

**West Chester University**  
**Graduate Social Work Department**  
**SWG 589 Analysis and Application of Humor in Social Work**

**Course Instructor:**

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Office Hours via Zoom:

Tuesday 10am-noon

Wednesday 6-8pm

Thursday noon-1pm

**Credit Hours: 3 Graduate Credit Hours**

**Department Mission Statement**

Our mission is to prepare versatile social workers to employ innovative methods of practice that promote the well-being of individuals, families and communities. We equip students to practice from a social justice perspective grounded in the realization of human rights.

**MSW Program Goals**

1. Provide a quality Master of Social Work Program in accord with the standards of the Council on Social Work Education and the PA State System of Higher Education.
2. Prepare graduates to practice competently and ethically in promoting well-being among diverse individuals, families and communities
3. Prepare graduates to consistently engage advocacy, policy and research skills in responding to ever-changing social and political settings.
4. Prepare graduates to practice rights-based social work that promotes social and economic justice.

**MSW Program Specialization**

*Advanced Practice with Individuals, Families, and Communities* is an approach to social work that addresses well-being from a trauma-informed, recovery perspective grounded in human rights. Focusing on human rights as the key to social justice, practitioners regularly engage advocacy, policy and research. Our unique, simulation-based curriculum provides students opportunities to demonstrate competency in utilizing this approach as they prepare to respond to complex and contemporary issues in a range of interprofessional settings.

**Student Learning Outcomes: Program**

The WCU Graduate Social Work Department uses a competency-based, outcome performance approach to its curriculum consistent with the Educational and Policy Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2015). Students take 30 credits of generalist content designed to offer opportunities to develop and demonstrate competency in nine core areas and 30 credits of specialized content specific to our MSW Program's Specialization: *Advanced Practice with Individuals, Families and Communities*. Course content across the curriculum is designed to provide students the knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive/affective processes needed to advance our department vision of preparing social work professionals who facilitate transformative social change.

## **Course Description**

This course will explore the use of humor as a complementary therapy and advocacy tool over the past half-century internationally. The anatomy of humor, types of humor, and humor as both empowering and oppressive will be investigated. Students will learn experientially developing and completing a personalized humor therapy treatment plan in addition to examining the application of humor on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of social work practice.

## **Course Information**

SWG 589 is a fully online asynchronous three credit course with no required in person or synchronous meetings. Instructional methods include pre-recorded lectures, pre-recorded interviews with in the field experts, and web-based instructional tools (e.g., YouTube video clips, required website, library resources, etc). This course format is designed to provide accessible instruction and meaningful interaction and participation opportunities. To prepare and successfully complete this course, students should consider:

- i. Appropriate online communication and etiquette  
<http://www.education.com/reference/article/netiquette-rules-behavior-internet/>
- ii. Technology expectations and requirements

You are expected to have a computer system that meets the minimum expectations as outlined by West Chester University Distance Education [Technical Requirements and Considerations webpage](#). You do not need a working web-camera and microphone.

## **Student Learning Outcomes: Course**

Students in this elective course will be expected to demonstrate competency in the following areas:

- Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
- Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
- Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Additional student learning outcomes include:

- You will be able to explain the use of humor as a complementary therapy.
- You will be able to critique the use of humor in pop culture and professional settings.
- You will be able to integrate humor into your social work practice.

## **Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

The following assignments have been designed to assess students learning outcomes in this course.

**Assignment:** Assessment and Development of Personalized Humor Therapy Treatment Plan

**Competencies Measured:** Generalist Competency 2

25% of Final Grade

**Assignment:** Implementation and Documentation of Personalized Humor Therapy Treatment Plan

**Competencies Measured:** Generalist Competency 4

25% of Final Grade

**Assignment:** Discussion Board Posts

**Competencies Measured:** Competency 2 & 4

25% of Final Grade

**Assignment:** Final Paper

**Competencies Measured:** Competency 4 & 6  
25% of Final Grade

**Required Text(s)**

There is no required textbook to be purchased for this course. All readings can be found within the D2L course under “Resources” then “Course Reserves.”

**Recommended Text(s)**

There is no recommended textbook.

**Course/Classroom Expectations**

*Class attendance* – This course is asynchronous so it does not require attendance at a specific time only that due dates are met throughout the course.

*Course readings* – Students are expected to complete and be prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Class discussions and lectures are designed to be an *integration* of course material, not a review of all required readings. Students are accountable for assigned material not covered in class.

*Respectful interactions* – Students are expected to interact with instructors and peers in a respectful, professional manner (e.g. active listening in class, use of non-discriminatory language, use of constructive debate and feedback, appropriate and professional use of email).

*Extensions* – Ideally, students submit all graded coursework by the stated deadlines. Please know, I block time in my schedule to grade assignments right away. This means you typically know your grade within 24-48 hours of a deadline. Research shows this is the most effective way to enhance student learning and the student experience. However, I try to have some flexibility with deadlines. We are a community, and we all need to work together.

If you need an extension on a due date, please email me to request an extension (you do not need to state the details for extension request, I trust your judgment) and suggest a reasonable alternative deadline. I do not typically grant requests to complete work beyond a week after the due date simply because students may fall too far behind in the course. However, there are always exceptions to exceptions, so please reach out if you are having an issue interfering with your successful completion of the coursework and let’s see if we can make a realistic plan that works for everyone.

I am able to have this flexibility because students understand and respect that we all have different life circumstances. If you meet the course deadlines, feel good knowing you are helping to create the option for someone else who needs it.

Also, extensions are very rarely granted for the final assignment and if they are granted you may earn an “NG” initially due university deadlines for final grades. An NG may negatively impact your financial aid, and I cannot guarantee when I will be available to review an assignment past the semester and submit a grade change.

*Professional qualities of written assignments* – Students are expected to produce professional quality work. This includes using non-sexist and inclusive language, not engaging in plagiarism (intended or unintended), giving credit to original author(s) for concepts and ideas that are not the student’s own, and using scholarly references to support one’s ideas. APA format is not required for this course.

## **Resources for Online Student Success**

### *Expectations for Student Success in Distance Education*

An online course uses technology to provide you, the student, with greater flexibility regarding when and where you learn. To be a successful online learner you must capitalize on this increased flexibility by doing the following:

#### *Self-Motivation and Self-Discipline*

Active participation in online activities is expected. This means that you login to the course frequently, engage with the provided materials, and read and respond to communications in a timely and thoughtful manner. Online courses require you to take *more* responsibility for your learning.

#### *Planning and Organization*

You will need disciplined work habits, effective time management skills, and the ability to work both alone and collaboratively if you wish to be successful in an online course. You should expect to devote 9 to 12 hours per week to this course. You may find that you need to work harder than you would in a traditional lecture class.

#### *Communication Skills*

In an online course communication takes place primarily through the written word. You need strong English reading and writing skills to express your thoughts. Online courses also expect you to proactively reach out to your instructor for assistance when you need it. Finally, pay attention to communication guidelines and be respectful of your fellow students when you communicate. Students who need academic support are expected to take advantage of the University's Writing Center services, including on-line and in-person tutorials:

West Chester campus: [http://www.wcupa.edu/\\_academics/writingcenter/](http://www.wcupa.edu/_academics/writingcenter/).

Philadelphia campus: <https://wcupa.mywconline.com/>

Course instructors are also available during office hours for additional help with course assignments or content.

#### *Minimum Student Technical Skills*

You are expected to be competent in the use of computers, the World Wide Web, and commonly used software programs such as the Microsoft Office Suite of applications and Adobe PDF readers. In addition, you should be able to utilize a web-camera and microphone. You should have a basic understanding of how to use the common elements of the university learning management system.

Students without experience using the university's learning management system (Desire2Learn) can contact the Student Help Desk to arrange instruction, can contact Distance Education Support, or can complete the Orientation for Distance Education Students.

Hours for support services may vary. Check their websites for times of operation.

General Technical Support

Contact the [WCU IT Helpdesk](#)

call 610-436-3350

email [helpdesk@wcupa.edu](mailto:helpdesk@wcupa.edu)

Distance Education Support

Contact the [Office of Distance Education](#)

call 610-436-3373

email [distanceed@wcupa.edu](mailto:distanceed@wcupa.edu)

Additional technical support information will be provided for tools as needed throughout the course.

#### *Required hardware and software*

Students are expected to have a computer system that meets the minimum expectations as outlined by West Chester University Information Services on the [Recommend Computer Specs for Windows Computer webpage](#) and the Distance Education [Technical Requirements and Considerations webpage](#). Hardware requirements include a PC or Mac, and internal or external webcam, microphone and speakers. Software requirements include the most current version of Internet Explorer/Safari/Firefox/Chrome. It is expected that all students will be able to open MS Office 2010 documents. Students are encouraged to contact the Student Help Desk to ensure that their computer equipment is sufficient for the D2L operating system. Students must be able to readily access the Internet via cable or broadband. The use of external headsets with microphones and headphones are encouraged during individual progress meetings.

#### *Library Resources for Distance Education Students*

The West Chester University Library makes resources available to distance education students. Please review their [Library Services for Distance Students website](#) for specific information.

### **ACADEMIC & PERSONAL INTEGRITY**

It is the responsibility of each student to adhere to the university's standards for academic integrity. Violations of academic integrity include any act that violates the rights of another student in academic work, that involves misrepresentation of your own work, or that disrupts the instruction of the course. Other violations include (but are not limited to): cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing, which means copying any part of another's work and/or using ideas of another and presenting them as one's own without giving proper credit to the source; selling, purchasing, or exchanging of term papers; falsifying of information; and using your own work from one class to fulfill the assignment for another class without significant modification. Proof of academic misconduct can result in the automatic failure and removal from this course. For questions regarding Academic Integrity, the No-Grade Policy, Sexual Harassment, or the Student Code of Conduct, students are encouraged to refer to the Department Graduate Handbook, the Graduate Catalog, the Ram's Eye View, and the [University website](#).

### **INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & ANTI-RACIST STATEMENT**

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to West Chester University's mission as reflected in our [Mission Statement](#), [Values Statement](#), [Vision Statement](#) and [Strategic Plan: Pathways to Student Success](#). We disavow racism and all actions that silence, threaten, or degrade historically marginalized groups in the U.S. We acknowledge that all members of this learning community may experience harm stemming from forms of oppression including but not limited to classism, ableism, heterosexism, sexism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia, and recognize that these forms of oppression are compounded by racism.

Our core commitment as an institution of higher education shapes our expectation for behavior within this learning community, which represents diverse individual beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences. Courteous and respectful behavior, interactions, and responses are expected from all members of the University. We must work together to make this a safe and productive learning environment for everyone. Part of this work is recognizing how race and other aspects of who we are shape our beliefs and our experiences as individuals. It is not enough to condemn acts of racism. For real, sustainable change, we must stand together as a diverse coalition against racism and oppression of any form, anywhere, at any time.

Resources for education and action are available through WCU's [Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) (ODEI), DEI committees within departments or colleges, the student [ombudsperson](#), and centers on campus committed to doing this work (e.g., [Dowdy Multicultural Center](#), [Center for Women and Gender Equity](#), and the [Center for Trans and Queer Advocacy](#)). Guidance on how to report incidents of discrimination and harassment is available at the University's [Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#).

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you have a disability that requires accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), please present your letter of accommodations and meet with me as soon as possible so that I can support your success in an informed manner. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively. If you would like to know more about West Chester University's Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD), please visit them at 223 Lawrence Center. Their phone number is 610-436-2564, their fax number is 610-436-2600, the [email address for OSSD is linked here](#), and the [OSSD website is linked here](#). In an effort to assist students who either receive or may believe they are entitled to receive accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the University has appointed a student advocate to be a contact for students who have questions regarding the provision of their accommodations or their right to accommodations. The advocate will assist any student who may have questions regarding these rights. The Director of Social Equity/Title IX Coordinator (Ms. Lynn M.Klingensmith) has been designated in this role. Any students who may need assistance with their rights to accommodations should contact her at [lklingensmith@wcupa.edu](mailto:lklingensmith@wcupa.edu); 610-436-2433.

## **EXCUSED ABSENCES POLICY**

Students are advised to carefully read and comply with the excused absences policy, including absences for university-sanctioned events, contained in the WCU Graduate Catalog. In particular, please note that the "responsibility for meeting academic requirements rests with the student," that this policy does not excuse students from completing required academic work, and that professors can require a "fair alternative" to attendance on those days that students must be absent from class in order to participate in a University-Sanctioned Event. Please see the [excused absences policy in the graduate catalog](#) for more information.

## **REPORTING INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

West Chester University and its faculty are committed to assuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students. In order to comply with the requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the University's commitment to offering supportive measures in accordance with the new regulations issued under Title IX, the University requires faculty members to report incidents of sexual violence shared by students to the University's Title IX Coordinator. The only exceptions to the faculty member's reporting obligation are when incidents of sexual violence are communicated by a student during a classroom discussion, in a writing assignment for a class, or as part of a University-approved research project. **Faculty members are obligated to report sexual violence or any other abuse of a student who was, or is, a child (a person under 18 years of age) when the abuse allegedly occurred to the person designated in the University Protection of Minors Policy.** Information regarding the reporting of sexual violence and the resources that are available to victims of sexual violence is set forth at [the Sexual Misconduct webpage](#).

## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

All students are encouraged to sign up for the University's free WCU ALERT service, which delivers official WCU emergency text messages directly to your cell phone. For more information, visit [the](#)

[emergency alert website](#). To report an emergency, call the Department of Public Safety at 610-436-3311.

## **ELECTRONIC MAIL POLICY**

It is expected that faculty, staff, and students activate and maintain regular access to University provided e-mail accounts. Official university communications, including those from your instructor, will be sent through your university e-mail account. You are responsible for accessing that mail to be sure to obtain official University communications. Failure to access will not exempt individuals from the responsibilities associated with this course.

## **Wellness**

As social workers, we regularly interact with people who are in vulnerable states often with experiences of oppression and trauma. To do this work ethically, **we must ensure that we are well**. We must actively engage in activities and practices that support our own wellness, whatever that is – wellness is personal. It may include things such as exercise, yoga, meditation, dancing, prayer or journaling. Whatever it is, we must make it a priority if we are to commit to working with vulnerable populations.

We must also be willing and able to recognize when we are not well and be prepared to seek support and/or make changes. Workers, and even students, who fail to do this are at risk of secondary trauma and eventual burnout. Once we are “burned out” we are no longer able to engage in ethical practice and can put others at risk, even unknowingly.

If you are concerned about your own wellness while a student in the MSW Program, please reach out to a trusted friend, a family member, a professional, your instructor or your advisor. Connection is important when you are feeling overwhelmed.

Other resources include:

- [WCU Counseling & Psychological Services](#)
- Philadelphia campus students may contact [Counseling & Psychological Services](#) at 610.436.2301 or their website and request an appointment with a counselor on the Philadelphia campus.
- Free [Yoga & Meditation at WCU](#)
- [Campus Recreation Center](#)
- [Free guided meditations](#)
- WCU's Department of Public Safety – (610) 436-3311

## **WCU Basic Needs Statement**

WCU is committed to ensuring that all students are able to reach their full academic potential. We know that basic needs are essential for effective learning, and we are working to address economic insecurity among our students in a number of ways. In particular, the [WCU Resource Pantry](#) is open to all students who lack access to food and supplies. Resources are also available for students facing housing insecurity. Please contact the Office of Service-Learning & Volunteer Programs for more information. As these factors directly affect academics, students who are comfortable doing so should contact faculty for further support.

## **Grading Scale**

A letter grade will be assigned based on performance in the course, according to the following scale:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Quality Points</b>	<b>Percentage Equivalents</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
A	4.00	100-93	Superior graduate attainment
A-	3.67	92-90	
B+	3.33	89-87	Satisfactory graduate attainment
B	3.00	86-83	
B-	2.67	82-80	
C+	2.33	79-77	Attainment below graduate expectations
C	2.00	76-73	
C-	1.67	72-70	
F	0	< 70%	Failure

D grades are not used. Refer to the Graduate Catalog for description of NG (No Grade), W, & other grades.

### **No Grade Policy**

A no grade or NG is only issued in exceptional cases when a student has not been able to complete assignments due to extenuating circumstances. Again an NG may negatively impact your financial aid, and I cannot guarantee when I will be available to review assignments past the semester and submit a grade change.

## Course Outline

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### **Module 1: Introduction to Course**

Assignments Due:

- Discussion Board
    - Initial post due 10am 9-4
    - Response post due 10am 9-6
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### **Module 2: Perspectives & Types of Humor**

Assignments Due:

- Assessment and Development of Personalized Humor Therapy Treatment Plan Due 10am 9-13
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### **Module 3: Humor as Therapy, Empowering, and Oppressive**

Assignments Due:

- Discussion Board
    - Initial post due 10am 9-18
    - Response 10am 9-20
  - Completion of Personalized Humor Therapy Treatment Plan and Documentation of Progress Due 10am 9-22
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### **Module 4: Humor in Social Work (general) and Micro Social Work**

Assignments Due:

- Discussion Board
    - Initial 10am 9-25
    - Response 10am 9-27
  - Completion of Personalized Humor Therapy Treatment Plan and Documentation of Progress Due 10am 9-29
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### **Module 5: Humor in Mezzo Social Work**

Assignments Due:

- Discussion Board
    - Initial 10am 10-2
    - Response 10am 10-4
  - Completion of Personalized Humor Therapy Treatment Plan and Documentation of Progress Due 10am 10-6
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### **Module 6: Humor in Macro Social Work**

Assignments Due:

- Discussion Board
    - Initial 10am 10-9
    - Response 10am 10-11
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### **Module 7: Integration of Concepts**

Assignments Due:

- Final Paper Due 10am 10-13

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