UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
SW679: End-of-Life: Implications and Challenges for Practice
Fall 2010

Instructor: Professor Tracy Schroepfer  Lecture Day: Tuesday
Office: 302 Social Work Building  Lecture Time: 10:00am-Noon
Phone: 263-3837  Lecture Location: 106 Social Work
Email: tschroepfer@wisc.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

Catalogue Description:
End-of-Life: Implications and Challenges for Practice is an elective course. This course focuses on social work practice with children, adolescents, adults and elders who have a terminal illness, as well as their families.

Course Overview:
This three-part course is designed to provide the knowledge base and practice skills necessary for working effectively with terminally ill individuals of all ages and their families. In Part 1, background information is provided on the shifting patterns of death and dying throughout American history, the theories constructed to assist professionals caring for terminally ill individuals, and the various end-of-life models of care. In Part 2, students are provided with opportunities via readings, discussions and exercises to develop a self-awareness of the values and beliefs they hold towards dying and death. Developing this self-awareness will allow them to work more effectively with terminally ill individuals and their families. In Part 3, knowledge and practice skills are covered regarding the assessment and fulfillment of the psychosocial needs of children, adolescents, adults and elders who have a terminal illness, as well as their families. Issues specific to each population are discussed, as well as those of special needs populations such as terminally individuals who have a developmental disability or a mental illness. Information is also provided regarding the final planning for dying and death, practice skills for mediating and facilitating such planning with terminally ill individuals and their families, and overarching ethic and moral dilemmas that may arise.

Competencies and Practice Behaviors:
Successful completion of this course implies that students will have progressed towards achieving the following core social work competencies and demonstrating their respective practice behaviors.

1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly (Competency 2.1.1), by:
   • Developing a plan for continuing professional education and development related to understanding the effect of one’s own losses on professional behavior
2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice (Competency 2.1.2), by:
   • Tolerating ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts in providing psychosocial care at the end of life
3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments (Competency 2.1.3), by:
   • Utilize effective communication skills with diverse communities, constituencies, and multi- and inter-disciplinary colleagues when dealing with issues related to palliative care at the end of life
4. Engage diversity and difference in practice (Competency 2.1.4), by:
   • Demonstrating knowledge and skills to practice without discrimination and with respect, towards people of diverse backgrounds within the field of palliative care at the end of life
5. Advance human rights and social and economic justice (Competency 2.1.5), by:
   • Appraising how mechanisms of oppression and discrimination impact various groups and outcomes relevant to the provision of palliative care at the end of life
6. Apply knowledge of human behavior and social environment (Competency 2.1.9), by:
   • Assessing the impact of historical and contemporary contexts on practice and policy in the field of palliative care at the end of life

Course Content:
Week 1 Topics: September 7
Introductions
➢ Overview of Course, Syllabus & Grading
➢ Goals of Dying & Death Education

PART 1: Background Information
Required Reading: Final Gifts, Pages 1-60

Week 2 Topics: September 14
History of Dying and Death in the United States
➢ Dying Trajectories & Legal Battles
➢ Self-Determination & Social Work’s Growing Role

Required Readings:
➢ Social Work in End-of-Life and Palliative Care: Chapter 1, pgs. 1-18.
Week 3 Topics: September 21
Coping With Dying & Death: Theoretical Approaches
➢ End-of-Life Theories
➢ Integrating Theory into Clinical Practice

Required Readings:

Week 4 Topics: September 28
ALL BOOKS MUST BE APPROVED BY THIS DATE
End-of-Life Models of Care
➢ Definitions & Goals
➢ Strengths and Limitations

Required Readings:

Week 5 Topics: October 5
The Dying Experience
➢ Physical, Spiritual & Psychosocial Symptoms
➢ Signs and Symptoms of Active Dying

Required Readings:
~ *Social Work in End-of-Life and Palliative Care*: Chapter 2
PART 2: Self-Awareness
Required Reading: Final Gifts, Pages 61-128

Week 6 Topics: October 12
REACTION PAPER #1 DUE
JOURNAL ENTRIES FOR WEEKS’ 2-5 (FOUR ENTRIES) DUE
Coping With Dying & Death: The Professional, Part 1
➤ Self-Awareness
➤ Beliefs, Values and Behaviors
➤ Ethical Dilemmas & Boundary Setting

Required Readings:

Week 7 Topics: October 19
OBITUARY DUE
Coping With Dying & Death: The Professional, Part 2
➤ Professional Power Differentials
➤ Caring for Self

Required Readings:
~ Roy, D. J. (2003). The wounded bird... a meditation on fragility. Journal of Palliative Care, 19(2), 75-76.
PART 3: Practice Skills
Required Reading: Final Gifts, Pages 129-231

Week 8 Topics: October 26
REACTION PAPER #2 DUE
Psychosocial and Spiritual Assessment
~ Person-in-Environment Approach & Assessment
~ Identifying Goals, Resource Acquisition, Advocacy & Empowerment

Required Readings:

Week 9 Topics: November 2
Communication
➢ Decisions require information
➢ Difficult conversations
➢ Communication & culture

Required Readings:
~ Social Work in End-of-Life and Palliative Care: Chapter 3
**Week 10 Topics:** November 9

*Journal Entries for Weeks’ 6-9 (Four Entries) Due*

Children, Adolescents & Family
- Theory, Communication & Assisting

**Required Readings:**
- *Social Work in End-of-Life and Palliative Care*: Chapter 4

**Week 11 Topics:** November 16

Adults & Elders & Family
- Death-Related Concepts, Attitudes, Communication & Assisting

**Required Readings:**
- *Social Work in End-of-Life and Palliative Care*: Chapter 5

**Week 12 Topics:** November 23

*Critical Book Review Due*

Terminally Ill Individuals with Special Needs & Their Families
- Developmental Disability
- Mental Illness
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender People
- Dementia

**Required Readings:**


Week 13 Topics: November 30
Helping the Patients and Family through the Grieving Process
➢ Grieving in the dying process
➢ Survivors’ Grief

Required Readings:
➢ Social Work in End-of-Life and Palliative Care: Chapter 6

Week 14 Topics: December 7
REACTION PAPER #3 DUE
JOURNAL ENTRIES FOR WEEKS’ 10-13 & Final (FIVE ENTRIES) DUE
Ethical Issues
➢ Confidentiality, Autonomy & Self-determination
➢ Withdrawing or Withholding of Treatment
➢ Palliative Sedation
➢ Physician-Assisted Suicide

Required Readings:
➢ Social Work in End-of-Life and Palliative Care: Chapters 7 & 8
Week 15 Topics: December 14
ADVANCE DIRECTIVE DUE

Final Plans
➢ Advance Directives & Organ Donation
➢ Inheritance & Funerals

Required Readings:
~ Social Work in End-of-Life and Palliative Care: Chapter 9

Texts and Reading Material for the course:
Required books & readings:
~ Required articles can be found on the course Learn@UW website

Evaluation of Student Outcomes: Assignments, Grading and Methods
1. Attendance & Class Participation Policy.
   In order for you and your fellow classmates to benefit from this course, attendance and active participation are expected. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class and I will note your level of participation. If you are unable to attend class, please email me prior to class so that you can receive an excused absence; you may receive two per semester. Two points will be deducted from your grade for each unexcused absence incurred.

2. Journaling.
   A key goal of this course on death and dying is to provide you with a deeper awareness and understanding of your own values and beliefs regarding dying and death. In addition to increasing your awareness and understanding, it is also important that you recognize how these values and beliefs may influence your assessment of, and relations with, terminally ill clients and their families.

   To assist you in gaining this awareness and understanding, you will be expected to personally reflect and respond to the weekly readings and class discussions by journaling your thoughts, reactions, and concerns. Please type your journal using the written assignment policy below. You must generate at least a full page per week for the weeks listed below. For each set of journal entries due, please staple a cover sheet and your entries together into a single packet.
Your final entry should include thoughts on the following: 1) how this class has increased your awareness of the values and beliefs you hold toward the process of dying and death; 2) how you feel these values and beliefs might impact your assessment of, and relations with, clients, families, and fellow staff members; and 3) the ethical dilemmas you might face as a result of value and belief differences.

Journal entries will be due on the following dates:
- Oct. 12th covering weeks 2 through 5 (4 entries)
- Nov. 9th covering weeks 6 through 9 (4 entries)
- Dec. 7th covering weeks 10 through 13 and the final entry (5 entries)

You may earn up to 4 points for the first two sets of entries and up to 5 points for the final set of entries, which includes the final journal entry, for a total of 13 points. You will not be graded on the content of the journal since the purpose of a journal is to express your thoughts freely. Your grade will be based on whether your journal is turned in on time and whether you have followed the instructions above and in the written assignment policy.

3. Reaction Papers.
You are required to write three reaction papers: one based on a reading from Part 1, one based on a reading from Part 2, and one based on a reading from Part 3. You may write four papers (the fourth paper can be written on a reading from Parts 1, 2 or 3) and I will choose the three highest grades to incorporate into your final course grade. These reaction papers are to be not less than three full pages in length and not more than four pages. Be sure that you adhere to the Writing Assignment Policy presented below. Papers are to be placed in the Learn@UW dropbox prior to the beginning of class on the date due. You can earn up to 14 points for each paper.

In these papers, both undergraduates and graduates should critically evaluate (not summarize) what they have read and respond by discussing the following:

1. What important point(s) arise from the reading?
2. Can these important points be generalized to individuals of diverse backgrounds (with respect to gender, ethnicity, culture, spirituality or sexual orientation)? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. What question(s) do you feel the reading should have addressed, but did not?
4. Overall, in what specific ways do you, not the author(s), feel the reading serves to inform social work practice or policy? Be specific.

Reaction papers for undergraduate and graduate students will be due three times during the semester:
- Oct. 12: Reaction paper(s) written on reading from Part 1
- Oct. 26: Reaction paper(s) written on reading from Part 2
- Dec. 7: Reaction paper(s) written on reading from Part 3
4. Obituary.
For this assignment, you will be given an instructional sheet with the general areas you are to cover. Your obituary is due in class on October 19 and you can earn up to 10 points for this assignment. Be sure that you adhere to the Writing Assignment Policy presented below.

5. Advance Directive.
You will be required to complete an advance directive document that I will provide to you. Your advance directive is due in class on December 14 and you can earn up to 5 points for this assignment.

**Undergraduate Students** will be required to write a 5-page minimum to 6-page maximum critical review **(Graduate Students** a 7-page minimum to 8-page maximum paper) of a non-fiction (not a biography) book focused on an end-of-life issue. A critical book review is not a book report: it is a critical evaluation of the book and not just a report of its contents.

In your paper, provide: 1) an introduction to, and brief summary of, the book; 2) an examination of the author’s thesis – whether it is valid and supported by evidence; 3) why the issue covered by the author is important, 4) the author’s main conclusions; 5) cultural information provided; 6) what material or questions you felt were not, but should have been, covered; 7) issue’s relevance to, and implications for, social work practice and policy at the end-of-life; and 8) a conclusion that weaves the threads of your discussion such that your reader has a sense of closure.

You must obtain approval for your book no later than September 28, and the completed paper is to be placed in the Learn@UW dropbox on November 23 prior to the beginning of class. You can earn up to 30 points on this assignment.

**Grading Structure:**
A total of 100 points is possible. Final grades will be determined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Number of Possible Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journaling (2 sets @ 4 points each; final set @ 5 points)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction Papers (3 @ 14 points each)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obituary</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance Directive</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Book Review</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Points | Grade | Criteria
---|---|---
94-100 | A | Outstanding, surpasses requirements in all areas
88-93 | A/B | Surpasses requirements in many areas
82-87 | B | Meets requirements in all areas
76-81 | B/C | Meets requirements in some areas, below in others
70-75 | C | Below requirements in most areas
64-69 | D | Below requirements in all areas
<=63 | F | Fails to meet minimal requirements in all areas, unacceptable work

Policies:
Reading Assignments: You are expected to have read all assigned material prior to the class date under which the readings are listed above. Reading and critically evaluating what you have read is necessary so that you can learn, actively participate in class discussions, and successfully complete written assignments.

Late Assignment Policy:
The assignments listed above are due at the beginning of the class period on the date specified. Students who believe they have a legitimate reason for turning in a late assignment should contact the instructor prior to the due date. Unapproved late assignments will be marked down three points for each day they are late.

Written Assignment Policy:
1. All written assignments are to be either typed or computer-generated.
2. Format assignments using one-inch margins, double-spacing, and a 12-inch font.
3. Always include a cover sheet (not counted as one of the required pages) with the title of the paper, your name, the date turned into the instructor, course number, and course title. Do not put this cover sheet information on the first page of an assignment.
4. Please use page numbers, but not on the cover sheet.
5. All assignments should be checked thoroughly for correct spelling and grammar.

Students with Disabilities
If you require accommodations to obtain equal access to this class or to any assignments that I may give, please contact me as soon as possible. I want all my students to have an excellent learning experience.

Student Behavior Policy:
In order to learn, we must be open to the views of people different than ourselves. Each and every voice in the classroom is important and brings with it a wealth of experiences, values and beliefs. In this time we share together over the semester, please honor the uniqueness of your fellow classmates, and appreciate the opportunity we have to learn from each other. Please respect your fellow students’ opinions and refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments of any kind. Finally, remember to keep confidential all issues of a personal or professional nature discussed in class.