

SOCIAL WORK 381—Death, Dying, Loss and Grief

Fall 2021/ 3 Credits

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00-9:50 Virtual + Weekly Independent Work (this is a hybrid course)

INSTRUCTOR

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VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday 10:00-11:00 a.m. and by appointment.

COURSE PRE-REQUISITES

N/A

REQUIRED READING

All required readings are available in Canvas. There is no textbook for this course.

RECOMMENDED READING

Gawande, A. (2014). *Being mortal: Medicine and what matters in the end*. New York: Metropolitan Books. *(This book is available for less than \$15 at most online bookstores)*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the provision of end-of-life care within the U.S. medical system, societal attitudes about death and dying, issues faced by dying individuals and their families, professional approaches and programs used to provide care, and self-awareness about death and dying. Upon completion of the course, students will:

1. Demonstrate understanding of professional and ethical behavior with respect to serving dying individuals and their families.
2. Demonstrate understanding of how human diversity affects the dying experience and people's care needs.
3. Demonstrate understanding of the current ethical and social justice issues related to care of dying individuals and their families.
4. Demonstrate understanding of existing policies relevant to end-of-life care, including their strengths and deficiencies.
5. Demonstrate understanding of the structure, strengths, and deficiencies of the U.S. health care system and the contexts in which end-of-life care takes place.
6. Demonstrate understanding of the professional approaches and programs used to serve dying individuals and their families.
7. Demonstrate the ability to engage in personal reflection to generate self-awareness for involvement with dying individuals and their families.
8. Demonstrate the ability to apply discipline-specific standards of oral and written communication to compose an articulate, grammatically correct, and organized presentation and piece of writing with properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience.
9. Demonstrate the ability to professionally critique others' writing and oral presentations to provide effective and useful feedback to improve their communication skills.

CLASS FORMAT

Classes include lecture, discussion, in-class activities, videos, and guest speakers.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students should **attend every class period** and **read all assignments** before attending the class for which readings are assigned. Students should be prepared to take part in discussion, experiential, and written assignments in class. Students should expect to spend time outside of class completing assignments. Students should regularly access Canvas for announcements, to access readings and other course materials, to monitor grades, and to submit assignments.

1. **Attendance** (*2 points per class for a total of 56 points*)
 - a. Attendance will be taken at each general class session.
 - b. Students are allowed two “free” absences in which points will be earned despite absence.
 - c. Students are expected to participate in class discussions and activities to learn and to earn their participation points for the day. This requires that students read the assigned materials and view the assigned videos prior to attending class.
2. **Weekly Independent Work Assignments**—described in Canvas under each weekly module (*10 points each for a total of 100 points*)
3. **Research Project**—described at end of syllabus and in Canvas (*100 points*)
4. **Fact Sheet Presentation**—described at end of syllabus and in Canvas (*60 points*)
5. **Open Book Final Exam** (*100 points*)
 Throughout the course, students will collect information/materials/resources (i.e. power points, lecture/reading notes, handouts) on dying and end-of-life care and organize them for use during the open-book final exam. The exam is comprehensive, covering any material used during course of semester. It will contain a variety of question types (i.e. multiple choice, true and false, short answer, essay, matching, factual, reflection). The hope is that students will also save course information/materials/resources for future use.

GRADING SCALE

		Percent
A	=	94-100
A-	=	91-93
B+	=	88-90
B	=	84-87
B-	=	81-83
C+	=	78-80
C	=	74-77
C-	=	71-73
D+	=	68-70
D	=	60-67
F	=	59 and below

ASSISTANCE WITH ASSIGNMENTS

Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss assignments as needed. This can take place in person, by phone, or by e-mail. Office hours may be utilized, or students can arrange another time with the instructor if needed.

LATE PAPERS/MISSED EXAMS/INCOMPLETES

Students are expected to complete course work by the date that it is due. Students are responsible for contacting the instructor to negotiate for any alternate dates. Students must do this **BEFORE THE DUE DATE**. The same process is necessary to request an incomplete. Requesting an extension does not automatically mean that one will be granted.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism—using words or ideas of another person without citation—will result in a failing grade for the course and may lead to other disciplinary action. Any quotation, specific fact, or major idea taken from a book, article, or other source, must be cited with its page number within your paper, as well as being included in your reference list at the end of the paper.

DISABILITIES/SPECIAL NEEDS

Students who have disabilities/special needs affecting their participation in the course may notify the instructor if she/he wishes to have special accommodations considered in either instruction or

examination. Students are encouraged to contact the instructor as early in the semester as possible to discuss special needs.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Since personal information may be revealed during the course of this class, confidentiality is of utmost importance. We will be discussing case examples about real people and will be sharing information about ourselves. Students are expected to hold confidential any personal information shared in class. Assignments will be viewed only by the instructor, and personal information will be held confidential unless information shared implies a threat of harm to the student, another person, or reveals academic misconduct.

GROUND RULES FOR CLASS PARTICIPATION

- We all have misinformation, and sometimes prejudices, about groups of people. One of the goals of this class is to learn accurate information that will help us change prejudice and discrimination--our own and that of others. In order to do this, we need to practice changing what we say after we have learned that we have misinformation. We need to practice not blaming people for their positions in life. We need to find accurate information about all people and actively work against myths and stereotypes that exist about people.
- We need to share information about ourselves for this course. No one is expected to be perfect. Everyone is expected to try. This involves some risk taking. I want to make this classroom a safe place to practice this kind of risk taking. Students are expected to assist in attaining this goal.
- Demonstration of ethical behavior is expected in all aspects of academic performance. Professional/ ethical behavior is expected to be displayed during class and in the completion of assignments.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

For more information on rights and responsibilities associated with being a student at UWSP, please see the UWSP Community Bill of Rights and Responsibilities at <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/rights/RRBOOKLET8-2005-06.pdf>.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Please familiarize yourself with the UW-Stevens Point Emergency Management Plan at www.uwsp.edu/rmgt for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point.

FACE COVERINGS

Under the [chancellor's order](#), and in an August 9, 2021 email sent by Chancellor Gibson that summarizes the order, "[A]ll students, employees and visitors to any UW-Stevens Point campus or facility will be required to wear face coverings when inside campus buildings and enclosed spaces with others outside of your household (e.g., in a UWSP vehicle). This policy is in effect until further notice."

READING ASSIGNMENTS AND CLASS TOPICS FOR: Changes in assignments or dates of assignments will be announced as far ahead of time as possible.

The Social/Structural Context

- **Week 1 (9/2)**
Introductions, Definitions, and Course Overview
- **Week 2 (9/7 and 9/9)**
Death and Dying in America—Demographics, History, Values, Concerns, Models and Contexts of Care for People Who are Dying
- **Week 3 (9/14 and 9/16)**
Policy Considerations: DWD Act, Patient Self-Determination Act
Advance Directives, Advance Planning, and EOL Decision-Making

- **Week 4 (9/21 and 9/23)**
Funeral Rituals and Practices
Guest Speaker: Funeral Director
- **Week 5 (9/28 and 9/30)**
Research Project—Topic Identification, Strategies, and Resources
Research Project—Library Session—Finding Resources
- **Week 6 (10/5 and 10/7)**
Social Work Roles in End-of-Life Care
Family Dynamics and Conflict at End of Life
Guest Speaker: Hospice Social Worker
- **Week 7 (10/12 and 10/14)**
Family Caregiving and Communication
Family Conferences and other Approaches to Working with Families
- **Week 8 (10/19 and 10/21)**
The Grieving Process
Helping Children Understand Death and Dying
- **Week 9 (10/26 and 10/28)**
Spiritual Aspects of End-of-Life Care
Guest Speaker—Hospice Chaplain
- **Week 10 (11/2 and 11/4)**
Physical Aspects of the Dying Process
Symptom Management and Physical Care Needs
Guest Speaker—Hospice Nurse
- **Week 11 (11/9 and 11/11)**
Cultural Implications
Research Project: Effective Oral Presentations
- **Week 12 (11/16 and 11/18)**
Common Ethical Issues in End-of-Life Care
Ethical Practice and Boundary Considerations
- **Week 13 (11/23)**
Fact Sheet Presentations
- **Week 14 (11/30 and 12/2)**
Fact Sheet Presentations
- **Week 15 (12/7 and 12/9)**
Fact Sheet Presentations
Self-Awareness, Self-Care, and Concluding Thoughts

Final Exam: Tuesday 12/14 from 10:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Assignment Detail

Research Project

This assignment allows students to investigate an aspect of death, dying, grief, loss, or end-of-life care that is of interest to them. The final product of this project is a research paper and presentation. The project is broken down into the following components:

Topic Statement (10 points). *Students will identify the topics they plan to investigate through their research. There are many topics related to death and dying and end-of-life care ranging from understanding people with particular diagnoses (e.g. AIDS, cancer, congestive heart failure, dementia), various age groups (e.g. children with terminal illness, young adults, elders), varying spiritual aspects (e.g. Catholics, Buddhists, Hindus), and racial/cultural diversity factors (e.g. African Americans, Hmong, Native American, Hispanic). One might also be interested in a particular social justice or ethical issue, financial/insurance aspects, issues pertaining to gender/sexuality, or how mental health or disability can influence the dying process. For those going into a professional role (i.e. social work, nursing, etc.), one might be interested in examining how a particular aspect of end-of-life care is approached in their particular profession. Options abound for topics that students might examine. The topic must be very specific. In class, we will discuss ways to select an appropriate research topic.*

Please submit a topic statement that indicates the following:

- *The main topic of research*
- *Sub-topics to be investigated*
- *Questions to be addressed through the research*

Reference List (10 points). *In class, we will discuss strategies for conducting a quality review of the literature to identify appropriate sources for your paper and you will do this specific to your chosen topic. You will utilize the UWSP Library indexes and databases to gather sources. You will develop a reference list containing at least 10 articles and/or book chapters from academic/peer reviewed sources specific to your topic. Your articles and book chapters must be from the year 2010 or later (unless your topic is primarily historical in nature). You must use APA format when creating your reference list. Your instructor will review your list and provide feedback.*

First Draft Submission (10 points). *You will submit a first draft of your research paper. Your draft should be a solid first draft—one that you would consider submitting as a final draft. Your paper must include a title page at the beginning and a reference page at the end. Length of content section must be 7-10 pages, double spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins. Paper must be divided into sections and subsections as discussed in class. You must use APA format for citations, quotations, and the reference page. **Sources for all quotations, statistics, and major ideas must be cited.** Standard English and nondiscriminatory language should be used. Papers should include complete sentences and appropriate paragraphs. Final papers will be graded on these characteristics as well as accuracy, breadth of content, development of ideas, spelling, and grammar. Your first draft will be reviewed by one of your classmates, and feedback will be provided to you.*

Review of Classmate's First Draft (10 points). *After first drafts are submitted, the instructor will email you one of your classmate's papers for review. You will be asked to review the draft and provide thoughtful feedback. Feedback should relate to grammar, spelling, and formatting issues, as well as content, depth, and flow of the paper.*

Research Paper (60 points). *You will submit a final draft of your research paper.*

Fact Sheet Presentation

This assignment builds off your research paper, allowing you to practice your oral presentation skills and share a summary of your findings with the class.

1. **Fact Sheet (30 points).** *Develop a fact sheet/handout that provides the main findings of your research in a useful and interesting fashion. A sample fact sheet will be provided in class by your instructor. Sources should be cited at the end of your fact sheet. Your fact sheet should be 2 pages (front and back).*
2. **Presentation (30 points).** *We will discuss strategies for effective oral presentations in class, and you will conduct a 5 to 10-minute presentation/discussion of your research findings. Upload your fact sheet to Canvas in advance of your presentation. Use your fact sheet as a guide to explain/elaborate on its content. The idea is to provide the class a brief handout, but then to explain it more fully during the presentation. Discussion questions are encouraged. Be prepared to respond to questions from the class and instructor.*