


The background of the image is a complex, abstract pattern. It features a dense network of thin, gold-colored lines that resemble veins or a web. These lines are set against a background of vibrant blue and purple hues. The colors are layered and blended, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is reminiscent of a microscopic view of a biological structure or a highly detailed, organic pattern.

# SOCIAL WORK, TRAUMA, & THE ARTS





DR. MEAGAN  
CORRADO



# CLASS 5: THE VISUAL ARTS

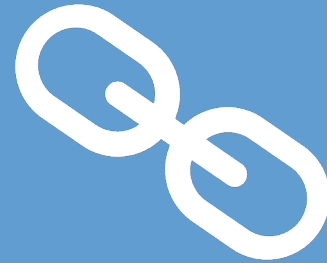
# SOCIAL WORK, TRAUMA, & THE ARTS

COURSE DASHBOARD

VIRTUAL ASYNCHRONOUS CONTENT



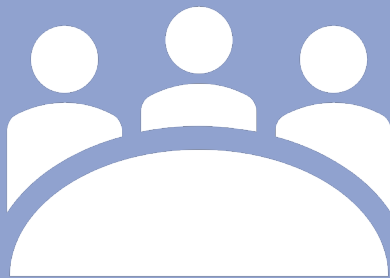
WEB LINKS



COURSE READING



"LIVE" VIRTUAL CLASS SESSIONS



WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS



STUDENT PROPOSALS



# Social Work, Trauma, & The Arts

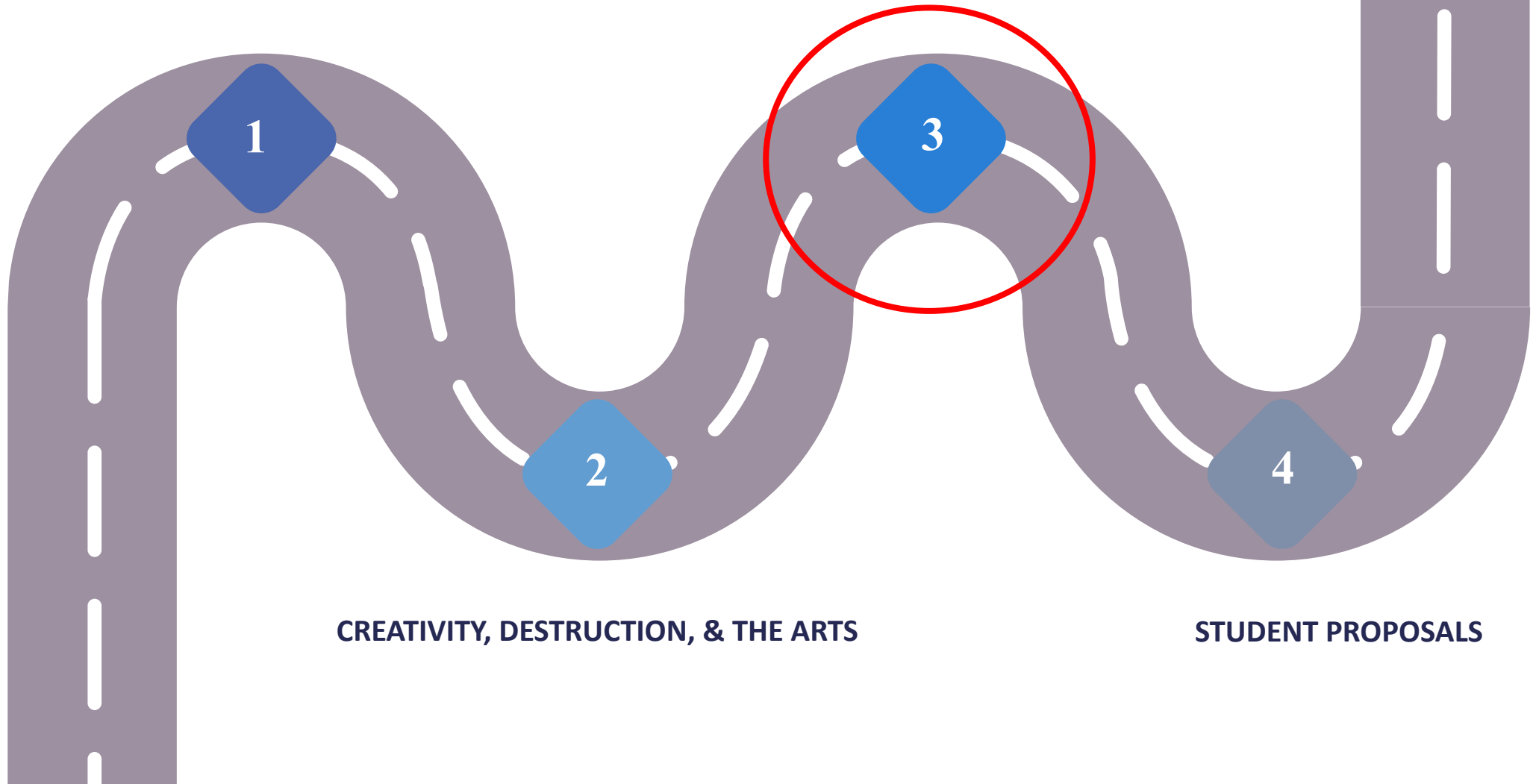
Course Roadmap

INTRODUCTION TO TRAUMA

EXPLORATION OF CREATIVE  
ARTS APPROACHES

CREATIVITY, DESTRUCTION, & THE ARTS

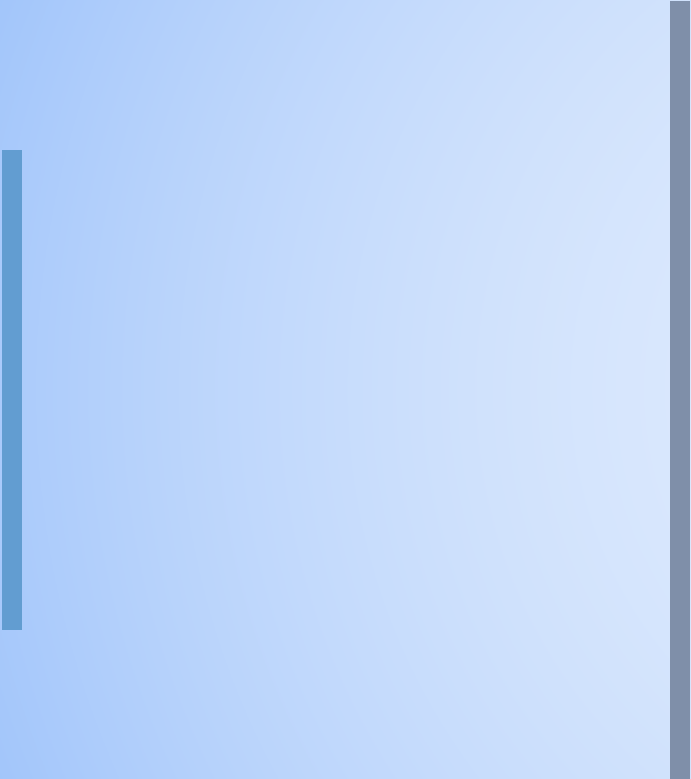
STUDENT PROPOSALS





# AGENDA

- Introduction to the therapeutic value of the visual arts
- Choosing an artistic medium
- The social worker's approach
- Art therapy

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF THE VISUAL ARTS



Enable	Enable individuals to process trauma-related thoughts
Engage	Engage non-verbal/pre-verbal parts of the brain
Assist	Assist clients/communities in overcoming traditional defenses that can prove to be a barrier in talk therapy
Encourage	Encourage use of symbolic language
Yield	Yield a concrete product that can be revisited, analyzed, and re-experienced

## VISUAL ARTS: BENEFITS

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# SELF-EXPRESSION THROUGH THE VISUAL ARTS

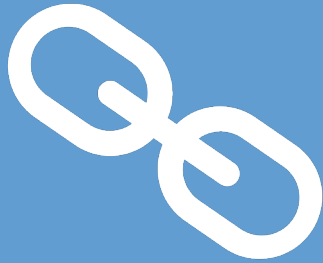
- Art appeals to individuals of eclectic interests. Whether it takes the form of sculpture, ceramics, sketches, or murals, it serves the universal function of promoting expression, communication, and empowerment.
- Ulman (in Rubin 1980) says that art, is “a way of bringing order out of chaos- chaotic feelings and impulses within, the bewildering mass of impressions from without” and is “a means to discover both the self and the world and to establish a relationship between the two” (Rubin, 1980).
- Artists’ products can reflect the pre-processed emotions and thoughts which one might ordinarily censor when using language as one’s primary means of expression (Groves & Huber, 2003).
- Riley (1999) says, “Visual images can slip by the barrier of ordinary defenses and provide information that has been inaccessible to the [individual].”



# SELF-EXPRESSION THROUGH THE VISUAL ARTS

- The creation of visual artwork is often a non-verbal activity.
- The artist uses symbolic images to express feelings and represent experiences.
- Riley (1999) states that symbolic imagery has the potential to be more effective than language because “there is no pure meaning to any word, since it not only has a unique intellectual significance, it also has a singular image activated by the vocalization.” She describes art as a superior substitute for language; artistic symbols, part of a universal “language,” allow for more precision.

WEB LINKS



# CHOOSING AN ARTISTIC MEDIUM



# CHOOSING AN ARTISTIC MEDIUM

- The visual arts can be a powerful form of expression for the clients/systems we service in social work settings.
- It is important for you to consider the artistic medium that you are introducing to a client/community.
- It is helpful for you to experiment with the medium prior to introducing it to a client so that you can anticipate the potential challenges and opportunities inherent in the medium.
- Some mediums are messy and others are controlled. Some mediums may be experienced as calming and others as anxiety-provoking.
- Work collaboratively with your client/community to identify an appropriate medium.

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# THE SOCIAL WORKER'S APPROACH



# THE SOCIAL WORKER'S APPROACH

- It is important for you to maintain awareness of your own responses to the client/community as they engage in their creative process.
- It is important to consider the following:
  - What are you communicating verbally?
  - What are you communicating non-verbally?
  - Are you using a strengths-based perspective?
  - How can you facilitate an environment of safety during the art-making process?
  - How can you support your client in navigating accidents and mistakes?
  - Will the activity be non-verbal, or will you also support your client in verbally processing their experience?
  - What are your feelings about non-verbal artistic processing? How can you contain your own discomfort during moments of silence?

## CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

What are you communicating verbally?

What are you communicating non-verbally?

Are you using a strengths-based perspective?

How can you facilitate an environment of safety during the art-making process?

How can you support your client in navigating accidents and mistakes?

Will the activity be non-verbal, or will you also support your client in verbally processing their experience?

What are your feelings about non-verbal artistic processing? How can you contain your own discomfort during moments of silence?

## THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Provide a supportive holding environment for your client in which they can make discoveries and mistakes.
- Emphasize process over product.
- Don't be so eager to interpret your client's art that you rob them of the opportunity to make their own discoveries.
- Art is not always pretty. The work that your client creates does not have to be pretty to be therapeutic.
- Adopt an attitude of curiosity and interest. Don't ask, "What's that!?" Instead use "tell me about..." or "I wonder" statements.
- Sometimes traumatized clients don't have the words to express their experiences. In these moments, their art speaks for them. It's okay if your clients don't have the words to fully articulate the meaning of their creations.
- Sometimes our clients' art will cause us to feel surprised, alarmed, or uncomfortable. Stay grounded. Adopt an attitude of curiosity, support, and empathy.





# ART THERAPY

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- Art therapy is defined by the American Art Therapy Association as “an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship.”