW617(801) Winter, 2023
<b>Course Website:</b>	<a href="https://umich.zoom.us/j/96897037698">https://umich.zoom.us/j/96897037698</a>
<b>Live Class Meeting:</b>	Thursday, 6:00-8:00 p.m. via Canvas Zoom
<b>Credit hours:</b>	3
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	None
<b>Instructor:</b>	Debra Mattison
<b>Pronouns:</b>	She, her, hers
<b>Contact info:</b>	<b>Email:</b> debmatt@umich.edu <b>Phone:</b> 734-763-1624 You may expect a response within 48 hours Monday-Friday. Please put "SW617(801) in the subject line.
<b>Office:</b>	SSW 3841
<b>Office hours:</b>	Wednesdays 12-2:00 p.m. and by appointment

**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 as social workers, 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 we will create a class community that provides space that is a *safe space* to be open and vulnerable, to feel included, and to be accountable for your own learning, as well as a *brave 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. Students are also responsible for reading assignment instructions/grading rubrics and to be responsible for self-managing 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, PowerPoint presentations, and other relevant documents can be found on Canvas at <https://canvas.umich.edu>**

# 1. Course Statement

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## a. Course description

This course will address the theoretical framework of human loss and grief from a culturally and philosophically diverse perspective. Students will be provided with 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 will be focused on life span development and the meaning of death and loss at different ages.

Various types of loss will be discussed from an individual, family, and socio/cultural/ecological perspective. The importance of understanding trauma and its relationship to grief and loss will also be addressed. Coping and resiliency in loss will be 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 we will certainly learn many clinical skills in this course that will be readily applicable to social work practice, **this course is not designed to be a methods and intervention course.** This course acknowledges that we must seek to understand the grieving process before we engage in interventions, and thus will provide an in-depth foundation for learning and implementing interventions.

## b. Course objectives and competencies

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- **Identify** primary needs, concerns, and issues that arise at end of life including ethical, legal, and decision-making challenges and conflicts
- **Compare** evidence-informed primary grief theoretical models for understanding bereavement and the grieving process
- **Explain** foundational interventions that support grievers and facilitate the grief process
- **Illustrate** the impact of the different types of loss for diverse populations grieving both death-related and non-death-related losses
- **Apply** a developmental life span approach to understanding the grief process including historical transmission of loss
- **Analyze** factors affecting diverse responses and reactions as well as their impact to death and loss client systems, the grief process, and expression of grief
- **Assess** types and risk factors of complicated grief and/or prolonged grief disorder
- **Evaluate** clinician's loss history and death system, potential impact on working with clients, and maintaining resiliency through self-exploration

**CSWE Course Competencies:** Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) 2015 Course objectives are intentionally connected to School of Social Work/Council on Social Work Education [Competencies and Practice Behaviors](#) so that the School can measure/assess student outcomes at both the course and curriculum/program levels. SW617 competencies:  
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 is an online course. Each week, you will be assigned readings, view lecture materials, watch videos, engage in activities and discussions within the live class time, and complete individual assignments. All tasks can be found in each weekly Canvas module. Make sure to read each module thoroughly each week.

This course encourages a “flipped classroom” format in which **students complete pre-class work (readings, videos, etc.) and come prepared to demonstrate their understanding** of the readings as well as raising questions and relevant areas for discussion.

Each week we will have a two hour synchronous live (in real time) session which will be conducted via Zoom weekly with attendance expected. So preparation for class is essential for the learning we do during the 2 hour in-class time.

This course uses [a relationship-based, engaged approach to learning](#). A variety of collaborative learning methods will be used to promote knowledge and skill development including interactive lectures with active student contribution, readings, in-class application exercises, clinical scenarios, videos and written assignments. Understanding and the ability to apply core class concepts will be a focus.

### d. Student time expectation

Students are expected to read assigned materials in advance of each class, submit assignments on time, and participate in live (synchronous) class meetings and asynchronous discussions. Weekly modules are provided to guide you. This is a 3-credit online course. This means that, as a student, you are expected to spend an total of approximately 112.5 hours throughout the 13 weeks (i.e., **8.5 hours per week**), including **synchronous and asynchronous** classroom time. For more details, please go to the [UM Center for Academic Innovation website](#).

### e. Intensive focus on privilege oppression, diversity and social justice (PODS)

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

Students are invited and expected to actively contribute from their experiences, field placement practice and knowledge of assigned readings, etc. to help develop and support a vision of social justice, recognize and reduce mechanisms that result in oppression and injustice. We will seek to integrate intersectionality and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self-knowledge and self-awareness to facilitate PODS-focused learning in the context of grief and loss.

Learn more about SSW Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (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>

f. Relationship to social work ethics and values

The Social Work MSW program is one of professional preparation. In addition to acquiring theoretical knowledge, students are expected to acquire and demonstrate professional values, to integrate knowledge across progressive weeks of the course, to develop professional skills and competencies to effectively represent the ethics and values of the profession.

This course seeks to increase awareness of the ethical issues and decision making at end-of-life and death and dying. Students will be provided opportunities to evaluate ethical issues involved in death and loss assessment and interventions, and discuss the impact of the social workers' own values and reactions to these issues.

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 (2021)

<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/>.

## 2. My teaching philosophy

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a. Learning is in service to our clients.

b. Relationship focused partnership

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

Many times learning experiences can be approached from **transactional** 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. I am **dually committed** to supporting you and your learning and assisting in removing barriers when possible, while also being committed to accountability to demonstrating competencies needed to serve clients.

c. 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.

d. 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 learning opportunities at a professional competency-based graduate school level.

e. How we communicate with each other

It can often be easier to talk [about](#) people than to talk [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, rather than holding on to them and letting them detract from your learning experience in this course.

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

f. Instructor communication

Email is the best way to reach me. My intent is to respond to emails within **24–48 hours Monday–Friday**. Email is not monitored regularly on weekends or holidays. Please put SW617(810) in the subject line.

I welcome communicating and connecting with each of you throughout the semester. I am happy to make individually scheduled appointments to ensure that you have access to discuss any class interests, feedback, questions, or concerns. [Please don't hesitate to make an appointment with me.](#)

### 3. Expectations of students and use-of-self

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a. Demonstrate School of Social Work technical standards

Please review [these Technical Standards](#) which all students agree to and sign upon entry into this program. They describe what each student must satisfy with or without reasonable accommodations, to enroll in, fully participate in, progress through, and graduate from the U-M SSW program.

The 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 specific abilities and attributes are essential for the profession and these apply in the classroom, field placements, our school, university and broader community and societal context. These standards provide expectations regarding three areas: communication, intellectual and cognitive skills, and emotional and behavioral readiness

## b. Personal accountability in learning

Personal accountability shifts the focus from being solely about what one is taught, to focusing on 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 developing practice-readiness 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.

## c. Professional use-of-self

Respect for others

- The SSW Technical Standards note that “Students must be willing and able to maintain respectful relationships with peers, faculty, field instructors, staff, clients and client systems and other professionals.”
- 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 beyond simply sharing our own perspectives.
- 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 that we are trying to prevent and advocate not happen to others or ourselves.

## d. In-class application of NASW Code of Ethics (2021)

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, 2.01 a and b)
- It is expected that all students conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Code of Ethics and demonstrate ethics-informed 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 in 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.

#### e. 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, not acknowledging the direct quotation). Unacceptable paraphrasing which does not use one's own words and structure, but rather changes a few words of another's text and/or rearranging words with failure to acknowledge that the content is not original constitutes plagiarism. 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.

#### f. Presence

**Presence is essential and valued.**

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.** Simply physically attending class does equate with presence. Presence involves attention and intention.

**Presence is crucial** to our ultimate goal of service to our clients. Predictability, reliability and consistency ("being there") are core to any relationship and are incredibly important to our clients and our employers. Thus, "being here" in class with predictability, reliability and consistency is an important core competency for this course. Presence is perhaps one of the most important interventions we offer to our clients and colleagues, and thus we will practice the challenging art of presence throughout this semester in this class.

#### g. Digital citizenship and presence: Use of phones, computers and electronic devices

We seek to pay more attention to each other in class than to screens. The concept of "digital citizenship" is a complex topic that has become increasingly important and will continue to evolve as we explore and learn from data regarding the impact of technology on individuals and communities as we learn and interact together.

We seek to be respectful digital citizens with awareness of the potential impact of our digital use during class on others. In this class, we will be intentional about digital etiquette and respectful and ethical use of electronic devices for professional use.

To foster an environment of safety, openness and presence, you are respectfully asked to monitor email, text messages and general use of your phone during breaks so as not to distract from your own and others' learning.

The use of non-class related computer/phone/electronic devices/reading materials/other non-class related activities **will be considered the equivalent of being absent from class** and may impact student opportunities to demonstrate competencies of presence and class contribution.

**Taking notes** is encouraged as an evidence-informed practice that assists with learning and retention of information and can help you prepare for class quizzes and to integrated required course concepts into assignments.

## 4. Class Requirements

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### a. Technology requirements

Reliable internet access will be needed for engagement with this course. Access will also be needed to a professional word processor and a presentation program such as Google Suite or Microsoft Office to complete assignments. For technological support, please contact the [U-M ITS Service Center](#).

### b. Canvas Zoom login

**Please log in through UM Canvas Zoom account using your umich.edu authentication and the course password is required. You will not be able to access the live Zoom session without following this required login process.** Watch [this video](#) for details.

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 things. You can merge your Zoom accounts through [this link](#). Also, please regularly update your Zoom account to ensure access to new features that may be used in class.

### c. Live class contribution and use of self

Our live Zoom sessions are the equivalent of our “classroom,” and we will strive to create an active classroom similar to an in-person classroom in terms of professional behavior and social norms and etiquette. Please use a space for class that allows you to best minimize visual and auditory distractions for yourself and others in the virtual classroom. Be aware of the impact on others related to your background, movement, location, etc.

**Students are invited and expected to have their cameras on throughout the entire class.** Having cameras on is a way to increase engagement in contributing your part to class learning and is helpful in assessing student learning and understanding. Visual cues are also important to **accessibility** for many who use these cues in their processing of information.

Cameras on also provides **valuable real-world practice and skill development** and demonstration with tele-health communications, online use-of-self and self-managing and maintaining attention to and presence with online clients. Students have consistently reported that having cameras on in this class has made a significant difference in both their experience of and learning in this class.



**Please speak with me individually at the beginning of the term if you have circumstances which may interfere with you meeting camera-on expectations.** We can explore ways to be ensure space for your voice through intentional contributions and verbal space for you to regularly speak during class. For students concerned about sharing personal environments, we suggest enabling a [virtual background](#).

**Recording:**

We will not be recording this class due to the personal and sensitive nature of our topics and class discussions.

d. Active contribution and participation: “Doing your part”

In service to our clients, we must learn to use our voices on their behalf. Class contribution and participation provide the opportunity to develop speaking, advocacy, discussion and facilitation skills. Active engagement and sharing of your diverse ideas, perspectives and experiences are highly valued, invited and expected in both full class discussion and breakout room discussions.

While observing and being attentive listeners is valued, this alone is not sufficient in developing engagement and participation skills that directly impact social work practice and service to clients. All students are invited to use this safe space as an opportunity to practice and develop verbal skills needed to serve clients, even when it can be sometimes challenging and/or uncomfortable.

We often state that we like to listen and learn from others. And this requires that sometimes we are listening and sometimes we are doing our part to verbally contribute ideas and content related discussion for others to listen to.

Students are expected to be prepared each week to initiate, to be invited and to be called upon to contribute knowledgeable sharing of their understanding, ideas, reactions and applications from readings and integration across progressive weeks of class both in full class discussion and in small groups. Doing your part is not solely about frequency, but also about the level and quality of preparedness and thoughtful, integrative analysis and application of course concepts.

Ways to contribute

You are expected to do your part in class learning by completing assigned readings in order to actively participate in full class discussions, pair/share and small group activities with reparation and intention. Each student’s learning is dependent upon every other student’s engagement.

In addition to responding to questions and discussions in class, here 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 from your field, the news, life experiences, etc.
- Prepare and raise a course-related question you have been pondering to the whole class

e. Attendance and active participation

Students have requested that their educational experience provide preparation and readiness

for professional practice environments. Thus, our attendance policy seeks to prepare one for practice by modeling professional behavior when absent. A significant part of learning in this course is interactive and experiential with discussion and in-class activities 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 learning and demonstration of competencies in service to our clients which including attendance, class engagement and individual contribution to class learning.

#### f. Absences

Life happens and individuals may experience absences related to personal choices regarding prioritization of competing demands, as well those due to uncontrollable events and circumstances. I believe students are the best equipped to prioritize and manage their time and choices and to be responsible for any missed classes. Professional behavior in academic and professional practice environments involves **taking initiative to communicate** with the instructor/your team regarding absences, and **to initiate taking responsibility for what is missed** when absent, all in service to our clients.

In this class, **absences ARE NOT determined as “excused” or “unexcused”** but rather as a reality that may occur, just as they would in employment and practice environments. Active and advanced communication with the instructor regarding both planned and unplanned absences is essential. Students are asked to demonstrate practice-readiness behaviors related to communication and responsibility for follow-up regarding class content/activities missed—again, just as one would do in professional practice.

Timely communication regarding planned and unplanned absences is essential.

Students are asked to demonstrate practice-readiness behavior by:

- Providing the instructor with advanced notification as early as possible for planned absences (at minimum 24 hours), and notification of an unanticipated absence when reasonably able to do so.
- As relevant preparation for practice, students are responsible for class readings, assignments and in-class competence learning that occurred in their absence.
- Initiating action for one’s responsibility for content, activities, announcements, etc. missed when absent as one would be expected to do in the workplace and with clients.
- An opportunity is given to all students to choose to complete a competency demonstration make-up assignment for up to two absences (See Canvas for competency make-up details).
- Competency Make-Up Assignments: It is up to the student to initiate and complete make-up assignments no later than the following class after the absence. Competency Make-up assignments will be graded as Pass-Fail. An absence without initiation and on time Canvas submission of a competency make-up assignment will result in a 2 point attendance and competency deduction per absence. See Canvas assignment for details.

Note: If you are absent from the synchronous live class, you are still responsible for any assignments due that day. Please review the [Policy on Class Attendance](#) found in the MSW Student Guide.

#### g. More than 2 absences

More than 2 absences for any reason cannot be sufficiently addressed solely with established competency make-up assignments. This level of absence will require students to initiate further discussion with the instructor to explore potential effective options for demonstration of course learning objectives and competencies. It is the student's responsibility for initiating discussion to address absences as early after they occur as possible (within one week) as the course builds on cumulative knowledge. If no communication is initiated by a student and/or no plan has been agreed upon within 2 weeks of the absence, adequate make-up competency without competency deduction may not be possible.

#### h. Partial absences

The SSW Technical Standards state that "Students must have the ability to be punctual and dependable, prioritize responsibilities, manage time and attend class..." Promptness in attendance is valued as an opportunity to demonstrate engagement, respect and courtesy and contributes to creating a safe environment for sharing among one another. We will begin class and resume class promptly after designated break(s).

Partial absences can negatively impact your learning and the learning of your class colleagues related to missed content and discussion and decreased opportunities for demonstration of class contribution. Partial absences may include any of the following: Lack of engaged presence (i.e. use of electronic devices for non-class related activities, late arrival after class start time, late return from breaks, not being in assigned breakout rooms, and/or early departure before class ends.

## 4. Texts

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#### a. Course readings

The required readings in this course matter. We will focus on specific engagement with and discussion of the required readings and on students' demonstrated competency in application of the readings in class discussions and activities and in all assignments.

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

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 specifically designated assignments and to pursue areas of interest.

## **Grades of A will require completion of all assigned required 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 competence demonstration (A) from grades of standard competence (B). Superior ratings in Professional Use-of-Self will require completion of all assigned readings.

You may also need do literature searches and additional reading to meet some assignments and to pursue areas of interest.

## **Two required course texts**

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)** Students often compare textbook prices on Amazon, Chegg, eTextbook and other book suppliers for purchase and/or renting.

Here are additional 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.**

**You will need to rent or purchase this text.**

This text provides a broad overview and many additional reading references.

### **Renting a Textbook**

You can find purchase and rental information on this text by going to Wolverine Access and selecting this course and clicking on “viewing textbooks for the class” in the upper right corner.

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.

Note: If you choose to use a different edition that listed on the syllabus, assigned page numbers will vary and you are responsible for making these page adjustments by investigating updates and assigned page differences.

**2. Worden, J. W. (2018). *Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner* (5th ed.). Springer Publishing Company.**

**This text is available electronically for free through the UM library using this link:**

<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lib/umichigan/detail.action?docID=423643>

This text serves as a clinical practice oriented text.

## 6. Class Schedule

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<b>Week and Topic</b>
<b>Module 1:</b> Attitudes toward Death and Dying; Historical Perspective & Current Views
<b>Module 2:</b> The Dying process
<b>Module 3:</b> Grief Models and Theories
<b>Module 4:</b> Complicated Grief
<b>Module 5:</b> Loss and Grief in Adulthood: Life Stage Losses
<b>Module 6:</b> Loss and Grief in Childhood & Adolescence
<b>Module 7:</b> Ambiguous Loss and Grief
<b>Module 8:</b> Clinical Assessment and Counseling Principles in Facilitating Grief
<b>Module 9:</b> Suicide Loss and Grief; Traumatic Death
<b>Module 10:</b> Medical, Ethical, Legal and Technology Issues; Rights of the Dying
<b>Module 11:</b> Grief and Diverse Loss Topics
<b>Module 12:</b> Honoring the Dead: Rituals and Funeral
<b>Module 13:</b> The Counselors Own Grief: Caring for Self

## 7. Assignments

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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 course assignments is to promote integration and competent application of concepts in service to clients.

You are empowered to self-direct your learning with some opportunity to choose areas of interest for some specific assignments.

Please read assignment descriptions at the beginning of the semester so you are clear about them and have ample time ask questions and discuss any concerns. If you have any questions or concerns about any assignment for any reason, please let me know early in the semester so adjustments may be considered.

## a. Assignment overview

Class material can often be emotionally challenging, 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.

Students are responsible for reading the assignment instructions and grading rubrics and to self-manage due dates. After reading the assignment instructions, you are encouraged to initiate asking additional questions regarding assignments and grading prior to completion and submission.

### **Assignments total 100 points of written work, activities, presence and participation.**

Written assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. the night before the relevant in-class session unless otherwise indicated. Course assignments are due as scheduled even if one is absent from class. Assignments will be graded based on specific competency demonstration criteria using rubrics that are provided in advance to help you best meet criteria.

## b. 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 articulate ideas clearly and competently 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](mailto: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 specifically designated 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: <https://apastyle.apa.org/products>

### **Written assignments criteria rubrics and submission**

Assignment descriptions and grading rubrics have been provided to clearly define assignment criteria and expectations and grading rubrics. Please review these prior to completing and submitting assignments to help you demonstrate your learning and competencies.

All assignments, unless otherwise noted, 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** and could lead to a late submission.

c. Late submission of assignments

Meeting deadlines, advanced planning and timeliness in completing tasks are all important in demonstrating SSW Technical Standards (“Students must have the ability to observe deadlines...” and preparation for practice and employment readiness. Thus, on time completion is a competency criteria of every assignment. Late assignments will receive a competency deduction (one point for each day/partial day after the due date/time ).

d. Extension of due date

Beyond common life experiences such as being busy and having multiple deadlines, students may occasionally experience extraordinary and compelling reasons which prevent on time completion of an assignment they have been actively working on.

Extensions due to unusual circumstances requested prior to the assignment due date (at least 24 hours when reasonably possible) will be considered on a case-by-case basis and are generally for short extensions of time (i.e. 1–2 days).

Requests for an extensions must be accompanied by submission of the work done thus far on the assignment and a specific plan and date for completion. Please be prepared to meet these criteria when requesting an extension.

**Timely communication** with the instructor is key in evaluating extension requests. Extension requests on or after the due date are not congruent with practice-ready preparation and generally will not be considered.

**Late assignments are not accepted after the final in-class meeting of class at the end of the term and** grades will be submitted based on current completed work. In some situations, students may follow guidelines for submission of a request for consideration of an Incomplete Grade if appropriate.

e. Assignments and due dates

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Student online introduction of self to each other	Jan. 11	0
My Intentions for this class	Jan. 11	0
Pre-Class Knowledge Check #1	Jan. 18	1
Post-Class Discussion Board	Jan. 19	5
Pre-Class Knowledge Check #2	Feb. 1	1
Competency Demonstration Quiz#1 (in class)	Feb. 2	8

RTAN #1 Loss History	Feb. 8	10
Pre-Class Knowledge Check #3	Feb. 15	1
Competency Demonstration Quiz #2 (in class)	Feb. 23	12
Insight Interview	March 15	15
RTAN #2 Advanced Directive & Durable Power of Attorney	March 22	10
Grief and Loss Diversity Article & Presentation	March 29	12
RTAN #3 Life Expectancy & Funeral Planning	April 5	10
RTAN #4 Final Reflection & Take-Away Learning	April 12	5
Use of Self/Contribution Rating*	April 12	10

\*NOTE: Class participation and “Professional Use of Self” are ongoing throughout the course. Therefore, students are encouraged to engage in ongoing demonstration of these competency behaviors across all modules.

## 8. Grading

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**Academic standards of demonstrated competencies matter to our clients, and the responsibilities with which we are entrusted as we 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.” Grades are not based on effort alone, but on demonstrated competencies. 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 your own individual learning.

Time constraints are validated as a part of life, and thus, it is acknowledged there are times when not all assignments are completed at the outstanding demonstration of competency level of an A grade. Meaningful learning can still occur.

### a. Feedback

SSW Technical Standards note that “Students must have the ability to [accept and integrate practice constructive feedback](#) back received in both the classroom and field stings.”

I will provide feedback comments and often pose questions to ponder and comments to encourage reflection, deepen your application of concepts, consider different perspectives, etc. These comments do not necessarily imply that there is a lack of demonstration in meeting the assignment criteria. Feedback is a conversation and an invitation to consider and ponder. Comments on assignments are intended to be of greater value to your learning than just a letter or numerical grade.



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 as this often where learning may occur.

**All assignments have rubrics and consider these general 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 and apply concepts/content across the term
- Demonstrate professional use-of-self and social work values and ethics (e.g. PODS, strengths-based perspective, anti-racism perspective)
- Integration, application and demonstration of completion and understanding assigned readings and additional literature when appropriate
- On time completion by assigned due date/time

**Final Grades** are based on demonstration of course competencies including quality of the work, demonstration of completion and integration of assigned readings, ability to apply concepts, professional use-of-self and class contribution 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 on one specific assignment rather than an overall course percentage for than individual assignment. For example, an 8 out of 10 on an individual assignment a loss of 2 points of the available total 100 points that can be demonstrated, not 80% for the overall course.

**Final letter grades are defined as follows:**

<b>A</b> grades	A (95-100), and A- (90-94)	<b>Exceptional, superior</b> demonstration of understanding and exceptional depth in demonstration of competencies
<b>B</b> grades	B+ (87-89), B (84-86), B- (80-83)	<b>Adequate</b> understanding and demonstration of competencies
<b>C</b> grades	C+ (77-79), C (74-76) and C- (70-73)	<b>Limited</b> , inconsistent, emerging understanding and demonstration of competencies
<b>D</b> grades	Below 70 Carries no credit	<b>Deficient</b> demonstration of understand and competencies
<b>E</b> grades	No credit	

**b. Grades of incomplete**

A grade of "I" (meaning incomplete) may be given in **rare situations** in which illness or other significant unforeseen, extraordinary and compelling circumstances prevent the completion of work of the course during the regular semester. If more than one-third of the required course assignments are incomplete and/or a student has 4 or more total absences (full or partial

combined), it becomes very difficult to demonstrate learning and competency demonstration through incomplete work make-up and an incomplete grade request may be not be approved.

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. Incomplete grade submissions require a definite, written plan that clearly specifies the work to be completed and deadlines. The deadline for final completion of all work cannot exceed 2 terms after the conclusion of the course to receive academic credit. NOTE: "I" grades remain on student academic records permanently, even once a grade is assigned.

If no contact has been initiated by the student with the instructor regarding incomplete work and/or no specific written plan has been established to complete work by the end of the last class session, a course grade will be submitted based on the completed work submitted thus far. This may potentially result in a grade which carries no credit.

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.

## 9. Class Recording and Course Materials

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Due to the nature and sensitive nature of this this course content and class discussions, we do not plan to record class sessions.

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. If a class session were to be recorded, students will be notified a recording is occurring. Additional information on class recordings can be found in the [Recording and Privacy Concerns FAQ](#).

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.

### **Class PowerPoints**

[Class PowerPoints may NOT be shared](#), reproduced, distributed to others, sold or published in whole or in part, in any way without written consent of the instructor.

## 10. Additional policies, information and resources

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### **Health-related class absences**

Please evaluate your own health status regularly and refrain from 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 and provided with alternative learning opportunities and options for competency make-up assignments for missed sessions. Please notify me by email about your absence as soon as practical, so you can initiate competency make-up assignments. Documentation (a doctor's note) for medical excuses is *not* required.

### **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

All students are welcomed to discuss their individual learning needs with me so we can seek to remove barriers and maximize learning.

The University of Michigan promotes efforts to provide equal access and a culture of inclusion through provision of reasonable accommodations without changing the essential elements of coursework or academic requirements. If you are in need of any accommodations or have an SSD accommodation letter, please let me know at your earliest convenience to allow adequate time to meet, discuss and make arrangements to implement accommodations to best assist you. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

If you anticipate or experience academic barriers that may be due to disability, including but not limited to chronic medical conditions, hearing and vision needs, individual learning needs, mental health, etc. and have not contact **Services for Students with Disabilities**, you may reach them at: **Phone:** (734) 763-3000; **Email:** [ssdoffice@umich.edu](mailto: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