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- Syllabus (End of life Issues: A social Work Perspective)
- Margaret’s home page at NMSU
- Professional Interests

Mail to Margaret

Teaching, Practice and Consulting Interests

End of life issues
gerontology
hospice
bioethics
non-profit administration
grief counseling
group work

End of Life Issues: A Social Work Perspective

New Mexico State University
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Department of Social Work

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Course Description

In all facets of social work activities the professional encounters people with needs relating to terminal issues. This course will cover emotional concerns
such as grief and loss, legal concerns such as living wills and power of attorney, ethical issues of end of life care and decision making, and societal problems relating to acceptance of death.

An integral part of examining the impact of death in our society is understanding one's own issues with respect to death. The student will be encouraged to look at his or her own experiences, and reflect on their influence. It is felt that the professional must be attuned to his or her own feelings in this regard before engaging in efforts to help others.

Goals

The main goal of this course is to prepare students to work with individuals and families who are dealing with end of life issues. Additionally, a goal is to acquaint students with the ethical, political, and medical issues of terminal care.

Teaching Methods

Readings, guest speakers, class activities, and lectures will be used to present and reinforce class goals.

Texts


Attendance Policy

When the number of absences hinders a student’s progress in a course, the instructor may initiate a statement of the student’s excessive absences. This statement will include a recommendation for retention or expulsion from the class. Based on the recommendation of the instructor with concurrence of the Department Head and the student’s academic dean, a student will be dropped for persistent absences or for persistent failure to complete assignments.

Students with Special Needs Policy

It is the policy of the Social Work Department to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. The Department Head is also available to assist with
accommodations. Students with disabilities are also encouraged to contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 646-6840.

Assignments and Evaluation

The students will be expected to complete an assessment of their goals for this course. Based on the individual assessments, students will contract to learn and accomplish certain things. A written project of significant depth and proficiency will be an integral part of the student’s contract.

Grading will be based on the completeness and quality of student’s project, attendance, participation in class activities, reading of assigned materials, and timely completion of other assigned work.

Units of Study

Unit 1: Cultural and Historical Perspectives of Mortality and Immortality

Objective: To provide a basis of understanding of the cultural and societal beliefs and practices regarding life, death, and immortality.

Topics:
   a. Impact of medical advances in life saving technology
   b. Religious and sociological views of immortality
   c. Changes in the last twenty years
   d. Implications on social work practice
   e. Multi-cultural implications

Activities:
   a. Read from Kubler-Ross’s On Death and Dying
   b. Lecture on medical history in last twenty years
   c. Small group exchange of personal experiences involving medical/cultural clashes
   d. Guest speaker on the Hispanic experience

Outcome:
   a. Students will acquire an historical background of the medical and cultural views of death. They will be expected to show an understanding of the many ways in which cultural views of death impact individuals and families.

Assignment:
   a. Read from Kubler-Ross, read first three chapters of Levine’s book.
   b.
Unit 2: Personal Grief Issues

Objective: To give students an opportunity to examine their own feelings and fears regarding death and terminality.

Topics:
   a. Personal history and its influence on view of dying
   b. Philosophical and spiritual components of personal beliefs
   c. Opportunities for change within oneself and in social work practice

Activities:
   a. Share early recollections of death
   b. Lecture from hospice chaplain on spiritual influences
   c. Explore in groups of two the feelings associated with death

Outcome:
   a. Students will gain an appreciation of their personal grief issues and history
   b. Students will have an opportunity to discuss spiritual issues with professional.

Assignment:
   a. Read Chapters 1-3 in Rosen’s text.

Unit 3: Assessment and Intervention with Individuals and Families Facing Death

Objective: To familiarize students with knowledge and skills useful in situations with individuals with terminal illness.

Topics:
   a. Special factors in assessment in life threatening situations
   b. Clinical cases for review
   c. Practice sessions within the classroom
   d. Sensitivity in the cultural/ethnic milieu of Mexican American community

Activities: -
   a. Lecture on special factors
   b. Mock interviews
   c. Class discussion of cases read

Outcome:
   a. Students will gain knowledge and experience in working with families dealing with death.
Assignment:
  a. Read chapters 4-6 in Rosen’s text
  b. Read from Levine’s text chapters 4&5

Unit 4: Legal Considerations
Objective: To outline the legal procedures and pitfalls in dealing with families facing death.

Topics:
  a. Powers of Attorney
  b. Living wills
  c. Trusts and inheritance
  d. Changes facing the legal community

Activities:
  a. Review and fill out living will for self
  b. Lecture from attorney specializing in elder issues

Outcome:
  a. Students will be familiar with legal issues in situations involving terminal care.

Assignment:
  a. Students will research the legal preparations that their families have made, present an outline for class discussion.

Unit 5: Ethical and Medical Issues

Objective: To prepare the student for decision making dilemmas they may encounter in practice.

Topics:
  a. The disonance between medical and personal needs from a patient’s perspective
  b. Ethics Boards and how they work
  c. Patient advocacy with examples
  d. Inherent problems with third party payor systems
  e. Elderly issues

Activities:
  a. Debate Medicare reform
  b. Role play patient situations with advocates

Outcome:
  a. Students will gain an appreciation of patient’s issues, health care reform, and elder care.

Assignment:
  a. Read Schulman’s article on care of the
chronically ill.
   b. Review current events related to Medicare reform.
   c. Read Levine’s chapters 6 & 7.

Unit 6: Counseling the Dying and the Grieving individually and in groups

Objective: To familiarize the student with current counseling theories and practices.

Topics:
   a. What is grief? And who has written about it?
   b. Group work with the grieving
   c. Specifics of working with children
   d. Personal grief issues and how they interact with issues of clients

Activities:
   a. Lecture on grief literature
   b. In class practice bereavement group
   c. Guest lecturer experienced with children’s grief

Outcome:
   a. Students will be introduced to grief counseling and will be expected to have an awareness of their own issues with respect to grief.

Assignment:
   a. Write letter to a loved one who has died.
   b. Read chapters 6&7 of Rosen text.
   c. Read from Callahan and Kelley’s book on reserve at the library.

Unit 7: Review of Course

Topics:
   a. Importance and application of skills learned
   b. Directions for change in social work
   c. Assessment of personal change

Activities:
   a. Presentation of projects
   b. Lecture on where do we go from here?

Outcome:
   a. Students will benefit from the work their peers did in their projects. They will apply some of the learning to their own developing practice skills.
Assignments:
   a. Finish Levine’s book
   b. Submit project
   c. Present summary of project to class

Bibliography


Jewett, Claudia. Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss.


Quill, Timothy, M.D. Death and Dignity


Yalom, Irwin, M.D. The good things about death