

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

STEVE HICKS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Course Number:	SW 360K/SW 395K	Instructor:	Susan M. De Luca, Ph.D.
Unique Number:	89504/89639	Email:	sdeluca@austin.utexas.edu
Semester:	Summer 2021	Office:	3.130L
Meeting Time/Place:	M/W 8:30-11:30am	Office Phone:	512-471-1713
& Place:	via Zoom	Office Hours:	By appointment

Suicide Prevention: Theories, Assessment and Policy

I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION

https://utexas.account.box.com/login?redirect_url=/v/ssweidprotected

This course will examine the public health problem of suicide, with specific attention to prevention, intervention, and postvention related to micro, mezzo, and macro approaches. Students will gain an understanding of suicide epidemiology and underlying theory, as well as risk and protective factors for suicidal thoughts and behaviors. This course will familiarize students with evidence-based practices and ethical considerations with clients engaging in suicidal thoughts and behaviors, including learning directly from individuals with lived experience with suicidality. Students will also learn about the current state and national strategies for suicide prevention, as well as policies related to suicide. Upon completion of this course, based on the completion of all readings and projects outlined in the syllabus, students will gain skills in assessment and management of suicide risk, intervention and treatment techniques with suicidal clients, and postvention approaches with survivors of suicide loss.

II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES

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

1. Understand the epidemiology and theories of suicide, as well as the various models of suicide prevention.
2. Understand risk and protective factors (at multiple levels) for suicide and identify and understand which social groups are at high risk for suicide.
3. Understand the importance of developing a therapeutic alliance for effectively working with suicidal clients.
4. Demonstrate the ability to actively listen to suicidal clients.
5. Demonstrate reflecting skills necessary to build rapport and trust with suicidal clients.
6. Be able to critically evaluate, select, and apply evidence-based suicide risk screening and assessment.
7. Understand, select and modify appropriate suicide intervention strategies based on continuous clinical assessment.
8. Learn about development and implementation of interventions for individuals with suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

III. TEACHING METHODS

The Professor is committed to helping students prepare for social work field education. A variety of teaching methods including interactive lectures, experiential group activities, reading assignments, guest speakers, audiovisual materials, and student presentations will be used to help students understand suicide prevention at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Students are expected to be the chairs of their own education, meaning they will contribute to their own learning through asking questions, sharing experiences, and actively participating in class discussion. In covering various topics, our class will

intentionally discuss diversity based on gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality, immigrant/documentation status, class, religion, varying ability, and age. This course will highlight diverse perspectives of thought, and encourages students to engage in new ways of thinking that may be represented by speakers, the professor, and classmates from diverse backgrounds. If students do not believe they are getting what they desire to learn in class, the Professor strongly suggests that the student meet with the Professor early on in the semester. The Professor welcomes these conversations and cannot know if a student is struggling unless he/she/hir informs her.

Use of Canvas in Class & Email

In this class the Professor uses Canvas—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://canvas.utexas.edu>—to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to give students online quizzes and surveys. Students can find support in using Canvas at the ITS Help Desk by calling 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Please plan accordingly.

It is required that students check their email daily and respond within 24 hours when warranted. This is not only preparing you for ethical and professional social work practice, but also affords effective communication between you and the Professor.

IV. REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

See syllabus calendar for all required readings. There is no required text.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The assignments are designed to give each student the opportunity to demonstrate their learning over the semester in a variety of ways including presentations, essays/papers, and in class debates/discussions.

Debates 40%

- ***20% in class debates***
- ***20% written comments/questions***

Students will receive a pro/con card at the beginning of every class based on the specific reading for that day. Students are expected to be able to argue both sides for the “debate article” as it will also increase empathy to a “side” you might not understand well. We will all read the required article for that day. While the other readings are not mandatory, I do ask that you read at least one other article the help organize and inform your thoughts for debates. As you read the ‘debate article’ please write a pro/con stance list with 3-5 comments for and against the topic. This will be part of your grade and must be turned in before class (hard copy only). As the field of social work specifically focuses on aspects of social justice or social determinates of care, please include those topics in your debate and the one-page paper you turn into your professor. Please remember all papers must adhere to APA or will be returned. For ease, you may use bullets for your pro/con list, but these bullets must be clear and concise so that the professor can also understand your points.

Stakeholder Paper and Presentation 50% (due 7/24)

- ***25% Paper***
- ***25% Presentation***

A final project typically demonstrates your ability to relate all the information you've learned inside and outside the class and apply it to a specific deliverable. Therefore, this project should reveal your knowledge of suicide prevention and the stakeholders involved.

First, pick a group that is at heightened risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors. You will then talk to stakeholders from that group you would like to serve. Please note, a stakeholder does not include speaking to a social worker at an agency. I would like you to speak to an individual who identifies as part of the group you are interested in (for example, someone who identifies as a middle-aged man, a member of the LGBTQ community, family members with lived experience of suicide, veterans, etc. You will first do research on a few prevention or intervention programs that are currently used with the specific stakeholder group. When you meet with these individuals (at least 3) you will describe briefly what each of the interventions or programs include and ask each stakeholder their thoughts on what could be improved upon or changed with each program. You will then write a paper and present to the class: 1) what are current interventions/programs for this specific group, and 2) a synthesized list of stakeholders in one group or you can meet with them individually.

You will be working in groups of 2-3 *students*. Your paper will be 8-10 *pages*, APA format with the bulk of your paper focused on what the stakeholders have said about the intervention(s) or program(s) and how you are going to improve or change them. The final presentation will be 10-*minutes* in length and must include all group members.

In addition to the group paper and presentation ***graduate students*** must choose from one of two options:

Option 1: Creating a one-page fact sheet/pamphlet or editorial to send to area agencies, policy advisors etc. that represent their stakeholder base. Another option is the information provided will share what you found as a group, what the agency is doing and recommendations for what else they could be doing. You will attach a cover sheet to your one pager/pamphlet/editorial offering to present your findings at the agency.

I strongly encourage students to meet with me about their papers from conceptualization/brainstorming to rough drafts. I have consistently found that students' work is far superior with consultation.

Participation 10%

Do I have to attend class?

In a word, "yes". Do you HAVE to, "no". But students who attend class regularly perform better and attain better grades than students who do not attend regularly.

I have a hard time getting to class on time, is that a problem?

Arriving to appointments on time not only shows your level of maturity, respect for your colleagues, and your commitment to learning to become the best social worker you can be in your career. It also is a skill you must achieve in the workforce to show respect for your colleagues and clients, but you will also represent your agency. Finally, time management is also key to model for your clients. If you want them to be on time for their appointment, you need to be on time as well.

Do you have an attendance sheet?

Yes. It will be distributed before class. Once class starts, I will take the attendance sheet. If you unfortunately arrive late, you may sign the attendance sheet, but you will be marked late. Students with

perfect attendance (meaning they are here in class, stay the entire class time and arrive before class starts) will get 3 points added to their final grade (i.e. they will likely raise their grade one letter grade).

VI. GRADES

Evaluation of student performance in the class is based on:

Debates (40%)

Final Paper and Project (50%)

Class Participation (10%)

See below for the SHSSW Grading Scale.

94.0 and Above	A
90.0 to 93.999	A-
87.0 to 89.999	B+
84.0 to 86.999	B
80.0 to 83.999	B-
77.0 to 79.999	C+
74.0 to 76.999	C
70.0 to 73.999	C-
67.0 to 69.999	D+
64.0 to 66.999	D
60.0 to 63.999	D-
Below 60.0	F

Grade Grievance Policy and Procedure.

The instructor reserves the right to alter the course requirements and/or assignments based on new materials, class discussions or other legitimate pedagogical objectives.

VII. CLASS POLICIES

Evaluation of students' performance is based on:

Assignments.

- Most questions can be answered by reading the syllabus. If your question is not answered, your professor will further explain her expectations for assignments and specific grading criteria based on questions offered by students in class/via email and office hours. *Each assignment is due on the date noted in the syllabus; any exception must be discussed in advance with your professor.*

Class Participation.

- You are responsible for completing all readings before class and being prepared to apply them in class discussions. Class discussion may include in-class discussions, debates, role-plays, and exercises. Class participation should reflect the social worker's professional responsibility for respectful interactions and attentiveness with fellow students and faculty. Please review the student policy manual for SHSSW standards for professional development and the honor code.

Attendance, Attentiveness, and Punctuality.

- Students are expected to let the professor know before class when they will be absent. This allows for the professor to change activities as needed.
- Use of computers, phones, and other electronic devices are not allowed during class.
- Please inform your instructor if you may be late and when late, enter the class quietly and with minimal disruption. Repeated lateness will influence evaluation of student performance.

VIII. UNIVERSITY POLICIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HONOR CODE. The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND CIVILITY IN THE CLASSROOM. The professor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as race, ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. This atmosphere includes working intentionally to recognize and dismantle racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism in the classroom. Social Work also deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues. In this environment, we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.

UNANTICIPATED DISTRESS. Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the professor. The professor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>.

POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION. Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and other forms of electronic communication (e.g. blogs) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image.

Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client

material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including *any* information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in *any* way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

POLICY ON SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>.

USE OF COURSE MATERIALS. The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor may be a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of distributing those materials to other current or future students.

DOCUMENTED DISABILITY STATEMENT. Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471- 6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). A student should present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed and followed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS. By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, examination, work assignment, or project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

TITLE IX REPORTING. In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct on the basis of sex <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>. Faculty, field instructors, staff, and/or teaching assistants in their supervisory roles are mandated reporters of incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking, dating violence, or any other forms of sexual misconduct. Students who report such incidents will be informed of University resources. Incidents will be reported to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Further

information, including student resources related to Title IX, may also be found at <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>.

CAMPUS CARRY POLICY. The University's policy on concealed firearms may be found here: <https://campuscarry.utexas.edu>. You also may find this information by accessing the Quick Links menu on the School's website.

CLASSROOM CONFIDENTIALITY. Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

USE OF E-MAIL FOR OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO STUDENTS. Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible for keeping the university informed about a change of e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

SAFETY. As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

BEHAVIOR CONCERNS ADVICE LINE (BCAL). If students have concerns about their behavioral health, or if they are concerned about the behavioral health of someone else, students may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns. This service is provided through a partnership between the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION POLICY. Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

IX. COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Assignment Due	Readings
6/7 M	Welcome	<i>Questions for the syllabus</i>	<p>Losing my dad Joiner, p. 1-15 (It can also be found in the “files” section of the Canvas page in case you haven’t purchased the book yet)</p> <p>Tad Friend. Jumpers: the fatal grandeur of the Golden Gate Bridge. <i>The New Yorker</i>. October, 3 2004. Available online. http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/10/13/031013fa_fact (It can also be found in the “files” section of the Canvas page)</p>
6/9 W	Suicide Introduction & Theory		<p>What we know and don’t know about suicide Joiner, p 16-45</p> <p>"It's OK to not be OK": Suicide attempt survivors offer insight and advice (9 minutes) https://www.cbsnews.com/news/suicide-attempt-survivors-share-insight-and-advice-on-how-to-help/</p>
6/14 M	Acquired Capability	<i>Discussant group 1</i>	The capability to enact lethal self-injury is acquired Joiner, p. 46-93
6/16 W	Connectedness	<i>Discussant Group 2</i>	The desire for death Joiner, p. 94-136
6/21 M	Suicide Prevention in Schools w/ Guest Presenter: Nic Dalhberg, LPC		Video: “A Voice at the Table” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XG7eH1GLK8E
6/23 W	Means and Demographics	<i>Discussant Group 3</i>	What do we mean by suicide? How is it distributed in people? Joiner p. 137-171

6/28 M	Biology and Suicide	<i>Discussant Group 4</i>	What roles do genetics, neurobiology, and mental disorders play in suicidal behavior? Joiner, p. 172 – 202
6/30 W	Assessment and Prevention	<i>Discussant Group 5</i>	Risk assessment, crisis intervention, treatment, and prevention Joiner, p. 203-222 Zero Suicide: (take a look at this and have some opinions on the pros and cons of Zero Suicide) http://zerosuicide.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/
7/5 M	No Class		
7/7 W	Mezzo and Macro Suicide Prevention w/ Guest Presenter: Amanda Horner, BA		
7/12 M	What is missing in suicide prevention?	<i>Discussant Group 6</i>	The future of suicide prevention Joiner, p. 223-230 Epilogue 231-232
7/14 W	Lived Experience	<i>Discussant Group 7</i>	The Kevin Hines story (13 minutes) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loiGNZTfu6g Pick 2 “stories of hope” to watch/read: (there are 7 pages of stories to choose from, so choose the ones that speak to you!)_ https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/stories/ Discussants, be prepared to watch them all to address all stories
7/19 M	Policy Implications and National Directives w/ Guest Presenter: Alison Mohr Boleware		Anestis, M. D., Houtsma, C., Daruwala, S. E., & Butterworth, S. E. (2019). Firearm legislation and statewide suicide rates: The moderating role of household firearm ownership levels. <i>Behavioral Sciences & the</i>

			<p><i>Law</i>, (available online UT library)</p> <p>Lezine, D. A. (2018). U.S. political parties and support for suicide prevention. <i>Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior</i>, 48(2), 199-203. (available online UT library)</p> <p>Corey Booker calls for a Suicide Czar https://www.newsweek.com/corey-booker-suicide-czar-guns-2020-1425733</p>
7/21 W	Class Topic TBD by Students	<i>TBD</i>	TBD
7/26 M	Final Presentations	<i>Stakeholder Paper and Presentations Due</i>	

X. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Joiner, T. (2005). *Why people die by suicide*. President and Fellows of Harvard University.