



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

SW 617, Section 002
Death, Loss, and Grief
Winter, 2023
Monday 6:00-9:00 p.m. Room SSWB 1636
Email: debmatt@umich.edu

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She, her, hers
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My intent is to respond to emails within 24-48 hours Monday-Friday. Email is not monitored regularly on weekends. **Please put “SW617 Monday class” in the subject line.**

Office Hours: I welcome communicating and connecting with each of you throughout the semester. I am happy to make scheduled appointments with you to ensure that you have access to discuss class interests, feedback, questions or concerns during office hours on Wednesdays 12:00-1:30 p.m. or at other times that may fit better with your schedule.

WELCOME! It is well that you have come.

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. 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. Thus, this course has broad relevance and application to your professional practice.

This class will be taught at a [competency-based professional master’s degree level](#). The course is an in-depth academic and experiential exploration of death, loss and grief that invites you to read, see, hear, explore and experience content related to a diverse range of loss and expressions of grief which is all around us in our professional and personal lives.

The content of this course will likely have an emotional impact on you and for some, may be triggering at times. We will be witness to challenging content and difficult stories. It is important to thoughtfully [consider your readiness](#) for this intensive content at this time in your life.

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, feel included and to be accountable for your own learning. It will also be 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.**

This syllabus serves as our guiding contact for the term. [You are responsible for reading it prior to the start of class](#) to ensure you understand the plan for our time together and can ask questions early regarding content, readings, assignments, format, expectations and any other concerns you may have. Syllabus changes may be made as appropriate at any time at the instructor’s discretion to meet class needs. I welcome and encourage your questions and feedback.

Learning is in service to our clients.

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

“Show up. Be Seen. Answer the Call.” - Brené Brown

“I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.” - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Syllabus Table of Contents

My syllabus is indeed detailed. Please don’t let that scare you. I invite you to see this detail as a [commitment](#) I have to provide information to help you succeed in reaching your learning goals. My intention is to [provide many invitations for learning](#) in these pages. I hope it will be a helpful resource to guide you through our time together.

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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, but not limited to the type of loss, socioeconomic and cultural factors, individual identity, positionality, personality, family functioning and social structures.

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 across the life span. 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 experiences 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. SW717: Grief Counseling: Principles and Practice is the methods focused course regarding loss and grief that you may want to consider after this course.

Course learning objectives and competencies

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

1. **Identify** primary needs, concerns, and issues that arise at the end of life, including ethical, legal, and decision-making challenges and conflicts
2. **Compare** evidence-informed primary grief theoretical models for understanding bereavement and the grieving process
3. **Explain** foundational interventions that support grievers and facilitate the grieving process
4. **Illustrate** the impact of the different types of loss for diverse populations grieving both death-related and non-death-related losses
5. **Apply** a developmental life span approach to understanding the grief process, including historical transmission of loss
6. **Analyze** factors affecting diverse responses and reactions and their impact to death and loss client systems, the grief process, and expression of grief
7. **Assess** types and risk factors of complicated grief and/or prolonged grief disorder
8. **Evaluate** the 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

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

b. Course design

This course is a three hour in-person course conducted synchronously (in real time) at the School of Social Work with in-person attendance expected.

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 and the ability to apply core class concepts will be a focus.

c. 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 and behaviors, to integrate knowledge across progressive weeks of the course, to develop professional skills and 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. In addition, students will evaluate ethical issues involved in death and loss assessment and interventions, and discuss the impact of the social worker's own values and reactions to these issues.

Social work and interprofessional 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>

International Federation of Social Workers(IFSW) Global Social Workers Statement of Ethical Principles <https://www.ifsw.org/global-social-work-statement-of-ethical-principles/>.

d. 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 seek to illuminate injustices and oppression that impact loss and grief while supporting evidence-informed approaches to reduce disfranchised 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 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 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, organizations, communities and society.

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

Course assignments are designed to be incremental, building and demonstrating core competencies over time with a variety of smaller assignments rather than focusing on a few large assignments. My commitment is to provide organized, meaningful course material and intentionally designed learning opportunities at a professional competency-based graduate school level.

2.5 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 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.

3. Expectations of students

3.1 Demonstrate School of Social Work Technical Standards

Please review the **Technical Standards** which all students agree to and sign upon entry into this program. They 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 also apply in the classroom, field placements, our school, the university and broader community. These standards provide expectations regarding three areas: communication, intellectual and cognitive skills, and emotional and behavioral readiness.

3.2 Personal accountability in learning

Personal accountability shifts the focus from solely being about what you are taught, to focusing on self-determination and what **you intentionally choose 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 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.

3.3 Professional use-of-self

Respect for others

- The SSW Technical Standards note that “Students much be willing and able to maintain respectful relationships with peer, 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 even when it is different from our own and to engage 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.

3.4 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.

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 quizzes, tests, evaluative materials 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.

3.6 Presence

a. 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 not equate with presence. Presence involves attention and intention. Presence is perhaps one of the most important interventions we offer to our clients, and thus we will practice the challenging 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 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. Our class 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 and presence: Use of phones, computers and electronic devices

The concept of “digital citizenship” and digital etiquette with respectful and ethical use of electronic devices is a complex topic that has become increasingly important as data continues to emerge regarding the impact of technology on individuals and communities as we learn and interact together. 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 can be a disruption to others (*CRLT Occasional Papers, No. 30 Use of Laptops in the Classroom: Research and Best Practices*).

Our intent is to be respectful digital citizens with awareness of the potential impact of our digital use during class on others. To foster an environment of safety, openness and presence, the focus of class time will center on paying more attention to each other in class than to screens. Thus our class will promote a “closed screen classroom” with the use of electronic devices/screens being minimal and used **only for specific class related activities**.

You are respectfully asked to monitor email and text messages **either: 1. during breaks or 2. by stepping out of the classroom as needs arise** so as not to distract 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 your opportunities for demonstration of presence and class contribution.

c. Attendance and absence policy

Preparation for Social Work practice

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 behaviors when absent.

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). This class focuses on learning and demonstrating competencies in service to our clients including assessment of attendance, class engagement and contribution.

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 your instructor/your work team regarding absences, and **to initiate taking responsibility for what is missed** when absent, all in service to our clients.

d. Absences

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. Students are asked to demonstrate practice-readiness behaviors related to communication and responsibility for follow-up regarding class content/activities missed as one would do in professional practice.

Active and timely communication with the instructor regarding both 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 known planned absences (a minimum of 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. Remember, learning competencies are ultimately in service to the client not to the instructor.
- 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).
- It is up to the student to initiate the Competency Make-Up Assignments with the instructor and complete them **no later than the next class after the absence**. Competency Make-up assignments will be graded as "adequately completed" or "not adequately completed/not complete."
- An absence without initiation and Canvas submission of a competency make-up assignment by the next class following the absence will result in not earning the weekly attendance and competency demonstration point (1 point per class).
- Pre-established course assignments are due as scheduled even if one is absent from class.

e. More than 2 absences

More than 2 absences 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 suggest and discuss effective options for demonstration of course learning objectives. It is the student's responsibility for initiating discussion and the student's ideas to address absences as early after they occur as possible.

f. 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 a way to demonstrate engagement, respect and courtesy and contributes to creating a safe environment for sharing among one another and our guest speakers. We will begin class and resume class promptly after designated break(s).

Partial absences can negatively impact learning and can result in missed content and discussion and decreased opportunities for demonstration of competencies. Partial absences may include any of the following: Lack of engaged presence (i.e. use of electronic devices for non-class related activities during class, side conversations), late arrival after class start time, late return from breaks, and/or early departure before class ends.

Life happens and when late arrival is unavoidable, please enter into the classroom space with awareness, quietly and with as little disruption as possible to what is occurring in the class.

g. Contribution and “doing your part”

We often state that we may like and prefer to listen and learn from others. Exquisite listening is indeed a desired skill. **And listening requires that someone is talking for us to listen to.** Thus, in this class, sometimes we will need to do our part in being listeners and at other times will need to do our part to verbally contribute ideas and content related discussion for others to listen to.

In service to our clients, we must learn to use our voices on their behalf. Contributing to class discussions provides the opportunity to develop speaking, advocacy, discussion and facilitation skills that directly impact social work practice and service to clients. Active engagement and sharing of your diverse ideas, perspectives and experiences are highly valued, invited and expected in both full class discussion and breakout discussions.

Students are expected to be **prepared each week** to initiate, be invited, and 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. Engaged contribution is not simply about frequency, but also about the level and **quality of preparedness and thoughtful, integrative analysis and application of course concepts.**

h. Ways to contribute

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

In addition to responding to questions and discussions during class, here are a number of ways to prepare to contribute your part in class discussion:

- 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

Even though it can be challenging and may involve “stretching,” all are invited to use our class space as an opportunity to practice and develop verbal skills needed to serve and advocate for clients.

4. Text and class materials

4.1 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.

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 competency (A) from grades of adequate competency (B).

Grades of A will require completion of all assigned required readings.

4.2 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

Students often compare textbook prices on Amazon, Chegg, eTextbook and other book suppliers for purchase and/or renting. Here are 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 likely need/want to buy or rent this text. This book is on reserve in the UM graduate library.

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.

Renting a Textbook

You can find text purchase and rental information 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](http://vitalsource.com) 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 in assigned page differences.

2. Worden, J. W. (2018). *Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner* (5th edition). New York: Springer Publishing Company. *This text serves as a clinical practice oriented text.*

Available to read online or download through UM inter-library loan:

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

4.2 Application of required readings will be a focus in this class.

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

- How would you summarize or paraphrase the main concepts you read?
- What did you learn from the reading(s): new concepts, theories, perspectives, theories, terminology?
- How do the readings relate to current events, diverse individuals, privilege, oppression and social justice? A global perspective?
- What reflections and/or questions do you have about the readings?
- How does this reading relate to other course concepts we have discussed in previous sessions?
- How might the information from the readings apply to your professional practice?

Relevant websites are listed in Canvas in the resource area at the top.

[Additional relevant handouts](#) will be provided via Canvas. Additional reference materials specific to class topics will be discussed/provided throughout the term.

5.0 Assignment descriptions and rubrics

Assignments are designed to use a variety of evaluation methods including quizzes, written papers, classroom activities and discussions and presentations 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 specific assignment(s).

Assignment descriptions and grading rubrics have been provided to clearly define assignment criteria and grading rubrics. 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.

5.1 Assignment expectations

Writing and communication skills are essential to effective professional practice. As professionals, our ability to articulate ideas clearly and competently on behalf of our clients, our organizations, our profession and ourselves has great impact and is thus an essential competency.

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 located 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>
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>

5.2 Written assignments submission

All assignments, unless otherwise noted, are to be typed double-spaced 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** which could lead to late submission.

5.3 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 demonstration deduction (one point for each day/partial day after the due date/time).

5.4 Extension of due date

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 (those beyond common life experiences such as being busy and having multiple deadlines) may be requested prior to the assignment due date (at least 24 hours when reasonably possible) and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Extensions are generally used for short extensions of time (i.e. 1–2 days). **Timely communication** with the instructor is key in evaluating extension requests.

[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.

Extension requests on or after the due date are not congruent with practice-ready preparation and generally will not be considered.

5.5 Incomplete Assignments at end of term

Late assignments are not accepted after the final in-class meeting of class at the end of the term. If course assignments are not completed by this last class meeting, students may explore potential appropriateness and consideration of an Incomplete Grade.

6. Grading

[Academic standards matter to our clients, and the responsibilities with which we are entrusted as we work with and on behalf of them.](#)

Grades are based on assessment of the demonstration of competencies and are “demonstrated” rather than “given.” Grades are not based on effort alone, but on learning and growth throughout

the semester, improvements based on feedback given and 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.](#)

6.1 Time spent on coursework

While time needed to complete required readings and assignments may vary from student to student and week to week, with some weeks requiring less time and other requiring more time, using a general formula can be helpful in your planning. Graduate school standards anticipate that for every credit hour spent in the classroom, students will spend additional time outside of the classroom to engage with the material and complete readings and assignments at a level of mastery. In compliance with United States Department of Education requirements, the School of Social Work utilizes a 1:2 ratio as a guideline: for every one hour of classroom instruction each week, approximately two hours of out-of-class activity is anticipated.

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, advanced demonstration level of an A grade and meaningful learning and demonstration of competency can still occur.

6.2 Feedback

[Feedback comments on assignments are intended to be of greater value to your learning than a letter grade.](#)

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 settings.”

I strive to provide meaningful feedback comments and often pose questions to ponder and comments to encourage reflection, deepen your application of concepts, consider different perspectives, etc. [You are encouraged to read this feedback and incorporate it](#) into future assignments to demonstrate your learning and competency progression.

Feedback 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 further. 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 these discussions are often where learning also may occur.

All assignments will be graded using these general principles along with specific provided rubrics:

- 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 of assigned readings, ability to apply concepts, professional use-of-self, class engagement and 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 rather than an overall course percentage. For example, an 8 out of 10 on an individual assignment a loss of 2 points out of the available total 100 points that can be demonstrated.

Final letter grades are defined as follows:

A grades	A (95-100), and A- (90-94)	Exceptional, superior competency demonstration
B grades	B+ (87-89), B (84-86), B- (80-83)	Adequate competency demonstration
C grades	C+ (77-79), C (74-76) and C- (70-73)	Limited competency demonstration
D grades	Below 70 Carries no credit	Deficient competency demonstration
E grades	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.

6.3 Grades of incomplete

Incomplete grades can be given in rare situations in which significant unforeseen, extraordinary and compelling reasons prevent completion of work by the end of the term. Incomplete grades are not intended to address ongoing, cumulative uncompleted assignments that have been delayed until the end of the semester as this has a negative impact on adequate demonstration of competencies which progressively build on each assignment.

Students are responsible for initiating advanced contact with the instructor well before the last day of class to request consideration of an incomplete grade. Incomplete grade requests require a definite, written plan that clearly specifies the work to be completed and deadlines that is mutually agreed upon by the student and the instructor. Per university policy, 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 more than one-third of the required course assignments are incomplete and/or a student has been absent more than one-third of the class (full or partial absences combined), an incomplete grade may be considered in extraordinary situations, but is not guaranteed.

If no contact has been initiated by the student with the instructor before the end of the last class session regarding incomplete work and/or incomplete competency make-up for absences, and no specific plan has been established and agreed upon to complete work, a grade will be submitted

based on the completed work submitted thus far which may potentially result in a grade deduction and/or a grade which carries no credit.

6.4 Assignment overview and schedule

Class material can often be emotionally intense, 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.

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.](#)

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.

Some assignments will be graded based on specific competency demonstration criteria. Other assignments (e.g. RTAN journals) will be graded based on experiential and reflection completion criteria.

Canvas submission due 11:59 p.m. the night before class session unless otherwise noted	Due Date	Grading and Points
Pre-class Preparation Check-in Assignment	Jan. 8	1
My Intentions for this class (done in class)	Jan. 9	1
Weekly Attendance and Participation	13 weeks	13
Competency Demonstration Quiz#1 (done in class)	Feb. 6	8
RTAN #1 Loss History	Feb. 12	6
Competency Demonstration Quiz #2 (done in class)	March 6	12
Insight Interview	March 19	15
RTAN#2 Advanced Directive & Durable Power of Attorney	March 26	6
Grief and Loss Diversity Article Presentation	April 2	15
RTAN #3 Life Expectancy & Funeral Planning	April 9	6
RTAN #4 Final Reflection Take-Away	April 16	7
Use of Self/Contribution Rating Form*	April 16	10

*Expectations are defined in a separate Canvas Use of Self grading rubric. Please read this at the beginning of the semester so you are clear about what is expected and how you are being assessed for Professional Use-of-Self competencies throughout the term.

7.0 Class recording and distribution of course materials

Recordings

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

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 did chose for some unanticipated reason 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. Students will be notified if 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.

Class PowerPoints

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

8.0 Additional policies, information and resources

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

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

The University 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 have an SSD accommodation letter, please meet with me privately during office hours or at a time of your convenience as early in the semester as possible to allow adequate time to 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, learning needs, mental health, vision and hearing barriers, etc., and have not yet contacted the **Services for Students with Disabilities**, they can be reached at: **Phone:** (734) 763-3000; **Email:** ssdoffice@umich.edu

Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here: <https://sww.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*

Course Schedule

Detailed information about the course schedule, assigned readings, in-class documents, assignments, and assignment due dates are provided in Canvas/Modules for an integrated way for you to access and prepare for each week's material. Syllabus changes may be made as appropriate at any time at the instructor's discretion to meet class needs. Here is a 14-week topical overview for the course.

Jan. 9 #1	Overview of Course Attitudes toward Death and Dying Historical Perspective and Present Views on Death and Dying\
Jan. 16	MLK Day: No Class
Jan. 23 #2	The Dying Process Health Care Systems Palliative Care and Hospice Care
Jan. 30 #3	Grief Models and Theories
Feb. 6 #4	Complicated Grief Reactions Theories of Complicated Mourning Symptoms, and Syndromes and Clinical Interventions
Feb. 13 #5	Loss and Grief in Adulthood Models of Adult Bereavement; Life Stage Issues Ambiguous Loss and Grief
Feb. 20 #6	Loss and Grief in Childhood and Adolescence Developmental Considerations
Feb. 27	Spring Break: No Class
March 6 #7	Ambiguous Loss and Grief
March 13 #8	Clinical Assessment and Foundational Supportive Interventions
March 20 #9	Suicide Loss and Grief; Traumatic Loss
March 27 #10	Medical Ethical, Legal Issues and Technology

April 3 #11	Grief and Diverse Topics
April 10 #12	Honoring the Dead: Rituals and Funerals Rights of the Dying
April 17 #13	Personal and Professional Issues Related to Death, Loss, and Grief Caring for Self; Compassion Fatigue and Resilience

Thank you for being a part of this class and our learning together!

Again, we remember....

Learning is in service to our clients.

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

“Show up. Be Seen. Answer the Call.” - Brené Brown

“I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.” - Martin Luther King, Jr.