



MRTS 1320 – Crematory Operations

Course Syllabus: Spring 2026

“Northeast Texas Community College exists to provide personal, dynamic learning experiences empowering students to succeed.”



Instructor: Savannah M. Toews, MS, FD/EMB, CFSP

Office: IA 111B

Phone: 903.434.8315

Email: stoews@ntcc.edu

Virtual Office: <https://bit.ly/3QUzaY8>

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Online
Office Hours	Available by Appointment	Available by Appointment	9:00 AM – 2:00 PM (CST) Virtual by Appt	9:00 AM – 2:00 PM (CST) Virtual by Appt	Available by Appointment	<i>*Link to my virtual office can be found in the introduction to your course folder</i>

This syllabus serves as the documentation for all course policies and requirements, assignments, and instructor/student responsibilities.

Information relative to the delivery of the content contained in this syllabus is subject to change. Should that happen, the student will be notified.

Course Description: A study of the general principles of crematory operations. Presentation of legal requirements, procedures, liabilities, records maintenance for cremation and disposition of cremated remains.

3 credit hours. 3 lecture hours. 1 lab hour.

Prerequisite(s): Program Director permission

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon the completion of this course, the student shall be able to demonstrate the following competencies with a minimum grade of 80%:

1. Discuss the historical significance of cremation.
2. Identify the primary consideration for funeral directors working with those interested in cremation as a method of disposition.
3. Describe the importance of legislative and regulatory compliance.
4. Describe considerations recommended when using third party crematories.
5. Explain the importance of using appropriate paperwork to document cremation related decisions, including forms required by state and local agencies and those designed for legal protection.
6. Distinguish between cremation containers, containers for cremated deceased, and other related merchandising options.
7. Explain the specific elements of the FTC Funeral Rule that applies to cremation.
8. Identify services and trends in conjunction with cremation.

9. Describe options for proper disposition of cremated deceased including legal restrictions and local customs.
10. Demonstrate understanding of requirements for shipping cremated deceased.

Evaluation/Grading Policy: There will be five exams, including the final.

Tests/Exams:

There will be four exams, including the final.

Exam #1 @ 100 points

Exam #2 @ 100 points

Glossary Exam @ 100 points

Final Exam @ 200 points

Total Exam Points = 500

Quizzes:

Quizzes 6 @ 35

Total Quiz Points = 210

Assignments

Assignments 3 @ 50

Final Project @ 80

Total Assignment Points = 230

Discussions

Discussion Boards 4 @ 40

Total Discussion Points = 160

Homework:

Modules 8 @ 50

Total Homework Points = 400

Total Course Points = 1500 Points

Percent

A 92 - 100

B 85 - 91

C 80 - 84

D 75 - 79

F 74 & below

Points

A 1380-1500

B 1275-1379

C 1200-1274

D 1125-1199

F < 1125

*A grade of C or better constitutes a passing grade in the Funeral Service Education program.

Final Exam grades must be 75% or higher to pass the class, regardless of the weighted calculation determined. If a student has a weighted grade of 80% or higher and does not receive a final exam grade above 75%, the student will receive an "F" in the class.

Required Instructional Materials:

Cremation Standards for Funeral Service

Publisher: NFDA

ISBN Number: 9780692024775

Fires Of Change: A Comprehensive Exam of Cremation

Publisher: FSERC

ISBN Number: 9780997926187

Gather Arrangement Software

Publisher: Gather

Provided

Optional Instructional Materials: None.

Appropriate readings will be supplied in Blackboard and through independent research.

Need library resources but do not know where to start? Ask a librarian! Research help is available in person at the Charlie and Helen Hampton Library Reference Desk, by phone at 903-434-8151, or by emailing the Director of Library Services, Ron Bowden, at rbowden@ntcc.edu. The library's website, www.ntcc.edu/library, offers access to over 80 databases (including an eBook collection and a streaming video collection), a citation style guide, tutorials, and a link to their online catalog. The Funeral Service Education's library guide can be accessed by going to <https://libguides.ntcc.edu/c.php?g=634483>.

The final exam in this course is required to be proctored live by the course instructor or their designee. The proctored Final Exam grade must be 75% or higher to pass the class, regardless of the weighted calculation determined. If a student has a weighted grade of 80% or higher and does not receive a final exam grade above 75%, the student will receive an "F" in the class.

Once a student has completed all requirements for graduation, the student's name will be certified with the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards (ICFSEB) to register for the National Board Exam (NBE). All students will receive an "Incomplete" for this course. The student must show proof that they have taken the National Board Exam (NBE) - Arts section.

Evidence of NBE – Art completion will be submitted via email to Ms. Gardner. Once proof has been submitted, regardless of passing or failing, the final course grade will be released. Completion of the NBE is required within 45 days of the last official class day. Please note that there are fees associated with taking the NBE and are covered by student fees. The current exam fee is \$285 for the NBE-Arts section.

Library Resources:

Need library resources but do not know where to start? Ask a librarian! Research help is available in person at the Charlie and Helen Hampton Library Reference Desk, by phone at 903-434-8151, or by emailing the Director of Library Services, Ron Bowden, at rbowden@ntcc.edu. The library's website, www.ntcc.edu/library, offers access to over 80 databases (including an eBook collection and a streaming video collection), a citation style guide, tutorials, and a link to their online catalog. The Funeral Service Education's library guide can be accessed by going to <https://libguides.ntcc.edu/c.php?g=634483>.

Minimum Technology Requirements:

- Regular (daily) access to high-speed internet via computer access
- Respondus Web Monitor (\$15), you will register for this in the "Start Course Here" folder
- Wired Webcam with microphone (for monitored test-taking and recording projects)
- Word processing software (Word) and presentation software (PowerPoint)
- Document scanning capability
- Windows laptops, PC, or MacBooks are acceptable. Chromebooks, Tablets, or iPads are incompatible with the learning management system and will not allow full utilization of resources in the course.

Required Computer Literacy Skills:

Students are expected to have reliable access to a computer and be proficient in the following technology skills:

- Using Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Using Adobe software (Reader, Acrobat, or other commonly required programs)
- Attaching and submitting documents in standard file formats
- Accessing and utilizing online programs, including Blackboard and textbook support websites
- Navigating the internet and performing database searches for academic articles

When available, automated classroom recording technology may be used to record synchronous (live/virtual) class activities. These recordings are intended solely to supplement the course/program in which they occur and will not be distributed otherwise. Students with concerns regarding the recording of synchronous activities should contact the Program Director prior to the scheduled virtual session.

Course Structure and Overview:

This is a **sixteen-week online course** delivered through the Blackboard Ultra Learning Management System. Students are required to access and submit all graded activities through the designated links in Blackboard.

A typical class will include participation in discussions related to funeral service topics and procedures being studied. Students are expected to:

- Check email and Blackboard frequently for announcements and updates
- Complete online work, discussion forums, projects, and exams as assigned
- Stay current with course materials and deadlines (this is **not** a self-paced course)
- Watch instructional videos and read assigned course textbook(s)
- Submit all assignments in Blackboard by the posted due dates

Active participation and consistent engagement with course content are essential for success.

SCANS Skills:

- Basic Skills: reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematical operations, listening, speaking.
Thinking Skills: creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, visualization, knowing how to learn, and reasoning.
- Personal Qualities: responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity, and honesty.
- Resources: Time, money, materials and facilities, human resources.
- Information: acquires, evaluates, organizes, maintains, interprets, and uses computers.
- Interpersonal: participates in teams, teaches others, serves clients, exercises leadership, negotiates, and works with diversity.
- Systems: understands systems, monitors and corrects performance, improves or designs systems.
Technology: works with a variety of technologies.
- Didactic: Lectures, PowerPoint Presentations, Discussions, Case Studies, Videos/DVDs, Worksheets, Presentations, Written Assignments, Computer-based Assignments, Tutorials, and Assessments.

Communications:

NTCC student and faculty email serve as the official forms of communication for this course.

Blackboard Ultra and Microsoft Teams may also be used to communicate with your instructor(s). **All written correspondence must come from your NTCC student email account.**

- **Response Time:** Student emails and phone calls will be answered within 48 hours. Messages sent after 12:00 p.m. (CST) on Friday, or over the weekend, may not be answered until Monday. Please plan ahead and submit any questions about tests or assignments well before the due date, as instructors are not available 24/7.
- **Email Use:** Emails must be sent from your NTCC student account; messages from personal accounts will not receive a response.
- **Assignment Submission:** Assignments must be submitted through Blackboard. Work submitted via email will not be accepted.
- **Class Communication Spaces:**
 - **Discussion boards, Blackboard Collaborate, and virtual sessions** are intended for open questions and class conversation.
 - **Private email** should be used only for matters you do not wish to share publicly.
 - **Group email** is visible to all recipients. Please use it appropriately when posting information, ideas, opinions, or questions intended for the class.

Students are encouraged to check in frequently and actively participate in both group and individual communications.

To help you develop your professional communication skills, I am instituting a (somewhat) formal email etiquette policy. While in the past, I have had a certain amount of patience for email messages that are written in an informal style—that is, without much attention to structure, grammar, spelling, and style—I am quite concerned that your future employer(s) and other professional colleagues will be less tolerant. They may think that if you are that inattentive in your writing, you might be just as careless when interacting with families. (For example, please read [this article](#))

Therefore, when you send me an email, please make every attempt to adhere to the following recommended guidelines:

- Use a properly descriptive subject line that consists of the course number ("MRTS 1330") followed by a very brief phrase that summarizes the subject of your message, such as "Homework 1, Problem 2" or "Appointment request." Please refrain from using short, nonspecific subject lines that have little to do with the actual message (like "hi," "class," "Comp Bio," "python," "question," "help," or just leaving the subject line blank.)
- Start the body of your email with a proper greeting, such as "Hello, Mrs. G," or something similar. (As a side benefit, this prevents you from accidentally addressing me by my first name)
- Please make sure you know the difference between they're, their, and there. Similarly, make sure you know when to use it's versus its, your versus you're, and to, two, and too. (There are people who write entire books to convey the wrath and fury they feel when they see examples of such abominations of punctuation and spelling.)
- Please capitalize the first letter in each sentence, not the entire sentence.

To encourage you to get in the habit of better email etiquette, my plan is as follows: If I receive an email message from you that does not make a sincere attempt to follow the recommendations outlined above, I may respond with a "canned" (pre-written) message that will politely ask you to rewrite your email and send again. It does not have to be perfect (even I screw up sometimes), but assuming you made a decent attempt to do the right thing, then I will be much more likely to provide an actual, personal, and timely response.

Microsoft Teams communications should follow the email etiquette policy outlined above. All communication should be respectful and professional.

Institutional/Course Policy:

Attendance: Attendance is crucial due to the nature of this course. Success in this course is dependent on your active participation and engagement throughout the course. As such, students must complete all assignments by the due date and actively participate in class discussions.

Since this is an online course, attendance is counted through exams, assignments, discussion boards, and quizzes. Make sure to log in at least three times a week to check for new materials and announcements.

Late Work: Students will have five days to submit late work; however, 10% of the total possible points will be deducted for each day the assignment is late; on the fifth day, the paper will be docked 50% of the grade, following the 10% per day policy. After the fifth day, late work will not be accepted in any Funeral Service course unless discussed with the instructor of record prior to submission.

Additionally, **late work is not accepted beyond the 14th week of class.**

Grading: It is the goal of the funeral service faculty to have all grades and feedback returned to students within one week of the assignment's due date. Occasionally, certain assignments (i.e., projects and essays) may take longer to grade and return. Your instructor will inform you when to expect a delay in returned grades. The CURRENT AVERAGE posted on the Blackboard course site is a calculated grade that represents your current course grade average based on the work you have turned in. It will not calculate correctly if you have missed assignments that have not been filled in with a zero.

** Students enrolled in Funeral Service courses, including external learning experiences (Internships), must comply with the program dress code. A copy of this dress code can be found in the documents section in your Student Portfolio. It is suggested (and in some cases required) by the Funeral Service program that students purchase personal protective equipment for courses in which exposure to biohazards exists. Please refer to the Funeral Service Student Handbook for specific policies.

For students in this course who may have a criminal background, please be advised that the background check could keep you from being licensed by the state in which you plan to practice. Please speak with the Program Director if you have a question about your background and licensure. You also have the right to request a criminal history evaluation letter from the applicable licensing agency.

Alternate Operations During Campus Closure and/or Alternate Course Delivery Requirements

In the event of an emergency or announced campus closure due to a natural disaster or pandemic, it may be necessary for Northeast Texas Community College to move to altered operations. During this time, Northeast Texas Community College may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include, but are not limited to, online through the Blackboard Learning Management System, online conferencing, email messaging, and/or an alternate schedule. It is the responsibility of the student to monitor NTCC's website (<http://www.ntcc.edu/>) for instructions about continuing courses remotely, Blackboard for each class for course-specific communication, and NTCC email for important general information.

Additionally, there may be instances where a course may not be able to be continued in the same delivery format as it originates (face-to-face, fully online, live remote, or hybrid). Should this be the case, every effort will be made to continue instruction in an alternative delivery format. Students will be informed of any changes of this nature through email messaging and/or the Blackboard course site.

NTCC Academic Honesty/Ethics Statement:

NTCC upholds the highest standards of academic integrity. The college expects all students to engage in their academic pursuits in an honest manner that is beyond reproach using their intellect and resources designated as allowable by the course instructor. Students are responsible for addressing questions about

allowable resources with the course instructor. Academic dishonesty such as cheating, plagiarism, and collusion is unacceptable and may result in disciplinary action. This course will follow the NTCC Academic Honesty and Academic Ethics policies stated in the Student Handbook. Refer to the student handbook for more information on these subjects.

Statement Regarding the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Technology:

Absent a clear statement from a course instructor, use of or consultation with generative AI shall be treated analogously to assistance from another person (collusion). Generative AI is a subset of AI that utilizes machine learning models to create new, original content, such as images, text, or music, based on patterns and structures learned from existing data (Cornell, Center for Teaching Innovation).

Unauthorized use of generative AI tools to complete an assignment or exam is not permitted. Students should acknowledge the use of generative AI and default to disclosing such assistance when in doubt. Individual course instructors may set their own policies regulating the use of generative AI tools in their courses, including allowing or disallowing some or all uses of such tools. Students who are unsure of policies regarding generative AI tools are encouraged to ask their instructors for clarification. **(Adapted from the Stanford University Office of Community Standards-- accessed August 31, 2023)**

ADA Statement:

It is the policy of NTCC to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals who are students with disabilities. This College will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to request accommodations. An appointment can be made with the Academic Advisor/Coordinator of Special Populations located in Student Services and can be reached at 903-434-8264. For more information and to obtain a copy of the Request for Accommodations, please refer to the special populations page on the NTCC website.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's educational records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are considered "eligible students." In essence, a parent has no legal right to obtain information concerning the child's college records without the written consent of the student. In compliance with FERPA, information classified as "directory information" may be released to the general public without the written consent of the student unless the student makes a request in writing. Directory information is defined as: the student's name, permanent address and/or local address, telephone listing, dates of attendance, most recent previous education institution attended, other information including major, field of study, degrees, awards received, and participation in officially recognized activities/sports.

Student Services Resources:

At Northeast Texas Community College, we understand that students often need support that extends beyond the classroom. "Eagle Assist" is the place to start when looking for that type of assistance. Our support system is here to help you succeed in both your academic and personal growth. www.ntcc.edu/eagleassist

Services provided:

- [Mental Health Counseling](#)
- [Classroom Accommodations](#)
- [NTCC Care Center Food & Hygiene Closet](#)
- [Financial Literacy](#)
- [Students with Children](#)
- [Emergency Aid](#)

- Tutoring

Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

Mental Health Counseling Services are available on campus- in person and online - to all NTCC students at no cost. If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help is a courageous thing to do. You can also contact us directly at counseling-center@ntcc.edu

Tentative Timeline (instructor reserves the right to adjust this timeline at any point in the term):

Class Week	Month	Dates	Readings*	Topics/Notes	Assignments Due
1	JAN	20-26	CSFSP Ch 1 FOC Ch 1	Course Introduction Cremation History	Discussion Board #1 (40 points) Respondus Syllabus Quiz #1 (35 points)
2	JAN/ FEB	27-2	FOC Ch 12-13	Cremation Trends and Statistics	Discussion Board #2 (40 points) Lab Module 1 (100 points) Quiz #2 (35 points)
3	FEB	3-9	CSFSP Ch 2 FOC Ch 6	Process of Cremation	Lab Module 2 (100 points) Quiz #3 (35 points)
4	FEB	10-16	FOC Ch 11	Alkaline Hydrolysis Virtual Class #1 February 10, 2026 6:00pm CST	Discussion Board #3 (40 points)
5	FEB	17-23	CSFSP Ch 3 FOC Ch 6	Crematory Operations and Maintenance	Lab Module 3 (100 points) Exam I (100 points)
6	FEB/ MAR	24-2	CSFSP Ch 4 FOC Ch 3	Cremation Authorization	Gather Assignment (25 points) Quiz #4 (35 points)
7	MAR	3-9	CSFSP Ch 5-6 FOC Ch 2	Identification and Due Diligence	Lab Module 4 (100 points) Gather Assignment (25 points) Discussion Board #4 (40 points)

8	MAR	10-16	CSFSP Ch 9 FOC Ch 5	Liability and Preventive Procedures	Lab Module 5 (100 points) Gather Assignment (25 points) Quiz #5 (35 points)
Spring Break Monday, March 16, 2026 – Friday, March 20, 2026					
9	MAR	24-30	CSFSP Ch 7 FOC Ch 4	Shipping Remains and Final Disposition	Exam II (100 points)
10	MAR	31-6	CSFSP Ch 8	Crematory Operator Safety	Lab Module 6 (100 points) Glossary Assignment (50 points)
11	MAR/ APR	7-13		Virtual Class #2 April 7, 2026 6:00pm CST	Lab Module 7 (100 points) Lab Final Module (50 points)
12	APR	14-20	FOC Ch 7-8	Cremation Containers	Quiz #6 (35 points)
LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW FROM CLASSES WITH A “W” – Thursday, April 16, 2026					
13	APR	21-27	CSFSP Ch 5.3 FOC Ch 9	Caskets and FTC	Gather Assignment (25 points)
14	APR/ MAY	28-4	CSFSP Ch 10 FOC Ch 10	Community and Customer Relationships	Cremation Arrangement Assignment (80 points)
15	MAY	5-11		Review	Glossary Exam (100 points)
16	MAY	12-14		FINAL EXAM- Comprehensive	Final Exam (200 points)
Spring Graduation ~ May 16, 2026					

Textbook Key: CSFSP = *Cremation Standards for Funeral Service Professionals* FOC = *Fires of Change*